SEEKING CONVERGENCE:

workplace identity in the conflicting discourses of the industrial training environment of the 90s, a case study approach.

by

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ABSTRACT

This study began during the mid 1990s - a period of intense change in industry. By that time the National Training Reform Agenda had been manoeuvred into a place of prominence and most major organisations had already established training systems. During the mid 90s the rhetoric shifted from the egalitarian idealism of the NTRA to the lean production discourse of economic rationalism and managerialism However some companies were still establishing accredited shop floor training and were struggling to reconcile the discourse of the NTRA with that of new management values.

The thesis takes a case study approach looking at the experience of one automotive company in the Retail, Service and Repair Sector where union negotiated enterprise agreements resulted in the implementation of site-based shop floor training. The study examines what industry training meant for each of the stakeholders – the company management, the training provider, the union, the workers and the government. It attempts to identify the forces that levered industry training to the forefront so that enterprises felt compelled to take it up in some form. However they did so loading upon it expectation that far exceeded its capacity. At the case study company, the overlays of conflicting discourses makes for very particular challenges in finding the way forward in establishing and maintaining a training system. Hence the research question is: 'What is industry training about? What were the pressures that shaped industry training in the mid 1990s and how did the players at one company interpret them in establishing their training system?'Given the number of players and their conflicting interests, issues of power, decision making and change predominate, raising questions of workplace identity. Hence a second set of research questions emerge asking 'Who are the workplace identities and how do they negotiate their relationships and influence decision making?'

The data was gathered over a 12 month period from 1996 to 1997. Audio and video recordings were made of meetings and training sessions in the workplace and at the training provider's office. In addition, workplace documents, company notices and government and union bulletins were gathered and analysed. A Critical Discourse Analysis approach was applied to interrogate the data. The outcomes sought by most stakeholders, as revealed by the analysis, were only indirectly connected to education. Each was reaching for goals that were often directly in opposition. The analysis demonstrates that significant movement on any aspiration can only be achieved when the trajectories of key stakeholders intersect. Industry training is therefore highly politically charged as stakeholders lobby, cajole, manipulate and threaten each other.
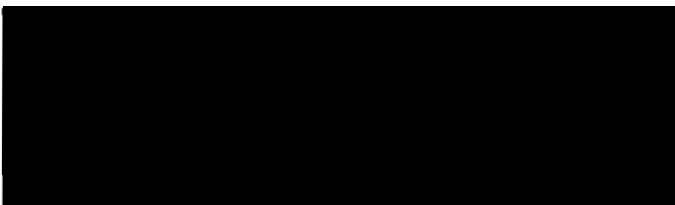
The study draws the conclusion that VET is an educational hybrid where knowledge is understood, generated and disseminated in specialised ways, particularly in its workplace site-based iteration. It is argued that the VET practitioner role is, in part, to manage these discourses. It is subject to political manipulation but at the same time, exercises considerable power in translating highly charged discourses to employee groups. This thesis therefore makes a claim to significance in that it assists practitioners to understand their workplace behaviour not only as educators but as players in a political landscape and as conduits for political and social messages.

STATEMENT

This thesis contains no material which has been submitted for examination in any other course or accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published by another person except when the due reference is made in the text.

Ethics approval has been granted. No. 96/440

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This thesis has watched me age, sometimes I think it has made me age but I have learned a bit of wisdom along the way. Much of this I owe to Lesley Farrell who had the good sense to let me learn from my mistakes but the virtue to buoy my spirits and convinced me I was capable of this mammoth task. The other people who have sustained me have been my colleagues, particularly Robin Sefton and Peter Waterhouse who have commiserated in my woes and pointed out the next stepping stone when it appeared that I had lost my way. They have also been faithful critical friends whom I could rely on for their honesty and their support. I am indebted to Maree Waterhouse who took on the tedious task of editing my bibliography with good humour and dear Lesley Ryall who proof read it. And then there was our very generous WLI secretary, Ellen Cousins, who thought she had taken on a mole-hill but it turned into a mountain. But most of all I have to thank my ever patient partner Barry who has kept company with this thesis every evening, weekend and holiday over the last 5 years and my three beautiful daughters who let me disappear for large tracts of time but joyfully involved me in their lives when I had the time.

ACRONYMS

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
ACM	Australian Chamber of Manufacturers
AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service
AHRI	Australian Human Relations Institute
ALBSAC	Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Action Coalition
ALNARC	Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian Research Consortium
ALNARC	Adult Literacy and Numeracy Research Consortium
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AMC	Australian Manufacturing Council
AMES	Adult Migrant Education Services
AMWU	Australian Manufacturing Workers Union
AMWSU	Amalgamated Metal Workers & Shipwrights Union
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
AS	Australian Standards
ASF	Australian Skills Framework
ATA	Automotive Training Australia
AVETRA	Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association
BCA	Business Council of Australia
CAI	Confederation of Australian Industries
CBA	Competency Based Assessment
CBT	Competency Based Training
CD	Compact Disc
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CFMEU	Construction, Forest, Mining and Energy Union
CSR	Customer Service Representative
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
DIR	Department of Industrial Relations
DIRE	Department of Industrial Relations and Employment
E&SFC	Employment and Skills Formation Council
EBA	Enterprise Bargaining Agreement
ESL	English as a Second Language
FCAI	Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries
FVIU	Federation of Vehicle Industry Unions
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GM	General Motors
HR	Human Relations
ILY	International Literacy Year
IR	Industrial Relations
ISO	International Standards Organisation
IT	Information Technology
ITB	Industry Training Board
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
MTFU	Metal Trades Federation of Australia
MTIA	Metal Trades Industries of Australia
NAITB	National Automotive Industry Training Board
NALLCU	National Automotive Language and Literacy Co-ordination Unit
NBEET	National Board of Employment Education and Training
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
NRF	National Reporting Framework
NTB	National Training Board
NTRA	National Training Reform Agenda
OH&S	Occupational Health and Safety
OPCETE	Office of Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment
OTFE	Office of Training and Further Education
PD	Professional Development
QC	Quality Circles
RDO	Rostered Days Off
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RS&R	Retail Service and Repair
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TDC	Trade Development Council Secretariat

TQM	Total Quality Management
TUTA	Trade Union Training Authority
VBEF	Vehicle Building Employees Federation
VBU	Victorian Builders' Union
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VIC	Vehicle Industry Certificate
VTS	Vehicle Tracking System
VUT	Victoria University of Technology
WCM	World Class Manufacturing
WELL	Workplace English Language and Literacy
WLI	Workplace Learning Initiatives
WMCOT	Western Metropolitan College of TAFE
WRC	Workplace Resource Centre

CHAPTER 1: - INTRODUCTION

1.1   Overview

This study observes the introduction of education in industry in the mid 1990s attempting to understand why and how the initiative occurred. It takes a case study approach so it describes global and national events and observes their impact through the experience of one particular company as perceived by myself as VET (Vocational Education and Training) practitioner and researcher.

This study uses a discourse analysis approach guided by Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis. Carcare, the case study company, is rich in its discourse[1] variations. Within the heteroglossic landscape there is the discourse of industry restructuring[2] mediated by the union and reinterpreted into an educational framework by myself as on-site educator. At the same time there is the strong voice of economic rationalism coloured by industry, referred to here as managerialism[3]. Out shouted by the louder voices, others can be heard murmuring in the background – the old style of defiant unionism, the rough auto-repair shop deal-doers and the educators struggling for a learning organisation. Within the consultative culture of the time, stakeholder groups seek points of convergence whereby decisions can be reached, initiatives supported and progress made. The overarching discourse of consultation connects all the players at certain points of interaction.

Companies are social institutions shaped by historical, political, sociological and industrial pressures that strongly influence, sometimes dictate, the values and ideology espoused by workplace personnel. This study is therefore very concerned with the contextual environment because of its capacity to shape workplace activity, power relationships and decision making. Considerable space is devoted to the emergence and development of these discourses in the industrial community and the way they are interpreted in company interaction. The micro at the company level, is mirrored by the macro at industry and national level.

The study has a number of characters:

- the company management[4] who represent different, often conflicting ideological positions
- the union represented through the training officer from the central union office
- the shop floor[5] workers who are represented here as a single voice
- myself as workplace educator
- Workplace Learning Initiatives (WLI), my employer and educational mentor
- government policy makers and education managers
- and the three major social and political pressure groups:
    - employers
    - unions and
    - educators, particularly critical educators.

All names are fictitious except for mine and that of my colleagues at Workplace Learning Initiatives, who have given me permission to use their real names. Large company names have not been changed on the rationale that they trade broadly within the sector and do not aid in identifying the case study company, however the names of smaller companies have been changed.

1.1.1 Overall Research Problem

This research attempts to understand and name the conflicting discourses of the stakeholder groups represented at a company where a training system was being established in the mid 1990s. The study asks what training was about for each of the groups as they strive to realise the aspirations they have overlaid onto the training initiative.

This study asks the following questions:

- What are the discourses that have created the pressures for change in local industry and how have they emerged?
- How does this company assimilate or confront the environmental exigencies of industry restructuring and globalisation[6]?
- What are the expectations of workplace training in this context?
- How does the company management perceive knowledge and competence?
- How do the key company players exert their authority?

- What discourses hold currency within this workplace culture?
- How do management and workers negotiate their relationship?

It answers these questions from a critical perspective based on values of egalitarian participation in industry and empowerment in education.

1.2   Structural Analysis
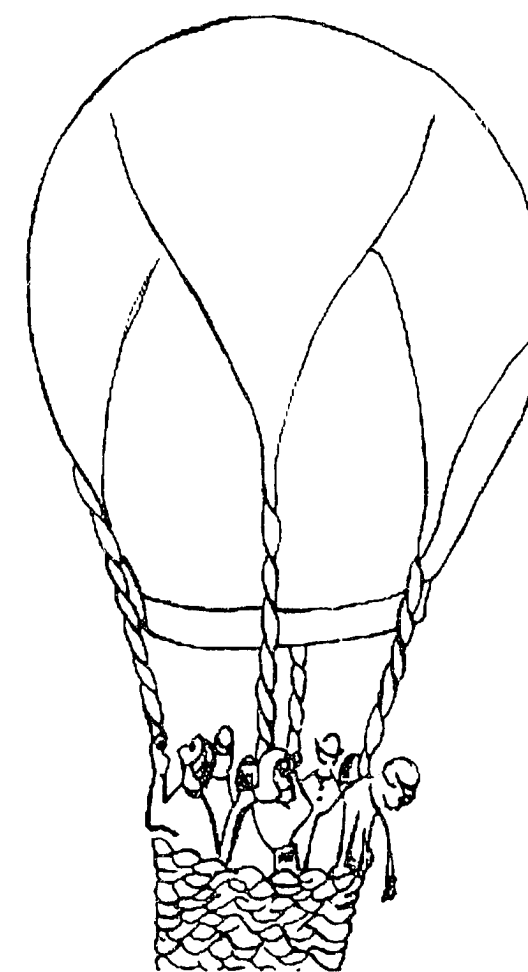
The structure of this study can be likened to a hot-air balloon. The basket is the case study company. It is here that the central characters live out their struggle. However the basket is secured firmly to the political, social and educational forces at play in the industrial training world. These contextual elements are the balloon itself. To carry the metaphor further one could imagine that the rigging that holds the two together is the discourses. As those in the basket construct meaning in their world, the air heats buoying the whole structure and setting its direction. The interaction of the basket and balloon controlled by the hot air is therefore of central interest to this study.

I, myself as observer with binoculars and map in hand, apply ethnographic methods and discourse analysis to make sense of what I experience. These tools provide the means to articulate the relationship between all these components. The three context chapters, 5, 6 and 7, investigate how the balloon is put together and how it achieves lift off. Chapter 8 takes a snap shot of the activity in the basket.

My position is both that of participant in the basket and ground crew observer. This culminates in the final chapters where I ask questions such as 'so what' and 'how come'. As ground crew I attempt to understand how this basket remained in the air and what gave it its unique character. In the final chapter I look back over the course industry education has taken over the intervening years since this particular basket landed (at least for me as

observer). I look again at the legacy we have inherited that we, in the basket, were part of but may not have understood so well at the time.

The structure is therefore somewhat cyclical as the case study experience is revisited from a number of different perspectives. It looks at the experience from different stakeholder positions and then from the viewpoint of themes such as that of the mechanisms of convergence and later from the perspective of knowledge values.

1.3   Site Introduction

The thesis begins with a tour around the worksite of the case study company and explains, in brief, the history of the company. This chapter provides a grounding for the reader in the context of the times and workaday experience of the company players. It outlines the attitudes and cultural traditions that have become fixed within the company.

Although the data were gathered between 1996 and 1997, the industrial and educational activity at Carcare was more representative of the experience of larger companies 6 or so years earlier. The tasks that preoccupied the players at the company were those of establishing consultative practices, of restructuring the workforce within a skills-based hierarchy and of constructing a training system. These tasks were engineered into a place of prominence by the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) and the restructured Award. These activities opened the way for the union to assert a role as co-manager of workplace personnel and to position workers as participants in decision making. I too, as the VET practitioner, worked in concert with the union attempting to disrupt the prevailing discourse by introducing a discourse drawn from that of industry learning organisations. The discourse valued the skills of employees and involved them in an attempt to develop a co-operative culture built on shared knowledge.

These were the preoccupations of many companies in the early 90s. By the late 90s larger mainstream companies had all but abandoned egalitarian values and had sought to increase productivity directly through enacting ideologies of lean management and economic rationalism. However, at Carcare one set of issues overlaid the other as the company was beset by the concurrence of these two waves: egalitarian restructuring and lean

management. The restructuring agenda with its interest in consultative decision making became complicated by managerialist initiatives that value control through systems and doing more with less.

The company was a member of the RS&R (Retail, Service and Repair)[7] sector of the automotive industry which is made up largely of small businesses. Restructuring activity of the early 90s was concentrated mostly in large manufacturing companies, leaving small business mostly unaffected. For this reason the RS&R sector had become something of a backwater in the area of industrial change. Reform came belatedly. However the case study company was jostled into change at the behest of the large automotive manufacturers. Carcare provided services to vehicle importers and exporters; it was therefore well placed to attract interest as globalisation gained pace. Customer companies hence saw it as important to draw the company into the global industry structures.

1.4   Methodological Underpinning

The two subsequent chapters deal with methodological issues. The first deals with the method of data gathering and research adopted for the study. It establishes a claim to ethnography as the appropriate approach to this type of study but is then beset with the question of objectivity – how does the researcher achieve sufficient distance and neutrality from her subjects to draw judicious conclusions, particularly when she is the practitioner at the research site?

It concludes that objectivity is neither possible nor desirable and establishes some guiding principles for achieving a balanced subjectivity and maintaining the integrity of the study. The chapter includes an autoethnography which outlines the subjectivities contained in this thesis. It also introduces the reader to another significant player in the case study, that of Workplace Learning Initiatives, the researcher's employer. WLI is the formative power behind the educational and political ideology I espouse and is therefore a major contributor to the autoethnography.

The next chapter explains the method of analysis used once the data was gathered. The method is Critical Discourse Analysis based on the Fairclough model (1989, 1992, 1995).

The chapter begins by asking 'why discourse analysis?' and responds to some of the critics of this approach. It then elucidates the theory of CDA and its mechanisms of analysis. It surveys the relevant literature in the field and identifies the questions that will guide the analysis in exploring the research issues.

1.5   The Context Chapters

The next two chapters, chapters five and six, deal with the political, industrial and educational context of the industry restructuring era and managerialist ideology. These chapters are important in making sense of the discourses reflected within the company. The wider context produces imperatives for action, justifies and gives weight to opinions and enables or dismisses courses of action or thought. CDA recognises the context as the frame for the discourse. The context is therefore critical in such an analysis.

Chapter five introduces globalism and outlines the discursive forces that gradually convinced the mainstream community that an Australian form of globalism could be wrought, based on consultation and egalitarianism.

I acknowledge that this is a very contested position. Analysts of a more critical persuasion believe that political and industrial leaders were not committed to their own rhetoric and were driving a ruthless course to a competitive global economy. Nonetheless I remain convinced that many of those who were drafting the principles and implementing the policies of industrial reform were driven by a view that industry could meet the goals of all players by shifting from an adversarial to a consultative mode of operation. I have spent some time throughout the thesis substantiating this belief.

Chapter five goes on to observe the failure of the vision of a globalised economy based on egalitarian principles. I attempt to explain the primary factors that caused its demise. Towards the end of the chapter I reflect on the experience of Carcare, the case study company, in relation to the vision and aspiration of the industry restructuring movement.

Chapter six looks at industry restructuring from an educational perspective discussing the values and debates that underpinned the National Training Reform Agenda (NTRA) and asserts that the principles were industrial rather than educational. The NTRA was based upon a poorly theorised analysis of work and learning and was set in place to achieve industrial and political outcomes. Once again the Carcare experience of the NTRA is briefly examined. The chapter explains the union's failure to establish a transformative discourse whereby union and company would work co-operatively in matters of worker skill development and worker management. The three players (union, company and training provider) finally abandoned the consultative model and, with some frustration, returned to a more adversarial means of protecting workers' interests.

Chapter eight observes the social and industrial context from a different point of view. It looks at the discourses that washed through industry at the time. It traces their origins and analyses workplace texts to grasp how they were reflected in the workplace environment. The analysis focuses on the discourses of science and knowing and finds its resonance in industry through scientific management, training and managerialism. It goes on to trace the discourses of unionism - the values reflected in the traditional discourse and that of 'new' unionism. It also describes the discourse of WLI and the identity its teachers carried into the workplace. The chapter wrestles with the question of knowledge and attempts to uncover what is legitimate knowledge in each ideological framework. It describes the disparity and disjuncture between the two adverse industrial stakeholders, unions and employers, in a political climate that sought to find greater convergence.

1.6   Data Analysis

In chapter eight, the case study data is intensively analysed. It consists of 5 selected 'situational events' where workers and workplace representatives interact with management. These are recorded events (audio or video) where workers, management and/or union representatives attended a training session or where they met at a Training Committee Meeting or a training presentation. The analysis identifies the discourses the interlocutors call upon and the mechanisms by which they negotiate identity for themselves individually or for their representative group. It is a set of narratives about the interplay between change and convergence. Each player attempts to find a point of unity with their interlocutors from which to build change. The situational events provide a snapshot of the consultative culture at work. They reveal the contradiction and contestation of discourses within the company. Emerging through the discourse ambiguity is a committed but hesitant

workforce pitched against an uncertain and sometimes punitive management, each seeking survival in an unforgiving work environment.

1.7   Concluding Chapters

The next chapter draws conclusions about the education and the training environment in industry viewed through the theme of convergence. The dynamics of convergence are analysed within the context of the industrial educational issues of the time. It concludes that Competency Based Training (CBT) allowed for an industrial truce between union and management within the consultative tradition. CBT provided a meeting point between two very disparate ideological and educational traditions. By attending to skills, ideology could be left intact, or so it seemed. Educationalists however disputed the direction of education in industry and fought to create a critical perspective on Competency Based Training leaving themselves sidelined in designing the development strategy. Training was therefore shaped by industry discourse which cast educationalists in the role of supplier of services to be purchased by business.

As the system has rolled on, employers have tightened their grasp. In enterprise based training, where the power of employers is amplified, a new hybrid has formed increasingly separated from campus training delivery as it pushes ever harder to produce the economic outcomes sought by employers in a demand driven culture.

Another truce underpinned the decisions at the case study company, that of the consultative culture. Points of conflict were quarantined for fear that they would undermine the consultative process. It was hoped that purposeful action could be enacted in the workplace even when intent, implementation and outcome might be read quite differently by the different parties. Carcare demonstrates the limitations of such a mode of operation and illustrates the importance of the principle of convergence. It is only when the ideology of all parties converge with a willingness to act in concert that significant workplace change can be achieved.

The final chapter takes a different perspective on the experience of Carcare and workplace change. It reviews the industry education and Carcare experience from the point of view of knowledge construction and generation. It draws conclusions about what has happened

over the restructuring years to shape our understanding of industry and workers' knowledge and the role of VET. The enterprise based teacher, as apart from the institution-based teacher, is positioned to make a significant contribution to the construction and dissemination of industry and workers' knowledge. However she is also vulnerable to manipulation particularly in the current industrial climate of corporate culturism. If she is able to bridge the discourse conflicts, she is in a powerful position to negotiate better educational outcomes. However the discourse mismatch at Carcare fouled all three parties so that none achieved their goals. The case study asserts the intensely political nature of workplace education.

The study concludes that workplace change is highly contingent and subject to the convergence of discourses both public and local that can be forged into opportunities for learning and development at individual workplace sites. The influence of local pressures and the interplay of relationships cannot be understated but the direction of national and global discourse and implementation structures are also very significant. The case study suggests that political persuasion cannot create change based upon consultative values unless the points of leverage consistently align with the points of convergence. Educationalists who identify themselves as change agents must develop the skills to find and forge points of convergence

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[1] Discourse refers to an ideological set of values which is manifest in a style of self expression (See chapter 4.)
[2] Industry restructuring was a movement that catalysed change within industry during the late 1980s and 1990s. (See chapter 5)
[3] Managerialism is a term that is used in two distinct ways. One identifies itself as apolitical, the other, as strongly political. Apolitical managerialism is defined by Pusey (1992) as 'a body of problem solving and organisational skills that are equally applicable to anything and everything... Management skills are content free and context free' (Pusey 1992:122) hence managers are believed to be transferable across any industry, geography or environment. Political managerialism is the calculated application of lean management principles by coercive means (Rees and Rodley, 1995). Willmott (1993) adopts the term 'corporate culturalism' to describe similar measures. Unteweger (1992) uses the term 'lean production' in much the same way. In this thesis managerialism is used in its political definition but examples are quoted of mild managerialism, where qualities of common interest and mutuality are exhorted, to more aggressive forms of managerialism where lean management values are being driven.
[4] The term 'management' refers to those who have management responsibilities from the supervisors to the managing director. It refers to those not eligible for union membership. 'Supervisors' are excluded from membership of the union because their loyalties are said to be with the company rather than the workers. Leading hands however are still recognised as eligible for union membership.
[5] The term 'shop floor' refers to the factory as apart from the office or laboratory. 'Shop floor workers' are those engaged in direct production work. Most factory employees are divided into 'hourly paid workers' and 'staff'. Hourly paid workers are paid according to an hourly rate while staff are paid an annual rate. The shop floor workers are those paid hourly.
[6] Globalisation encompasses the spread of activities associated with globalism. Globalism refers to an economy based on international competition in the commodities, financial and information markets with its consequential impact upon wages and employment patterns and hence on social systems.
[7] The Retail, Service and Repair Sector (RS&R) refers to a wide range of small businesses in the automotive industry. It includes dealerships, panel beaters, wreckers, trailer builders ... Carcare is no longer a small business, but it maintained membership of the sector because of its activity and its history.

CHAPTER 2:- SITE ANALYSIS

Balloon Metaphor:
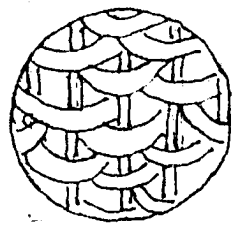
This chapter takes account of the basket, which represents the company. It examines the material it is made from and how it comes to be the size and shape it is.

2.1 Overview

This chapter introduces the reader to the site where the case study was conducted. It describes the business activity but also interprets the workplace. It locates the company within the industry landscape as an introduction to the discourses that permeate the workplace. The discourses are most observable at two points of negotiation: in the relationship between management and shop floor and in the relationship between the company and the business world where globalism and managerialism increasingly dictate change.

2.2 The Company

2.2.1 Company Activity

The company was an amalgam of two companies and three types of activity - vehicle storage, vehicle transport and the fitment of accessories. Let us call it ACME Carcare. Its work was to take delivery of consignments of imported cars from the wharves, ensure they met Australian standards, repair damage that has occurred in transit, fit them with accessories and finally prepare and deliver them to sales centres. A similar service was offered to local manufacturers – cars were stored, accessories fitted and they were prepared for sale or export.

ACME Carcare was set on a dry, flat, wind swept plain on a street called Cherry Blossom Lane, a name that belies its character. It was not the set for a Japanese opera. It was an industrial wasteland where large trucks rumbled past work sheds, scrap metal yards and parking lots seemingly devoid of people. The company settled on this site in 1983 when searching for an area close to the wharf and the car manufacturing plant and where the land was cheap.

Surveying the company site one could see sheds scattered here and there among rows and rows of cars. The company could provide open-air storage for up to 10,000 cars. ACME was the car-carrying part of the business. It brought the cars from the wharf to the storage site and, following processing, from the site to the dealer.

Carcare was the processing side of the business. Carcare's work was to process the vehicles by fitting some internal items, changing badges to the local trading names, fitting safety belts etc. to meet Australian Safety Standards and Australian Design Rules. The company worked in co-operation with the manufacturing companies to allocate the cars to dealers and to arrange transportation. The company therefore was able to provide complete ship to showroom service.

The divide between the two functions, transport and processing, was still clearly marked even though they both shared the same site. The two divisions had different cultures, separate employees and different management structures. This study was centred on what was referred to as the 'processing side of the business', that of Carcare.

2.2.2 An Orientation Tour

On approaching the property, one saw a humble little box building marked 'OFFICE' sitting in a pool of parked cars[8]. The front door opened on to a small reception area with the traditional quality pledge hanging on the fake wood panel wall. The passage ahead led to a rabbit warren of offices all decked in fake wood.

A little further down, the passage way opened into a partially shared office space. Here the carpet stopped and the lino began. Three very busy women and one man sat behind computer screens most of the time holding telephones to their ears. These were the Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) - the people who received the manifest from the ships and co-ordinated the work from the ship to the customer. They received the orders,

instructed the shop floor on the work to be completed, allocated the finished cars, managed the accounts, punched information into the computer and rarely left their desks.

The Information Technology (IT) system allowed them to locate any car at any time. Each car was given a bar code by the CSRs when it arrived at the wharf. From that point to when it was sold to the customer, it could be tracked by activating the bar code. Each time it underwent an operation, it was zapped by the shop floor worker with the bar coder which told the computer what had been done.

Locally made cars were prepared for export using a similar system. The company's computer was linked directly to the manufacturing plant. As each car rolled along the production line, the computer registered its progress through its bar code. This level of involvement would make it more difficult for the manufacturing company to change service providers.

If you wandered out of the office area into the adjoining workshop you would find yourself in the Fleet area. The building, like all the work sheds, was made of fibro cement. The walls were unlined and there were two gaping doors at each end which provided car access. There was no heating in the sheds and the wind roared through the open space. The sheds were bitterly cold in winter and fiercely hot in summer. There were four similar sheds dotted around the yard where other processing work was undertaken. There were also other abandoned sheds in various stages of disrepair, which held unused and out-dated parts and provided places for birds and rodents to nest.

Back in the Fleet workshed, cars were lined up diagonally down the length of the shed. There were a few hoists where mechanics were dealing with the underbellies of cars. Alongside them, operators were busy with drills and ratchets fitting tow bars, shelving, even wash basins into the back of vans.

The Fleet area was where vehicles were built up according to the needs of particular companies to fulfil specific utilitarian purposes. For example, vans were turned into mini travelling workshops for a large telecommunication company or for special cartage purposes under specifications set by the clients.

Alongside these operators were the detailers busy buffing and polishing the cars. These people worked for a sub-contractor who was responsible for cleaning the cars and providing the final touches in preparation for sale at a dealership.

The other sheds were similar to the Fleet shed in design and lay out although the activity was somewhat different. Each shed was dedicated to a particular automotive manufacturer. Radios, Compact Disc (CD) players and side mirrors were fitted. Compliance plates were dated and stamped and decals (transfers) and badges were put on the cars. Activities here were determined by the package that goes with the car - the accessories and paraphernalia, along with the compliance to the Australian Design Rules.

There were about 8 men working in each area fitting out about 70 - 80 cars in each shed per day. They worked as a team, one person fitting radios, another fitting mirrors etc. When all of the cars were completed, they were driven out into the yard again to await allocation.

The complement to the processing part of the business was the checking and allocation activity. This was the work of 'yardies' who located the cars that had been sold to dealers. They checked them and put them on the allocation pad ready for loading onto the car carriers.

At the back of the Fleet area were two dusty, grimy offices. One belonged to Reno, the Operations Manager, the other to Ray, the Fleet Manager. Both had windows that looked out to the workshop. On the desk surfaces were piles of paper scattered among the tools, the numberplates etc. The telephone was grey yellow with ingrained dust. The offices were more storage spaces than work spaces and were not occupied for any length of time by either manager.

Alongside the offices was the training room - an inglorious space designed originally for offices but later transformed with painted windows, poor air circulation and a pall of stale cigarettes. The fibro walls stopped short of the ceiling and the noise of grinding and workshop activity provided a constant accompaniment and sometimes an insurmountable intrusion into training activity.

2.2.3 The Making of the Company

Carcare opened for business in 1969 owned by a 'truckie' known to all as Bluey. At that time, an import quota on cars limited the foreign market to 20% of cars manufactured each year. The company's primary business was in the transport of vehicles from the wharf to the dealer. Some required accessories to be fitted, others needed repair due to shipping damage. Bluey arranged for the work to be done at various local workshops and carted the cars to and fro. In time Bluey recognised that he could provide the repair, fitment and storage service himself and hence started a flourishing business.

By the mid 70s the business employed a band of about 50 workers - mostly auto repair trades and semi-trades people. Bluey sold his business in 1989 to his colleague and works manager Bazza. Bazza gradually dignified the business with a more professional image. Office staff grew in number and Bazza then only occasionally donned a pair of overalls to help out. Bluey was everybody's uncle but Bazza saw himself as an entrepreneur. He also developed a national network with branches at the ports of Perth, Sydney and Brisbane. Unlike his predecessor, he issued redundancies when there was insufficient work and established a slightly distant relationship more befitting a modern business structure.

In 1994, Bazza sold out to a large car transport company, ACME, which in turn was bought by a multi-national owned by a large investment company. Bazza could see that the business could no longer be run as a private family enterprise, as imports began to increase along with the need to respond to the growing demands of quality and customer service.

By all accounts, both Bluey and Bazza were typical RS&R businessmen - rough diamonds and good drinking mates. They were non-corporate workmen who made good. Their business grew without a lot of strategic forethought. There was no budget. The profit was what was left in the bank at the end of the month. Business deals were forged by good will and a network of personal relationships, favours and understandings. They were never formalised with a written contract. This style of business was not unusual within the RS&R sector.

2.3 The RS&R Sector

2.3.1 RS&R Workplaces

Carcare's cultural traditions were firmly rooted in the RS&R industry sector. Many employees in the sector were qualified tradesmen though experience was valued more than paper qualifications (NAITB 1993) and the status of the employees' qualifications may have been unknown to the employer. Businesses were presided over by an owner whose personality and style of management determined the workplace tenor and employee and customer relationships. Practices were largely uncensored by the standards and corporate culture that typically regulated the practices of larger businesses.

In most RS&R workshops, wages varied considerably among employees according to individual arrangements with the manager. In most cases, wages were not discussed amongst employees and since the shops were rarely unionised, there was no pressure for consistency or accountability in wage variation between individuals beyond legislative requirements. The boss however used wages as a means of rewarding skill and maintaining the service and loyalty of valued individuals. This was the way wages were organised at Carcare:

> Once upon a time when it was a company and one guy owned it and it's smaller and it's not so unionised you know, if someone's doing a good job you fling them a few bucks here and a few bucks there and eventually when you come to compare it, it's all over the joint .
>
> Tom, (National Business Development Manager) Training Session

Many shops cultivated a particular ethnic identity consistent with that of the owner so workshops could be Italian, Vietnamese, Greek or Maltese as was the case at Carcare. The older workshops made up of European and Anglo workers were often characterised by a sense of bawdy mateship. Emotions were untempered and intolerances loudly expressed. The male stamp on the workplaces was accentuated by the pornographic pictures on the wall and the grime in the shop floor offices and the tea-room. The worksheds themselves were a memorial to old style work practices where there was no consideration for

aesthetics, cleanliness or comfort. The workplaces were functional male domains where the sole priority lay with the task at hand rather than life-style niceties.

Management style varied considerably and in many businesses, there was minimal planning, marketing and systems management (Ernst & Young 1991). The owner reacted to contingencies with whatever resources he could muster and dealt with irregularities following past traditions of practice. There was no culture of training except perhaps in tools and vehicle technology (E&SFC 1993, Thompson 1992). New skills were acquired from fellow workers or, if demanded by law or customers, from attendance at night school at a TAFE college.

2.3.2 Carcare as an RS&R Workplace

Carcare left some of these traditions behind as it became absorbed into a large multi-national company. The multi-national had superimposed itself upon the business and, for 3 years, had been struggling to turn it into a corporate enterprise. The primary challenge was to move away from the ad hoc, unilateral decision making style that characterised the RS&R sector, to institutional, global management practices that were regulated, consistent and accountable. This implied a significant discourse shift that required the redefinition of work roles, the establishment of systems to formalise work practices and the development of a work culture that demanded disciplined adherence to agreed practices.

At this point in its evolution (1996/7/8), some features of the corporate mantle had been taken up by the old managers. Newly imported managers had brought new standards into the company. All managers were then expected to wear suits and ties and speak managerial rhetoric. Some organisational systems had been manoeuvred into place but the workshops had barely changed in appearance or practice. Workshop bravado had mellowed somewhat with size and the imposed legislation of equal opportunity and safety procedures. However, many features sustained the stamp of the RS&R traditions. Some of these are described below.

The company had few formal planning documents. Such documents were required by the multi-national company and the quality system but formal plans and systems were outside the tradition of operation within the sector and, where they had been imposed by the multi-

national company, compliance was minimal and on paper only. Planning was perhaps the company's greatest weakness. The State Manager described the company's modus operandi as 'reactive'. Despite the best efforts of the overarching company, Carcare seemed unable to develop workable planning measures to govern the flow of work and found itself constantly buffeted by cycles of over-demand and slump. This was partly due to the uneven nature of work activity. Work at the company came in waves as ships docked, sometimes 3 or 4 at a time, with a full cargo of cars to be processed and transported. At other times there would be no ships for days, even weeks. Work therefore fluctuated from crisis to inactivity.

As a result, the company required complex contingency planning, but this seemed to be out of reach, at this time, for the current management. When a boat load of cars arrived, the cars were 'parked off' in available spaces in the yard. The parking arrangements often turned out to be unsuitable so people worked overtime to shift them. Despite the grid system, cars got lost and could take hours to find. It had happened in the past that they were never found.

With such work fluctuations and a wide range of customers, a complex communication system was required to ensure that priority contracts were filled, labour was organised to meet the need and changing customer requirements were fed down the line. The company had no such system. Face to face communication on a one to one or small group basis was the only method used. Despite the constant complaints about poor communication, attempts at instituting improved communication measures had quickly fizzled. Neither management nor workers had the follow through to implement suggested communication improvements. They seemed to lack the belief that change was possible and repair measures dissolved before they were fully implemented. Communication systems therefore remained informal and suffered from all the shortcomings of the 'Chinese whisper'[9] methods.

Communication failures were a constant source of distress in the company. In one episode, Scotty[10], a leading hand in one of the sheds, lost his position of authority because he was not told that an urgent boat load of cars had arrived and warranted immediate processing. Management claimed to have passed on the message. Such incidents happened on almost a daily basis though usually without the same severe consequences.

Supervisors and senior managers were only loosely controlled by company philosophy and discipline. When confronted by frustration, some resorted rapidly to insult and raucous personal abuse. The Scotty incident came to attention because the state manager was so abusive that Scotty raised a complaint with the union. The outcome was that the manager had to publicly apologise to the victim but the incident so soured relationships that Scotty left the company not long afterwards.

Consequently, it was personalities and crisis that shaped the workplace rather than principles embodying a company policy and code of behaviour.
Business deals were wrought through mateship involving male business rituals:

> Nearly all our customers are on handshake agreements. There is no written contract except for Toyota. The terms and conditions are not spelt out. What is a good job is not specified. There is usually a 12 months implicit agreement but we keep the job only by good will.
> Andrew, (State Manager), Training Session

Most agreements were not based on measured calculation. One of the new managers told the following story to the class during a training session[11].

When the company lost the Audi contract, the recently appointed financial controller calculated that the company had not profited from the contract for some time. In fact it had cost the company $80 to transport each vehicle. This information was met with disbelief by some managers who had worked conscientiously to sustain what turned out to be an unprofitable contract. The financial controller explained that the company had a practice of taking work in order to win competitive strength against the rival companies rather than gain company profit. Objective assessment of profit and loss had been a recent innovation into the company.

Other contracts were entered into despite insufficient resources and facilities to accomplish the work. For example the company was assembling large scale, imported agricultural equipment such as harvesting machinery and heavy duty tractors, but they did so without the availability of overhead cranes or adequately sized forklift trucks. There were wheels six foot in diameter and other parts of similar dimensions. Employees had to devise ways of manoeuvring parts so as not to injure themselves. Loading the assembled machinery onto transports was particularly hazardous as the load was often beyond the advised capacity of the forklift. The operators devised ingenious ways of balancing the load. The company maintained the contract for some three years without providing adequate equipment or sufficient numbers of trained personnel to meet the demands of the quotas. They finally lost the contract. The state manager explained:

> We never fully understood the requirements. We never clarified the agreement. We didn't really plan the operation. (The customer company) never complained out loud so we didn't know it was a problem until we lost the contract. The opposition has a specialist team and they pay better (wages) than us.
> Andrew, (State Manager) Training Session.

Employee relations were rocky. People were promoted, demoted and shifted from job to job without explanation and often against their will. Extra responsibility was parcelled out without warning, training, support or often remuneration. It was also revoked without explanation. The workers surmised it might be punishment for speaking out or dissatisfaction with productivity. When assessing the implementation of the quality system, Tom confessed:

> We have used the big stick rather than getting them (the workers) to embrace the concept.
> Tom, (National Business Development Manager) Training Session.

Wage structures had been loose and employees had been paid whatever wage they could convince the employers to pay. Most long term employees could tell a story of when they resigned or threatened to resign and were enticed to stay by a promise of increased pay. As a result many of the older employees were earning a wage considerably in excess of the award and better than their compatriots doing comparable jobs in other companies. However there was also a sizeable discrepancy across the floor disfavouring less assertive employees. Scotty (the same Scotty referred to earlier) explains:

> It was only through me going in there and bluing with Smith all the time that I got on full time[12].
> Scotty, (Trainee) Training Session.

Persistence, threats and rewards had been the method for pay increases until the union set about achieving more structured progression. The skills assessment system instituted through the training program was to be an arm of the new structured process.

As the company grew, the old bonds between management and workers forged by Bluey and Bazza disintegrated. Bonds between workers strengthened, particularly in some quarters. Many of the long term Maltese employees sat together always in their self appointed position in the canteen. There was a widespread family network connecting workers - cousins, brothers, sons or those from the same Maltese village. Others were bonded in their distrust of both management and union power bases. They sat in the same places at lunchtime and exchanged stories to feed their bitterness.

The features above identify the company as parochial and 'make-do' in its work practices, ad hoc in its decision making and planning, undisciplined and inconsistent in its dealings with both customers and employees and buffeted by personal whim and crisis. Carcare shared these features with many other small RS&R shops that managed to sustain a law unto themselves. The same features can be found in many larger mainstream companies. The world of business is often messy and ad hoc. However times have changed and a new economic and cultural paradigm has introduced new systems to make work processes transparent, bringing with it new uncertainties and contradictions.

2.4   The Influence of Modern Business Practice

As a player in vehicle import and export, the company was positioned as a service provider to some of the largest and most powerful multi-national companies. It therefore could not continue to lock itself away from major industrial movements and, in the age of quality and service management, Carcare found itself moulded, manipulated and menaced into change.

Features of Industry Restructuring were forced upon the company due to the presence of the union. At the same time, features of globalism and managerialism edged their way into the company with the changing economic climate and the insistence of customers. The impact of these movements was interpreted at Carcare in a unique way. Carcare had already been thrust into new economic circumstances with the reduction of tariffs. Imported cars began to flood into the country[13] and the parochial business started

by Bluey suddenly had new demands upon it. Carcare was the only company providing the services of import agent, pre-market build-up and storage handler for the first 20 years of its operation. Individual automotive manufacturers made separate internal import arrangements but, apart from these, Carcare had a monopoly. Other companies entered the market in 1989 as car imports rose. The workforce of about 70 employees remained relatively unchanged in size over the years. This reflected the loss of handling contracts to competing companies. While the sector boomed, Carcare remained almost static.

The type of work activity at Carcare was further manipulated by changing tariff legislation. The tariff was calculated on the value of the vehicle. The value could be reduced if the vehicles arrived without certain accessories. Radios and CDs were therefore fitted by Carcare on arrival as a means of reducing the import tax[14].

In the past, leather seats and other luxury features were also fitted at Carcare. However with changing legislation, competitive product prices and global manufacturing networks, the tax reduction was not enough to offset the cost of fitting these accessories in Australia. Hence the work was done overseas and the work of Carcare employees was reduced in complexity. The customer service culture has further reduced the type of work conducted at the company. Some of the more complex work has been taken up by the dealerships responding directly to individual customer requests emanating from their own sales. Furthermore, in days gone by, it was mostly luxury cars that were imported. Carcare customers used to include Saab, Volvo and Audi dealership networks. More recently they were Toyota, Holden and Hyundai. As more and more cars at the lower end of the market were imported, business activity shifted from a luxury niche market to a mass market. In the words of the state manager, Carcare was more like a K-Mart than a Daimaru.[15] It depended upon mass turnover rather than highly priced specialisation.

The employment profile of the company changed dramatically as work patterns changed. Of the 15 workers employed at the company for more than 10 years (some as long as 18 years), 8 were tradesmen. These were the only tradesmen employed at the company. As the work has become deskilled, tradespeople have lost the hold they once had over their skills and their tools. The attrition of trades people has left a vacuum filled by non-trades employees.

Work became more procedural and emphasis shifted from skill to time. Carcare was very vulnerable as a relatively small company providing a service to large multi-nationals in a highly competitive environment where time was the primary item to be traded. Speedy processing and delivery to dealerships was the service marketed.

Perhaps the greatest catalyst for change came via managerialism and globalism. Customer companies exerted extraordinary influence over the work practices and decision making processes at the company. Driven by principles of lean production, customer companies sought to both negotiate lower prices on their contracts and exercise greater control over the quality of the service. The state manager explained to the training group:

> In the last Holden tender, 1 million dollars was cut off the contract nationally. They are seeking a 4% cut each year – 2% every 6 months. Work that was done for $1 last year has to be done for 96 cents in the new year and 92 cents at the end of the second year.
> Andrew, (State Manager), Training Session.

Customer companies also demanded that the company qualify as a quality certified provider through the Q1 certification for Ford work and through the AS4000 system for government and other manufacturers' work. Hence while customer costs were being pushed down, adherence to quality systems was being dragged up.

Customer company representatives established a full-time presence on the work site – a situation that was unprecedented in any other line of business. Under the banner of quality control, outside inspectors monitored daily production. In this way they influenced work organisation and employee relations and dictated aspects of the work in workshops where their products were processed. For example, General Motors (GM) insisted that workers undertaking GM work be dedicated to GM production exclusively, thereby preventing the company from developing a multi-skilled workforce capable of transferring workers into or out from that particular workshop. On GM's insistence, the complete build up on their vehicles was to be conducted by a single individual rather than shared across a team. They insisted that a continuous record of each person's daily production be displayed on a white board in the workshop. As each car was completed, it was to be marked up under the worker's name. The workers objected to this, particularly as it offered no explanation as to why one or other might have fallen behind. The workers complained to the union and finally a delegation of representatives, motivated, organised and supported by the training group, convinced the Carcare management that the display was not conducive to productive working relationships. The practice was to cease. But when put to the customer company, they raised an objection and the management retracted their decision. Practices such as these gave the customer companies an intrusive power that permeated through to the heart of the business.

The customer quality controllers reported their dissatisfaction and concerns to their senior management in the manufacturing companies. They had a vested interest in finding quality faults and in demonstrating that quality was not good enough so that they could retain their jobs as quality inspectors. In their reports they could request (read demand) that certain employees be removed from a work area.

The IT network that links manufacturers, Carcare and the dealers within a single system was called the Vehicle Tracking System. It was said to be the state-of-the-art system, imported from Daewoo. However it was already bettered by the competitor who had achieved a paperless system. Given the level of surveillance and accountability it offered to customers it provided another example of the way customer companies have edged their way into the core of Carcare's work arrangements. This level of involvement became incorporated into the terms by which contract agreements were renewed.

Evidence of lean management was apparent in the company's employment practices which recently came to include contracting out services and the adoption of employee contracts. Fitting air conditioners was contracted to a specialist company although the expertise to do the work still existed in-house. Detailing and dewaxing were also contracted out.

More recently the office staff had foregone their permanent employment status in exchange for individual contracts. An unwritten requirement of the contract was resignation from the union. All the office staff complied.

An increasing pool of employees were casuals, hired from a contract labour agency. According to the award, contract employees must be made permanent after 6 weeks of employment. The loophole in the legislation was that casuals could be given a day's break

then re-employed. Further economies could be achieved by sustaining this practice and increasing the length of their contracts. Many employees at the company maintained this arrangement for over a year before the company was forced by the union to up-grade their status.

The company therefore reflected some of the major recent trends in industry employment practices. It reflected the profile of many modern businesses with increased contract labour, reduced technical demand of workers and the supremacy of customer satisfaction (Waterhouse, Wilson & Ewer 1999).

2.5   Conclusion

Carcare was a company that, until this point, had not adopted current corporate management practices that called for constant restructuring and image making. Rather, it was a company that changed only when economic and industrial pressures allowed no other option. As a result the ghosts of former eras maintained a persistent hold on the culture of the company. RS&R 'cowboy' traditions lived alongside features of modern, global companies. At the same time its lack of an enforced code of ethics, its poorly disciplined management practices and its lack of formulated strategic direction made it vulnerable to the manipulation of outside forces. Its strategic position within the automotive import and export business looked set to lever the company wholly out of the RS&R traditions into a corporate world. It was therefore a company in the process of change. This study explores the varied and competing discourses that washed through the organization.

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[8] Refurbishment was underway to expand the office area and make room for the ACME office staff who were previously located at another site. The new building would also accommodate some senior executives from the new multi-national parent company. The new offices were therefore designed to project the image of a modern, successful, global company.
[9] 'Chinese whispers' is a game whereby an initial message is passed down a line of people who whisper it from one to the next. The last person repeats the message usually to find that it has become very distorted in its travels from the initial message.
[10] Scotty was also a course participant in the VIC program.
[11] Managers were regularly invited into the class to speak about their particular aspect of expertise within the business.
[12] Full-time means a shift in employment status from casual to permanent.
[13] Changes in regulations in 1984 resulted in an increase of 16% in imported cars in 1985. (Automotive Industry Authority, 1986)
[14] A local content scheme heavily penalised importers whose cars required no Australian content or labour. This meant more work for Carcare but the scheme was abandoned in 1988.
[15] A specialist Japanese retailer

CHAPTER 3:- RESEARCH METHOD

Balloon metaphor:
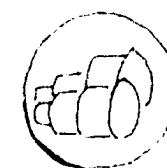
This chapter examines the binoculars I am using to observe the events inside the basket, the structure of the aircraft and the direction we are taking.

3.1   Overview

This chapter identifies ethnography as the approach selected for this research and discusses the advantages and disadvantages of this approach. It also includes an autoethnography[16] that summarises the subjectivities that have coloured this research.

3.2   Ethnography – a research approach

Ethnographic research is a method of investigation that has produced fruitful insights into workplace culture and practices (Hull 1992, 1995, ed.1997, Gowen 1992, Gee 1993, Gee et al. 1996, Stevenson 1996, Searle 1991, Deetz 1995, Roberts et al. 1992).

I have been drawn to this research approach because my interest is in documenting the experience of a particular company within the context of the social and industrial change of the 90s. The general landscape is a changing one however, within this microcosm of industry. The social and political forces are unique to the specific time and place. Broad generalisations applied across the field therefore have doubtful validity. Likewise positivist epistemology will not assist in achieving the purpose. Ethnographic approaches provide greater potential to explore these interests.

Caulley (1994) identifies ethnographic research as 'the work of describing and understanding a culture'. Roberts et al. (1992) describe it similarly:

Ethnographic research is a detailed investigation of the cultural and social patterns of interaction and the values, beliefs and assumptions that account for such interaction.

Roberts et al., 1992: 179

Such a methodology meets my purposes but it raises the question of validity. Since culture, values and beliefs are not measurable, how does the researcher know when he/she is providing a valid analysis? The method calls into question the stance of the ethnographer in relation to his/her research subject.

3.2.1 Issues Within Ethnographic Research

A bias, or subjectivity, is an inevitable outcome of experience. Ethnographers argue that subjectivity does not compromise validity; it is, they claim, essential to the enrichment of an analysis:

> ...one writes on the bias or not at all. A bias may be provided by a theory or an experience or an image or an ideology. Without a bias, however, language is only words as cloth is only threads. To write is to find words that explain what can be seen from an angle of vision, the limitations of which determine a wide or narrow bias, but not the lack of one. Far from guaranteeing objectivity, third-person assertions too often record an unexamined routine in which the writers who follow a bias provided by, say, the 'objectivism' of journalism or science confound that world view/ theory/ ideology with reality. The bias we should rightly disparage is that which feigns objectivity by dressing up reasons in seemingly unassailable logic and palming off its interests as disinterest - in order to silence arguments from other quarters.
>
> Brodkey, 1996: 26

If the researchers acknowledge the inevitability and validity of subjectivity, are they free to indulge their bias without limitation? Does it matter, and if it does, how does the researcher avoid myopia, prejudice and over interpretation?

The following text provides a testing ground. It was written by Charles Abel, an English missionary working in Papua before the turn of the century. It raises the question of whether the researcher can provide useful insight into another culture through his/her subjectivity:

> Centuries of gradual development have given to us our present sentiments, and have resulted in the taste and delicacy of our ideas to-day. We can only expect from savages, crude habits and immature tastes, and it is not to be surprised at that when we judge him from our own standards, he cuts a very grotesque figure and is altogether wanting in delicacy and refinement.
>
> Abel, n.d.: 25

This text tells us more about the author, his values and fears, than his subjects. Herein lies the answer as to why it matters to avoid myopia or over-interpretation. Similarly, David Williamson in his play 'Heretic'[17] would have us believe that Margaret Mead's research, published as 'Coming of Age in Samoa', fails for the same reason. It would appear that Mead's methodology was flawed[18], but, as well, her bias obliterated the experience of her subjects.

Both Mead and Abel used an ethnographic methodology in their research. Cultural immersion was their research process. The goal of the ethnographer according to Malinowski is:

> ...to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision and his world.
>
> Caulley, 1986: 1 (author's emphasis)

However 'the native's point of view' often fades from sight under the glare of the researchers' gaze. Both Mead's and Abel's observations are rich with bias; their subjects are used as tools to create or contribute to an ideology within their own mother culture. Mead may well have shared Malinowski's goal but, according to Williamson, she described her vision of Samoa rather than the Samoan vision of Samoa, with the intention of projecting a sexually and socially liberated utopia that could provide a model for a liberated America. Abel purports to understand the natives' point of view but does so by

measuring their distance from Anglo-Christian culture. He unapologetically transposes English values onto Papuan culture from a conviction that Christian beliefs were supreme. He subscribes to a hierarchical view of human evolution, which places the English firmly at the top of the human species tree and the Papuan near the bottom alongside the monkey.

Abel and Mead are easy targets for criticism. Their values contrast sharply with contemporary values and traditions. Their work serves to illustrate that wanton myopia is inadmissible and yet both would have defended their integrity and fidelity to truth had they been challenged. Neither would have considered themselves wantonly myopic. Leaving aside methodological excesses, hindsight bestows clarity. The greater the distance in time, the less we are subject to the validities that shaped the vision of the era. All theories (cultures and historical periods) take a normative stance in matters of 'language, subjectivity, knowledge and truth' (Weedon 1987:22). Therefore can we expect any social research to achieve Malinowski's goal and can it have any relevance outside the author's community and era?

Given that social research is culturally embedded, how can a researcher determine the point of balance between objectivity and bias? How does the researcher achieve a measure of separation from her subjectivity in order to preserve the integrity of the ethnographic experiences? If one owns up to his/her subjectivities, does that overcome the problem?

In studies of culture and ideology, there is no neutral position. 'Human beings are interpretive beings' (Grant 1996:116). Observers within or outside a culture will analyse a text[19] in different ways revealing their particular political, socio-cultural perspective and aspirations. It is the business of the critical analyst to reflect upon the biases, name them and analyse their relationship to others to the extent that such practices maintain relevance to the inquiry. Scientists who believe they have freed themselves of such dilemmas by following positivist inquiry methods have blinded themselves to values and subjectivities that underlie their studies.

> Scientists firmly believe that as long as they are not conscious of any bias or political agenda, they are neutral and objective, when in fact they are only unconscious.
> Namenwirth, 1986: 29

Bearing this in mind, Malinowski's goal is only partly achievable. If we are, as individuals, a conglomerate of shifting subject positions observing yet another set of shifting subjectivities, there is no fully comprehensive view of the native's vision, only facets within a range of possibilities, contextualised within time and place. Such an analysis challenges the assumption that there is a singular native view and that it is the only valid one.

According to Sarangi (1995), anthropologists should avoid a relative position where one compares cultures, particularly when making comparisons with the researcher's own culture . A relative position blinds the researcher to meaning and in-depth understanding of the subjects in their own terms. But if the researcher adopts Sarangi's maxim, he/she is reduced to describing the culture and is silenced as a critical commentator. This study seeks to probe social and political questions hence a relative stance is unavoidable. While all studies are subjective, those that are relative have reduced value beyond the time and place of their focus. They have little durability in hindsight but they seek to compare values, directions and outcomes rather than simply describe. This study is therefore unashamedly relative in its stance.

In accepting this conclusion, I am required to uncover my own subjectivities. Furthermore, I acknowledge a need to exercise discipline in seeking out analyses and interpretations that may conflict with my own and then to probe the ideological and identity issues that create pressures in interpreting the workplace. What follows therefore is a brief description of my research orientation proceeded by an autoethnography and an ethnography of my professional community.

3.3   Research Methodology

3.3.1   Recognising the Researcher's Stance

Garman (1996) distinguishes between three 'discourse communities' engaged in qualitative research - empirical, interpretive and critical. The empirical community adheres to principles of 'objectivity, validity and reliability'. The interpretive community is founded on constructivist thought based on 'the notion that we construct our realities' (Garman 1996:15). Critical theorists are those committed to a particular ideological

position and who 'direct the purposes of their research to questions about social, historical, political, gender and/or economic forces' (Garman 1996:15).

The research stance within this study is positioned somewhere between the constructionist and the critical communities. In keeping with the Fairclough school of critical discourse analysis (See Chapter 4), I recognise human experience and institutions as a construct of various subjectivities. At the same time my subjectivities and those of the company that employs me, are committed to identifiable ideological roots. I was predisposed to interpret the research data in keeping with a specific political and social stance. I worked as a teacher employed by Workplace Learning Initiatives (WLI) and contracted to Carcare during the research period. My subjectivity was therefore doubly layered, firstly with the predispositions I brought as a result of my personal sociological and political beliefs and secondly with the professional role ascribed to me. To summarise my subjectivity: I interpreted my professional role within Carcare as one of influencing workplace identities to embrace a culture of learning within a participative workplace environment. This interpretation involves social, political and educational ideas and values that need to be unpacked.

I spent one day a week at Carcare, teaching, co-ordinating and administering the learning program. I was not detached from or dispassionate about decision making or identity formation in the workplace. I was therefore both subject and analyst within this study.

My educational agenda was shaped by a belief that training programs for shop floor workers should provide access to information, skills and networks that form the tools for participation in workplace decision making, knowledge formation, personal development and workplace improvement. My task, as I perceived it, was to facilitate learning experiences and workplace interaction that advanced these goals. By way of this, I created opportunities to showcase the skills and knowledge of workers as a means of demonstrating to management and the participants themselves the value of their contribution.

My educational stance was therefore 'critical' in that it was directed towards cultural change aimed at equalising the power balance within the workplace. I sought to assist all players to realise something of the potential of the workers and hence involve them in decision-making and power sharing. On the other hand, my commitment was not to a single ideological position or an exclusive interpretation of workplace activity. I was not a Marxist or a feminist or a unionist in the sense of having an exclusive commitment to a dedicated position. My ideology was more eclectic. My interest in this study was to explore the way the stakeholders constructed themselves, their allies and their detractors, the issues and situations within the workplace. It was not to find living examples of particular ideological positions, but to account for the streams of contrasting and sometimes conflicting ideological positions that were represented in the workplace and to observe how these influenced workplace identities and decision making. This study will attempt to lay bare the workplace culture from the standpoint of these subjectivities. An autoethnography is therefore necessary to explain my subjectivities.

There are two levels of autoethnography below. One is my professional evolution, the other is to do with my community of practice. The first explains something of my career and affiliations in order to establish my personal ideological orientation. The other examines the professional community of teachers who make up WLI of which I am a founding member. This community has a strongly articulated ideology which explains something of the tenor and depth of my activity.

3.3.2 Uncovering My Subjectivities- an autoethnography

Brodkey (1996) refers to 'autoethnography' as a term coined by Francois Lionnet:

> Autoethnography 'opens up a space of resistance between the individual (auto) and the collective (-ethno) where the writing (-graphy) of singularity cannot be foreclosed.
> Brodkey, 1996: 26

I have attempted an autoethnography below in the hope of explaining
- what feeds my interest in the subject of this thesis;
- what shapes what I see;
- what I am looking for;
- what experiences have legitimised my insights.

My subjectivities have been shaped by my experience within industrial education particularly

- by language and literacy learners in factories;
- by alliances with union activists and educators;
- by mostly all-male and always male-dominated workplaces;
- by my position at the heart of training implementation during the years of the National Training Reform Agenda (NTRA)[20];
- by my membership of the community of teachers at WLI.

I have worked in industry training since 1986 when there was little shop floor training taking place, aside from apprenticeship training. There was union training, on a small scale, for union delegates, and English language training, on an even smaller scale, funded by the Department of Immigration.

In 1986, in response to rising unemployment, courses for retraining the unemployed had emerged. I was given responsibility for one, sourced by AMES but conducted at Richmond College of TAFE. This course catered for unemployed, migrant auto-repair workers. It was the only one of its type in Victoria that included both a practical component and a work placement. My task was to develop language and literacy and to negotiate and manage the work experience placements. The course allowed me access to the TAFE network and also local panel beating workshops in the RS&R sector of the automotive industry. Here I was immersed in the culture of the sector providing an important foundation for my work at Carcare.

At the same time, I was teaching a language and literacy course in a large company, Containers Packaging. When Industry Restructuring dawned, I took an interest prompted by the talk of industrial democracy. I mounted a small research project to investigate the barriers to participation in training for Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) workers within the new industrial restructuring environment (Virgona 1989). The International Year of Literacy allowed me to apply for further research funds to pursue the cause of the disadvantaged in the context of the Training Reform Agenda. On this occasion I looked at alternative training delivery options and trialed peer tutoring as a solution to the needs of small business (Virgona 1991). In this context, I established training programs at another two smaller manufacturing companies. In my role as industrial educationalist at AMES, I visited companies and spoke at forums constructing the training response to industry restructuring, particularly in relation to NESB issues.

At about the same time, the 'talk fest' that launched Award Restructuring was culminating in action. Western Metropolitan College of TAFE (WMCOT, nee Footscray College of TAFE) secured funds to design and deliver the first accredited training in Victoria within the Metals Award under the Training Reform Agenda - the Engineering Production Certificate. WMCOT had reached agreement with Containers Packaging to trial the Certificate course on site. The trial was to model a fully negotiated training management and delivery process.

I had a significant role in the project as the language and literacy support person and later, the curriculum writer for the Communications and Industrial Relations module. 'Train the Trainer' was another of my responsibilities. The task was to make ready a group of shop floor people who were to take over as trainers somewhat later in the life of the project. Four modules were part of the trial - Communications and Industrial Relations, Occupational Health and Safety, Quality Concepts and Manual Handling.

With no models to follow for this type or scale of industry training, we took the task very seriously knowing that industry was watching anxiously for guidance. We struggled to capture the spirit of Industry Restructuring and to translate that into workplace processes and curricula that was reformative and consultative. Industry visitors came to view the program and forums were set up so that other companies could learn from this experience.

Hours were spent in meetings with representatives from all parties as we deliberated on the form the training should take. Imbued with the consensus culture, we struggled to make room for the interests of each stakeholder despite their conflicting agendas (Virgona 1992). The final model was, I believe, sound (Virgona 1993). However it has not been widely adopted as companies found the consultative approach culturally dissonant and cumbersome and consequently sought leaner methods of program delivery.

In 1992, I was also involved in a joint shop steward training between the Vehicle Builders Employees' Federation (VBEF)[21] and Ford Motor Company. This program gave me very valuable insight into industry from the union perspective. These were very formative times

for me. They gave me the opportunity to translate my political ideology into practice. In 1993, I became a member of the National Automotive Language and Literacy Co-ordination Unit (NALLCU), later to become Workplace Learning Initiatives (WLI)[22]. Since then I have worked in a range of client companies (numbering more than 25), in a variety programs, as a teacher, consultant and researcher. Many of the training programs have been union auspiced as was the case at Carcare. Almost all of my experience has been with shop floor employees as the client group.

As a workplace trainer working with shop floor employees, I was enmeshed in the issues and challenges that confront workers. Building bridges between dislocated workplace groups was a central function of my work, based on the belief that solutions were found through open communication, consensus approaches and shared values. As a result, my role was often contradictory, politically laden and emotionally enmeshed. The quality of my relationships in the workplace was perhaps the most important factor in enabling my work.

This history, as with this thesis, begs the question of education and its role in industry. An unacknowledged assumption underpins the argument that a valid educational system is a critical, democratic, developmental one and that any educational endeavour should embrace these principles regardless of its context or social objectives. This endorses the position of many critical educationalists who believe that education is about valuing life rather than profit (Metchild 1992, Poole 1992, Jaakola et al. 1995). Such a position therefore asserts that social and political values within the learning environment must complement and support these educational values. Furthermore, it asserts that political structures within industry should aspire to be democratic and participative. I need here to reiterate Waterhouse's favourite metaphor given to us by Schon (1987): while the stated position is the hard high ground, we live our lives in the swamp where ambiguity and compromise are the norm.

Workplace Learning Initiatives attempted to live this philosophy in its workplace projects. Perhaps the most defining contributor to my perceptions as a researcher and my practice as an educator was my membership of the professional community of Workplace Learning Initiatives. The oft-quoted Sefton and Waterhouse (Sefton et al. 1994, 1995, 1997; Waterhouse et al. 1999, Waterhouse 1998; Waterhouse & Sefton 1997) were my work

colleagues and founders of the company. They were active contributors in the field and also chose to research WLI and its identity as doctoral topics (Waterhouse 1999, Sefton 2000).

The following is an adjunct to the autoethnography. It exposes the discourse community that acknowledges and nurtures the ideology that I espouse and makes up my community of practice. It asks how the WLI teachers see themselves and their work.

3.3.3 Workplace Learning Initiatives

Workplace Learning Initiatives was founded in 1995 when the NALLCU Project was completed. NALLCU was a project established within the NAITB (National Automotive Industry Training Board) to facilitate and co-ordinate the development of basic skills among production workers in the automotive industry. The project group was funded for a three year period. The task was to enable workers to participate in the training and communication demands of the restructured automotive industry.

An audit of the language and literacy skills of the automotive manufacturing workforce had preceded the project. The audit profiled the workforce establishing that it was 71.3% NESB and largely unable to communicate independently in English medium (Sefton and O'Hara 1992). The project was to facilitate and co-ordinate rather than to teach. The unit however, managed by Sefton, interpreted its task more broadly. It set about developing a model for industry training that could cater for the needs of the whole workforce, their learning needs, skill needs and knowledge content needs.

NALLCU seconded teachers mostly from TAFE and AMES to conduct the programs. It adopted an action research approach to workplace operations in 6 sites, designing and teaching custom made programs at each. The work culminated in a major report called 'Breathing Life Into Training' (Sefton et al. 1994) which outlined the 'integrated model'. The integrated model challenged the notion that language and literacy learners should be streamed into ability groups. NALLCU teachers argued that the learning environment should replicate the work environment where peer support and other techniques assisted NESBs to achieve the production learning they required to operate effectively in the workplace. The model demanded that teachers cater for the full cross section of learners

within a heterogeneous group. Learning was contextualised within the production and business activity of the host company and the learning program was developed in consultation with workplace personnel at all levels of the hierarchy. Learning activity was to be participative and problem based.

This approach put NALLCU somewhat at odds with the industry training that was emerging at the time. The pedagogical principles of the integrated training model were drawn from Freire (1971), Action Learning (Revans 1991) and Critical Andragogy (Brookfield 1987) schools of thought. In contrast, the popular training models in operation in industry were based on behaviourist principles.

Epistemological Orientation of the Integrated Model

Gribble (1990, 1992-3) summarised and compared the educational traditions evident in our culture. She drew upon the work of Kohlberg and Mayer (1972). Her analysis identified 'Cultural Transmission' as the psychological and epistemological source of Competency Based Training (CBT) and the one most in evidence within VET at the time. Education systems based on Cultural Transmission establish credibility through adherence to behaviourism. They require learners to repeat and imitate the teacher's input hence their social role is to maintain and extend the status quo.

Critical education however is rooted in Development Education. Developmental Education is based on a change-focused epistemology, which exposes and questions values and ideas. Adherents to Development Education are also referred to as critical educationalist. This has been the well spring of andragogy which starts with the presumption that learners bring valuable knowledge and experience to the learning situation[23]. Learners interact with and challenge new ideas, information and skills and hence knowledge is built up by extending and reframing their previous experience. My bias, along with that of WLI, lies with this group.

As industry education defined itself in the emerging years, debate raged between the educational subgroups. For Critical Educationalists, the validity of the programs and principles was tested by their position on the epistemological hierarchy with Cultural Transmission at one end and Development Education on the other.

Life after NALLCU

The 'integrated model' was an approach to learning and curriculum development rather than a model. It became the flagship of the new organisation, Workplace Learning Initiatives, which was established when the three-year project had run its course.

At the end of 1994, government funding for NALLCU ceased. The organisation could not maintain its relationship to the Board as a teaching unit[24]. At the suggestion of the NAITB members and the request of the union and a number of companies, members of NALLCU formed a new organisation to continue the work of developing and disseminating the principles of sound industrial education practice that NALLCU had championed. The new company was registered as a private industry-based training provider with the support of the Board.

WLI therefore entered the commercial world with a clearly defined ideology, a strongly articulated direction and purpose and a defined field of endeavour. The culture of NALLCU and WLI is well documented in publications (Sefton 1993, Sefton et al. 1994) and reports for WELL. There is a rich source of material where teachers talk about themselves, their work and the work of our organisation. I have gathered representative statements as a means of observing and describing the identity and culture of the organisation. This functions as an ethnography of WLI pitching the organisation within the training landscape along with the educational activity at the case study company. It explains what we, at WLI, meant by educational development and the learning culture.

WLI: an Ethnography

WLI teachers set themselves a task greater than just 'delivering training'. One of the managers wrote about the purpose of the work of teachers in the field:

The development of a better future depends upon a consciousness of different ways of working and that every step in changing people's consciousness through experience is significant in the longer term.

Sefton, 2000: 55

Teacher's work here was to do with creating 'a better future' through changing the consciousness of learners. Teacher's work was therefore viewed as potent and transforming of workers and workplaces.

Sefton's statement was echoed in that of another manager:

I believe the staff at Workplace Learning Initiatives have demonstrated and continue to do so in various ways, a collective commitment to building futures which are more socially just, more environmentally responsible and more fully human.

Waterhouse, 1998: 24

Seddon and Modra interviewed WLI staff about the nature of their work. The authors summarised part of the discussion as follows:

The importance of relationship building was not seen simply in interpersonal terms. Rather, there was a clear recognition that building relationships was also about power and being political...the distinctiveness of WLI's work practices lay in commitments to social justice, mental awareness and awareness of the constructed environment that we live within.

Seddon and Modra, 2000: 42

WLI staff saw the boundaries of their work extending far beyond the interpersonal into spheres of power, politics and social justice.

The political identity of the organisation was a significant dimension of the professional activity of the teachers which resulted in conflict and compromise in the struggle between political integrity and customer responsiveness:

So there's WLI in there with an agenda that it wants to do the best by those workers...How do you supply something which meets your personal needs, meets workers' needs and meets management requirements? Being subversive or dishonest? Or trying to find a middle way?

Interview with teacher

Seddon and Modra, 2000: 46

During a WLI in-service, recorded on audio-tape, discussion ensued on the matter of empowerment of shop floor learners in the workplace:

Teacher 1: The empowerment is very often no more than helping them believe in themselves.

Teacher 2: I sometimes feel that what I am doing in quite considerable part is forming a workplace philosophy or helping them form a workplace philosophy of where they are...There are bad things as well as good things about that because people can feel very discontented about it and be powerless to do anything about it...I think what's the object of economic activity. If part of that is happiness however you define it. If people are going to be unhappy then you are going to say, well I need to be able to take this a step further because I'm actually, instead of helping these people I'm hindering them in the pursuit of happiness or serenity or whatever in their lives.

In service meeting, June 1996

These teachers saw themselves as involved in the intimate processes of identity formation and in constructing the individual's sense of happiness and serenity.

WLI teachers therefore were not employed to work out their contract at each company in a functional, objective manner. There was an overlay of political even perhaps evangelical purpose. In a staff meeting in December 1993, the group proffered that the quality of the product of an educational organisation might be measured against a yardstick of 'political and industrial integrity based on commitment to certain deals'. A significant challenge of the work was to 'plant some notions of industrial democracy' in workplaces where teachers were engaged. In WLI work-sites, teachers' work was regarded as highly political.

A libertarian philosophy was privileged and a critical stance was taken particularly in discussion of managerialist philosophies.

WLI within the Epistemological Landscape

In the post-modernist/modernist divide, WLI finds an ambiguous position; however it seems important to draw a relationship with these very influential constructs.

The workplace texts quoted do not reveal an orientation towards a post modernist world view according to Bagnall's (1994) definition. Post modernity is defined as:

> Contemporary culture that is informed by a belief and commitment to the interpretative nature of all perception, the cultural contingency of all belief, and the ontological contingency of being; and a profound scepticism towards all claims to the privileging of knowledge.
>
> Bagnall, 1994: 3

By contrast modernity is based on a belief in evolutionary progression - a belief that there is a better way which should discredit and supersede lesser knowledge and social practice.

> (The truth) is an instrumental commodity which may be used to enhance control of the natural and social worlds for the greater common good of humanity. Entailed in this view is a belief that universal truths and principles can be discovered and that we have good (objective) grounds, independent of social conventions or traditions for believing in the superiority of some beliefs over others. These grounds or foundations are defined by the scientific, philosophical or political programs in which knowledge is legitimated.
>
> Bagnall, 1994: 4

Post modernity views knowledge as contingent, culturally embedded and temporary. There are no universal and sustaining truths. The role of the educator is to uncover and reflect upon the discourses of the workplace in a participative learning environment but, at the same time, to avoid privileging one discourse over another and to guard the open ended nature of the program's outcomes (Bagnall 1994).

While this does not describe WLI philosophies and practice, nor are they adequately described by a modernist, positivist orientation which seeks concrete and measurable data to verify its stance. WLI was ideologically committed and politically directed; its practice was instrumental in the realisation of the ideology. However its tolerance of ambiguity and contradiction was the place where post modernity made its mark. The case study demonstrates this vividly. Workplaces are heteroglossic and as a training organisation we are required to allow space for all.

3.3.4 Seeking Research Veracity

Given this autoethnography, I return to the question posed at the beginning of this chapter - how does the researcher maintain the integrity of her experience? As a practitioner with such an intentional ideology, my temptation to be polemical is as great as that of Abel and Mead. My subjectivity is further blurred by my relationship to my research subjects. The only bulwark I can apply to ensure validity is a resolve to be vigilant and to apply Garman's principles.

Garman (1996:18) uses an 8-point guide to judge the veracity of qualitative research. Below is a paraphrase of the points she presents:

Verite	Does it fit with the discourse in related literature? Is it intellectually honest and authentic?
Integrity	Is the research rationale logical, appropriate and identifiable within an inquiry tradition?
Rigour	Is there sufficient depth of intellect?
Utility	Does it make a useful contribution to the field?
Vitality	Is it meaningful? Is it vibrant and does it communicate a sense of discovery? Are the personae authentic?

Aesthetic   Is it enriching and does it give insight into some universal part of my educational self?

Ethics   Is it ethically sensitive and has the dignity of participants been respected?

Verisimilitude   Is there sufficient detail to make the experience recognisable and tangible?

The above criteria are likewise inferential and coloured by the perceptions of the reader however, in this case the reader is a member of a dialectic within a discipline where research traditions and an amount of literature have accumulated to establish standards familiar to those making the judgement. The worth of the study is judged against comparative and contributive values drawn from cumulative research experience. Such methods are not dissimilar to positivist inquiries where traditions and accumulated academic experience have established standards whereby the quality of research is judged within the expectations of the discipline.

3.3.5 My Relationship with the Research Workplace

The postpositivist enquirer employs a monist epistemology (Caulley 1994) where the enquirer and the enquired are engaged with each other. It is therefore essential for the researcher to establish a sense of trust and an environment where open communication can flourish. I nurtured a relationship where both management and employees regarded me as at least fairly neutral most of the time, generally respectful of their point of view and maybe even an ally.

Workplace educators are in the very fortunate position of having free access to management as well as to shop floor personnel. I had allies and credibility among individuals within management circles, if one makes allowance for the fact that I was female and an outsider and known to be from the organisation recommended by the union as the preferred provider. Workplace personnel saw me as something of an aged, ex-hippie who, in the playful words of one of the company managers, 'parks her broomstick at the door before she comes in'[25].

There were advantages and disadvantages in this. On the one hand management regarded me as harmless. They did not need to compete with me and therefore they could take me into their confidence to some extent. On the other hand they saw me as irrelevant because I made no mark in those places where they hung their identity or asserted influence. I had no power in their business world. However they also recognised that I was a useful conduit to the shop floor.

On the shop floor I had many friends who shared their confidences and work frustrations with me. They recognised my commitment to them and hoped that I would be able to improve their lot. Being a good listener, in some circumstances, they were pleased to find someone with whom they could unburden their woes.

However there was no confusion over their recognition of my status as an outsider. This measure of distance allowed me sufficient authority to impose educational challenges and stretch the boundaries of their competence.

My role however was an ambiguous one. There were multiple stakeholders vying for conflicting positions within the company. I, however, needed to appear judiciously unaligned despite the educational, social and political commitments that shaped my identity as a workplace educator. As a professional fulfilling a contract agreement, my relationship with the company was that of supplier. Failure to recognise and respect management concerns could result in a termination of contract. As an educator, there as a representative of a registered training provider, and supported by the union, I was required to present a position that was at least sympathetic to labour causes and supportive of the philosophy of the RTO[26]. The other significant sponsor was the Australian government. I therefore brought with me the bureaucratic baggage of the national training system complete with the government training ideology. On the other hand my workplace engagement was primarily with the shop floor with whom trust and integrity were the essential ingredients for fruitful exploration of workplace issues. Their interests often conflicted with all the other stakeholders.

3.4 The Process

3.4.1 A Case Study Approach

In keeping with the post-positivist approaches, this research presents a case study. Adelman et al. (1982) specify two ways in which case studies are used:
as an illustration of an issue or hypothesis – a living example of a theoretical construct
as a discrete study where external issues and points of significance may be reflected.

This study fits the second category. Like most companies, Carcare was typical of its time only in some features, but the themes that shaped all Australian companies in the 90s were the themes that ran through the veins of this company. Observing how they were played out in the everyday experience of one company provides a perspective on the theories, fears, beliefs and aspirations reflected by other commentators on industrial issues. The study of the company allowed the observer to trace the discourses back to their source and to examine how the company dealt with the pressures that influenced its decisions and identity.

It is a 'bounded' study in that the particular company was the central point of interest, but the boundaries were permeable in that the events in the wider industrial context strongly influenced what happened within the confines of the case. As a result the lines between the context and the case cannot be firmly drawn. Arguably, in this study, the context was as important as the case.

This case study provided a narrative for a 'thick description' (Geertz 1983) in issues of industry education, democratisation of the workplace, decision making and knowledge construction in one company at this point in Australian industrial history. A thick description allows the reader to become immersed in the detail and complexity of the case. It seeks out the ambiguity and contradiction inherent in human experience and explores the many faces of experience.

> As in art, which teaches by example rather than precept, the second type of study begins with the coherence of the case.
> Adelman et al., 1982: 142

As such it is the study of a unique set of individuals in a unique situation. So therefore, can it tell us anything outside itself? Uniqueness raises questions of generalisation. Can case studies draw generalisations about a similar class of events or phenomena?

Stake (1982) argues for the notion of 'naturalistic generalisations'. He refers to our tacit and intuitive knowledge that forms the basis upon which we naturally make generalisations. 'Naturalistic generalisations' are:

> arrived at by recognizing the similarities of objects and issues in and out of context and by sensing the natural covariations of happenings.
> Stake, 1982: 74

Stake argues that this form of knowledge is particularly powerful because it shapes our belief systems and influences our perception. It becomes part of our repertoire of experience and therefore does not compete with scientific knowledge but belongs to another knowledge tradition. Its embeddedness and attention to detail allows a rich source of experience which speaks to multiple audiences and provides a window to a range of reference points. As the study progresses from the macro to the micro, the reader interprets from the social to the personal. The business of the reader is to draw generalisations and transfer models as his/her experience resonates with that of the case study (Caulley 1994).

Social psychologist Bruner (1988) develops a similar argument. He suggests stories have an equal but different validity or status compared to arguments. Social scientists have used narratives as a primary data source since the mid 70s as their interests shifted from reporting facts towards 'a more interpretive posture' (Bruner 1986:8) of uncovering meaning. Freedman and Combs (1996) use narrative in the practice of psychology in order to capture the subjective and transient meaning that drives behaviour and decision making. Grant (1996) explains how narrative provides a new dimension to social science because it takes meaning into account rather than just behaviour and its determinants.

The case study could be read as a collection of stories of work in one company in the 90s. This case study is interested in meaning, perception and identity. These interests are captured through narratives and interaction as interlocutors tell their experience of work at the case study company. The study provides an opportunity to observe how the dominant

narratives are constructed and played out within one workplace. The case study approach is therefore concerned to uncover meaning in worklife by observing the way individuals construct their identity in relation to the ideological influences of the time.

3.4.2 Gathering the Data

Adelman et al. distinguish between two types of relationship with the subjects – one where the researcher 'aspires to a 'fly on the wall' presence' (1982:145) and the other where the researcher encourages reactivity on the part of the subjects as an integral element. This study aims for the relative invisibility of the researcher. Regular audiotaping of set events appeared to me to be the least intrusive form of data gathering.

Adelman et al. emphasise the need for transparency in data gathering methods so that the relationship between the data and the researcher is explicit. The reader is then able to measure the credibility of the research. The 'raw' data should be accessible and differentiated from the 'cooked' data (that which has been interpreted). In this study, an extensive collection of recorded texts provided the raw data.

To this end, I sought formal permission from management and union groups to record meetings and training group discussions. The intention was to gather examples of authentic interaction particularly where different levels of the hierarchy were speaking to each other. Most recordings were audio only. I made further notes to elucidate paralinguistic features. One meeting was videoed, the training presentations session. A bank of 20 hours of recording was gathered to form the basis of the data for analysis.

Added to this I made journal entries of events, particularly those that challenged the status quo, for example when individuals expressed dissent or sought to affect change or where one group attempted to reconstruct the other by renaming their motives or behaviour.

Meetings, both training session and Training Committee meetings, were the primary sources of data. I focused on this activity because these meetings were a forum where management and union representatives and employees spoke directly to each other. Also, it was the only forum where a level of formal consultation took place in the company apart from the EBA negotiations. The EBA negotiations were deemed unsuitable because they were closed to all except the management, the shop steward and union personnel. Furthermore education and training was of minor interest to the negotiating parties in EBA talks.

Material used to describe the industry and social contexts was gathered from library resources, newspapers of the time and archives that I had collected personally. Some material came from union and company based texts. The material was analysed for the discourses that prevailed at the time. Text samples were classified and cross-referenced allowing emergent themes to synthesise and gather voice. This process assisted in tracking the origin of the discourse voices.

Audio and video case study material was transcribed and analysed for the implicit ideological and workplace cultural features. When themes emerged as predominant, evidence was sought for their resonance within the contextual material. The research design therefore was emergent (Caulley 1994) with the research question/s being constantly refined in the light of new data.

The recorded data were gathered over the period of a year in situations where I was both a participant and an observer. The advantage of such a relationship was that it allowed me extensive exposure to varied and sometimes contradictory experience as well as a large bulk of data from which to select. The disadvantage was that it was difficult at times to divest myself of my partisan interests and my engagement with the task at hand in order to observe impartially. The research required me to stand somewhat outside my ideological perceptions and attend disinterestedly to the discourse activity. It is however a subjective analysis of its nature.

3.4.3 The Analytical Tool

The analytical tool is discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is a useful form of analysis for ethnographic methodology because it provides an authentic and verifiable source of data that is rich in its capacity to provide insight. Sarangi (1995) argues for the importance of language in drawing authentic conclusions in ethnographic research. He argues that studies in anthropology that have not used language as the primary source of data, depict cultures

as static, confined by the researcher's subjectivity and most often bound by relative judgements and comparisons with the researcher's own culture.

Language analysis meets Adelman et al.'s (1982) requirements for a transparent relationship between the data and the judgements made. It provides an anchor for the principles. Garman (1996) applies in assessing the academic value of the study. Most of all it provides a legitimated methodology with which to undertake detailed analysis and draw grounded conclusions. Discourse analysis involves the recording and observing of the interactional behaviour of the research informants. The subjects of analysis are not only the words used but all associated communicative behaviour and paralinguistic features including tone of voice, body language, silence etc. All these features constitute the discourse.

The recordings provide an authentic tool with which to unfold and track the strategies used by each party as they negotiate relationships, shape identities and influence decision making. The data provide a window into the social practice and discourse practice of the company under observation. As a critical tool, the analysis allows insight into the political and social pathways that have been selected by the players.

The discourse approach I have adopted asks questions of the text drawn from Roberts et al. (1992) and Sarangi (1994) and from Fairclough (1989) models of discourse analysis. The central questions are 'who has control at any moment and how is it asserted?' 'How are organisational roles interpreted and played out?' 'How are notions of education and knowledge constructed?' 'How does the company construct itself in relation to industrial and social pressures?' In order to answer these questions, the reader needs to be immersed in the company culture.

To get to the heart of these issues we need to understand the larger global issues that shape the workplace, the pressures influencing decision making and the roles of workplace representatives. The context chapters provide this understanding. They explore the historical, political, sociological and industrial discourses that influence the case study company. In the context chapters, the central issues are to do with identifying the discourses of power, how they achieved their power and authenticity, how their power is exerted and how they are linked to the case study company. The chapters also provide insight into how the powerful discourses are juxtaposed against other discourses in the industry and company context.

Thus the text can be interrogated with the help of the following questions:
- how is reality named and defined, in particular, notions around education, company 'drivers'[27] and restraints?
- how is power conferred and retracted?
- what are the features of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1991) at work and who embodies and uses them?
- how is the discourse controlled and legitimated?
- how are priorities constructed and maintained?

To answer these questions we need to understand the features that shape the workplace culture:
- how committee members and speakers interpret, act out and reconstruct their roles, authority and social space;
- how social identity (age, gender, ethnicity, class, position in the company hierarchy) influences power and control;
- what position the dominated group takes in relation to the discourse;
- what are the rules of the discourse;
- what values are universally held;
- how values shift and change;
- what is the relationship between power and authority;
- what are the points of convergence and deflection between the shop floor and management.

Answers to these questions will be laid bare by observation of the discourse practice paying attention to:
- turn taking: who is listened to, who is ignored, interruptions;
- discourse roles;
- challenge and acceptance of proposals, suggestions;
- humour;
- conventions and politeness;
- pauses and silences;

- appropriation of discourse;
- intertextual references;
- body language.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter gives an overview of the research approach and biases of this case study. It acknowledges the shortcomings of the ethnographic approach but, in so doing, recognises that all approaches have limitations and all have a unique richness. They all throw light upon the nucleus, but since there is no still point of the turning circle the researcher has to accept that the ethnographic moment moves on and any truth will be transitory and singular. This study however embraces ethnographic methodology combined with discourse analysis as the analytical tool, in the belief that such an approach offers structure, rigour and richness in understanding how the issues of industry restructure and globalism have borne out in one Australian company.

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[16] An autoethnography is an explanation of the writer's experience that has shaped his/her perceptions.
[17] David Williamson explores the debate between Derrick Freeman and Margaret Mead over the authenticity and validity of her research method and hence her conclusions about the sexual mores and social institutions of Samoan society.
[18] Mead is accused of using only two informants to interpret Samoan culture.
[19] 'Text' here adopts the discourse analysis use of the word meaning any material/data that is analysed (Foucault 1972).
[20] The NTRA was the educational arm of industry restructuring that was launched following the tripartite industry missions that researched overseas models of industrial and economic prosperity (late 1980s). Education and training was one of the most important ingredients for success following the new models adopted by Australian government and industry.
[21] The VBEF was soon after amalgamated into the AMWU, and renamed the AMWU Vehicle Division.
[22] I had worked in partnership with NALLCU in previous projects in 1992. WLI was not formally inaugurated until mid 1994 and started operating in March 1995.
[23] Newman (1994) criticises some androgogists, particularly Knowles (1990), for his acceptance of the learners' political and social stance. In Newman's view, Knowles is not a critical educator.
[24] The Board legal structure prevented it from undertaking teaching. NALLCU was supposed to restrict itself to co-ordination.
[25] This statement was leaked to me by a colleague.
[26] An RTO (Registered Training Provider) is a government registered body qualified to deliver training in authorised areas, to assess competence and to issue certificates to learner graduates under the auspices of the Australian National Training Authority.
[27] 'drivers' is corporation speak for factors that motivate action or change.

CHAPTER 4:- ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Balloon metaphor:

This chapter describes how I analyse what I observe through my binoculars. It assists me to draw significance and to recognise relationships between ideologies, events and historical moments.

4.1 Overview

This chapter consolidates the research tool adopted for this study, that of discourse analysis. It defines the methodology and Fairclough's particular interpretation of it, CDA. It considers the advantages and limitations of the tool but argues that it is the most applicable for analysis of this case study. The second part of this chapter is devoted to scanning the field of Critical Discourse Analysis and identifying the analytical features that have been applied in this study.

4.2 Rationale

This study seeks to understand and describe the way power works in a changing industrial landscape. Discourse is a particularly pertinent area for workplace research at this time in industrial history as change agency has shifted from the enforcement of rules to coercive measures in negotiating consent within the workforce. Previously, workers were constructed as having a mechanical function in the production process. Technology was seen to provide the means of production. The workers were an adjunct to the machine though they needed to be disciplined. With the reconstruction of the means of production to a more even balance between systems, technology, workers skills and knowledge, emphasis has shifted to worker identity, commitment, self management and teamwork. Language has become the primary vehicle of control, learning and people management (Fairclough 1992a, Gee et al. 1996, Donnellon, 1996, Gee 1992). 'It is increasingly through texts that social control and social domination are exercised'. (Fairclough 1995:209)

A central theme of this study is identity – what identities/ideologies are evident in the workplace and how are they expressed? The negotiation of identity is about the way individuals call upon certain discourses to lay claim to a particular position of power. It is a discursive process set within a context of vested and divested discourses. It is therefore especially useful to understand how certain discourses gained ascendancy and became powerful. The current shape of industry culture is the product of the discursive pressures of industry restructuring and globalisation. The purpose of this study is to name these discursive pressures and to understand the mechanisms by which they have become potent and how they are sustained or vanquished. The task is to illuminate the ways power is produced and reproduced in the changing workplace. The case study seeks to understand at the micro level the way those forces legitimise certain decisions and presentations of power while others become limp and ineffectual.

In searching for an analytical tool with which to explore these issues, I sought an instrument that could give me a body of data and a measure of distance from the material so that I could draw conclusions based on verifiable evidence. For this reason I chose discourse analysis. The discourse could provide the body of data and an analytical methodology could provide the tool.

The term 'discourse' requires definition and discussion.

4.3   Discourse Definition and Orientation

4.3.1   Discourse

Discourse was originally defined by applied linguists as the study of language beyond the sentence level (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975). 'It therefore was separated from structuralist thinking where the interest was confined to the language system' (Pennycook 1994:119). With the advent of 'discourse', context gained status. The context stands alongside the words in making meaning (Widdowson 1978). Some theoreticians adopted broader definitions of context than others, blurring the boundaries between words, events, cultural significance and identity. Fairclough argues:

Discourse is a practice not just of representing the world but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning.
Fairclough, 1992a: 64

Within this definition it is evident that words are only one of the events that sit within a set of contextual features that make meaning of what is happening. Discourse includes any form of communication - oral, written, mimed, implied or symbolised. It includes the physical setting, the associated sociological conventions of the event and other contextual information which collude to make meaning or to 'signify the world' (Fairclough 1995: 4). What is left unsaid, in fact silence itself, is also part of the communication.

The abstract noun 'discourse', becomes particularised into 'a discourse' when it is recognised as communicating identity of particular sub-groups: features drawn from a shared specialised vocabulary, sets of ideas, concepts, symbols, dress and behaviour which mark a loose cohort. (Gee signifies this use of the term 'discourse' with a capital 'D') (Gee 1990):

A Discourse is composed of ways of talking, listening, reading, writing, acting, interacting, believing, valuing, and using tools and objects, in particular settings and at specific times, so as to display or to recognise a particular identity.
Gee, Lankshear, Hull, 1995: 10

However discourses are not always clearly defined and identifiable:

Discourses operate with various degrees of unity and disunity and at different levels of specificity.
Luke, 1995: 15

Discourse provides a window into the way cultural groups express meaning and relational significance. It therefore can provide this study with the primary source of data. The next task however is to seek out a method to analyse discourse that can best serve the investigation.

4.3.2 Discourse Analysis

As with notions of discourse, definitions of discourse analysis can be viewed on a continuum. At the linguistic end are non-critical analyses and at the other, critical analyses. Non-critical discourse analysis confines itself to unpacking the interplay of linguistic and contextual features of the discourse that facilitate the exchange of meaning. Fairclough (1992a) describes a number of variations of non-critical analyses such as Conversational Linguistics and the Labov-Franshel approach. Each school has produced a key to unlock an understanding of the dynamics of language and meaning construction, each working from their particular frame of interest. By contrast, critical discourse analysis probes the political and social dimension of discourses – the ideological layer. Linguistic features may be the focus of the analysis (eg. Roberts, Candlin, Willing). Alternatively, linguistic features move to the background as with analysts such as Hull, Gowen and sometimes Gee, while the social and political dimension is the pervasive interest.

The point of agreement among all discourse analysts is that there is no strand within the whole that can be distilled and said to hold meaning in isolation - a discourse analyst cannot look exclusively at the words, the intonation patterns or the contextual information. The import of an interchange can only be fully understood within the context when all the factors that carry meaning and significance are accounted for - the relationships, the assumed knowledge, the non-verbal responses, the symbols and the cultural and temporal issues. According to Lankshear 'the important point is that the language component is inseparable from the other elements in these 'combinations' (1995: 42).

Emphasis on the role of context is a major feature that distinguishes discourse analysts from their predecessors. However non-critical analysts focus upon the interaction of language features against a contextual background that is defined by function, relationships and generic features. By contrast, critical discourse analysts give prominence to the context understood as the meta level of ideology percolating through the text. Either way, the context is not a bland, transparent backdrop viewed consistently by all observers. It is interpreted by the researcher who analyses it by selecting items of relevance and ignoring others. Discussing discourse frame, MacLachlan and Reid quote Culler in arguing for the inclusion of context as within the analyst's frame:

context is not fundamentally different from what is contextualised; context is not given but produced; what belongs to a context is determined by interpretative strategies.
(Culler 1988:ix), MacLachlan and Reid, 1994: 7

The context then is part of the frame the analyst adopts in selecting and analysing the interaction and hence must be considered part of the text.

Texts are any interactional activity that the researcher chooses to analyse. They are usually language based interchange as exemplified by the case study. For Luke, texts are transitory and ephemeral:

... texts are moments of intersubjectivity - the social and discursive relations between human subjects .... Texts are moments when language connected to other semiotic systems is used for symbolic exchange.
Luke, 1995: 13

Luke's notion of texts is highly contextualised absorbing all aspects of the moment. Texts are not sustained beyond the moment of their occurrence. Such a definition precludes research. For the researcher, the texts need to be carried beyond the moment in order for them to be analysed. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, texts are the portable and durable elements of the moment. Words therefore sustain prominence in research texts because they are the most portable features.

Several chapters of this study are devoted to descriptions of context - one to the evolution of the global industrial culture (Chapter 5), another to the emergence of industrial education that has influenced the case study company (Chapter 6), another reviews the discourses that flow through the industry milieu of the 1990s and are reflected in the company (Chapter 7). The site description in chapter 2 may be added to the list. The context material must be regarded as an essential part of the research frame in which interactions take place stressing the view that the context and discourse analysis cannot be ideologically separated.

This study therefore seeks to claim a space within the domain of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in part on the criteria of context. It recognises the predominance of context in making meaning. CDA is the method of analysis named and applied by Fairclough (1989, 1992a & b, 1995).

4.4 This Study as a Discourse Study

4.4.1 Positioning this Study within the Discourse Tradition

Critical Discourse Analysis maps its domain around all features of communication and context that provide a meaning dimension within the macrocosm or microcosm that is being investigated.

This study takes its direction from the analytical traditions of critical discourse because it is interested in the way communication mediates social, cultural and political affirmation and change. It is therefore less interested in the way language behaves per se. It seeks to answer sociological questions rather than linguistic questions. It views language as a means of producing and reproducing social relations and hence power relations in the workplace. It is concerned with the political and social structures that mould the discourse roles and the complex interpretations of interaction which influence responses and ultimately the ideologies of communities, in this case, workplace communities. It therefore requires a linguistic theory that has its roots in social theory and that views language as primarily social practice. Critical Discourse Analysis appears to be the most appropriate analytical tool for this study.

4.4.2 Orientation to Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysts adopt different priorities in their analyses; however a number of features are held in common. All maintain an ideological orientation within their framework.

Roberts, Davies, and Jupp, define Critical Discourse Analysis giving prominence to issues of power and ideology as a central function of language and communication. Critical Discourse Analysis is:

a socially and politically committed analysis in which language is understood and explained in terms of its key role in maintaining power relations. Language is described and explained as 'an instrument of control as well as communication' (Kress and Hodge 1979). Language is never neutral but always embodies ideologies which are themselves the fabric of power relations and social struggle. 'Language is both a site of and a stake in class struggle and those who exercise power through language must constantly be involved in struggle with others to defend (or lose) their position' (Fairclough 1989).
Roberts, Davies, Jupp, 1992: 77

Critical Discourse Analysis is based on the notion that embedded within any interchange is a set of beliefs and power relationships - an ideology. While not all discourses are ideologically invested to the same degree, our interactions engage us, consciously or unconsciously, in the business of 'cultural reproduction', as we endorse and affirm a particular discourse, or alternatively, challenge it. The discourse instructs its members, redefines its ideology and, at the same time, positions the speaker within the socio-political setting. Hence we establish our social identity in relation to the ideology we express. We recognise others who share the same discourse by the language and values reference points held in common. Affiliation with discourse communities are the primary means of establishing personal identity.

The 'dominant' discourse is that of the mainstream thinking and attitude within the community. Sanctions, direct and indirect, act as watchdogs guarding the dominant discourse. Communicators are included or excluded, challenged or rewarded according to their fidelity in reflecting the dominant discourse. The ideology of the dominant discourse becomes 'common sense'. It becomes naturalised: part of the shared understanding within a culture about the way the world operates, implying who are the winners and who are the losers in our society and why they deserve to be where they are (Fairclough 1989). 'Common sense' enshrines the values that guide mainstream decision making. With these processes at work, it has become the 'common sense' belief in our community that the fiscal argument in political decision making should have the highest priority; that education and the arts should make a measurable contribution to the economy and that competition is a positive force for cultural and economic well being.

Discourse also indirectly instructs community members on roles, attitudes and relationships that are consistent with the social position of the discourse. It moulds social identities:

> Viewing language as social practice implies.... that it is always a socially and
> historically situated mode of action, in a dialectic relationship with other facets of
> 'the social' (its 'social context') - it is socially shaped, but it is also socially
> shaping, or constitutive.
> Fairclough, 1995: 131

Hence to engage in a particular discourse is to specify a particular 'subject position' (Kress 1989), 'social position' or 'social identity' (Gee et al. 1996) or a 'discourse position' (Fairclough1992a). Engaging a particular discourse states an identification with an ideology and set of relationships shared by others. However ambiguities arise when we recognise that we not only belong to one discourse but to multiple and sometimes contradictory discourses. For instance our political affiliations do not always align with our social interactions. Consider, for instance, a Palestinian-born mother of school age children who is also a state school teacher and a member of a traditional Islamic extended family.

> The idea of several identities takes apart the structuring of the world into 'them'
> and 'us' - the 'centre' and the 'margin'. It allows for a more fluid social space and
> so more ambiguity.
> Roberts and Sarangi, 1995: 367

How do we manage to navigate our way through the ambiguities and maintain a convincing fluency in a range of discourses?

> ...each Discourse represents one of our ever-multiple identities. These Discourses
> need not, and often do not, represent consistent and compatible values. There are
> conflicts among them and each of us lives and breathes these conflicts as we act out
> our various Discourses.
> Gee, 1996: ix

Luke represents the relationship between individuals and discourses differently emphasising the individual as the agent who selects and combines discourses rather than subscribes to a membership of a discourse:

> Social subjectivities are not unitary or singular ...these available positions and
> discourses offer possibilities for difference, for multiple and hybrid subjectivities
> that human subjects actively make and remake through their textual constructions,
> interpretations and practices.
> Luke, 1995: 14

Luke allows individuals greater autonomy in shaping their identity while Gee sees identity as shaped mainly by social forces.

4.4.3 Positioning this Study within the Critical Discourse Framework

This study is about the discourses of industry and workplace identities as reflected in one particular company. Workplace identities position themselves in relation to company values and images of power at the workplace. Individuals take on roles projecting, maintaining, generating, redefining or challenging the power relationships.
This study seeks to understand how power is represented within the industry discourses reflected within the company. It draws evidence from a number of 'interactional events' - meetings, addresses to the training group and trainee presentations - where management, union and or workers interact. I have not called them discursive events because they are not necessarily part of the regular social practice of the company. They are drawn from a number of interactional episodes where management and or union and workers are brought together. These interactional events provide the data for analysis with which to investigate the research questions.

The analysis asks questions of each of the key players. It asks how managers construct themselves as entrepreneurs and leaders of the workforce and of industry. It asks similar questions of the central union representative - how do union representatives construct themselves and maintain their identity in their role both in their relationship to the workforce and to management. Likewise with the workers - how do they establish their relationship with work authorities and with each other, what are the values and behaviours

that they use in their construction of themselves as workers? How does each group take its place with and against others?

This analysis attempts to plot workplace identities within the broad landscape of globalism and managerialism. This study observes the behaviour of discourses at the industry/community level analysing samples of text. It attempts to trace the discourses industry players call upon to legitimate their stance. This study therefore takes into account the macro and the micro.

4.5   Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA is not an inflexible and prescriptive tool. Rather, it is a loose alliance of eclectic analytical approaches. It is inclusive of any questioning which serves to observe, probe and expose the way discourse is generated, nurtured, understood, shared and generalised in the process of shaping the ideology of communities. It embraces mechanisms that assist the analyst to uncover the interplay between those forces that maintain the values, relationships and structures of the community and those that contest and challenge its current manifestations. It is an approach or orientation rather than a method.

Fairclough was concerned that CDA should provide a comprehensive analysis of communication rather than giving disproportionate interest to certain aspects or closing down possible areas for investigation. He has been critical of approaches that cast a light on one aspect of discourse but leave others in the dark (1992a). He has therefore advocated

> a 'three dimensional' framework where the aim is to map three separate forms of
> analysis onto one another: analysis of (spoken and written) language texts, analysis
> of discourse practice (processes of text production, distribution and consumption)
> and analysis of discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice.
> Fairclough, 1995: 2

In general, CDA combines the central tenets of interactional sociolinguistics with theories of social structure (Roberts and Sarangi 1995). It draws from two traditions: critical social theory best represented by Foucault and socio-linguistic theory best represented by

Halliday. What makes it Foucauldian is the view that language functions as a primary force for social order and the formation of concepts. What makes it Hallidayan is the analytical method grounded in linguistic structures.

4.5.1   Critical Linguistics

Halliday was the grammarian particularly responsible for developing an analytical tool that gave primacy to social contexts and power relationships. Halliday (1985) elaborated upon Bakhtin's (1986) notion of genre as a set of linguistic features that are common to certain text types. Embedded within genre are social relationships expressed through register, value schemata and linguistic conventions. These features are conglomerated in predictable ways for the purpose of achieving a particular interactional function.

Halliday provided a methodology for the analysis of genres that guide the analyst to uncover the strategies employed by the writer or speaker to create language effects. He directs the analyst to consider the field - the syntactic dimension (the ideational), the tenor - the relational or power dimension (the interpersonal) and the mode - the medium of the communication (the textual). Halliday's analysis, called Systemic Grammar, is holistic taking into account context, words, their style of presentation and their effects. He therefore accounts for the multilateral and multifunctional nature of language.

Halliday's theory of language was based on the belief that language is functional. Communicative functions are achieved in different ways by different social groups. Groups who share similar social positions utilise characteristic language and communication devices which are patterned and selected from a finite set of options. Outsiders may learn the language devices associated with a particular function and thereby interact with the associated social group and authentically achieve the target function.

Fairclough embraced the analysis, particularly the interaction between social position and language devices. He does not use Halliday's nomenclature but the thinking and the analytical questions of Systemic Grammar are incorporated into the larger frame of CDA. Halliday's field and tenor have been combined and renamed 'social practice'. Examples from industry could include consultative meetings, procedures for announcing work schedules, EBA negotiations, instructional procedures. The mode has become the 'orders

of discourse' which represent the text types of particular institutions. Examples from manufacturing companies could be production quality reports, union meetings, standardised problem solving methods, standard operating procedures, reporting styles for continuous improvement activity or even clock cards. 'Genre' is a term that Fairclough has transposed directly into his own analysis but he built more flexibility into the concept.

The strong linguistic base of Halliday's analysis has the potential to provide the evidence and illuminate the dynamics of social power. Fairclough argues for the inclusions of Halliday's analysis of the texture of text, their form and organisation because these features are sensitive indicators of sociocultural processes, relations and change (Fairclough 1995). Other analytical systems are preoccupied by either linguistics or social analysis thereby drawing upon only some of the indicators available. Analyses based on a narrow set of indicators are also open to challenge because the conclusions may be contradicted or influenced by those not taken into account. The inclusion of linguistics into the social and political analysis of interaction gives Fairclough a tool that is holistic, comprehensive and grounded.

> Approaches to (critical) discourse analysis which have an ideational bias ... are ill-equipped to capture the interplay between cognition and interaction which is a crucial feature of textual practice.
> Fairclough, 1995: 6

Fairclough however is dissatisfied with Halliday's approach in that it does not account sufficiently for social change (Fairclough 1995). It assumes genres are static and consistent whereas, from Fairclough's point of view, they change, constantly recreating themselves. They are also often heterogeneously made up of contradictory elements and stylistic features juxtaposed and intermixed. Luke supports Fairclough's view defining genre as accommodating flexibility and change:

> Genres are momentarily stabilized forms of social action that take what are to some degree regular and predictable, if dynamic and fluid forms.
> Luke, 1995: 16

Systemic Analysis assumes that the discourse of social groups is transparent and accessible to everyone. One can learn them and reproduce them according to Halliday. This position does not sufficiently take into account the notion that discourses are sanctioned and guarded. Within industry, not everyone is heard around the board room table even after having practised the genre carefully. Despite the rhetoric of shop floor consultation, everyone is not equally sanctioned to contest the point of view of the managing director or even to crack a joke. The subtleties of social position and role interpretation are socially and contextually determined and localised at each site. Gumperz's notion of contextualisation makes this point:

> Contextualisation ... comprises all activities by participants which make relevant, maintain, revise, cancel ... any aspect of context which, in turn, is responsible for the interpretation of an utterance in its particular locus of occurrence.
> Gumperz, 1992: 4

The difference between Halliday and Fairclough is probably best measured by their difference in purpose. Halliday's interest is primarily linguistic within a social frame whereas Fairclough's is social and political within a linguistic and sociological frame.

4.5.2 Foucault and Social and Critical Theory

CDA is founded on two pillars - social theory and linguistic theory. The discussion above demonstrates that the two are intermeshed since linguistic theory is engaged with issues of power and social relations, particularly that of Halliday (1978, 1985), Kress (1989) and Fowler et al. (1979), Roberts et al. (1992), Roberts and Sarangi (1995), Sarangi (1994, 1996), Lakoff (1990). Likewise, Foucault's social theories are based on language and communication.

Foucault (1972, 1977) theorised language as the means of constructing social order and power. His notion of 'discursive formations' explains how language works to give concepts boundaries, relational existence and social significance. For example, concepts such as 'madness' or 'criminality' are used within the community in association with other terms such as 'dysfunctional', 'restraint' and 'institutionalisation'. In another society they could be pitched along-side terms such as 'mysterious' even 'mystical' or 'bedevilled'.

Madness and criminality are therefore 'discursive formations' - concepts constructed through the language of a particular social group.

Language works not only to position concepts within the social structure but it constantly reshapes and redefines meaning and relationships through 'interdiscursive processes' - a means of cross-referencing and drawing association with other concepts. Therefore within any sub group, words are overlaid with meaning inclining them towards a positive or a negative association. Meanings however are never static. For example, 'madness' and 'criminality' have been more recently reconstructed within the framework of 'deinstitutionalisation' and the 'medicalisation' of social behaviour. Both are said to be disorders that are attributed at some level to emotional imbalance and are treated by medical intervention. In other communities they may be attributed to wanton defiance, a lack of moral rectitude or the inspiration of cosmic beings and subject to forces outside human persuasion.

As concepts are repositioned, they are found in a different language environment. Disturbed individuals are no longer treated by priests called upon to exorcise the devil but by medicos who right the chemical imbalances. The language environment has shifted from a religious population to a medical population. Hence concepts change when discourse changes, or discourses change when concepts change.

Foucault based much of his analysis in the clinical environment of doctors, social workers and psychologists. He observed the way language functions as the means by which social identity is expressed and power relationships are exercised. For example, professionals when interacting with clients exercise certain liberties in the questions they ask and the activities of their interaction, licensed by their professional relationship. They exercise their authority to decide what information is admissible and what is irrelevant and so they control knowledge in their own domain. Clients submit to the superior knowledge and acquiesce to an unequal power relationship.

This phenomenon of co-operation between parties in the interchange of power was developed further by Gramsci (1971) in his notion of hegemony. Gramsci's theory of hegemony explains how dominated and repressed social groups acquiesce to the values of the dominant group and collude in their own repression. Hegemony is achieved by forming

alliances, integrating and reconstructing the needs of dominated groups so that each social group accepts their lot in life as righteous and inevitable. The relationship between groups however is unstable and requires continuous work to sustain.

Fairclough drew this into his analytical framework. CDA questions the way the subjects of power relationships sustain and further project the dominant discourse.

Foucault (1972, 1976, 1977) also developed theories of knowledge based on power relationships. Academic disciplines decide what are the appropriate and sanctioned modes of inquiry and how knowledge should be expressed, thereby excluding material and research perspectives that do not follow the preordained rigours of the a scipline. It is not only academics that perform this role as gatekeepers of knowledge. Fairclough (1989) describes how these processes operate within our social and political structure at all levels of authority. Sarangi (1994), applying the analysis to interview situations, demonstrated the cultural dynamics that excluded non-English speaking background migrants from educational and employment opportunities.

Foucault goes on to explain that members of any one particular subcultural group recognise each other by the conceptual frameworks they communicate - the discursive formation they apply. They develop their own discourse as discussed earlier. Foucault tracked the ripples of social identity through language to behaviour and on to symbols.

Architecture is one such symbol. Foucault analysed the way architecture reasserts social roles and social order, something which is particularly observable in the design of schools, prisons and factories where surveillance is of primary interest. The architecture of factories, offices and workplaces is therefore rich with symbolism which is part of the discourse of industry - the geographic separation of office and worker space is one example. The symbolism is reinforced by the large windows overlooking the work area through which management view work activity. The quality of amenities offered to management and employees along with the protocols and clothing requirements, draw the boundaries unambiguously in most workplaces. In Fairclough's terms, these are all part of the discourse to be analysed.

Foucault therefore had a definition of discourse that extended far beyond words and into social identity, power and control. Fairclough embraced the social and political dimension of discourse espoused by Foucault, but he is critical of Foucault methodology in that his conclusions are not based on the analysis of texts. He does not study language in practice and hence has not recognised sufficiently how texts are resisted and transformed.

4.6   Fairclough and Foucault Part Company

For Foucault everything is fluid as it is constantly reshaped by language and culture. Truth is a construct within a particular world view encapsulated by a system of power, knowledge and discursive formations. There is no objective truth since everything is subjective and relative. Community belief would hold that objective truth is constant and has universal application. For Foucault there are only subjective truths momentarily held by those who share the discourse.

> A Foucauldian analysis presents a different possibility. It is not concerned with
> how discourses (texts) reflect social reality, but how discourses produce social
> realities; it does not look for relationships between discourse and society/politics,
> but rather theorises discourse as always/already, political; it does not seek out an
> ultimate cause or basis for power and inequality, but rather focuses on the
> multiplicity of sites through which power operates; and it does not posit a reality
> outside discourse, but rather looks at the discursive production of truth.
> Pennycook, 1994: 131

From Foucault's position we cannot stand outside our discourse. The researcher must stand within the culture to make sense of it and yet must at the same time stand outside it to draw parallels and relationships to other observations. To stand outside a culture is to stand in another and hence to observe from a new subjectivity. There is no objective truth; there are only the truths of particular discourses. Truth is therefore very ephemeral, buttressed by the power the discourse commands and pitched against the truths of other discourses. For Foucault, nothing is preconstituted, it is the discourse that gives things shape, colour and relativities (Fairclough 1992a, Pennycook 1994). There are no absolutes, moral or material. Oft-quoted human rights are an example. From a Foucauldian perspective, human rights are a cultural construct of particular social groups and their imposition upon others is

an act of imperialism. They are misguidedly imposed in the name of justice and fundamental moral truth and therefore pronounced to have universal application. For Foucault, discourse groups are so ontologically blinkered, they can say nothing about other interpretations of reality.

Fairclough stops short of accepting the transience of truth that Foucault upholds. If one fully accepts the ambiguities of subjectivities then one is silenced from speaking for the well-being of society as a whole because such a position presumes there are principles of universal application that transcend discourse subjectivities. Fairclough rejects the political behaviour of those who retreat into relativism as 'serious ethical failure' (Fairclough 1995:19).

4.7   Subjectivities - whose and how much?

This view is particularly problematic for scholars of culture and ideology because there is no neutral position. Observers within or outside a culture will analyse a text in different ways, reflecting their particular political, socio-cultural perspective. Gee et al., quoted the following anecdote:

Consider the following sentences from a brief story in which a man named Gregory has wronged his former girlfriend Abergail: 'Heartsick and dejected, Abergail turned to Slug with her tale of woe. Slug feeling compassion for Abergail, sought out Gregory and beat him brutally'.

> In one study (Gee 1989, 1996) some readers, who happened to be African-
> Americans, claimed that these sentences 'say' that Abergail told Slug to beat up
> Gregory. On the other hand, other readers, who happened not to be African-
> Americans, claimed that these sentences say no such thing.
> Gee, Lankshear & Hull, 1996: 2

History and historians have been particularly subject to these ambiguities as discussed in the example of Charles Abel and Margaret Mead. Windshuttle (1997) makes similar accusations against recent historians' interpretations of the fall of the Aztecs. He argues

that contemporary historians were persuaded by fashionable notions of cultural diversity to explain the Aztecs' defeat with recourse to their own system of values, beliefs and behaviour. Historians claim that these observations eluded the view of their predecessors because their discourse was not open to these possibilities. Windshuttle contests this position as fashionable folly which does not take account of the obvious cause of the demise of the Aztecs - gunpowder, superior might and disease. Modern historians failed to understand the event because of their cultural myopia that favoured the Aztecs as the culturally violated and the Spanish as the aggressive victors. Ironically, Windshuttle presents his case as if he is somehow free of such subjectivities.

Where does truth lie? Most modern thought has come to accept that there is no point of purity, no white light of empirical truth that is universally applicable. But there are social positions that speak for a more just and harmonious society for most of humanity. As such, political, moral and social action is based on a plea for justice rather than a declaration of truth, even though justice itself is strongly culturally invested (Weedon 1987).

And so we find ourselves at a point similar to that of the last chapter – how can a researcher say anything legitimate when she is so bound by subjectivity? Once again I need to reassert that our work is based on reflection about our own subjectivity from which inference and meaning is drawn. All subjectivities are prisms of truth. Outside a prism, there are only other prisms; however some prisms are more highly coloured than others in that more licence is taken in interpreting the data and in extrapolating from scant reference in the data. These are also truths but they may be more limited in their application than others. There is no objectivity, but there are arguments about the colour and intensity of other analysts' prisms.

The argument around discourse analysis, levels of subjectivity and whose subjectivity, has been the source of considerable academic debate (Pennycook (1994), Widdowson (1995) Fairclough (1996). The question for this study hangs on whether CDA is a valid tool for the analysis of data.

Pennycook believes that Fairclough and CDA theorists have coloured their prisms so intensely that they have blotted out factors of human agency and individuality. Individuals are viewed as puppets of a particular ideology. The analyst is seen as accessing a higher

wisdom than that of the subjects - they can name the string pullers while the subjects mouth the preassigned ideology. Fairclough however does not shy away from this accusation, he believes CDA has an important political role to fulfil:

> the task, of the critical linguist, then, is to help remove this veil of obscurity and help people see the 'truth'.
> Fairclough, 1989: 125

Critical discourse analysis has the power to make visible and tangible, features that may not be conscious or visible to the interlocutors but which have profound consequences for shaping the social realities, power relationships and perceptions of individuals.

Pennycook believes that such a position calls into question the stance of the analyst in relation to his/her subjects. In his view it removes the potential for human agency because it removes the subjects' power to act as individuals. It contradicts human experience therefore invalidates the conclusions drawn by CDA analysts. Pennycook asserts that their committed stance invalidates the analysis:

> it is subject to a representational fallacy, a 'real world' of social relations is represented in language; and second, in models whereby the micro is determined by the macro, which is in turn reproduced by the micro, there is little space for an understanding of human agency, interpretation, or change .... an essential aspect of a critical approach to discourse analysis lies in the understanding that our ability to act in the world is constrained, it is nevertheless crucial here to allow for human agency rather than constructing a model in which all is determined by socio-economic (or other) relations.
> Pennycook, 1994: 126

The question of human agency can be further reinforced by those analysts who argue that CDA communication recipients hear in a singular way – in keeping with the researcher's ideological position. The juxtaposition of grammatical features and invested terminology, the use of certain syntax and the convergence of symbolic information will be interpreted in the way that best supports the position of the analyst. Widdowson (1995) argues similarly. He argues that CDA offers only a partial interpretation of the text because it

offers only one ideological reading and because it selects texts that provide evidence to support that ideology.

Fairclough acknowledges the multiplicity of meanings that can be drawn from the text:

> The interpretation of texts is a dialectical process resulting from the interface of the variable interpretative resources people bring to bear on the text and properties of the text itself.
>
> Fairclough, 1995: 9

Nonetheless, his analysis is singular in its interpretation. He adopts a particular frame which excludes other interpretations from his analysis. Other CDA theorists generally follow suit. However, to acknowledge that there are other interpretations of the text does not bind the analyst to exhaustively explore the options. CDA theorists usually use their analysis as evidence for their argument, not as a demonstration of the capacity of the tool to present various representations. They may offer an interpretation of the text from a 'fixed' theoretical position such as feminism or Marxism or a fluid dialectic standpoint. Either way, the question is, do these criticisms invalidate the analysis?

The tug of war between determinism and individuality thrusts back and forth with those that seek to analyse and describe social movements from a committed point of view pulling against those most interested in the way individuals make meaning despite the contradictory jumble of discourses the interlocutors apply. Here, the divide is between those with a critical social bias versus those with a linguistic bias. The accusation of myopia and predetermination is predictable, particularly as Fairclough unambiguously states his mission. The vision is already blinkered (from the critic's perspective). Fairclough seeks:

> to correct a widespread underestimation of the significance of language in the production, maintenance and change of social relationships of power' and to 'increase consciousness of how language contributes to the domination of some people by others, because consciousness is the first step towards emancipation.'
>
> Fairclough, 1989: 1

Criticism arises because of the interest of analysts in making generalisations that describe a class of people, their motivation and struggle for power. Furthermore they are critical of the intensity of the analysts' investment in a particular point of view. Which prism, how applicable and what intensity of colour, are debates that are inexhaustible. However it is not the tool itself that is the point of criticism. The tool is simply a series of questions applied to selected texts. The questions are not finite. Validity lies in their comprehensiveness in addressing all three aspects of discourse function (the production, consumption and distribution of texts). The questions may be co-opted to the service of any political or social perspective but the tool is neutral. Its application however allows the analyst to observe which discourse has dominance, how it achieves prominence and persuasion, how interlocutors interplay in the hegemony. The analyst bases her analysis on texts but the scope and selection priorities of the texts are not defined.

The extent to which the analyst allows for human agency is a matter over which she has total jurisdiction. She may colour her prism with whatever level of intensity she finds appropriate. It is not determined by the tool. The tool itself is flexible and adaptable. It may be used to achieve insight or to recreate one's own bias. I believe Pennycook's concern is with the way in which Fairclough uses the tool to frame his analysis.

The way in which particular analysts use the tool is not a debate that is of immediate interest to this study. The heart of this study focuses upon individuals who, within the course of their interaction, select from the discourses available in deciding which one to call on at a particular moment. This research is observing the micro and the extent to which it appears to be influenced by the macro. Individuals may combine contradictory discourses. This study is seeking to map the discourses reflected by the individual subjects rather than the individual as a reflection of the discourse. The intensity of the investment in the ideology is an issue of my own personal stance. One seeks to temper one's stance in the light of the evidence and in the interests of personal integrity and fidelity to intellectual rigour.

However interpretation is never objective. The analyst chooses a frame within which to view the text which inevitably excludes other frames and interprets the texts that shape the frame. MacLachlan and Reid p12, quote Bordwell 1989:3 : 'meanings are not found but made' and they are made in relation to the frame built around the text. This analysis is

therefore not free from the accusation of the absence of human agency. The judgement as to the value and insightfulness of the analysis lies with the reader.

PART 2: CDA APPLIED TO THIS STUDY

Having decided that Critical Discourse Analysis is appropriate, applicable and valid within this study, this chapter further explores those aspects of CDA that are most pertinent to industry and the company context.

4.8   The Instability of the Dominant Discourses

Discourse maintenance and change is a major interest of CDA: how discourses become dominant, how their dominance is sustained and what causes them to change. In his strongly Marxist analyses, Fairclough was particularly concerned with the contestable nature of discourse. The powerful are always seeking to secure a better hold while the powerless threaten those who have grasped it.

> The power to control discourse is seen as the power to sustain particular discursive practices with particular ideological investments in dominance over other alternative practices.
> Fairclough, 1995: 1,2

Therefore discourses are unstable and subject to frequent change and readjustment in response to constant challenge.

A powerful strategy in the maintenance and change process involves the constituting and reconstituting of ideas and ideologies, shifting them into environments that colour them favourably or unfavourably as the case may be. Hence ideas and therefore discourses change. In this way governments, for example, construct our ideas about what is good for us. They convince us that economic rationalism is essential, efficient and even attractive. The general community has come to agree that users should pay and a good balance of payments helps us to sleep better at night.

4.8.1   Mechanisms for Discourse Maintenance

This section discusses four mechanisms for maintaining discourse which have been selected from the literature because they are most readily observable in this study. They are

- activity type
- playing the discourse game
- symbolic capital
- anaphoric pronouns.

Activity Type

Fairclough's 'social practice' is similar to Levinson's (1979) 'activity type'. Both are a way of naming and categorising predictable characteristics of social activity according to features such as the sequence of events, social interaction and relationships associated with different social contexts. For example, we know the type of behaviour that is expected of us at a formal social event peopled by wealthy guests from an older age bracket. One could predict the type of conversational conventions and the events of the evening.

Activity types have boundaries which are protected by implied cultural rules which govern features such as appropriacy and speakers' right. There is a 'code consistency' (Sarangi 1994) that interlocutors manage with various levels of proficiency. Interlocutors are less likely to be aware of the code or conversational rules in informal activities in contrast to formal interaction where many of the constraints will be clearly identifiable. Within this study, the activity type of Training Committee meetings provides a forum for structured communication between management and workers. It also prescribes the constraints, protocols and formalities through which both parties navigate their interaction.

The activity type (in this case, meetings) manages the discourse. Those who transgress the unwritten code may be admonished or sanctioned and reminded of the boundaries of the social practice. In meetings, the boundaries are formal and defined. Those who speak out of turn may be called to order, told their contribution is irrelevant to the matter at hand or reminded of the bounds of their role within the meeting as the representative of a particular

interest group. Personal attacks may be sanctioned as out-of-order and heated debates may be intercepted and held over to the next meeting.

Other activities are bounded by rules that are informal and changing. Within this study a number of senior executives visit the training group to converse with the trainees. They were invited to discuss their role within the company and their area of expertise. It was made clear that the forum was open and questions and discussion were encouraged. Behind the closed door of the classroom with a small group of 10, intimacies could be traded. Which issues could be probed and what level of honesty could be expected was tentatively negotiate between the parties. However certain boundaries remained inviolable. The tenet of relevance ensured that work and the company were the appropriate topics. The tenet of respect ensured that neither party would be humiliated or aggressively confronted. The tenet of authority would allow management an unequal share of the talking time and the final word on the interpretation of the way things were. The tenet of appreciation would acknowledge the generous gift of time on the part of management in attending the training session and would allow us all to feel warm and assured at the end. The tenet of loyalty would ensure that company values would be affirmed and critical attitudes would be moderated.

Bourdieu (1991) introduced the term 'habitus' to name the cultural space in which a particular group lives out what is natural and expected. Habitus is that which inclines groups to affirm and reconstitute the store of beliefs, behaviours and relationships that characterise them providing the market for different types of capital.

Within a particular activity type, in a particular environment, a certain habitus will prevail, guarding what can and cannot be said, feeding the dominion of the hegemony. Threadgold (1998) gives a graphic example of the way the interrogation conventions of the law court allow barristers to manipulate evidence to serve the values and prejudices of the dominant discourse within a misogynist social schema, effectively silencing any challenge to the status quo. Farrell's study of women in a textile mill (1998a) gives a contrasting example of women who are experts in their field who are likewise silenced by their estrangement in the alien activity type and habitus of a problem solving meeting. In such an environment knowledge and authority is edited within patrolled boundaries.

This discussion invites a textual analysis that considers:

- how is communication bounded within the activity types?
- how carefully are the boundaries patrolled?
- what knowledge is admissible and what is dismissed?
- who is silenced and how?
- what habitus is sustained and which ones are rendered illegitimate?

The Discourse Game

The Discourse Game as envisaged by Bourdieu (1991) is related to the notion of activity type. Activity types are micro, episodic instances where social groups act out social expectation. For Bourdieu the interchange between the dominant and the dominated is a game that both at some level agree to play. There are rules and the players know when the rules are transgressed. If they choose to play within the rules they contribute to its maintenance. If they transgress the rules, they challenge the discourse and may unsettle its dominance. Bourdieu believes the dominated group are unaware of the rules. Sarangi believes it is the dominant class who believe most in the illusion of the game.

> It is the imposition of the (rules of the) game by the dominant group as a natural and inevitable means of social advancement which contracts the dominated groups as having a fixed identity. According to this prevailing view among the dominant class, the single, fixed, marginalised identity of the subordinate groups can be exchanged for a new dominant class identity if individuals from the dominated class have the ability and the motivation to make the exchange.
> Roberts and Sarangi, 1995: 369

This framing of the relationship between the dominant and the dominated fits the experience of most workplaces. Management, whether company or union, is constantly watchful for those who have mastered the discourse which represents the communality of values between themselves and workers/members. They indicate the promise of a bright future for those who are willing to play the game. They ask repetitively are you working for us or against us?

Roberts and Sarangi (1995) outlines four likely responses to the game by the dominated group:

- they may take it as naturalised ideology and strive to emulate it (e.g. employees newly promoted from the shop floor to the office who usually endeavour to act out, or over-act, the dominant ideology);
- they may recognise it as a game and shift position to the status quo (e.g. politicians seeking to identify themselves as non-racist and non-sexist edit their language for political correctness);
- they may work as a group to appropriate the rules to its own advantage (e.g. trade unionists sometimes appear to take on the habitus of management in order to forge a deal for their members);
- they may expose the games and the rules (e.g. political commentators have named Pauline Hanson's[28] discourse strategy as one of deliberate naivety and ignorance so that she presents as 'one of us', taking on community fears and longings).

Genre teaching acknowledges the game and teaches students to master it. However, the criticisms levelled at the social analysis of genre theorists applies again here. Roberts and Sarangi's options do not account sufficiently for complex levels of resistance and hegemony. A common response from shop floor employees is passive non-co-operation, another is a fumbling mix of acquiescence to the naturalised ideology and a deliberate defiance of the rules. These options are not equally open to all players. The response depends largely on the relationship between the dominant and the dominated groups. Relationships based on adversity allow different options to those based on consensus and negotiation or to those based on transparent repression.

Maybe it is unfair to demand an exhaustive list of responses to the dominant discourse however, in everyday interaction people work within and across several responses. At an extreme, resistance is violent. Those whose dignity has been destroyed or whose society is clearly structured may accept the ideology but not seek to emulate the discourse since it is not theirs. It is therefore, I believe, not useful to categorise responses to the discourse game but rather to consider the relationship played out by the interlocutors as a reflection of the options available to the dominated group.

However Bourdieu's and Roberts and Sarangi's thinking prompt questions for the research analysis such as:

- are the workers and those who manage them aware of the discourse game?
- do they join the game or resist it in the discourse texts?
- are workers offered a place in the dominant discourse if they master the genre?

The notion of the discourse game is based on the belief that discourse is goal directed. From this perspective interlocutors are operating at a meta level, choosing their words and style of presentation to create affects. There are a number of analysts who hold this view particularly the psychological stream exemplified by Potter and Wetherall (1987). They are interested in the way individuals construct the self in social settings, strategically presenting the self in order to achieve determined goals.

Gumperz (1982) adopts this perspective in his analysis of course entry interviews. He analyses the success or failure of interaction within the activity type of the interview by the skill with which the applicant applies 'discourse strategies'. Gumperz's notion of 'discourse strategy' refers to the interactional ploys one applies in negotiating the activity type or discourse game. Through cultural experience, one acquires a stock of discourse strategies with which one reads the cultural assumptions and applies discourse practices with increasing proficiency. This notion places the individual increasingly in charge of the language effects.

Sarangi (1994) is critical of Gumperz because of the level of agency he assumes on the part of the interlocutors. Interlocutors are credited with a level of language and cultural manipulation that appears to exceed the capacity of most of us.

Fairclough rejects analyses based on goal-oriented discourse where the analyst measures the effectiveness of the interchange by the interlocutors' skill in managing the 'rhetorical strategies' (Gumperz 1992) inherent in the activity. Rhetorical strategies are the 'ways of speaking which develop out of routine interactional experiences' (Sarangi 1994:368). Fairclough's contention is that such an analysis fails to come to terms with the opaque and invisible, unique to the particular instance.

Nonetheless, Fairclough incorporates the concept of activity type into his analysis alongside the orders of discourse associated with it. Notions of discourse boundaries and social practice are central to CDA but Fairclough stops short of using activity type or playing the game as a means of measuring communicative effectiveness.

Sarangi (1994) uses the term 'situational literacy' to explain the fluency that one might acquire within a particular type of interactional event. The 'situationally literate' are able to capture and respond to the nuance and subtleties of the interaction. 'Situational literacy' is an observable phenomenon though it may be a reflection of intuitive communication skill rather than a conscious manipulation of symbols. Regardless, these issues invite the researcher to consider:

- what makes the situationally literate persuasive?
- what discourse and rhetorical strategies are evident?
- is there an apparently conscious use of strategy or is it the intuitive skills of a powerful communicator?

Symbolic Power

Bourdieu's theory of language and symbolic power (1991) contributes substantially to an understanding of how discourses maintain their dominance. Bourdieu transposes economic metaphors onto social power structures. He uses notions of market and capital to categorise the resources and power within society. He challenges the belief that modern Western society is a meritocracy and claims that it is based upon three kinds of capital - economic (material), cultural (knowledge, skill) and symbolic (accumulated prestige, honour). Certain discourses have more power than others when they draw upon the appropriate market:

> ...certain discourse practices construct and legitimise dominant speaking subjects and consequently come to be recognised in the public domain as having material reality.
> Roberts and Sarangi, 1995: 365

'Legitimate language' is understood and listened to within the appropriate market because it is invested with a sense of normalcy and common sense rightfulness. Hence employees in this study listen with considerable reverence to those who command symbolic power within the company through their position in the authority hierarchy. Management's arguments are not measured for their evidence or their cogency. They are accepted as legitimate because of the power they assume. They silence their opposition by controlling the discourse with the respect they command drawn from the authority hierarchy. Opinions and interpretations of the world are stated as facts, and, within their market audience, are taken to be so.

Gergen (1988) calls this 'warranting voice'. This can be observed when an individual expresses such conviction and claim over the topic under discussion that others acquiesce:

> the motive force behind the dominance of some self constructions is people's desire for 'voice' or speaking rights, their wish to have their interpretation of events prevail against competing versions. The self is thus articulated in discourse in ways that will maximise one's warrant or claim to be heard. Some versions of the self will thus come to predominate in some contexts.
> ...voice is determined by how skilfully one can use warranting conventions.
> Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 108

Speakers who deliver with warranting voice make a claim on common sense in the interpretation of their message.

Individuals are empowered by the capital they hold, but capital does not necessarily transfer between different market places. The linguistic market is very powerful, allowing those suitably endowed and positioned to interpret the world for those who have less capital. Education has significant power in reproducing the linguistic market and in providing the currency for translation and exchange between markets. Education has the potential to convert capital from cultural to symbolic to material power by assisting people to gain high salaried jobs.

Bourdieu's commercial metaphors are useful in this study where managers and workers struggle for, or lay claim to legitimacy in their market of the workplace. The one is

constantly knocking at the other's door demanding acceptance and the power to influence and persuade.

Bourdieu's cultural capital overlaps with Clegg's (1989) circuits of power. Management can use its capital to exert power within the workplace which allows it to annex territory far beyond that of making business decisions. It has the power to pass judgement on the success or failure of workers, to decide their job classification, their worth, their promotional potential, their job security. Circuits of power can be extended, reduced and encroached upon in the struggle between discourses.

These issues prompt an analysis which asks:
- how does symbolic power work within the interchanges analysed?
- what happens when symbolic power and markets are mismatched?
- what are the dimensions of the circuits of power of the stakeholders?

Anaphoric Pronouns

Discourses are sustained by hegemonic processes. These processes are complex, various and inexhaustible since they are unstable and constantly created anew. This dissertation does not therefore seek to give an exhaustive account of them. It seeks only to refer to those that have direct application to the analysis.

One set of hegemonic processes have a function of enculturation and homogenisation. They work to draw the interlocutors together in a shared set of beliefs about authority, causality and the way the world is. Anaphoric pronouns can be exploited for their ambiguous reference to 'us' and 'you'. Lakoff (1990) made a study of the interplay between the exclusive and inclusive 'we'. The exclusive 'we' refers to me and some others but not you. The inclusive 'we' means me and you and not some others or maybe all of us. A skilful use of 'we' and 'us' can have the effect of forming emotional bonds allowing audiences to feel they are part of the decision making and they therefore have some stake in the outcome. Ziv (1997) observes the skilled use of anaphoric pronouns in his analysis of a training program at a factory in Silicone Valley. The management-trainer working

with a group of shop floor employees establishes their common purpose and feeds their sense of self worth and responsibility, shading the boundaries between levels of authority.

The following provides an example from a printed training text. It is a statement of the objective of a training module from a quality program:

> We use a model for the controlling factors in our work processes and come to
> understand that these factors help us build a quality system of prevention.
> Crosby, 1988: 30

The reader is co-opted into a committed stance in building the quality system while the writer assumes a position alongside the learner. The text subsumes any political ambivalence that may be inherent and presents an unproblematic simple course of action. There is nothing tentative about our 'system of prevention'. It is designed by an expert and since we are co-producers, we are vicariously experts.

Anaphoric pronouns provide the means of creating an artificial familiarity assumed by the speaker or writer. A counterfeit intimacy is presumed which is a common advertising device where the vendor feigns a personal conversation with the subject. Fairclough calls this 'synthetic personalisation' (1992a). Examples can be found in 'technologised' (see below) managerial discourse aimed at managing the employees' emotional domain or in instances where a greater intimacy is assumed than is shared by the interlocutors. The Managing Director's Message from the newsletter of the company under study is one such example:

> I find it hard to believe it's already been a month since I closed the door on my
> comfortable old 'Queenslander' with the palm trees and the newly installed
> swimming pool, but as the saving goes time flies .. and though I have never lived in
> Melbourne, I must say it is a great city and a great place to live.
> Carcare Newsletter, June 1997

The managing director offers details about his personal life and his feelings which give the reader a feeling that he is unthreatening, warm and personable, an old friend perhaps.

The observation of the use of anaphoric pronouns is an important means of analysis in this study.

4.9   Strategies for Discourse Change

Strategies for discourse maintenance may equally operate as agents of change. They may be used to defend the dominant discourse or to colonise its communication features and draw members towards a new discourse. It is the way strategies are applied that prescribes their function.

Here the pivotal construct is that of intertextuality. Other strategies and phenomena are a function of intertextuality. They include:

- the technologisation of discourse
- marketisation
- democratisation.

> Change involves forms of transgression, crossing boundaries, such as putting
> together existing conventions in new combinations, or drawing upon conventions in
> situations which usually preclude them.
> Fairclough, 1992a: 96

Change results from a process of problematising ideologies. This process may begin with an individual's refusal to comply with the dominant discourse or the desire to assert power. Calling the boss by his/her first name may challenge the boundaries of the hierarchy. Transgressing the dress code, inappropriately adopting the culture or refusing to use the genre similarly may threaten the boundaries and call the ideology into question. Such activities beckon change when they do not succumb to sanctioning processes and when they draw with them a critical mass.

However, usually change does not happen by storm. It involves a consensual process whereby a particular discourse is contested and colonised (Fairclough 1989). The mechanisms for incursion, influencing and colonising discourses are varied. One of the major mechanisms is intertextuality which involves resonating an alien discourse within the primary discourse in order to change the way the text is perceived.

4.9.1   Intertextuality

Intertextuality is a powerful mechanism for constructing our feelings and responses. It is a valuable analytical measure incorporated into CDA from Bakhtin (1986). Intertextuality is a referencing strategy whereby words are imported from an outside discourse to make links between discourses and so to create alliances. Gee et al. (1996) discusses the incursion of counselling discourses into the discourse of industry. These days, industry seeks commitment, loyalty and a sense of 'family' from its workforce, so we find references to caring and well-being in management and worker texts. The following example from the Woolworths training for shop assistants places emotive experience at the heart of their activity. It defines 'empowerment' as:

> Trusting your CARE CONSCIENCE and giving yourself the approval to take
> action on behalf of the Customer when you feel an opportunity for Awesome
> Service arises - self EMPOWERMENT.
> (author's emphasis)

Training for Woolworths' supermarket employees appears to have as much to do with sensitising the feelings and developing intervention strategies within the commercial operation as it does with operating a sales procedure.

Intertextuality is a standard device in advertising where products such as cigarettes are associated with romantic life-styles for instance. Strategies used within industry to develop an identification with the company amongst employees are another rich source of intertextual absurdities. The Woolworth's 'I Care Attitude' song is one such example. Here is the first verse:

> Another day in all its glory
> Glowing in the morning light
> We're a part of this great story
> Let's try to do it right.

The incongruous juxtaposition of the quality adage of 'doing it right the first time' alongside symbols of heroic new life, exemplifies the linking of unlikely discourses. The

authors are attempting to colour the supermarket and the behaviour they wish to engender with a sense of purpose greater than the activity itself of serving customers.

The lack of subtlety in this particular example makes it improbable that Woolworths' employees will in fact reconceptualise their work as an heroic call to the achievement of 'quality' performance. However, clever use of intertextuality successfully constructs our attitudes and responses. The association of sophisticated life style with smoking has been very powerful. The same could be said about drinking Coca Cola or the sexual prowess to be gained from wearing Windsor Smith shoes. Intertextuality therefore is a means for constituting change. It is a strategy for investing a discourse with particular significance in order to shift its locus of meaning.

Intertextuality demonstrates how several text types can be combined and configured but the imported text is often contested. While the Woolworths' attempt is dismissed as absurd, the smoking example is heavily contested by the medical profession and those who resist the exploitation of the vulnerable in the community. Feminists are watchful of intertextual references that associate women with mindlessness or sex objects and religious fundamentalists guard the environments in which their symbols are located, as was experienced in the 'Piss Christ'[29] episode. The community's sense of appropriacy acts as a censor on matters of intertextuality:

> The seemingly endless possibilities of creativity in discursive practice suggested by
> the concept of interdiscursivity - and endless combination and recombination of
> genres and discourses - are in practice limited and constrained by the state of
> hegemonic relations and hegemonic struggle.
> Fairclough, 1995: 134

A response to a challenge to the dominant discourse may be defended by misrepresenting or distorting opposing ideologies - 'they are recontextualised as having less value' (Bernstein 1990:171 in Sarangi 1996:203). In industry, 'quality of worklife' programs were developed with the philosophy that the employees are the company's greatest resource. In the 1990s the programs were dismissed as 60s romanticism using intertextual practices to associate programs with self indulgence and industrial naivety. In the age of economic rationalism, so called 'human resource' departments are no longer seen as holding the promise for the future of a company. Members of such departments are most

likely to be made redundant and reduced to a single staff member who keeps employee records and contracts and out-sources training and other HR functions. However, some employers have turned their attention to spirituality in business as a means of harnessing commitment and creating meaning in work (Frank 2000, Mitroff & Denton 1999, Senge 1991).

4.9.2   Technologisation of Discourse

When intertextuality becomes a calculated strategic process, Fairclough has named it the 'technologization of discourse' - calculated intervention to shift discursive practices as part of the engineering of social change' (Fairclough 1995:3). This is a strategy whereby new practices are set up or old ones are reframed, creating a space or a destabilisation of the old frame so a new idea can fill the vacuum. The Woolworths examples have been technologised. In the race debate, terms such as 'racial integration' and 'protection' have been disqualified with the help of intertextual devices to convince communities of the inappropriacy of a paternalistic relationship with indigenous Australians. Terms such as 'reconciliation' and 'cultural diversity' have been tactically introduced.

Within industry, a culture of managerialism and lean production has been created by a carefully engineered process of renaming change processes. The technological formation of 'restructuring' is found in a community of words which includes 'downsizing', 'right sizing' and 'out-sourcing' to replace the ugly realities of 'sacking' and 'dismissal'. 'Accountability' is reframed as 'profitability' and measured only in monetary terms. An example further away from home would be the 'Information Warriors' of the American Intelligence. According to an ABC report, the American Intelligence assigned individuals to work as Information Warriors. Their task was to create a discourse of dissent against Sadam Hussien among Iraqi citizens in order to undermine his political power. They were remarkably unsuccessful both in changing the discourse and the concepts surrounding the political culture of Iraq. (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 1998). They had no legitimacy in the local discourse communities and hence no power to destabilise the ideology.

Colonisation is a form of intertextuality where a term is borrowed from another discourse and transplanted into a new discourse, investing it with new meaning. The word

'empowerment' is one such example. Borrowed from an idealist Frierian context, it is now used in industrial and commercial settings as a coercive measure usually involving the individual in apparent decision making. For example, workers may be described as empowered when they join continuous improvement groups.

A similar investment has taken place with the word 'flexibility' (Ewer et al. 1993). In industrial settings, flexibility is a desirable attribute. It is demonstrated when an employee accepts a change in work practice that is sought by an employer. Within education it has come to mean technologically based educational delivery which ironically offers the least flexible curriculum and learning materials (Brown 1991).

4.9.3 Marketisation

Marketisation of discourse is another example of the technologisation of discourse which reflects the shift in values and outlook of our society. Marketisation and commodification are the discourse practices that have transformed social activity into marketing activity (Fairclough 1993). Words and concepts have been annexed or colonised from commercial and financial environments and have been transplanted into social domains. Within current industrial education practice, the employers are our 'clients' and our students are our 'products'. In some instances, the argument would be that the graduates are the products and the employees the clients. Our customers and clients demand satisfaction and our responsibility is to meet that demand. Educational institutions spend money grooming their image to reflect the type of institution most favoured by market surveys (Fairclough 1995). We measure our productivity in quantitative terms using measuring tools transcribed from manufacturing contexts. In CDA terms, the boundaries between the orders of discourse and discursive practices have been restructured to establish a new hybrid of consumer advertising which has been strategically introduced into the dominant discourse of professional and public service institutions. No other language is recognised as appropriate for the discussion of institutional activity. (Fairclough 1995:138,9).

Within this study, the issues of intertextualty and the technologisation of discourse are important in understanding the constant waves of change that have washed through industry within the last decade. The researcher needs to question
- where the discourses come from,
- why these sources have been chosen and
- what avenues of dissent and contestation have been available to the dominated groups.

4.10 Emerging Discourses

We are faced with a new world order, according to Fairclough, hence we need a new discourse to operate within it. There has been a shift from traditional social roles handed down from previous generations to a language based social organisation where social roles are mediated through conviction and persuasion. We have hence seen a shift from a structured social stratification system to a negotiated one.

> Relationships in public, based automatically upon authority are in decline as are personal relationships based upon the rights and duties of, for example, kinship ...people's self identity, rather than being a feature of given positions and role, is reflexively built up through a process of negotiation.
> Fairclough, 1995: 137

I have briefly touched on democratisation and ambiguity as discourse strands but marketisation could also be included.

4.10.1 Democratisation

The democratisation of discourse both reflects and constructs this change in social relationships. The democatisation or 'informalisation' (Featherstone 1991) of discourse names the way language has become casual and colloquialised shunning classical, formal modes of self expression. The trend aspires to be inclusive and appears to reflect a flattened authority hierarchy. It gives the appearance of equality, but Fairclough stresses it is only an illusion. The democratisation of discourse in asymmetrical relationships is:

> interpretable not as the elimination of power asymmetry but its transformation into covert form.... Linked... to the broad shift from coercion to consent, incorporation and pluralism in the exercise of power.
> Fairclough, 1995: 79, 80

The analyst needs to be mindful of Fairclough's warning, but also conscious that informalisation is ambiguous:.

> conversationalised discursive practices are open to contradictory investments, being linked either to democratisation or to new strategies of control and being therefore themselves a focus of hegemonic struggle.
> Fairclough, 1995: 101

4.10.2 Ambiguity

Ambiguity is perhaps the strongest feature of the most dynamic contemporary businesses. Such businesses have been described as the new work order:

> The new capitalism has itself co-opted a good deal of the language and many of the themes of ostensibly opposing movements...The new capitalism blatantly blurs traditional identities (e.g. between 'workers' and 'managers'; 'products' and 'services'; 'practice/production' and 'knowledge'); it celebrates change and the absence of borders ... and it encourages the undermining of overt authority.
> Gee et al., 1996: 68

Its ambiguity is created by the fluid mixing of genres and ideologies. It is both benign and insidious, creative and constricting, manipulative and free forming. Interpreting it at any one time is temporary because its meanings change rapidly. The new capitalism makes extensive use of intertextuality, the colonisation of terms and of marketisation and commodification. CDA is a useful tool to unlock its dynamics but its instability makes it difficult to typify. New capitalism is however the energy behind most change activity in contemporary workplaces.

4.11 Conclusion

In this study change needs to be understood both at the macro level of industry and global movements and on the micro level of a small company. The strategies outlined above need to be applied to both fields. The remaining chapters are devoted to this analysis. The

context chapters demonstrate the way the climate has been created to establish priorities and urgencies for action by investing events and phenomena with an interpretation that demands a change response. At company level, discourse analysis of interactional events allows us to observe how employees are persuaded, cajoled or overpowered to change their position and support a management or union framing of a situation. On the other hand, employees themselves attempt to influence attitudes and decisions and forge new relationships with management.

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[25] A colourful political figure who has gained popularity among conservative voters who feel themselves by-passed in the dominant parties.
[26] As part of an international art exhibition held in 1998, a painting of Christ was exhibited where artistic effects were achieved with the use of urine. The artist made his methods public not least of all in the title of the artwork. A debate raged in Melbourne and Christian activists succeeded in damaging the artwork and finally having the exhibition closed.

CHAPTER 5 :– THE INDUSTRIAL AND DISCURSIVE CONTEXT

Balloon metaphor:
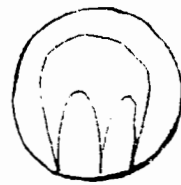
This chapter concerns itself with the broader environment that provides a context for the activities in the basket. It attempts to understand the structure and function of the balloon itself and how it achieved sufficient momentum to achieve lift off.

5.1 Overview

This chapter gives an account of Australian industrial change over the last 25 years. The change was energised by the government's reading of the competitive pressures to participate in the global economy. Embedded within the government's reading was a belief that Australia needed to hurriedly catch up with the best practice models of Europe and Japan.

This history is important because it traces the evolution of a new ideology in industrial, social and political thinking that both nurtured and made space for the activity of organisations such as WLI. A large component of the change was to do with the development of technical and communication skills. WLI interpreted the educational agenda to include the development of skills and attitudes consistent with industrial democracy. The imperative of Australia's participation in the global economy was accompanied by an urgency to create a new industrial culture. Some union, government and academic stakeholders believed that industrial democracy provided the direction for a vibrant and productive industry culture. Government and industry policy sanctioned development along these lines. This breadth of consensus helped create a climate which gave WLI and the union permission to undertake their work and promote their agendas at local sites such as Carcare.

This chapter outlines how unions and policy makers constructed the industrial democracy argument within the industrial milieu producing an environment ripe for organisations, committed to that ideology, to flourish. I acknowledge that there are other interpretations of the activity surrounding the advent of the global economy which discount the role of industrial democracy (Probert 1993, Ewer et al. 1993, Hampson et al.1994, Fairbrother et al. 1997). They interpret the change as always intent upon promoting neo-liberal policies. I, however, argue that the industrial democracy ideology was gradually subsumed by the discourse of managerialism and economic rationalism that has now come to define the nature of industrial globalism in Australia.

I have drawn material from a range of sources - newspapers, union publications etc in order to describe and illustrate the discursive construction of change. I focus particularly on the last 10 to 15 years of the century - years often described as turbulent and characterised by rapid and far-reaching change (Mackay 1993). The chapter begins by describing the climate that accelerated the government and the industrial community towards globalism. It goes on to explain how this was interpreted initially as a discourse of egalitarianism but it was soon rendered into one of managerialism under the influence of economic rationalism. The chapter ends by observing how WLI and Carcare responded to the change that beset them.

5.2 The Context

5.2.1 Globalism

The central theme during this period is globalism. Resistance to it, acceptance of it and issues of definition are central to the debate:

> The great philosophical conundrum facing Australia and governments in the 1990s is whether an internationalised economy is compatible with the Australian tradition of social egalitarianism.
> Kelly, 1994: xxii

A narrow view of globalism refers to an economy based on international competition in the commodities, investment, financial and information markets with its consequential impact upon production and social systems and culture. A broader view would give equal weight to the three components of globalism – economic, social and cultural as one impacts upon the other:

The characteristics of an open and competitive economy are likely to include a growing disparity in performance and wealth and between different states, regions, locations, companies, institutions and households.

Kelly, 1994: xxii

There are at least two ways of viewing the advent of globalism in Australia[30]:

- as a persistent and highly strategic progression master-minded by international business in league with Australian power brokers (Probert 1993, Rees and Rodley 1995); or
- as an ad hoc struggle between the imperative of economic viability on the one hand and the values of equity and humanism on the other (Kelly 1994, Carmichael 1993).

Although tenable arguments are put forward from both perspectives, I prefer the second interpretation. While international forces were creating an environment that could not be ignored (Kelly 1994), Australian business people were searching for answers. At ground level, many, maybe most, were neither clear in their vision nor in control of the change process (Pappas et al. 1990). Carmichael (2001), taking a retrospective view, states that neither unions nor regular business people understood the workings of globalism. The case study company provides supporting evidence of this point of view.

Now, at the turn of the millennium, Australian government and industry appear to have surrendered their attempt to achieve an Australian brand of globalism that allowed a measure of national autonomy and an ideology that balanced economic prosperity with humanist social values.

This chapter describes the discourses embedded in the historical circumstances which have nudged Australian decision making towards the form of globalism now predominant. These discourses have shaped the company under study.

5.2.2 Globalism and the Case Study Company

The case study company, ACME Carcare, provided a service to automotive retailers, exporters and importers. Positioned at the turnstile of the import/export automotive market, it felt the consequences of most of the change decisions that have rippled through industry:

- the change in tariff boundaries and the national interest in overseas markets catapulted the company from a small business with no competitors to a company of considerable dimensions in a competitive global economy
- the advent of globalism cast the company into strategically important alignment with automotive manufacturers and retailers as the traffic of cars in and out of the country multiplied
- its strategic position made it attractive to company amalgamation and take over, both of which happened over the last 8 years
- the effect of international competition forced modern management systems onto the company
- the repositioning of the Australian workforce within the industrial relations framework gave rise to consultative and educational processes.

It is therefore impossible to interpret the power relations and the decision making interchange at the local level without understanding the discourses of recent industrial history which echo throughout the company.

5.3 The Emergence of a New Epoch

5.3.1 Heralding Change

Prime Minister Whitlam began reducing tariffs in the 1970s, heralding a new chapter in industrial history. In the 21st century Australian industry is still turning the pages of that chapter as globalism continues to force the door ever wider to free trade. By the end of the 1980s, despite the resistant[31] discourses, the popular wisdom was that economic prosperity lay in international markets.

Petty's cartoon in the bicentennial edition of *The Age* (Saturday December 31, 1988) captures the foreboding with which many greeted the new direction. It portrays a very uncertain Australia headed off with mud map in hand under penny-cracker propulsion and armed only with trusting smiles. Ill equipped for the journey, the travellers are destined for an unwelcoming land full of blockages, perils and false starts.

AUSTRALIA 1988: THE FUTURE
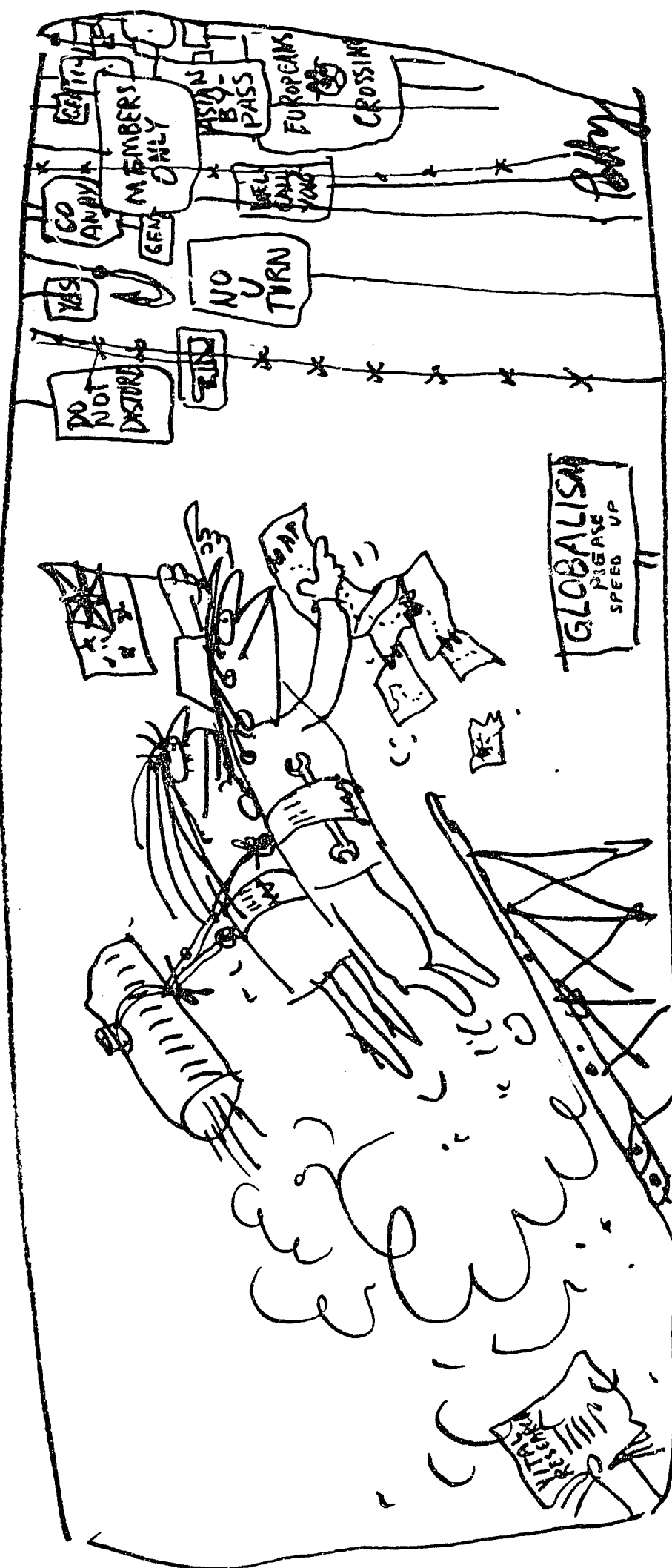
From *The Age* Newspaper Saturday 31 December 1988

5.3.2   A New Discourse of Equity

Australian manufacturing culture had been built on strong authoritarian traditions drawing upon mechanistic models of Taylor and Ford[32]. In the meantime, a new discourse began to emerge. Management discourse until now had constructed itself within the domains of engineering and accountancy. The almost inevitable corollary was defiant labour organisations and adversarial industrial relations practices (Pappas et al. 1990). By the 1980s, however, the discourse of human psychology began to infiltrate the sphere of management. This meant a shift in emphasis from mechanistic, technical systems to discursive measures in managing the workforce.

By the eighties human relations managers were firmly established in large companies, many of them trained in organisational behaviour. Schools of management were established in universities and training institutions. American ideas of 9:9 management styles[33] and Theory X and Y[34] management models infiltrated the workplace. Humanist psychology suggested new alternatives in managing employees based on establishing trust and involving the workers in decision making (Elsey 1990, Kitay and Lansbury 1997). They argued for new ways to achieve international competitiveness. In some large companies Quality of Worklife programs offered personal development courses and gymnasiums that looked to the development of the whole person. The new discourse sat uncomfortably alongside that of production managers who continued to prowl the glass windows overlooking the factory floor, their gaze firmly set on the production figures.

Consistent with the rise of humanism in business, the Australian Labor-led government determined to find political advantage in creating a humanist form of globalism[35]. Listening to the alarm in the voices of the Australian unionists, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) found a unique mix of national and international ingredients in creating a form of globalism that provided profit, prosperity for all, social justice and democracy.

The ALP wrested power from the Liberal Coalition (1983) promising more inclusive processes as the means of solving contemporary questions (Maddox 1989). A number of summits demonstrated a new way of dealing with issues through consensus and holistic approaches bringing together all interest groups on critical issues. Consensus decision making became the model for industry and government. The Accord[36] was an example and

undoubtedly the most successful in creating tangible change. It was noted in the bi-centenary special edition of *The Age* newspaper as a significant achievement:

> However else that government is seen by history, the accord between the
> government and unions will be its great achievement. The accord harnessed the
> militancy of the unions incorporating them into the decision making process, giving
> them an obvious stake in the outcomes.
> Rees, 1988, *The Age*, Saturday, December 31.

The new approach was recognised as a revolutionary circuit breaker by social and political commentators:

> The first great triumph of the new administration was the National Economic
> Summit... This event was at once the chief vehicle and symbol of national
> consensus ... the Prices and Income Accord between the government and the trade
> unions which ... traded an increased 'social wage' - tax cuts, health benefits,
> reduced interest rates and welfare benefits - for wage fixation according to stringent
> guidelines ...Whatever the perspective, there is no questioning the fact that the
> government had achieved something of a revolution in industrial relations.
> Maddox, 1989: 33

'Consensus', 'shared decision making', 'consultation' and 'negotiation' became the banner words of the new discourse of industry. This was the discourse that opened up tripartite decision making in companies as far removed from the mainstream as Carcare.

New Occupational Health and Safety legislation in Victoria (1985) turned the old adversarial system on its head. Where in the past, the legislation required that workers prove that the negligence of the company caused their work injuries, the new legislation put the responsibility on to the companies to create a safe workplace. It empowered workers through their delegates to shut down unsafe equipment and stop unsafe practices. Delegates also had a role to play in implementing safety investigations and corrective practices. While the legislation invited a renegotiation of the power relationships, other social mechanisms held social relations in place so that most delegates did not explore the full potential of their power. Nonetheless, unions began training their delegates in the new

legislation and sleepy companies such as Carcare found stewards asserting their authority in areas where previously only management trod.

Equal Employment Opportunity legislation[37] appeared to be committed to breaking down old hegemonies based on the supremacy of white, middle class males. Compensatory education programs pledged to redress the imbalances and develop the potential of all community members[38]. The discourse of social justice emanated from both sides of the industrial divide:

> equal opportunities for skills acquisition need to be extended to all groups in the
> workforce, particularly those that have traditionally had limited access to training in
> industry, such as mature age entrants and migrants.
> AMC[39], 1988: 10

The new initiatives shifted the locus of action from technology to language, from mechanisation to people centred endeavour, from adversarial to consensus conflict resolution.

> Even in engineering maintenance ... the key variables (and barriers) to the change
> process were social and cultural rather than technical.
> Waterhouse, Wilson and Ewer, 1999: 16

Shared opportunity, shared responsibility for occupational health and safety, skills development and the joint formation of industry strategies meant the catalyst for change was to be carried by belief, perception and the 'soft' skills of communication.

5.4 Industry and Award Restructuring

5.4.1 Implementing the Rhetoric

Consensus decision making and a commitment to humanist values sat within a far-reaching set of reforms which were to be the nucleus of an egalitarian globalism. The industrial reform movement, known as Industry and Award Restructuring, was based upon wisdom gleaned from observing successful industries overseas. From the mid 1980s, overseas

missions had set off to study how other countries had accomplished economic prosperity. These missions were evidence of a change in attitude within Australian government and industry. There was a belief that the future lay in international competition and Australian industry was moving to take a place in the global market economy. (ACTU/TDC 1987, Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries and the Federation of Vehicle Industry Unions, FCAI/FVIU 1989.)

The missions, led by different industry sectors, brought together union, management and government bodies. True to consensus principles, each player was recognised as an indispensable part of the equation, whose inclusion was essential to progress.

The Metal Industry Award Restructuring Implementation Manual proudly sports the logos of each of the industry stakeholders, the MTIA, the ACM and the MTFU.

The restructure was designed to enhance industrial efficiency and to increase skill levels in order to achieve productivity and therefore prosperity through export production (Dawkins 1989 a). Based on egalitarian values, the reforms were to be achieved by:

- establishing consultative practices;
- reorganising work through the broad banding[40] of jobs;
- devolving greater responsibility to the floor for quality and production control;
- developing workers' skills;
- up-grading technology;
- improving efficiency through communication with the workers.

Many of these points of action were focused on changing the relationships between the management and the shop floor. The most intense sites of activity were industrial relations and skills development, both identified as the significant retardants to progress.

The idealised model, symbolised by the inverted triangle, represented the new communication values. Workers would inform managers on matters of work organisation and efficiency improvements. Managers would facilitate the change. Management structures would be flattened. Workers would take control of their work. Grievances would be resolved at the worksite gathered around the negotiating table. The following statement was that of an industrial manager:

The true 'Learning Organisation' would be encouraging its employees, as individuals and groups, to develop new skills, knowledge and attitudes, and in return the organisation would be learning from its employees about efficiency or quality improvements, new applications and innovations.
Elliot, 1989: 18
Staff Development Manager, National Mutual NSW Branch

However not everyone greeted this rhetoric as the dawning of a new age of industrial democracy. Critics recognised the new era as the beginning of an insidious movement towards lean management and economic rationalism:

They (the new organisational values) are a subject of sharp disagreement in the literature. Some writers see the current trends as the forerunner of a new era of humane, democratic and productive workplaces. Others expect that workers will be subjected to a new regime of surveillance and specialised work design that will lead to fewer jobs and greater stress.
Waterhouse, Wilson, Ewer, 1999: 14

Many would regard the following statistics as evidence of this trend:

By 1994, of more than 3,000 federally registered enterprise agreements 53% contained at least one provision relating to flexible labour organisation, team work, quality assurance, continuous improvement, organisational restructuring or a new classification structure (DIR 1996, p.109) …
Waterhouse, Wilson, Ewer, 1999: 14

Personally positioned as one of the implementation foot soldiers of the restructure movement, I read the dominant discourse as a very optimistic one. Adult learning led by industry would be the means of realising a new social vision.

It is through language that we develop our thoughts, shape our experience, explore our customs, structure our community, construct our laws, articulate our values and give expression to our hopes and ideals:

We aspire to an Australia in which its citizens will be literate and articulate, a nation of active intelligent readers, writers, listeners and speakers. Such a nation will be well educated and clever, cultured and humane, and rich and purposeful, because of the knowledge, skills and values of its people.

Dawkins (DEET), 1990: iv

I, along with many of my colleagues in the field, enthusiastically volunteered to help realise the new vision.

Consultative mechanisms were set up in many companies. Most included decision making power. The metals industry was a leader in constructing the discourse. The Metal Industry Award Restructuring Implementation Manual recommended the Workplace Resource Centre (WRC) as a tripartite consultancy body established to support companies engaged in restructuring:

> The WRC established and preferred approach for initiating workplace reform is to totally review all aspects of the enterprise's business, via the consultative mechanism, in a planned and structured manner, with the participation of all employees to establish commitment and attitudinal change.
>
> MTIA, ACM, MTFU, n.d.: 70

There were few, possibly no aspects of the business that were to be outside the scrutiny of the consultative group. (In practice there were many, but union training instructed stewards to ask for access to financial records.) Matheson, a unionist, listed the items open to consultation:

> In 1988 the ACTU and the CAI agreed on a Joint Statement on 'Participative Principles'. Included in that statement was the 'shared conviction ... that co-operation is best achieved by furthering the practices of information sharing, communication and active involvement of employees at the workface in pursuing mutually beneficial objectives, including:
> - efficiency
> - quality of worklife
> - competitiveness

> - job security
> - reliability and quality
> - skills development
> - a healthy and safe working environment
> - flexibility and responsiveness
> - innovation and creativity
>
> Matheson, 1989: 1.5

The old issues of contention between unions and management were renamed as areas of common interests eg work organisation, skill development, labour levels ... Union texts were assertive and optimistic. They spoke of 'sharing', 'involvement' and 'co-operation'. Some went as far as envisaging industrial democracy. Mathews (1989) recognised the restructuring movement as a significant step towards this goal. Words borrowed from socialist thought replaced the language of accusation and mistrust. 'Innovation' and 'creativity' were new ideas in the work-a-day environment of production runs and scheduling but they claimed a presence in the discourse of factory work. 'Mutual benefit' was imported as a key concept of the consensus culture. It still maintains a significant hold.

Awards were reviewed and brought together under new broader headings breaking down the old demarcations between jobs. Frameworks were developed to reclassify the workforce from top to bottom through the Australian Standards Framework (ASF).

ASF levels classified all workers into 8 levels from those at the bottom, say a cleaner, to those at the top, say a senior engineer. Each level was matched to a degree of responsibility. This formed the basis of the career path, the broad banding of skills and skills training and development. Notionally one could move from the bottom to the top.

This reclassification was the work of the first project to be undertaken at Carcare under the guidance of the union – referred to here as the assessment project. The task was to translate the restructured award to the company by broadbanding the jobs and defining the skills needed at each level. Along the way we were to create culture change towards a consultative decision making environment. Only the first was formally stated in a project brief. The second was part of an informal 'pact' we, at WLI, entered into with the union.

5.4.2 A Reticent Embrace of Reform

Despite the discursive shift in the public domain, most Australian industry leaders did not leap into reform (Buchanan 1995). The cage door had been opened but most of the inmates sat resolutely inside. They clearly did not trust restructuring as the enterprise life raft it was purported to be. It appears that the technologisation[41] of the discourse had largely failed. Carmichael, a spokesperson from the union movement, writing the foreword to the Employment and Skills Formation Council report, Raising the Standard, quotes from the Financial Review:

> 'Despite all the sound and fury over recent years only a minority of companies have really restructured with the majority just grafting ideas such as quality circles on existing systems.'
> 'What we need', he said, 'is a circuit breaker to help them decide on the need to reorganise and to get critical technical, economic and social issues on the table in a non-threatening way. But one thing is for sure. Work systems designed by experts and imposed by managers can never be as good as those developed with the people who actually have to perform them.'
> Carmichael, 1993: ix

The Trade Union Training Authority (TUTA) was established in 1975 through an act of parliament by the Whitlam government. In the restructuring years, it worked vigorously to train unionists to participate more fully and more powerfully in their working lives. Their learning materials of 1991 note:

> It is important for unionists to recognise that consultation is now an award right (See Clauses 6, 41, and 42) as well as an extension of the negotiating framework allowing for increased union intervention in decision making.
> TUTA, 1991(author's emphasis)

The text attempts to convince unionists to take up their legal right, but consultation and shared decision making were new words and new roles as threatening to union members as they were to managers.

The take-up rate was inconsistent. According to an extensive industrial relations survey:

> It is clear that the less important decisions are settled 'down the line', while the critical issues affecting workplace performance are settled by senior workplace or head office management. Far from 'letting go of the chains' most organisations still appear to be quite centralised and controlled from above. The rhetoric of devolution and decentralisation is yet to make a real impact in practice at most workplaces.
> Buchanan, 1995: 60

The government drove the reform with incentives and financial support. Some government programs were only available to companies who could administer the initiative through a site-based tripartite or bipartite committee. This was true for the funding achieved for Carcare. The role displayed by the Labor government in industry reform struck a marked contrast to previous governments. The Labor government formed a partnership with employers and unions which influenced the core of industry practice. It influenced decision making, the way work was organised and the terms on which it would be rewarded.

The cleverness of the government initiative lay in locking together opposing forces to create rewards and incentives associated with the achievement of reform, for example, classification levels were linked to skill development, increased wages for union members to the restructuring of awards, worker safety to management liability, training funds to the establishment of a consultative training committee.

Another reading of the trade-off tactic is that the government and industrial parties were committed to deregulation and having relinquished a strategy of direct intervention, they used incentive schemes and training reform as 'industry policy by other means' (Ewer 1996:13). For unions in the Accord era, recognition of skills growth was to replace industrial action as the means to bettering wages and conditions.

It is fatuous to attempt to draw a single and consistent discourse particularly from government where politics are more important than social ideals. However there was plenty of textual evidence around with which to construct a discourse of industrial democracy.

5.4.3 Industrial Democracy Perhaps

In radical quarters the discourse shifted from reform to industrial democracy. Mathews (1989), even in his more cautionary statements, expressed conviction in the possibility of industrial democracy:

> ...post Fordism...opens up the prospect of the invention of work systems in which people and their skills are valued, and where authoritarian systems of surveillance and control give way to democratised forms of participation and self management.
>
> Mathews 1992:95

Fraser, national secretary of the Metal Trades Federation of Unions (MTFU) reflected the euphoria of the times. In December 1990, a new wage agreement was signed between the MTFU and the Metal Trades Industries Association (MTIA). Fraser wrote in the press:

> The MTFU-MTIA agreement represents a revolution in industrial culture in this country. Indeed it represents a new industrial revolution.
>
> The agreement acknowledges that giving skills to the workforce and paying people a living wage not only ensures that they have some money in their pockets to buy Australian-manufactured goods, it means Australia will have an unrepressed, skilled and intelligent workforce that produces as well as, if not better than, anyone else in the world.
>
> *The Age* Tuesday 4 December, 1990

The euphoria of the vision masks a reading of this text which implies a lack of faith in the skill and intelligence level of the then current workforce and hegemonic shift to the management framing of the workforce. The text suggests that the workforce is not skilled, intelligent or sufficiently productive – a view usually presented by management.

In the same newspaper report, Fraser referred to the reform achieved at two companies as a result of the new agreement. At the Campsie plant of Sunbeam-Victa where:

> Absenteeism was halved and the rejection rate on products fell from 16-20 per cent to 1-5 per cent. At the same time output on some lines doubled.
>
> *The Age*, Tuesday 4 December, 1990

At Trico in Melbourne, Fraser reported:

> restructuring created productivity increases estimated at $2 million in working capital and expanded total export business by 300 per cent in 1989, while increasing employment from 160 to 230.
>
> *The Age*, Tuesday 4 December 1990

Fraser typified the new consensus culture where partisan interests were accommodated. Notably, he celebrated profit gains but made little mention of labour gains.

There was a certainty about the construction of the problem and the solutions that generated hope and energy and silenced critical voices. The restructuring solution was presented as unproblematic, transparent and readily available, though not necessarily easy. The synergy and enthusiasm of the discourse left little space for counter discourses. However Hampson et al. writing a few years later, recognised that the uncritical adoption of overseas models of change was dangerous:

> Missions overseas failed to distinguish work intensification[42] models from German group work models.
>
> Hampson et al., 1994:236

A lack of critical sensibility opened the way to managerialist work organisation that settled into the new restructured space in some companies. The road to industrial democracy was already corrupted. Reform measures embraced lean management as willingly as industrial democracy and many union delegates were yet to learn the difference.

> The shift in the union movement's strategy from advocating state-led economic intervention (best illustrated in *Australia Restructured* ACT/TDC, 1987) to supporting workplace change as the key lever of union strategy, provides a strategic vacuum to which apolitical tendencies of post-Fordism are well suited.
>
> Hampson et al., 1994:232

5.5 Evaluating the Industry Restructuring Movement

5.5.1 Uncertain Achievements

The industry restructure movement failed on a number of levels. It failed to produce nation-wide, industry-wide reform partly because reform activity was narrowed to the manufacturing workforce and the bodies that regulated it. Larger non-manufacturing companies and services were not under the microscope because they were not seen to have export potential in Australia during the launching years of the restructure movement. By the mid 1990s the global potential of services such as education, internet and financial services reframed Australia's global offerings as manufacturing moved increasingly off-shore[43].

Other industry sectors also escaped attention, particularly small and medium sized business[44]. Australia's primary employers[45], we are constantly reminded, hid unobserved and were only minimally affected by the revolution taking place around them.

Secondly, reform energy was preoccupied with change at shop floor level. Little attention was paid to management skills and processes. The diagnosis, the legislation, the government grants and the incentive programs framed the causes of the problem around workers; the way they worked and the way they were organised industrially. The skills of managers and their styles of management received no significant attention until the Karpin Report (1995). The Karpin Report was particularly directed towards frontline managers leaving aside more senior executives who still remained cocooned from any significant reassessment. Development of the shop floor on its own does not produce workplace reform as this case study demonstrates.

The recession took hold in 1991 and in their effort to respond to the shared responsibility of keeping 'their' company in business, employee representatives accepted increases in productivity, reduced real wages and reduced employment levels. Most stewards became inadvertently complicit in an agenda which read as 'mutually beneficial' but which served management interests disproportionately (Virgona 1994). In their role as workplace communicators they worked diligently to 'sell' their proposals to the workforce – a role which would have been that of managers in the past. They had fluency and credibility within the shop floor discourse which advantaged their arguments. Thus, in the name of flexibility and common interests, unions sold back to management hard won gains in enterprise bargains[46] (Short et al. 1993, Heiller 1997).

The Age, 15 Nov., 1993

In company meeting rooms, the colonising power of the management discourse silenced worker representatives. The logic of managerialist solutions in creating efficiencies and the urgency of production imperatives coloured the issues, particularly as the recession began to take hold (1990 – '91). For many shop stewards, the alien authority of the boardroom and the persuasive power of production figures and timelines found them lost for words. Positioned outside their traditional discourse, they were no match for the experienced debate of managers. Despite union evidence of the gains to be made from a democratic workplace, most managers could not be converted. As was the case at Carcare, managers would be nudged some of the way but unions failed to construct a discourse of sufficient presence to shift the balance of power. It would take conviction and commitment from all parties to transform the workplace (Elliott 1989). It could not be done by stealth (Brain 1999).

Had the recession come a little later when workers had developed a confident discourse with which to match management, the consensus experiment may have delivered the unique form of globalism envisaged by some in the labour movement. However, according to some critics, such a proposition was never a possibility. In their opinion, the industry reform process provided the tools for down-sizing and managerialism. Probert quotes Schultz who has a definition of restructuring which is far removed from the idealism of Mathews, Fraser, Carmichael and Matheson:

> Schultz insists that 'restructuring is a code word' which hides the reality of the job loss involved in 'manufacturing industry's transition from labour intensive to capital intensive'.
> Probert, 1993: 3

Probert (1993) points out that restructuring was happening right across the globe during the 1980s as part of a right wing agenda. It was happening in Thatcher's England and Reagan's America and around the Pacific rim. This came as a surprise to many Australians working locally in the field who believed that Industry Restructuring was inseparably wedded to an ideology of rebalancing power through consultation and the recognition of stakeholder interests:

> Replacing confrontation, consensus was to be the surrogate for Australianness - a cry to national unity bordering on the jingoistic, with sporting and cultural heroes repeatedly called to witness to the essential Australian ethos.
> Maddox, 1989:11

This idealistic vision of restructuring appears to have been a temporary Australian aberration.

In Probert's analysis, the restructuring discourse was directed to the same end goal whether the ideology came dressed in consensus mythology or Thatcherism. In each case the goal was to reverse the decline in profitability by building an accommodating infrastructure to attract international markets. Post-Fordism[47], as the movement was named by some, was perilous for the quality of worklife but persistent in its credibility in political and industrial

spheres (Hampson et al. 1994). The deregulation of the labour market was a primary goal. Discrediting the workforce was part of the technologisation process (Hull 1994).

In Britain, Cutler (1992) talks of the change that occurred from the 1970s to the 1990s in what he calls the 'discourse of failure' in Britain's economy:

> The 1970s was the central discursive time of the British Labour Problem...sober social scientific work appeared to demonstrate that British labour practices were a central reason for Britain falling behind her major competitors economically.
> Cutler, 1992:162

The 'British Labour Problem' referred to 'the obstructive and conservative character of manual workers in British Industry', that is, workers' low productivity, slow pace of work, resistance to technical change and job re-design and the high numbers of industrial disputes.

Such a discourse could build public sympathy for labour reform. Partnered by a deregulated, decentralised labour management system, globalisation had the essential element for success. As early as 1989, the Business Council of Australia (BCA) bemoaned the centralised arbitration system. The stated concern was that managers deferred their responsibility and initiative in resolving disputes to the Commission rather than developing the skills and resources to resolve them internally. Lansbury and MacDonald report:

> The arbitration system has long been seen as resulting in relatively underdeveloped mechanisms for the conduct of workplace industrial relations because it has encouraged both management and unions to depend on the external system of arbitration to resolve disputes and set wages and conditions ...Thus management does not seek to develop an industrial relations function beyond that necessary to participate in the arbitration system.
> Lansbury & MacDonald, 1992: 9-10

The other part of the problem, according to the BCA report, was the industry focus of industrial awards. The unions were craft and industry based and they negotiated to set standards for awards with national and industry wide application. The BCA claimed that

'productivity would increase in relevant firms by about 25 per cent if enterprise bargaining were introduced.'(Lansbury & MacDonald, 1992:3, quoting BCA 1989).

The progress towards these goals since 1989 has been considerable. Quirk, National Manager, Human Resources, ACM, speaking at the VUT Work Intensification Seminar, May 8, 1997 reviewed the territory covered by enterprise agreements. He attributed the greatest achievement to the shift in focus from the industry awards to the company. However he did not boast about a 25% productivity increase.

5.5.2 The Fading Voice of Egalitarian Industrial Relations

The consensus form of industrial relations of the early 90s embraced globalism. It was largely sympathetic to the decentralised systems but not to a deregulated system. Maybe for this reason alone, the consensus vision could not survive – it was too highly regulated to attract multinational investment. Two distinctive voices were heard during the 90s in employer and union circles, unions upholding a discourse of egalitarianism and employers upholding a belief that market forces should prevail unshackled and unhindered, both envisaging a future within a framework of globalism. These voices are heard in the case study.

From a textual perspective, contradictory discourses lived side by side, one, an offspring of the Australian model of restructuring, another drawn from managerialist/lean models of globalism (Laur Ernst 1993). One therefore finds unlikely partnerships in industry discourse and practice: 'up-skilling' through training paralleled with job deskilling; permanent employees working alongside contract and casual employees; nationally accredited training offered as well as company specific training both claiming competitive value; equity policies encouraging the employment of minority and disabled people while companies ruthlessly discard labour sympathies to meet the lowest price output; employment policies operating under closed shop[48] agreements as well as under individual contracts within the same company; 'safety first' policies demanding priority while tendering systems create safety compromises; award conditions sharing the same workspace with work intensification practices. Most of the above incompatibilities are observable in the case study company.

The battle to achieve an internationally competitive manufacturing sector gradually slipped down the industrial priorities list as the Asian labour market offered cheaper wages and unregulated financial markets. Hence an understanding of Australian globalism evolved to mean not only the displacement of local companies by capital intensive multinational corporations but the shift in economic activity from manufacturing to niche services dependent upon complex IT networks and continued dependence on the resource sector. Carmichael (2001) holds that the Pacific Rim Strategy of the 1970s had assigned a role for Australia within global industry as the supplier of resources, based on a notion of 'comparative advantage'. Australia's restructuring agenda with its emphasis on manufacturing challenged the design laid down by corporate capitalism, but not for long.

Probert (1993) explains that the loss of Australian manufacturing was not a sign of economic decline, just a major economic shift. The nation now measures its tradeable economic strength by the technological and systems growth available and its potential to secure lucrative IT contracts. Competitive advantage has now replaced comparative advantage as the organising principle in judging business growth and in determining the investment attractiveness of a nation (Brain 1999).

5.6 The Rise of Managerialism

Globalism has been an emerging discourse. While it originated with notions of free trade, it has fractured into many discourses in its search for formulas for success in international competitiveness. Most of these discourses are camped under the umbrella of managerialism/neo-liberalism (Brain 1999).

Managerialism is based on an ideology of 'lean production'. The bible of lean production is *The Machine that Changed the World* (Womack et al. 1990) which systematised pull-through processes as a means of creating efficiencies. Pull through systems create urgencies between customers and producers which force faster operations and the need to invent better ways of achieving goals. Customers are conceived as both internal (within the company) and external (outside the company) so the tensions are distributed throughout the production cycle. The system provides the environment for work intensification where the demand increases while the resources decrease.

The problem of maintaining quotas and standards is often the responsibility of workers to solve. Work pressures create an environment where groups discipline themselves, organise their own work and even perhaps decide who should be retrenched, as Premier Kennett did in the Victorian school system in the late 90s. Each school group was charged with the responsibility of achieving greater efficiency and cost reduction in part by reducing staff. They were, what might be called, 'cannibal teams' - their job was to prey upon themselves and reduce their number.

The manager's role is to nurture a culture based on company loyalty and a logic of consequences. Discoursal processes are put in place that display and avow the truth of company values while the consequences of global market competition drive the demands for productivity and the inevitability of downsizing.

Although the philosophy originated in manufacturing industry, there are probably no workplaces that have entirely escaped managerialism since it has been hinged so firmly to concepts of efficiency and advanced company management.

Another discourse of globalisation is that of 'the knowledge economy'. Analysts such as Drucker (1993), Peters (1994) and Senge (1991) all preach similar 'isms' that fall under the banner. These 'isms' are not discreet doctrines that one signs up to as one might a religion excluding other belief systems (although they are sometimes written and sold that way). They are a set of trends and ideas that have been conglomerated by particular social, industrial and political analysts. Companies and groups of people may exhibit some aspects and not others and may combine features without trading fidelities. It is therefore difficult to follow the strands and attribute them to a single school of thought. Such is the case with managerialism, neo-liberalism and the knowledge economy.

Theorists such as Drucker and Peters write with excited animation about a world that is emerging where knowledge is the primary currency - it is fast, constantly changing, technically sophisticated and immediately responsive to customer requests:

> (Work) must be organised for systematic abandonment of the established, the
> customary, the familiar, the comfortable - whether products, services and processes,
> human and social relationships, skills organisations themselves. It is the very nature

of knowledge that it changes fast and that today's certainties are tomorrow's absurdities.
Drucker, 1993: 57

Texts are racy and irreverent, impatiently breaking the bounds of the traditional organisational texts:

> Letting go means letting the person alone to experience those Maalox[49] moments -
> that is true, genuine, no-baloney, ownership in the gut. If there's no deep-seated,
> psychological ownership, there's no ownership. Period.
> Peters, 1994: 80-81

Its pace and apparent lack of respect for convention beckon the reader to reconceptualise business in like terms. 'Fast capitalism', a term coined by Gee et al. (1995) is an apt descriptor.

The new economy operates in niche spaces. It is ephemeral and continually recreating itself. Work relationships usually fit a partnership model rather than an authority model. Work is highly competitive. There are few winners, but the system is fluid allowing a constant flow of opportunities for those well placed to take them (Pink 2001).

Knowledge is situated in enterprise work systems rather than segmented into traditional disciplines. It is separate from skills that Drucker calls *techne*. Knowledge is about effective communication and the systemic application of understanding. It is 'knowing what to say and how to say it' (Drucker 1993:26).

The difference between the knowledge economy and managerialism is that the latter is preoccupied with the control of labour though in some industries it is carefully camouflaged. Managerialism manipulates the pressures, creates the ethos and engineers the relationships. On the other hand, the knowledge economy relies on the pressures that globalism generates to shape labour demands, behaviour and workplace values. However no company can be described as subscribing to one or the other; industrial leaders borrow and blend from each school of thought.

Whether work cultures are better described as managerialist or as knowledge economies, the guiding principle remains the same - that of maximising profits and minimising costs within a competitive global economy. For some, education is intrinsic to the realisation of these goals; for others it is an unnecessary interruption in the business of profit making.

5.7   NALLCU/WLI in the Restructuring Landscape

NALLCU and later WLI was a product of industry restructuring. NALLCU answered to a tripartite governing body. Consultation was an imperative. The new values of global prosperity prioritised shop floor development.

NALLCU's informal partnership with the Vehicle Division of the AMWU opened doors to a large network of automotive assembly and parts manufacturing companies as well as companies within the RS&R sector[50]. The organisation was therefore strategically placed to play an important part in defining the role of training in the change agenda and also in influencing the union's educational discourse.

NALLCU WLI teachers were idealistic and committed to a philosophy of change but the change ideals of the organisation were never stated in the training brief signed by the company. They were however discussed intensely among colleagues. There was significant community 'capital' around the notion of change. It was the theme of the times and learning was a sub-set of it.

> The focus upon issues of workplace learning and change within Australian industry
> is strategically important at this time. Industry in general and the automotive
> industry in particular, is facing increasing pressure from overseas competition.
> Federal government policies (such as those relating to tariff reduction and to
> industrial relations reform) along with the economic forces of global markets have
> placed unprecedented demands upon both employers and unions. Workplace
> change has become mandatory.
> Sefton, Waterhouse and Cooney, 1995:11

WLI staff were keen to contribute to industrial reform where a contribution could be read as part of a democratization process. WLI spent time in professional development sessions alerting teachers to those change activities within enterprises that supported lean manufacturing. Looking back on the first NALLCU project, Sefton and Waterhouse reasserted the boundaries of our interests:

> It was based on a grounded understanding of the workplaces and the workers
> within them, and sought to reduce barriers, minimise problems that may be caused
> by cultural factors, and maximise the opportunities for workers to demonstrate their
> skills. Conducted on behalf of the industry, this research acted as a catalyst
> amongst enterprises and the union to raise awareness and warrant joint action to
> meet the identified needs.
> Sefton and Waterhouse, 1997: 72

The statement specifies a primary responsibility to the workers and an interest in communication as the site for change. When viewed as part of the grand vision of Industry Restructuring, it was a significant contribution.

With the advent of consultative arrangements, the workers became part of the decision making structure of companies. Worker representatives such as shop stewards (or skills assessors acting as employee representatives on training committees) had new roles they were still seeking to define. For shop stewards there was a new and contradictory identity to mould. Where their pre-Restructuring role had been one of agitator, their new role was far more complex:

> They must be strategists who can identify the direction of prevailing forces, know
> what issues are winnable, and when and how to promote them. They must know
> when to agitate and when to negotiate. They must be politically astute,
> understanding global industrial issues and negotiating them at plant level. They
> must be able to define issues separating them from incidents and they need to
> appreciate their political potential. They must research issues and gather data
> framing it in terms that are credible within management's value schema and in
> terms that are advantageous to both parties. They must be able to work with

complex legal material using industrial agreements to argue fine points of interpretation.
Virgona, 1994: 128/9

WLI staff were well equipped to support development of these skills. However, most of us did not find ourselves in companies where management appreciated the contribution we could make to the development of consultative skills within the organisation. None of us were working in workplaces such as those held up as examples by protagonists like Mathews or Fraser. Our workplaces were such that concessions to democracy were wrested from a reluctant management through hard headed union negotiation. They were usually maintained only through vigilance and recourse to the legal power of signed agreements, backed by a well administered set of records that could provide evidence to substantiate claims. Carcare was atypical in this respect.

WLI teachers were to assume impartiality while the industrial parties negotiated the deals. Our contribution would be indirect. In practice, for most of us, the best we could hope for were changes in communication structures and management/worker relationships within the company. At the least we could contribute to the education of individuals, which, we believed, could be a transformative experience:

> The process of teaching, while not revolutionary in itself could provide the basis for different futures by raising awareness through experiential and transformative learning activities.
> Sefton, 2000: 55

The programs were identified within an empowerment and sometimes an emancipatory[51] paradigm:

> What they (the workers) did require was recognition of their skill, access to the dominant discourse and a fair and balanced education program that gave them opportunities to have some say in how their work was organised and the chance to survive in the given environment.
> Sefton, 2000: 128

While many professional development meetings bemoaned the injustice of lean management, some staff reported progress in their host companies. One of the NALLCU newsletters carries a discussion paper as an attachment:

> Some manufacturing companies are genuinely empowering their workers to apply learning to the workplace, to change the design and conditions of work. They are providing a style and content of training that encourages these initiatives. Workers in these companies are genuinely proud of their achievements, happy to have their skill recognised and their opinions and ideas valued. It is equally true that the opposite applies in other companies and a range of intermediate positions also exist.
> Newsletter, September 1992

We sometimes indulged an inflated sense of our own potency as change agents but it was tempered by the constraints of our contractual relationship with managers as the purchasers of our services. At one professional development meeting a staff member mused:

> There is a point of tension there about to what extent you can be open and explicit about the values you are promoting on the one hand and on the other hand the extent to which the work we do is subversive ... I had this discussion about the potential for certain sorts of vocational education to be empowering and to be liberating and all that kind of stuff ... And I said, wouldn't it be fantastic if we as a training company with the union, on behalf of the union, we could go in and we could expose all this sort of crap that is sprouted about quality systems and statistical process control and all the rest. And there is no question that we could do it. We've got the skills to do it. We've got the expertise to do it. We could work people through those processes of critical thinking and all the rest of it, but how long would we survive and who would pay for it?
> Staff Meeting, June 17, 1996

The text makes a somewhat brash assumption about the willingness of workers to submit to a belief in the unassailable absurdity of the industry rhetoric but, in the privacy of the staff environment, such indulgence was tolerated. At the same time the underlying values assert the discourse of management as the one at fault and the most intransigent.

However most of us recognised that the WLI vision was much grander than our modest achievements could demonstrate:

> It seems to me we can't expect through training to change everything. That is the role of organised unions, political parties and arguing out the economic case. All those areas are very important. You can form these policies and ideas but unless there has been some work done in the workforce itself then it won't fall on the fertile ground. There won't be the activist to take it up in the workplace so I don't see the role of training being able to change the system but I see it as playing an important part in enabling those changes at some time further down the line. At least that is my hope. I am reasonably optimistic about that.
> Staff Meeting, June 17, 1996

While NALLCU/WLI drew upon the discourse of Industry Restructuring for a raison d'etre, for political allegiances and for leverage within industry, the possibility of achieving long lasting change was contingent upon the convergence of factors far beyond the control of the organisation.

5.8 Carcare: a tentative partnership

The union negotiated a training program with Carcare on the basis of implementing the restructured RS&R award. The new award provided the lever to introduce new consultative arrangements under the umbrella of Industry Restructuring and to establish a partnership between Carcare and WLI.

Carcare was a late starter in the NTRA, though the first in its industry sector – the Retail, Service and Repair sector. The sector was difficult to encourage or ensnare into Restructuring.

It took till 1995 for the RS&R Award to be restructured and till 1997 for the RS&R Advisory Group[52] members to approve an accredited certificate though the sector was well placed to achieve an early agreement. It was represented by an energetic training board and partnered by the automotive manufacturers who were at the forefront of training reform. The backbone of the RS&R industry has been the automotive trades. Employers therefore

had a long involvement in training through the apprenticeship system. The RS&R certificate offered employers the possibility of dismembering parts of the trades so that non-trades employees could perform some trade skills without being fully trade qualified. The certificate would therefore seem to meet the interests of employers. Nonetheless they resisted. The union played an active role in developing the certificate and applied pressure over a number of years to have the credential approved as a matter of urgency. It would then be able to offer its non-trade members recognition for their skills. Yet it took until 1997 to have the certificate passed by the Advisory Group. One could conclude that some Advisory Group members, namely the employers and some state level representatives, saw training as of such little value that the incentives failed to overcome uncertainty, the impost on the company budget and inter-state rivalries[53]. For this reason, the Carcare training participants received a certificate of attainment towards a Vehicle Industry Certificate (VIC) rather than an RS&R Certificate since the first graduates completed in 1996.

The restructured award allowed the union a new foothold in its relationship with Carcare. The implementation of the award was a mandatory legal requirement. As a self-appointed guide to the company on the implementation process, the union infiltrated new domains of influence.

The intention of the union was to improve the pay and conditions of the workforce through the legislated channels of skill development. At the same time the Restructuring movement offered an opportunity to begin to negotiate at least a partial industrial democracy. The union sought to set in place a transformative discourse that would supersede adversarial industrial politics. It sought to destabilise the old hegemony based on conflict and industrial disruption and to replace it with a discourse of co-management based on co-operation and conciliation. Eventually, the union hoped to be recognised for the role it played in labour management and wanted it authenticated by the establishment of consultative decision making throughout the company. The following discussion between the shop steward and the central union representative suggested that some progress had been made towards achieving these ideals:

Ron: He (the national manager) told me 5 years ago he wasn't going to ... that he wasn't ... that he wasn't putting up with anyone, union or shop

steward, running the company from the shop floor

Anna: That was Tom?

Ron: That was about 5 years ago now

Anna: Well he's learned a lot, hasn't he?

Ron: Yeah

           Training Session

With the support of government policy and funding bodies that sponsored training, consultative structures were set in place and the company falteringly dealt with the compliance requirements. The Restructuring happened upon the company in a similar way to the globalisation agenda. The latter was imposed upon them by the multinational owners, the former by other industrial pressures. The transforming discourse seeping into the organisation through the union and WLI, was not echoed back by the management group. It was allowed to coexist but the management resisted colonisation.

5.9   Conclusion

This chapter described the emergence of the discourse of globalism and the industry practices and ideologies that have clustered around it as it has secured its status over the last 10 to 15 years, from the restructuring period of the mid 80s to the end of the century.

Industry Restructuring introduced a whole new discourse that changed the relationship between labour, unions and managements. Initially it appeared to be the discourse of egalitarianism and industrial democracy. However, despite the resistance of unions and organisations such as WLI, the pressure for economic prosperity colonised the reform discourse and absorbed it into a new form of globalised economic imperialism embedded in an ideology of economic rationalism.

A number of initiatives introduced during the restructuring years have been sustained although they have been recoloured as managerialist objectives have overpowered those of egalitarian reform. The shift in the way industrial relations decisions are made and the opportunity for employee input on business decisions has altered the way most companies interact with their workforces and has created new communication processes and structures. The broad-banding of jobs, the amalgamation of unions and the development of team based work units has altered the organisation of work. The shift from the adversarial relationship between unions and management is still somewhat contested but the management of labour relations at enterprise level has changed. It has become more interactive and more site specific. The notion of common interests has created new discursive practices for unions. The EBA as the primary mechanism for setting wages has endured, but it has becoming increasingly problematic since shop floor work has become more complex with devolved responsibility and employees believe they have exhausted their tradeable capacity. The wedding of skill levels to pay has also left a lasting legacy and one that has served the interests of those supporting individual work contracts.

Carcare is an interesting workplace to study in this environment. While it was a late-comer to Industrial Restructuring, the ideals of the movement persisted in the reform activity driven by the union in partnership with WLI. The relationship between these three organisations provides a rich source of data through which to view the discourses of change. The interpretation of these discourses at company level is the primary interest of this thesis. Carcare does not exemplify a smooth synchronicity with the dominant discourses but it reflects the energies that have shaped the values and cultures of industry.

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[49] A Marxist view would analyse the advent of globalism as the result of a crisis in world capitalism driven by the falling rate of profits and the global flow of international finance capital made possible by the information technology revolution (Castells 1996).

[50] Many left wing intellectuals (eg Teichman 1990, Wheelwright, 1990) maintained a vigorous debate in the media arguing that multinational companies would colonise Australia economically and culturally and create dependencies that would destroy Australian autonomy. Unionists argued that jobs would be lost to cheap overseas labour markets and small business would close (Australia Ripped Off, AMWSU, 1979).

[51] Since the 1950s, management thinking had been guided by Taylorist and Fordist approaches to manufacturing that conceived of people as robotic and one of the technical resources of the company. The effective management of the resources would result in profitability.

[52] Blake and Morton, 1964, developed a grid where concern for workers was pitted against concern for production. An equal balance of both was scored at 9:9 and presented as the most desirable.

[53] McGregor, 1960, profiled two polarities in management style. Theory X personalities distrust workers and believe in strong control mechanisms to achieve effective outputs. Theory Y personalities have faith in their employees and believe that the best results can be achieved by fostering creativity and a sense of initiative.

[54] The Hawke Labor Government was elected in 1983 on a reformist platform.

[35] The Prices and Income Accord was a centralised system of wages and price setting that was arrived at through consensus mechanisms whereby prices were to be automatically adjusted in response to the rise of the cost of living index. This system was to replace previous measures of unionised industrial action to agitate for wage increases.

[37] Racial Discrimination Act (1975), Sex Discrimination Act (1984), Disability Discrimination Act (1992), Victorian Equal Opportunity Act (1995), Racial Vilification Act (1996).

[38] The Australian Language and Literacy Policy (DEET 1991) was drafted in this vein projecting a progressive agenda based on social equity.

[39] The Australian Manufacturing Council (AMC) is a peak employer body.

[40] Broad banding jobs involved the grouping of jobs in large populations, based on skill levels, in place of separate awards and regulations for each job eg within the RS&R sector, the previous 40 classifications were reduced to 8 – 5 pre-trade levels, a trade level and 2 post trade levels.

[41] A term coined by Fairclough defined as 'calculated intervention to shift discourse practices as part of the engineering of social change' (1995:3) See Chapter 4

[42] 'Work intensification' refers to work organisation reform based on increasing the pace and demand of work to meet increased productivity goals rather than redesigning the work with the interests of workers in mind.

[43] In Victoria, 7% of manual jobs disappeared in 1993. Jobs in plant and machinery operation dropped by 11%. Between 1990 and 1993, 21% of such jobs disappeared while jobs in the service, IT and finance sector grew. (Quoted from ABS sources by D. Walker, state economics correspondent, in The Age Fri., Nov 6, 1993).

[44] Small business is defined by the ABS as fewer than 30 employees in non-manufacturing and fewer than 100 in manufacturing industry. Medium-sized business could be described as fewer than 80 in non-manufacturing and fewer than 250 in manufacturing industry.

[45] Small business accounted for 51% of non-agricultural, private sector businesses in Australia in 1993 contributing almost 30% to GDP (Employment and Skills Formation Council 1993).

[46] The accord method of wage fixing began to give way to enterprise bargaining methods of wage adjustment from 1991 with Accord Mark VI which allowed an amount of wage negotiation at enterprise level. Accord Mark VI was the final accord agreement. The accords marked a gradual shift from a centralised system of wage fixing to local arrangements negotiated at enterprise level.

[47] Post-Fordism embraces concepts such as lean production and systems for cheaper, quicker productivity outcomes.

[48] A closed shop is a workplace where union membership is compulsory.

[49] Maalox is an American antacid. The term has made its way into the colloquial vocabulary in reference to particularly stressful situations.

[50] The 'pact' between the union and NALLCU/WLI was formalised in a Memorandum of Understanding when WLI was inaugurated. The empathy between the ideologies of the two organisations made for an important strategic alliance.

[51] Inglis (1997) distinguishes between emancipation and empowerment. Empowerment assists people to work successfully within the existing system whereas emancipation is concerned with resisting and challenging the given power structures.

[52] The RS&R Board is the national body that represents the industry on matters of training and skill development through the National Automotive Industry Training Board (now Automotive Training Australia ATA). It is made up of representatives of RS&R enterprises, the union and ATA staff.

[53] I was working with the Advisory Group on an RS&R project in 1993/4. The fractured nature of the sector and the resistance of the members made it difficult if not impossible to progress the reform agenda.

CHAPTER 6: -THE NATIONAL TRAINING REFORM AGENDA IN ACTION

Balloon metaphor:
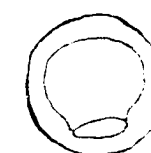
> This chapter looks at the inner lining of the balloon, which represents industry training. The inner lining is an essential component of the outer structure. It holds the heated air that gives the balloon propulsion.

6.1 Overview

This chapter examines the development of the National Training Reform Agenda (NTRA) exploring the values that underpinned it. It explains how the discourse of training was established, charged with the task of building a strong manufacturing sector, with the locus of activity on the shop floor. It goes on to explore the Carcare experience of training, looking for points of convergence with the NTRA. It reflects critically on the shortfall of both the NTRA and the training at the case study company.

6.2 The National Training Reform Agenda

The lynch pin to the industry restructure movement was training:

> The quality of a nation's education and training system exerts a direct and substantial influence on the depth, breath and flexibility of its labor force skills
>
> Dawkins, 1989b:4

The need for a highly skilled workforce was one of the loudest calls from the overseas study missions which set off to find the answer to Australia's industrial malaise. The automotive mission returned with images of industry playing a central role in training:

> In all the plants visited, training was seen as a long-term investment and not a current cost. The amount of resources invested in training revealed the high priority

it was accorded. The knowledge that training was a collective responsibility of industry reinforced individual company effort.
Tripartite Study Mission, 1989: 16

The radical point of departure was that the jobs of the labouring classes were described as 'skilled' and in need of training. Restructuring energy, particularly training energy, was poured into this sector as if it were the sole hope of international competitiveness.

The nature and the form of the training system were to be unravelled under the name of the National Training Reform Agenda.

The term itself, National Training Reform Agenda, suggests a broad sweeping set of changes. Smith quotes FitzGerald et al. to provide a working definition of the Training Reform Agenda:

> a loosely related collection of government policies progressively agreed by Ministerial Councils between 1989 and 1994, whose common element is that they are all directed explicitly towards reforming aspects of Australia's approach to skill formation.
> FitzGerald et al., 1994: 17 in Smith, 1996: 3

It was therefore not a single unified concept, but one that evolved as the 'problem' was progressively redefined. With each redefinition, the movement redirected its energies as corrective action. Hence the term 'agenda', implying an on-going adjustment towards the goal of restructured industry:

> The use of the term 'agenda' to describe the reform of a major social and economic institution reveals something of the driving force in the process. As Richard Sweet remarks: 'An agenda is a list of things to be brought before a committee, a list of things to be done. It implies a bureaucratic process of change based on structures, controls, guidelines, committees and reports'.
> Sweet 1993:2 in Smith, 1996:3

The outcome was that the government in partnership with industry established a training system from the ground up for working people - a complete greenfield site (Foley & Morris 1995). Consistent with the times, it incorporated principles of consensus and participation of all stakeholders. It adopted a holistic perspective and attempted to address workplace skills, theory, knowledge and attitudes in its curriculum and assessment. It was to be a comprehensive reform plan to cover each industry's needs separately and all levels of workplace activity.

The National Training Reform Agenda however was driven by a perception of need that was not shared by Australian industry. Most firms were not dissatisfied with the prevailing training practices. In Pappas et al.'s diagnosis, firms were 'not particularly demanding in their (training) requirements' (1990:67), but Australia's training performance compared poorly with that of overseas and fell well short of world best practice (ACTU/TDC 1987, FCAI/FVIU 1989, DEET 1988). Since Australian managers were not particularly troubled by this fact, the government set about intervening in the discourse to create a problem. A technologisation[54] process was required if reform and world parity were to be achieved.

The NTRA was founded on a number of beliefs:
- that the shop floor workforce was poorly skilled. Up-skilling was essential for the prosperity of the nation's industry;
- that training should be 'demand driven'. Industry would identify the skills it needed rather than educational institutions deciding the skills they would teach;
- that national uniformity and consistency of standards in nomenclature, course content and outcomes were needed as a mechanism to ensure a national system that allowed portability of qualifications between states and companies;
- that Competency Based Training (CBT) and assessment was the most effective means to skills achievement and recognition;

A system predicated on these beliefs was to be managed by the National Training Board (NTB).

The National Training Board was established in 1990. It was made up of representatives from employer, union and government bodies whose job was to design, implement and monitor the vast NTRA, with the single purpose of increasing quality and efficiency so as to make a major contribution to Australia's international competitiveness:

High productivity and quality in goods and services is dependent in large measure on a nation's ability to produce both well trained workers and organisations which enable employees in all areas and levels of the organisation to contribute their potential.

NTB, 1992: 8

Skills training would be delivered through a highly controlled and nationally applied curriculum and assessment framework, credentialed through industry-wide certificates. A full set of skills would be defined for each industry from the least to the most complex. Curriculum would be prescribed through defined learning outcomes allowing restricted leeway for company customisation. Training would be prioritised for workers at the lower levels of the hierarchy and financial incentives would be offered by government to assist with the implementation.

In an attempt to place industry at the centre of the training reform, the Board was deemed responsible for all significant educational decisions. Educationalists were not represented on it. Industrialists and bureaucrats made ontological, epistemological, axiological and, by implication, methodological decisions[55]. Industry teachers drafted curriculum materials but they were edited and vetoed by industrialists. Industrialists decided what should be included and excluded from the learning program, what was knowledge and what was not, what was desirable for learners to know and, by implication, how it should be taught. They authorised not only the learning outcomes but also the structure for learning, the curricula and the learning activities[56]. Endorsed industry certificates, curricula and learning materials were devised for each industry and managed by separate Boards set up for each industry.

The Vehicle Industry Certificate[57] is the one referred to most frequently in this study. It came under the jurisdiction of the National Automotive Industry Training Board (now ATA, Automotive Training Australia). The certificate consisted of competencies embracing both on-the-job skills and off-the-job knowledge[58]. Learning outcomes were set for each competency and, to achieve the credential, candidates were required to meet these outcomes by demonstrating their competence in accordance with the mandated CBT model. Learning materials were developed for each module of the knowledge component. These materials were widely accepted throughout the automotive industry but they were not a stipulated requirement of the certificate.

6.2.1 Competency Based Training as Interpreted by the NTRA

While there is no agreed working definition of CBT observable consistently across learning environments (Harris et al., 1995), the NTRA and industry bodies made reference to it as if it were unproblematic and universally accepted. In practice it is best understood as a set of features that were most likely to characterise training offered under the banner (Harris et al. 1995). It became associated with several features that protagonists incorporated into the definition, such as modularisation, outcomes focused, flexible delivery, performance oriented, norm referenced … In practice, examples within TAFE and industry embraced practices that contradicted the definition (Deakin 1994)[59]. However, fundamental to the system was a belief that skills and knowledge intrinsic to the performance of a particular work endeavour, could be comprehensively described by task-based units of competence. CBT gave the impression that skills could be standardised throughout industry. Their formal description, within the industry standards, provided an apparently unambiguous measure of skills recognition and achievement. CBT, as interpreted within the NTRA, asserted that competence could be authentically parcelled, taught and finally tested through observing demonstrable behaviour.

CBT was not just a pedagogical feature of the new training system, it was part of Dawkins' political armoury that drove the NTRA (Ewer 1996). It gave governments leverage to win support for this major initiative because it demystified education and gave industry a simple tool with which to control curriculum, knowledge and outcomes (Hall 1996). In fact the NTB demanded that competencies be 'sensible to trainees, supervisors and potential employers' (NTB1990:13). CBT allowed for the modular accumulation of skills, seeming national consistency and transferability between companies. To industrialists, CBT provided tangible skills accountability and modularised training which accommodated flexibility and equity:

> A modular course structure makes it easier for employees to gain credit for skills already held and enables employers and employees to more closely tailor their courses to their needs.
>
> MTIA, ACM, MTFU, n.d: 60

Competency Based Training, as practised in Australian industry, catered to the interests of those managing the trade-off between skills and pay levels because it charted skills on a hierarchy. Its strength was in controlling, systematising, standardising and accounting for training. For the unionists, bureaucrats and some educators, the system had some functional advantages in providing a uniform set of scales where the measures remained consistent no matter who, where or what the circumstances. On the other hand, for most educationalists, qualities such as these made it difficult to develop authentic educational experience for workplace learners based on principles of adult education (Scott 1991, Brown 1991, Foley 1995, Chappell et al. 1995). For industrialists it made for transparent skills accountability whereby performance could be measured to give relativities on the classification structure.

The intention was to shift authority and control from educational institutions to industry. Ryan (1999) even argues that Dawkins worked at establishing a discourse that discredited TAFE as an informed and credible provider of industrial education. That aside, CBT was part of the arsenal for achieving the shift. In time, the popular forms of CBT[60] proved unsuitable for the needs of industrialists and managers also. They required genuine skills growth that was directly applicable to their enterprise activity rather than generalised industry based skill development (FitzGerald et al. 1994, Virgona et al. 1998, Sefton et al. 1995, Billett et al. 1999, Billett 1993). Generalised industry training has proved not to be generic (Billett 1994 a). For example, trainees at Containers Packaging learned about general press operations rather than the operations of the unique presses at the plant. It was assumed that transfer of learning was a simple, virtually automatic process.

Deakin (1996) argued that the system that emerged under the National Training Reform Agenda had restricted the knowledge and skill development of workers. It fragmented learning into modules of packaged general learning, often decontextualised from real work, and assessed in artificial settings. It 'echo(ed) Taylor's model of separation, segmentation, hierarchy and control' (Gowen 1994:124). Mulcahy and James (1998) observe that CBT favours an environment where the learner is subservient to established practice rather than one where the learner utilises the technology in order to innovate and explore the boundaries.

In practice, CBT as interpreted by the NTRA practitioners, served industrial relations better than it served education. Debate, led by educationalists, arose over the nature of CBT early in the restructuring years. CBT was criticised not for its rhetorical shift from time based to performance based learning and assessment[61], but for the way it was interpreted within the Training Reform Agenda. Early models implemented in industry were associated with methodologies that valued repetition and duplication and ignored higher level skills of inquiry, work management and problem analysis (Gribble1990, Marsick 1988, Brown 1991, Jackson 1993, Stevenson and McKavanagh 1994). Popular models conceptualised work as a narrow set of tasks (Mawer & Field 1995). The industrial education agenda had no interest in emancipatory ideals or reflective practice that formed the wellspring of critical andragogy (Foley 1995). The discourse was industrial and instrumental rather than critical and educational (Stevenson 1993). It adopted a narrowly functional role. Knowledge was text bound, defined and compartmentalised into occupational subsets which denied the need for 'higher level cognitive processes (to develop) students' control over their own learning - positive attributes and a capacity and desire to appraise a situation, to generate an approach for problem solving and to monitor and review this approach until a solution is reached' (Stevenson 1994:49).

Skills were measured against set, rigid industry standards which distinguished competence from incompetence in binary terms. This however 'fails to recognise the active modification and subjective redefinition of work tasks that necessarily occurs continuously during the performance of a job' (Mulcahy & James 1998:122, citing Leplat 1989). Herein lies competence (Billett 1994a) and often the niche advantage of an enterprise.

More recent research (Sandberg 2000) argues persuasively that competence is not contained in mastering 'how to' instructions but rather in the way workers conceive of their work. While all workers may recognise the same definitions of quality and productivity, they do not achieve the goals in the same way. Those that take a holistic approach and construct their activities in a conceptually sophisticated manner, achieve higher order competence. Other research indicates that productivity growth is the result of relational factors and how skills are applied (Maglen and Hopkins 1998). Productivity was linked with issues of learning, how problems are posed and how the workforce is engaged intellectually and culturally (Billett 2001, 1998c).

While this research was not available to the NTRA designers of the CBT models, the social function of maintaining the status quo appears to be of greater interest than issues of the nature of skill and expertise (Welton 1991). The CBT model that evolved drew upon the values of 'Cultural Transmission' (Gribble 1990)[62]. By contrast, 'Development Education' models are directed to nurturing creative analytical thinkers in line with critical andragogy[63].

Recent studies note that developmental education is reserved for the higher echelons of the organisational hierarchy (Mulcahy & James 1999a) where thinking skills and attitudinal qualities are recognised as imperative.

Knowledge and debate about skills transfer is still unsophisticated in most workplaces today as demonstrated at Carcare. Spurious research based on unsupported generalisations assumed that skill transfer would just happen (Hall 1996)[64]. Studies conducted since the mid 1960s assert that skills transfer is complex and less predictable (Pogson and Tennant 1995, Darrah 1992, Stevenson 1994b, Wilson 1993, Bevan 1994)[65]. There are a number of highly contested positions on skills transfer, none of which can command certainty (Misko 1999). Other studies suggest that transfer of learning is a skill in its own right and must be learned directly (Marginson 1995).

Likewise the career structure provided some inconsistency with the NTRA stated policy. Wage agreements were made at industry level on the basis of recognised skills and credentials. Credentials were locked into a career path through a nationally agreed classification ladder based on ASF[66] levels. Since wage agreements were set at industry level on the basis of recognised skills, a worker's position on the career ladder determined his/her pay. Once on the ladder, a worker was to be guaranteed national recognition[67] at that level within the industry and was eligible for progression upwards from that point. However both national recognition and progression[68] were beset with political impasse.

6.3 Creating the Climate for Change

6.3.1 Technologising the Discourse

There were major organisational changes that had to take place to achieve a reformed industry sector- awards to be restructured, work systems to be redesigned, entrenched traditions to be reshaped, technological changes to take place, consultative processes to be set up. However, the discourse led the community to believe that none of this was achievable with the skill and knowledge level of the workforce of a decade ago, particularly the manufacturing workforce.

> There is now general agreement that Australia needs a more flexible and highly skilled workforce capable of maximising its productivity, producing quality goods and innovatively exploiting both new technologies and market opportunities. In the drive to achieve these results it has become apparent that poor literacy, numeracy and English language skills of a significant number of adults and youth is an impediment to this occurring.
> House of Representatives, 1991: 12

The 'general agreement' referred to above grew out of compelling policy and rhetoric rather than overwhelming empirical evidence (Hull 1994, Gowan 1994, Hall 1996). Language capability gained particular prominence. It was at this time that facility with language was referred to as a 'skill' along with a number of other capacities such as communication, problem solving, negotiation, customer responsiveness etc. Under the 'skills' banner each could claim the status of a developmental entity alongside technical skills and so, acquire visibility. Through processes of colonisation and intertextuality, the discourse expanded the category of 'skill' to take on new subject areas. Skill development was the business of the NTRA which provided recognition and funding. Within the industry restructuring discourse, skills, therefore, had particular meaning. They were marked by finite dimensions, analysed for elements and composite qualities and assessed with measurable outcomes – features that became synonymous with Competency Based Training. Once reconceptualised within the CBT lexicon, they could be called competencies and could then be quantified, costed, accredited and credentialed. Training

was being commodified, standardised and marketised consistent with industry training environments.

Within government and VET forums 'skill' sat alongside 'competence' and 'competencies' ('now used as a generic term for knowledge, skills and attitudes' Stevenson 1994:42). Their discursive environment included 'skills formation', 'up-skilling', 'skills recognition', 'industry and competency standards', 'credit transfer', 'workforce flexibility', 'competency based assessment' and 'reform', many of them action words implying redirection and renewal.

This was also the time when intertextual processes were at work colonising the term 'training' to replace the word 'education' in its vocational application. In Shor's terms it represented 'the triumph of training over education' (Shor 1986:52). The intention was to draw a line to separate the academic and scholastic from the 'hands-on' and technical. Training was to be grounded in the practical processes of industry. Training was part of the industry lexicon, education was not. A technologisation process was taking place to inflate the presence to a new industrial phenomenon. In the following example, DEET attempted to rally recruits and commitment to training:

> Integral to Australia's concerted effort to boost its share of world trade through increased productivity is a revolution occurring in our factories and laboratories, on the shopfloors of industries and in the design shops and studios of our businesses, large, small and medium.

> The frontline troops in this revolution are the working men and women of Australia. Their weapons are their skills and intellect.

> Their purpose is that Australia become a clever and capable country - able to use the wit, intelligence and skills of its people to improve and cement its position in the international marketplace and the world community.
> DEET, 1992

Hyperbolic language trumpeted the announcement of reforms. A euphoria of revolution was being constructed making intertextual links with nationalist sentiment and a 'call to arms'.

6.3.2 Incentives for Change

The federal government put forward incentives for companies to implement training and to take up the NTRA. The Training Guarantee was one such initiative. It was launched in 1988, established in 1990 and was designed to change the culture of Australian industry.

The Training Guarantee required all companies with a payroll of $200,000 or more, to spend 1% of their payroll on training or else pay the same sum in tax. In 1992, the amount was to increase to 1.5%. A large investment of hope rode on the back of the Training Guarantee as expressed in the following explanation of the rationale printed in the popular press:

> It (the Training Guarantee) was established to increase profits, lift staff morale, allow for easier structural change and improve the competitiveness of Australian industry.
> *The Age*, Nov. 18, 1990

6.3.3 A Deficit Workforce

There were some stipulations as to what was eligible training under the Training Guarantee, but the constraints were loose. The legislation required that training programs be structured and that they develop the skills and knowledge of employees. Studies aimed at analysing and defining the needs of shop floor employees were allowable under the Guarantee.

Training needs are a construct of those stakeholders invited to interpret a potential training situation. Training providers, anxious for a share of the training dollar, put forward programs. A flurry of activity gave birth to 'audits' as educators adopted the discourse that resonated in corporate circles[69]. Shrouded in terms that pretended the accuracy of science and the level of accountability applied to financial records, audit teams 'measured' the

technical skills and the language and literacy skills of workers and produced numbers in tables to prove their conclusions. Brief tests, observations and interviews provided comparative data. Training providers made a significant contribution to the technologisation process. Audits, alongside other surveys, particularly the Wickert survey (1989), provided apparently damning evidence of an illiterate workforce bereft of the skills necessary to transform the workplace.

Some of the problems that have been linked to communication difficulties include:

- time/productivity/quality control losses due to misunderstanding of instructions, extra (supervision) time necessary for giving and clarifying instructions;
- OHS incidents;
- difficulties in provision of/access to training;
- reduced workforce flexibility (eg inability to substitute for fellow workers, difficulties in coping with organisational and technological change);
- contribution to language barriers to workplace tensions, poor morale, absenteeism and turnover;
- not to mention the skills and ideas which are lost because of language and literacy barriers.
Reece, 1991: 8

Long reported a comment from the *Business Review Weekly* of June 1989:

Rough estimates, the only ones we have, indicate a lack of English language skills could be costing Australia at least $3.2 billion a year in additional communication time needed in the workplace. The figure could be considerably higher if it took into account the increased cost of industrial safety, poor product quality, low job mobility and flexibility, high turnover and a limited quality of life.
Long, 1990: 20

The outcry bemoaning failing standards has been cyclical in industrial history and is more ideological and anecdotal than a measure of fact (Green et al. 1997). It coincides with a sense of economic crisis and a community demand for governments to assert control. When governments initiate directed action to arrest the educational and therefore economic decline, their actions may convince the electorate that they are addressing structural

problems and providing economic growth (Elsey 1990). The leap from the low levels of literacy and numeracy to productivity loss was perhaps somewhat tenuous (Hull 1994, Gowen 1994) but literacy practitioners and advocates were complicit in the process. It was quickly integrated into the dominant discourse and remained unchallenged, even in the critical discourse, until recently. The literature from both sides of the political divide blamed the workforce for the impoverished state of Australian industry and by implication, put responsibility for economic salvation on to workers.

The juxtaposing of language issues alongside safety issues was an intertextual device which implied a level of responsibility for accidents to the NESB workforce and added weight to the language and literacy training need:

Inadequate literacy skills in the workplace ... increase individual proneness to industrial accidents and increase dangers to all workers.
Hartley, 1989:7

The 1976 Report of the House of Representatives Select Committee on Specific Learning Difficulties (Cadman Report) noted that the annual cost of industrial accidents alone was $2 billion. If part of this is due to poor communication skills on the part of operatives, it argued, then the cost of illiteracy mounts.
Long, 1990:20

DEET worked hard at building the discourse connecting growth in English language and literacy with increased productivity. It trumpeted successes, printing testimonials from industrialists in its training magazine. For example, Sue Lawton from Johnson and Johnson reported that after an 80 hour AMES program delivered to language and literacy learners on product knowledge and terminology, the trainees were striding ahead:

'They all got great results and are performing well on the job'.. ..The workers were showing more self-confidence.... They are more inclined to speak up. They are also more likely to want to take part in future training.
Training and Productivity Journal, 1994: 12

Similar testimonials profess the success of language and literacy training in literature published during the International Year of Literacy, 1990. Both union and employer peak bodies put out information folders professing the gains that could be achieved through literacy training: *'An Equal Chance, Literacy in Your Workplace'* and *'Literacy Training: the key to long term productivity'*.

The transformation went beyond the literacy skills of workers. As testified by Sue Lawton, they were on the way to becoming workers of a totally different social calibre. Literacy would deliver improved moral citizens and productive workers:

> Literacy training makes good sense.
> The long term benefits to employers are:
> - cost savings
> - improved health and safety
> - better quality production
> - better communication
> - greater participation in work
> - better industrial relations through improved communications
> - improved job satisfaction for employees
> - increased loyalty to the organisation
> *Literacy Training - the key to long term productivity* 1990

The new worker was to be inventive and interactive in the mainstream of company activity (ACTU 1990). He/she would conform to management expectations (Gowan 1992) and would participate fully in the communication, training and continuous improvement aspects of the workplace and exclusively in English language (Gee 1994).

Mawer takes a critical view:

> There has been, pervasively an implicit deficit model operating. That is, the problem has been clearly assumed to be that of the individual worker who for a variety of personal, socio-economic, historical and cultural factors has failed to fit the Anglo-Celtic, middle-class, educated, articulate, assertive male criteria implicit in the prerequisites.
> Mawer, 1992: 21

There was little public debate about claims such as those of Mawer (except in Miltenyi et al.'s significant report 1989). The new discourse taking hold was not set to address these concerns. It constructed the 'migrant problem' in terms of equity and positive discrimination and offered English language training as the panacea.

The federal government established the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program (WELL) as another item on the Agenda. WELL administered funds for the development of language, literacy, numeracy and communication skills in industry. Carcare was one of the recipients. The funds were to provide enabling skills to equip shop floor employees to participate fully in the training offered through industry certificates.

6.4   The Emergence of NALLCU

The language and literacy debate created an urgency for communication training for the most disadvantaged employees. It freed money into the system which provided the resources upon which NALLCU was built. In the spirit of the times a major audit of the automotive industry was proposed. The Work Placed Education Project (Sefton and O'Hara 1992) profiled a multi-lingual, multi-national workforce where 71.3% came from a non-English speaking background (NESB). 82% of NESB and 37% of ESB workers were in need of assistance to participate in regular training programs. The survey created the evidence to justify funding and to establish the NALLCU project. Subsequent submissions stretched the funding to three years. The task of the project was to co-ordinate training and to develop a strategy to deal with the challenge of training such a workforce. The outcome was the 'integrated model' described in Sefton et al. 1994 (key principles of the model are outlined in 6.6.2).

6.5   Summarising the NTRA

The NTRA was set in place using the communication skills of marketeers and the political will of key industrialists and politicians. The new training regime was to be the instrument of major cultural change particularly focussed on the shop floor. It was hoped that it would create a participative, communicative workforce, accountable skills development, career opportunities based on equity principles and industrial peace on the way to enhanced productivity and improved international competitiveness.

The NTRA with the assistance of the Training Guarantee, achieved some outcomes. The national percentage of pay roll costs spent on training rose to 2.6% and continued to grow despite the full abolition of the Training Guarantee in 1996. It reached 2.9 % in 1997, but fell to 2.6% in 1998 for the first time since the ABS started collecting figures on training expenditure in 1989 (quoted from ABS sources, Smith 1998).

6.6   The Carcare Experience

6.6.1   Interpreting the NTRA at Carcare

The training system established at Carcare was founded on the principles and aspirations of the NTRA. It was negotiated by the union, nominally administered by a representative consultative committee and designed to deliver competencies of a nationally accredited training certificate attached to pay outcomes for graduates. It was intended to establish a skills based career structure to replace the ad hoc wage system of the past. Ironically, while the strongly globalised sectors of industrial Australia were moving back to free labour market principles and wage deregulation, Carcare, under the influence of the union, was aligning itself with the old ideology of consultation.

Carcare managers had never considered training for their shop floor employees till the union came knocking with demands to increase skills and hence wages. Most managers argued that shop floor work was unskilled and there was nothing for the workers to learn. In a letter to the union they claim that 'a large number of employees are competent in carrying out their function after one day on the job'. The managers did not subscribe to the beliefs of the new Restructuring ideology. However, the letter from Carcare to the training funding body accompanying the funding application states:

> The project will build on our commitment to training through our ISO9002 accreditation and enhance the skills and multi-skilling of our employees creating opportunities for new career paths to evolve.
> July 1995

The management put their name to a number of documents that reflected the values of the NTRA. The Training Component of the Enterprise Agreement states:

The parties … commit themselves to:

- developing a highly skilled and flexible workforce;
- providing all employees with career opportunities through accredited training;
- ensuring equity of access to all sections of the workforce;
- removing barriers to the utilisation of skills acquired.

The document was drafted by the union but supported sufficiently by the management to carry their signature. The revised Award required a reclassification of jobs and a strategy to assess skills. The union explained that the task could best be achieved by electing shop floor employees who would be trained to analyse skills on the floor and classify them into ASF levels in accordance with the broad banded streams identified in the Award. Once the workforce was reclassified, individuals would be assessed on the new skills-based criteria and training could begin to develop the multiskilled, flexible workforce described in the rhetoric.

Thus the first training project appeared to shift considerable management responsibility to the employees. The funding application for assessor training set out the following tasks for the shop floor assessors throughout the first stage of the project:

- to interpret the implications of the restructured Award and the new training structure in its application to Carcare Australia;
- to educate the workforce into the notion of a training culture;
- to identify the learning needs of the workplace in terms of shop floor skills and Key Competencies;
- to develop a training plan for the company.
  July 1995

The document expressed laudable values in relation to education and training. Shop floor assessors were to lead the reform and draw up a plan for the future. It invested a level of trust in the skills of the shop floor and, one could infer, an apparent willingness to embrace co-management of skills growth and planning and Award interpretation.

The Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) demanded that the training and assessment process be managed by a representative committee. The union argued that this would

ensure a broader acceptance of the change and would again assist in sharing the management load. Meetings were to take place monthly and a representative from the union head office would attend to assist in interpreting the legislation. The workplace trainer would be the meeting secretary so that the impost upon management would be minimised. Once fully established and independent, the Committee would manage its own affairs free of the central union and training provider guidance.

A somewhat bewildered group of managers recognised that times had changed. In the spirit of the Restructure movement, greater responsibility would be devolved to the shop floor.

Six shop floor employees were 'elected' to be trained as workplace assessors. A national union organiser spoke to a full meeting of members to explain the new regime and call for nominations for assessors. When no one came forward, the shop steward nominated the most likely individuals. Three of these were to be the workplace representatives on the Consultative Committee. It was not only the management that was corralled into the process, it was also the shop floor.

The company deferred to union advice because it had no interpretation of its own and because a good working relationship with the union was imperative to industrial peace. The union argued that the legislative requirements of the Award and the signed Training Agreement allowed no choice to the structure and process they advocated.

Training would be governed by a representative training committee consisting of three management and three workplace representatives. In resource terms, the program was very demanding. It would meet within working hours tying up the resources of a number of key personnel. Training would also be conducted in work time, drawing, by the end, almost 20% of the permanent, non-trade, employees off the floor at one time. Jobs would be restructured and workplace assessors would decide the criteria for the new structure in line with the new Award. The assessors would be paid extra for their new skills as would VIC graduates.

6.6.2 The Learning Principles Applied at Carcare

Training commenced in September 1995. The National Staff Development Project funded the project under the category of CBT in Action – a project designed to increase the acceptance of Competency Based Training as the heart of training reform.

By 1995, CBT was a highly contested concept in some educational circles (Harris et al. 1995). While Harris argues that CBT definitions were broad and capable of embracing a wide range of learning styles and methodologies, the most visible examples in industry were true to popular industry constructs of CBT. However, some outspoken educationalists challenged the status quo by providing integrated, company specific training programs designed around the learning needs of the participants and the skill needs of the enterprise. WLI was in the forefront of the fray having developed the Integrated Model (Sefton et al. 1994). The training at Carcare subscribed to the Integrated Model with a view to developing the innovative, productive and communicative workforce required for progressive industry development (Hager 1992). The key principles are outlined below.

The training curriculum at Carcare was to be jointly developed with input from the shop floor and management, framed around the strategic direction of the company. A learning needs assessment was to be conducted along with workplace research. These findings would shape the curriculum. The interests and needs of each group would be integrated into the content and delivery of the program. Parallels between the negotiated curriculum and the endorsed curriculum would demonstrate a sufficient coverage of core material but would leave scope for further topics to be added to the negotiated curriculum if required. The competencies stipulated in the industry certificate curriculum would be cross-referenced afterwards when the consultation and development process was complete. The credential awarded would be the national industry certificate and it would be achieved through learning about the culture, processes and industry knowledge at Carcare.

To this end speakers were invited to the classroom from each administrative department and area of responsibility within the company. The training group went to the wharf to experience the way cars were received and checked on arrival from the ship. They visited Toyota as a supplier company and had speakers from other customer groups. They conducted a customer satisfaction survey and attempted to investigate complaints. They

visited a customer outlet and questioned how they could better assist customers in handling the vehicles. They learned to interpret the computer system that controlled the flow of cars from wharf to customer and practised using the 'remote function' computer.

Skills learned in the classroom were consistent with those of the transformed workplace envisaged through the NTRA. Workers learned about the decision making system at the company and how to participate within it. They wrote memos and set up meetings with management in order to suggest changes, particularly when contentions arose. They discussed the strategic direction of the company with workplace managers when they visited the class. Communication was a central theme of the training. The graduates had started the journey on the way to becoming the type of employees envisaged by Matheson.

The invitation to speak to the class was embraced by most managers:

> It is a very positive move to invite managers to speak to the training group. It will
> help to bring a better understanding between different groups in the company.
> Tom (National Business Development Manager) Training Session

However this response could not necessarily be read as support. Managers resisted involvement in planning and organising the training, even in the negotiation of the curriculum. When invited to comment on the curriculum outline they had little to say. Furthermore, they disregarded training as an item on the business agenda and seemed at a loss with the consultative culture. They provided little 'affordance' for learning that invited workers to participate in the workplace as learners (Billett et al. 1998). However, at the same time, managers spoke about unnamed desirable skills and knowledge learned and demonstrated in the classroom (see chapter 8) that would be transferred directly to the shop floor without any cultural shift or special arrangements on the part of the company.

Shop floor skills development was the responsibility of the supervisors and training manager, but, despite the demands of the Consultative Committee, there was no visible system for supported multi-skilling training, which makes the memo below somewhat puzzling:

> Training methods are now in place to ensure that all operators are fully aware of
> correct procedures ... A training matrix register for all sections has also been
> established for all sections to enable quick reference for future multiskilling.
> Memo: Action plan to reduce operator error during production, Dec. 18, 1996

This memo appears to be referring to a system outside the one that was developed by the workplace assessors. Despite the policy however, there was nothing in evidence on the floor. The system referred to was part of the ISO compliance requirements. The appearance of compliance was always important to the company. It by no means implied consistency in practice.

The same applied to the assessment system developed by the workplace assessors. The system was in place and had been nominally approved by the Training Committee, but it was not effectively disseminated throughout the workforce. Skills trainers were not appointed to ensure skills growth and recognition. Timetabling arrangements for assessments were not made, despite the agitation of the Training Committee. Workplace assessors were never called upon to apply their skills outside the classroom.

The dissemination process was in part my responsibility as a member of the Training Committee. The union and workplace representatives on the Committee were meant to consult and feed back to their constituent group. However there was no avenue or forum in which they could do this and there was no management interest in providing it. In retrospect neither the union nor myself was strong enough to ensure that this function was allowed. We failed to influence the discourse sufficiently hence our power to create change was weak.

Another unresolved anomaly related to the transfer of skills from training to the shop floor. Management assumed that the VIC course graduates would demonstrate new skills on the floor. These skills were not specified, demonstrated or supported on the floor. Skills goals were defined through the assessment system, but these were not referred to in discussions with management when these criticisms were raised. There were few production based skills dealt with in the classroom[70]. Skills growth was to be facilitated through the assessment system when skills goals were negotiated and a pathway to achieving them was

set. However there was no will to make their achievement actual and no cultural preparedness to support the process.

One problem lay in the lack of clarity around the discourse of 'skill'. Andrew used the term to describe activity resulting in the direct production of vehicles, although sometimes, as in the example below, it referred to attitudes and values. I called upon the discourse of transferable, generic competence in my use of the term 'skill' which management saw as irrelevant and invisible.

This became a significant point of contention at one Training Committee meeting as Andrew, the State Manager, complained about the poor development of multiskilling among training graduates:

Andrew: This is part of probably where we've lacked in communication to them. It's not a want, it's a bloody need. Someone's gotta do it. That's what gets up my nose and that's what ...they do the training and they don't add anything to this company after they've done the training, by lack of it ... lack of application of the skill they've got though the training group, they're not gunna get a pay rise. They've got to be married together. There's got to be some ...

Crina: Andrew, what training opportunities are there, are there for people out there on the floor to ... once they move into another area, what training support is available?

Andrew: What training support? There's no formal training support.

Crina: [So therefore how ...

Andrew: [There's a , there's a , there's a show and tell, if you like, training support

Crina: And how do they get feedback on their, on their performance and how do they get information about how ...

Andrew: Every area has a supervisor ...

For Andrew the problem was one of a belligerent workforce rather than a management failure. Andrew's response demonstrated that the skills progression pathway mapped out by the workplace assessors had never been implemented and had probably escaped his grasp entirely. The terms of Andrew's 'multiskilling contract' had never been spelled out. He appeared to expect the graduates to do any job he requested in exchange for the training pay rise. It was a contract of increased compliance with management's wishes. This was what he was referring to as 'skill'. 'The skills they've got through the training group' however were skills in communication, knowledge of company systems and processes (See Appendix 1 for program summary).

The training program was discussed at the Training Committee meeting. There were 6 topics to do with the industry, the company customers and business practices, safety and communication. The Training Committee was invited to make suggestions. They advised a few minor changes but then agreed that the program was suitable. It therefore came as a surprise to me that Andrew expected a direct transfer between the training program and the production skill demonstrated on the shop floor. From Andrew's perspective, training had failed to break down the agency of individual workers who exercised their choice not to subscribe to the company priorities.

Andrew displayed a somewhat ill-informed understanding of skills transfer. His stance however exposes assumptions and misunderstanding endemic in the NTRA.

Skills transfer was poorly conceptualised in the NTRA (Stevenson and McKavanagh, 1992, 1994). There was a mismatch between the general standardised skills described in the industry competencies and the skills required in the particular workplace context (Sefton et al. 1994, Stevenson & McKavanagh1994). While Carcare managers were largely untroubled by these contradictions, industry could not refer to the official literature to cast any light on the question of skill transfer. The literature simply assumes that it would take place regardless of whether the skill was taught in the workplace context or elsewhere.

At Carcare however there was a transfer and an application of skill that were not predicted by management at the beginning of the program. The graduates had becomes more aware of their OH&S rights and had built an expectation of consultation. They learned to participate in consultation meetings and make formal requests. In the course of the training they had spoken to the major decision makers in the company, had queried company policy and sought information directly on company developments and decisions. Transfer had taken place, they had become more assertive, but, for the management, they had learned the wrong skills. There was a mismatch between management and workers expectations of what would result from the training.

6.6.3 Cultural Misalignment

The NTRA made unforseen demands on the Carcare management. It called for new industry values and processes. The company had no experience to apply to the new industrial agreements. Within restructured industry, the relationship demands were based on consultation and a shared understanding of business development. The Carcare industrial relations culture functioned within an adversarial framework where management improved wages and conditions when sufficient industrial pressure was applied. The company floundered with the notion of a partnership relationship and appeared to be bewildered as to their role and how to manage the training and the consultation to their own or to mutual advantage.

In their confusion, the company appeared to be extremely malleable. They were easily convinced by the union's interpretation of legislative requirements. They continued to promise that a vigorous, well supported training system would emerge but their promises never translated into action. The push for change from the union resulted in passive resistance around training. Management often failed to attend Training Committee meetings and were formally admonished by the union for their lack of support. They paid lip service to the new skills recognition system but failed to enact it. Training was sabotaged indirectly. They allowed most employees to come to training most of the time but provided no encouragement and communicated a sense of annoyance at the disruption their absence created to work schedules. Attending training became almost an act of defiance for many employees.

In hindsight, the union and myself, as trainer, were not sufficiently educative or strategic in managing the company's enculturation. I made constant requests and offered reminders of tasks to be completed between meetings. Memory was clearly not the problem. The union response to management's inertia was to restate procedures as if there were some lack of clarity or maybe in the hope that the underlying values would transfer:

> Assessment is an on-going process. Basically anyone should be able to come up to the assessors and say 'I was assessed a month ago, 2 months ago, whatever it was. I've now had the opportunity to walk around and do different skills. I'm now up for reassessment.'
> Anna, (Union Training officer) Training Committee Meeting

Anna's restatements of procedures read as formulaic descriptions determined at industry level rather than answerable to this company's needs and identity. They rarely matched the anomalies of the work-a-day experience of the company. She knew that the system lay dormant in folders in the offices of the managers, nonetheless she acclaimed its industrial potency as if it were active. Anna's repeated explanation of why in-house assessors likewise had an empty ring of unreality:

> We've got in-house um assessors, so we know you guys are going to be assessed by the people who know the job. We've got training in the company's time so it's not costing you a cent and in the end of the day we've got a three classification pay structure, we get three pay rises out of it.
> Anna, (Union Training Officer) Training Session

The assessors were said to have assessed everyone in the workplace and to have reassessed the training graduates following the training program. Anna asserted the democratic power that follows when there are in-house shop floor assessors (Interactional Event No 4). To Andrew she affirmed the practical value of in-house assessors:

> That's the reason we went in for in-house assessors, so it can be an on-going process rather than having to wait, you know, for the first of the month every three months to have some TAFE college come in and do it.
> Anna, (Union Training Officer) Training Committee Meeting

Claiming a shared agency she assumed a shared motivation in establishing the assessment system. Andrew agreed with Anna's reasoning even though he had only minimal understanding of the system and no appreciation of how it originated beyond a response to industrial pressure. Both Andrew and Anna placed a high value on being seen to be playing by the rules. The knowledge that the training and assessment system existed was what mattered. As long as assessment and assessors had a nominal role, the training system could claim political integrity. The game of pretence was an important component of their attempted mutuality and their searching for common ground.

Hence the combined forces of the union and the training provider were unable to address the essential anomaly of passive resistance. The politeness code masked the contradiction evident in Committee discussion. The Committee protocol was sustained. Confrontation arose only when a key industrial principle was threatened, then Anna would lead the charge. Key principles related to wages and conditions.

The ultimate tactic of the union was to threaten direct industrial pressure. This would finally achieve compliance but not cultural transformation. The union was forced to adopt the old adversarial approach using new weapons:

> We've got the agreement. It's signed. We know we can win in the Commission every time on it.
> Anna, (Union Training Officer) Training Session

We all seemed to avoid opportunities to discuss the broader issues relating to consultation and training until a crisis arose when the disparities were left gaping. The crisis of the moment, however, overshadowed the possibility of discussing the NTRA ideology, the mismatched principles driving the parties' actions or issues of learning and the way it was fostered. We were all engaged in a conspiracy of agreement where issues of conflict were almost taboo. The training offered to this company was culturally dissonant. The managers could not see the relevance of the curriculum designed to develop workers as thinking, informed, interactive partners, but nor where they willing to challenge it. There seemed no meeting point from which to begin discussion of educational effectiveness and validity. They did not want the inventive, creative, resourceful worker advocated by the NTRA. What they wanted was a compliant, hardworking worker with high output. They did not

know how to utilise the skills developed in training, nor did they acknowledge a space for learning. The roles created by the union, which were features of a progressive and consultative workplace, were dissonant with the aspirations of the company.

Finally, in 1997, the union abandoned training as the means to achieve pay increases through skills progression and decided to return to the old strategy of industrial pressure. This decision came with a huge sigh of relief from management who could now settle back into the familiar adversarial role but things would never be quite the way they used to be.

The decision was also welcomed by WLI who recognised that genuine developmental processes could not be sustained in the face of persistent resistance. Training was not creating solutions for this already beleaguered workforce. It was perhaps creating problems. It was contributing to expectations of consultation, information sharing and participation that would not be met. Could I be accused of the unholy evangelism perpetrated by middle class 'do-gooders' on the working class? We had discussed this in WLI staff meetings.

> There's a certain middle classness about wanting to rescue people (in inhospitable workplaces) so sometimes it doesn't help to preach to people about something they know already ... (Many respond by saying) 'we have no choice, we don't want to discuss it'.
> WLI Professional Development Session, June 17, 1996

6.7   The Training Reform Agenda - a Critique

While the Training Reform Agenda failed to create a training culture at Carcare, it opened new questions and challenged the status quo.

- It claimed a place for Vocational Education and Training within the workplace as part of the everyday activity of industry where training had previously been deemed irrelevant.
- It nudged at the epistemological boundaries around industry knowledge and acknowledged the skill base that underpinned factory work.

- It foregrounded communication skills as essential to business success.
- It progressed towards creating a dialogue between industry and education.
- It attempted to give voice to all stakeholders in the framing of the system and called for input on issues of participation, curriculum, assessment and evaluation.
- It opened discussion in relation to 'competency' in matters of promotion and career progression and challenged old procedures for promotion.
- It resulted in a comprehensive, company-wide review of shop floor wages.
- It set a higher value for on-the-job training even though it did not establish a systematic or structured approach to it.

In more receptive companies, the NTRA allowed a training culture to develop that became integral to the identity of the enterprise (Sefton, Waterhouse and Cooney 1995). The Sefton et al. study demonstrated that successful workplace reform depended on a commitment to change, but many, maybe most companies were not ready, saw no need for change or did not believe that establishing a training culture was the answer. Major cultural reform depended on the concurrence of a set of industrial, educational and company cultural changes – an issue that will be fully explored in Chapter 9.

The Carcare story affirms Billett's conclusions:

> You just cannot mandate change although you can probably mandate resistance to the intended change. Perhaps the problem in Australian VET goes back a decade or more. At that time a decision was made about how to proceed with the management of change. Was it to be through genuine consensus and rich understanding and the development of the skills of those involved (all of which takes time) or was it to be through regulation, legislation and mandate.
> Billett 1998a:111

Australia of course chose the latter. Billett goes on to say that Germany, by contrast, had a 10 year plan of gaining interest, commitment and skills. Those reforms are now legislated and negotiated with bi-partisan bodies.

The reaction of Carcare to the NTRA was consistent with maybe the majority of companies particularly those pressured by outside agencies. Carcare took a measured

approach to demonstrate minimal legal compliance and to silence a forthright union. It hoped to hold everything else in place, quite unchanged. Like many others, Carcare participated in training because public money was available (Hawke 1998). The Training Guarantee provided a further incentive while the union applied pressure for training. At Carcare as in many other companies, lack of cultural preparedness at company level failed the NTRA. Managers had no vision or desire to fully embrace the values of the restructuring movement. They had no skills to manage a participative and assertive workforce. And, as previously noted, managers largely escaped the attention of the National Training Reform Agenda as a target for training (Karpin 1995). Probing how this occurred leads one to question some of the political assumptions that seemed invisible at the time.

There had been a few whispers in some quarters that management skills needed attention. Gilmour and Lansbury (1984) noted that poor management skills limited the capacity of middle managers to devolve management and industrial relations responsibilities, but Gilmour and Lansbury had a union bias. There was however a gaping silence on such matters in NTB documentation and in policy and commentary put out by Dawkins, Carmichael and others.

Pappas et al. (1990) remarked that managers were 'complacent' and unrealistic in their assessment of the skill of their workforce and the extent and effectiveness of their consultative mechanisms. Their limitations were evident to those of us working in training who sat alongside them on training committees. Most expected their workers to emerge from training programs somehow able to reform work practices and skill levels without disturbing anyone or anything else. This suggested that many had a poor understanding of training, of systemic thinking and of development and change management (Mant 1997). Few managers know how to 'enable employees in all areas and levels of the organisation to contribute to their potential' (NTB Guidelines 1992:18).

The OTFE research project undertaken by Deakin University, 'Return From Industry Training', 1995, revealed that very few companies evaluated training as part of strategic development and change. Many companies evaluated training simply by noting that training money had been spent, as was the case at Carcare. For the most part, managers had not been clever in using structured training as a resource to assist in workplace

improvements such as: change initiatives, practical problem solving, the improvement of team communication, the breakdown of company divides or building company identification (Hager 1997). In most instances, structured training was viewed by management as an unwelcome intrusion into the day's production (Mawer & Field 1995). At the same time, managers were not assisted by the poor understanding of workplace learning that prevailed. Policy makers as well had very little knowledge about how workplace learning occurred or the capacity of enterprises to assume the training role (Hawke 1998).

It was not until the Karpin Report, 'Enterprising Nation', 1995, that there was any serious government attention on the need to increase the skills of Australian managers. Karpin demonstrated that managers and supervisors were poorly trained and had few resources relevant to new, reformed industry:

> Providers of management education, training and development … have succeeded in providing functional skills. However an overemphasis on the more analytical areas of business has precluded the development of integrative ('strategic') skills and also the soft or people skills necessary to succeed in modern business.
> Karpin, 1995 b: 9

The Australian Human Resource Institute report on the Karpin study summarises the findings as follows:

> Australian managers … lack the skills required to address the "new management paradigm."
> The gaps were identified as lack of long term vision; lack of strategic thinking; poor team work; inflexibility; poor people skills; and lack of acceptance of responsibility and fulfilment of commitments.
> *Inside AHRI*, June 1995

The addition of management training corrected an important omission of the Agenda, but it did not make the Agenda complete, indeed the Agenda was conceived as always evolving and subject to review as is the case today. It is still grappling with the question of relevance to industry. It is still far from achieving an education system that is fully supported by

industry and that has the capacity to nurture the skill demands of the economy (Scollay, 2001), not to mention the skills of a democratic society (Falk 1997). There are few work environments that meet the criteria Field puts forward as the features of a learning organisation (Field 1995).

6.8   Conclusion

This chapter explains how training for shop floor employees arrived at a company which had, until that point, rarely entertained a single training thought.

What unfolded at Carcare, after 2 ½ years of training involvement and more than $70,000 of government money, was an outcome that questioned the status quo, in some quarters, but stopped well short of cultural transformation or radical skills growth. It only temporarily satisfied the central union and the needs of some union members.

It was introduced by the union in the spirit of the industry restructuring movement. The union aspired to produce a transformative discourse that would create a culture of consultation and lead gradually to a co-management model of production and industrial relations. It attempted to do so by superimposing new values through coercion and finally through legislation (See Chapter 8). The company however was an unwilling player which saw itself meeting a legislative requirement rather than participating in a reformative movement. As with the Accord, partnerships were imposed rather than agreed by mutual consent:

> The architects of the Accord hoped that centralised unions would find a role as partners with government and business on corporate lines. Business, fortified by neo-liberal ideology, was never a party to this scheme.
> Brain, 1999:216

WLI had an agenda that complemented that of the union – that of establishing a learning culture within a consultative environment. It was an unlikely, maybe naive, act of faith to demand of such a management.

The experience of Carcare was probably not exactly duplicated in the same form at other companies but other companies regarded the NTRA with disfavour. Some would say it spawned more activity in meeting rooms and in policy and design documents than in training rooms (Ryan 1997, Braddy 1998, Jackson 1997 a). The FitzGerald Report 1994 [71], was commissioned by the government to review the Training Reform Agenda. The report reflected the dissatisfaction of business with the construction of skills and skill acquisition in the National Training Reform Agenda and pushed for a more demand driven system (read management driven). Industrialists complained that the competency framework was educationally driven and failed to take into account the efficiency and work value concerns of industry. The report was discussed in the newspaper:

> training reforms are not clearly focused on the needs of business and workers and aspects of the reforms have probably even discouraged firms participating........
> Government regulations and intervention is constricting rather than fostering vocational education.
> Richards, 1994, *The Age*, Wednesday August 17

Braddy, MLA and Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations in Queensland, addressed the ANTA national conference in 1998. In his opinion, the problems outlined by FitzGerald et al. four years before had not been resolved:

> We've raced headlong into a training reform agenda which was supposed to make training simpler, more flexible, and attuned to industry needs. But what have we got? A system which is considered by many to be too complex and confusing and one which may actually have a negative impact on the decision to employ.
> Braddy, 1998

The next stage of the Training Reform Agenda, the National Training Framework, has delivered a more deregulated system. It has responded to the call from managements for more 'demand driven' training. As a result it has distanced itself from the egalitarian consultative ideology of the earlier industrial education policy and where possible, from union involvement. This can be viewed as a step in the progression to realise the goals of the Agenda rather than a new direction. It is an attempt to better realise the objectives stated in 1992:

> The concept of competency focuses on what is expected of an employee in the workplace rather than on the learning process: and embodies the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge in new situations and environments.
> NTB, 1992: 29

The educational and industrial job of the National Training Framework is to simplify and customise skills development to cater for specific and specialist needs of enterprises. Its economic task however is to shift the financial burden for skills training from government to industry and to the individual (Down 1998, Mulqueeny 1998).

The Training Framework has dismantled accredited curriculum and with it much of the regulation and control superstructure that looked over the shoulder of every industry training program in the country. It offers a flexibility to respond to company needs. However, it no longer honours democratic or consultative practices. It seeks to focus solely on skills demonstrated through competency based assessment, as defined by the industry boards and customised by individual companies. It values individually negotiated skills development plans. At best it allows for the enterprise specific training programs emulating models such as the integrated training programs demonstrated by WLI. At worst, it results in programs that propagate the status quo and that replace education with assessment (Schofield 2000 a & b). This trend places in jeopardy the development of generic skills, the communication curriculum and discussion based learning that has some capacity to intervene in company practices. NCVER studies (Billett et al. 1999, Mulcahy and James 1999a) conclude that CBT within Training Packages is valued for its ability to address job specific skills but it is less successful in developing more generic focussed skills such as innovation, on-the-job goal setting and personnel management.

The interpretation of training need, epistemology and career path progression have been shifted away from the industrial relations arena. The national skills recognition system remains but adherence depends on individual workplace arrangements and the strength of the union at the site. While that has always been the case, the sidelining of the unions in training decision-making forums has increased the autonomy of enterprises. The national training regulating bodies have acceded to enterprise interests so that recognition of skills and epistemological questions have become a conversation between training providers and

enterprise managers with providers working within a discourse of competitive customer

satisfaction and productivity rather than educational values.

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[54] A term coined by Fairclough defined as 'calculated intervention to shift discursive practices as part of the engineering of social change' (1995:3). See Chapter 4.

[55] CBT was not meant to prescribe a methodology

> The concept of competency focuses on what is expected of an employee in the workplace rather than on the learning process.
> NBT 1992:29

However learning outcomes were so tightly prescriptive that they generated a methodology tied to the demonstration of the competency whereby learners replicated task-directed behaviour in order to demonstrate competence in an observable way.

[56] National policy, regulated through industry competency standards and accredited training programs, was specific as to what constituted the program content. Consultative practices at workplace level could demand all educational materials be vetted by union and management bodies who could modify the emphasis of the content to meet their agreed values.

[57] The Vehicle Industry Certificate was later called Certificate 2 in Vehicle Industry Studies and is now called Certificate 2 in Automotive Manufacturing within the National Training Framework.

[58] Knowledge was delivered 'off the job' often by outside training consultants. It was thus separated from 'skills' that were trained and assessed by workplace personnel who usually had little interaction with external consultants.

[59] NTB policy specified that standards should not be based on tests, simulations or training activities. They should be based on outcomes not methods or procedures (NTB 1990) however many examples of accredited curriculum contradicted these specifications.

[60] 'Popular forms' referred to here are the early behaviourist models. While a variety of models abounded, the models applied most commonly in parts of TAFE and in industry, particularly the automotive industry, were narrow and although highly contested, they established an orthodoxy that industrialists regarded as a mark of quality.

[61] Despite the commitment to competency assessment, all accredited training carried a reference to hours. The VIC was about 404 hours of training (depending on the elective) divided between on and off the job training. The EPC was set at 960 hours, exactly equivalent to apprenticeship training.

[62] Gribble's classification was the basis of a counter-claim criticising the exclusion of critical educationalists from the design process of the emerging restructuring education. Her paper, aptly named 'Resistance or Hijack', alerted critical educationalists to the paradigm around which industry education had been framed and called for critical resistance rather than submissive acceptance.

[63] Some educators accuse some andragogy theorists of adhering to principles of Cultural Transmission (Newman 1993 re Knowles) because the enterprise context disallows an openly critical stance. Such a debate could be extended to say that no industrial programs can maintain a purist Developmental Education stance if they are auspiced by most culturally and politically committed bodies. Referring to Foley's categorisation (1995) (based on Scott 1986), it could be argued that almost all examples of enterprise based training fit into the category of Organisational Effectiveness as espoused by Argyris and Schon – training is aimed to assist 'an organisational more effectively achieve its goals' 1995:12. This categorisation is still within the ambit of andragogy.

[64] Thomson confirmed that trainers (in their writings) just assumed that skill transfer was possible. This assumption is dogmatically asserted in a number of working paper reports (including core competency reports) as well as in political statements. The unsupported generalisation then becomes 'research evidence'. In fact an analysis of research literature does not support the skills transfer assumption' Hall 1996:4,5.

[65] Research on the notion of 'situated cognition', a term imported from educational psychology, concluded that learning depends on the concurrence of alignments between the learning environment and the application environment. Skills do not transfer readily between workplaces. 'Work' is richly contextualised (Hull, 19934 Darrah 1992, Stevenson 1996, Billett 1994a & b). Communication skills in particular do not translate readily between contexts. Standardised work practices are modified and reformulated in response to contingencies and the behaviour of certain equipment and materials in different circumstances. Contingency management is the key to maintaining quality standards (Deakin, 1996) rather than standardised practice. However the NTRA conceptualised skills in terms of static, standardised practice. Industry competencies make no allowance for adaptability, performance specialisation and context specific understanding of quality maintenance. The national competencies system and CBT was therefore founded on a limited construction of the notion of work and skill (Darrah 1994, O'Connor 1995, Virgona et al. 1998).

[66] ASF levels (Australian Skills Framework) were the basis of the national pay structure. Each level, 8 in all, described a hierarchy of increased responsibility and skill. Qualifications attached to each level describe the qualification gradient. ASF 2 corresponds to a certificate level qualification while ASF level 3 corresponds to an advanced certificate. (ASF levels have been superseded by AQF levels, Australian Qualifications Framework. Levels are differentiated by qualification but the structure is basically the same.)

[67] National recognition and portability have been somewhat tenuous achievements. They were valued by employees and unions but not by employers. There has been an uneasy acceptance of Vehicle Industry Certificate graduates between the major car manufacturers. Recognition was only available because the union stood guard and had the industrial muscle to negotiate it. There appears to be no acceptance outside the industry and in less unionised shops. Likewise, RPL credits in enterprise based training were supported and driven by unions in the hope that members would achieve a speedy recognition of credentials. For most educationalists and employers, RPL created anomalies and interfered in the continuity of developmental training programs. RPL has been picked up with greater vigour within Training Packages because it can discount the cost of training and because of its links to life long learning.

[68] There were some major blockages in the system. Until late 1997 the accredited training for vehicle construction workers (VIC) stopped short of the trade level classification. Employees could not move beyond AQF level 2. An AQF level 3 program was formally accepted but its implementation was fraught with political obstacles. While trades representatives 'gate kept', employers protected their wages bills. The Engineering Production Certificate (EPC) provided an uninterrupted career development on paper but neither union nor employer groups supported open access to trades for non-trade employees. As a result there were few examples of radical career growth and the pre-restructuring status quo largely prevailed. The Food Industry Certificate likewise provided limited opportunities to a few individuals. In the food industry and many others, credentials were not rewarded unless the employee won a promotion where the credential was a requirement. In summary, there was little job progression but, as in the Carcare example, employees achieved qualifications for the work they were already doing along with an increase in pay.

[69] This response on the part of educators is evidence of the phenomenon that Sarangi named as the 'discourse game' where the oppressed group appropriates the rules of the dominant group to achieve their own ends. (See Chapter 4).

[70] The only production skills taught in class were some basic computer operations and the completion of forms such as the Quality Alert Forms.

[71] Seeking impartiality the government commissioned the Allen Consulting Group to undertake the review. While the review is spoken of as the FitzGerald Report, it is also cited in bibliographies under the organisation's name.

CHAPTER 7: -THE COMPETING DISCOURSES OF INDUSTRY

Balloon metaphor:
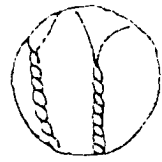
This chapter analyses the rigging that attaches the basket to the balloon and holds the lining in place. It therefore refers back to the outer structure and the lining in relation to the rigging.

7.1   Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the discourse roots of the management, union and training traditions in order to recognise the voices behind the communication in the workplace. The discourses of industry reflect the values and ideologies of workplace groups. These are shaped by community beliefs about truth, power and the pragmatics of influence. This chapter describes and seeks out the origins of the discourses that wash through industry and takes account of how they can be recognised in the case study company.

Chapter 8 gives vivid examples of these voices in action at Carcare. This chapter explains their origins and their context.

7.2   Science as the Voice of Knowledge and Authority

7.2.1   The Influence of Science in Management Discourse

The discourse of science is a pervasive ideology that is so well integrated into the dominant discourse it is difficult to uncoil from the main thread. Notions of scientific validity are rooted to social attitudes of trustworthy knowledge. Echoes of science are heard in areas as diverse as personnel management, quality control and education. A particular style of management which has taken the name 'scientific management', has been strongly influential throughout industry.

Scientific management has been attributed to Fredrick Taylor (1911).

If one school of thought has been a thread to link the others, it is Taylorism with its claim that management can be a true science and that 'science' can be universally applied. Even though other schools appear to humanise the conduct of management, the Taylorist emphasis on control and efficiency in the interests of an organisation and of a country has survived as an essential piece of management wisdom.
Rees, 1995: 17

Probert (1989) notes that the Australian workforce resisted Taylorism when it was introduced elsewhere, but after the war, Australian managers succumbed.

Blackmore (1993), in discussing educational management, supports Probert's view that scientific management styles emerged in Australia in the 50s giving hallowed status to science:

> not only because science was seen to be a more 'objective' form of knowledge production during the post war period but also because scientific knowledge promised those who practised administration and policy development predictability, comparability as well as objectivity, thus imparting greater authority to administrative experts. The epistemological foundation of the view of administration as neutral, rational and value free enterprise in the period after the Second World War was positivism. Underpinning emergent organisational and management theory since the 1950s, positivism made privileged claims to objectivity, predictability and universality, claims which separated means from ends, facts from values.
> Blackmore, 1993: 40

From the 50s through to the rise of managerialism in the 80s, management leadership has presented a strong but colourless face. Under the influence of science as interpreted by Weber[72] (Willmott 1993), it has resorted to fact rather than passion, authority rather than charisma and honours bureaucracy rather than meaning and value. The scientific discourse exercises rationality over the chaos of unfettered human behaviour (Ball 1990). The following notice pinned on a factory canteen notice board is an example of print based scientific management discourse:

IT IS THE INTENT OF (COMPANY NAME) TO INTRODUCE AND DEVELOP AN ON-GOING NOISE
CONTROL AND HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAMME.

UNDER THE PROGRAM THE FOLLOWING ISSUES WILL BE ADDRESSED.

1. To carry out sound pressure level measurement in work areas that are recognised as being noisy, in order
   to determine the source and extent of the noise.
2. To reduce by engineering means the level of noise generated by pieces of equipment which have been
   shown to be excessively noisy
3. To provide suitable hearing protection (and storage for same) for all personnel and educate them in the
   need and use of such protection. Hearing protection provided will be worn by personnel working in areas
   where noise suppression, by engineering means, has not been successful
4. ...

EMPLOYEES ARE ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROGRAMME AND TO
VOLUNTEER INFORMATION AND FORWARD SUGGESTIONS TO ENSURE ITS SUCCESS

GENERAL MANAGER

This text professes the knowledge of science to measure noise and to provide protection.
Its structure is controlled and methodical, firstly stating the intention, then the scope. While
it finishes with an invitation to workers to participate, the invitation is more a formality
than an expectation since it is clear that the esoteric nature of the exercise is unlikely to
welcome workers. The complex sentences and vocabulary are reminiscent of a legal text
communicating a sense of exactness and purpose ('it is the intent to reduce by engineering
means'). They give authority to the manager's words and demonstrate that he is educated
and set apart from the colloquial discourse of the shop floor. The use of the passive voice
distances the writer from the text, projecting a seeming scientific objectivity and a sense of
social superiority. Few employees would have sufficient familiarity with the genre to
comprehend the message and even fewer would be willing to venture into such culturally
remote territory to contribute their knowledge, particularly as their knowledge is not
'scientific' but experiential.

Science has given authority, legitimacy and rationality to management practices that may
otherwise have appeared ad hoc or self serving and ruthless - practices such as time and
motion studies, quality measurement, proficiency profiles, methods for standardising work
or for 'downsizing'. Artistic, literary, religious and humanist knowledge has been

delegitimised as subjective, whimsical, trivial and inappropriate, particularly in the
workplace (Gardner 1985).

Jacobs defines the popular concept of science as follows:

> Science is based on hard facts or trustworthy experience. It is readily
> distinguishable from other intellectual enterprises such as religion or art by virtue
> of its proven knowledge, rigorous methods and foundation in facts. Science has its
> own special permanent methods of proving knowledge true and it is progressive in
> the sense of having an expanding body of knowledge. It is rational rather than
> irrational, it is objective rather than subjective, that is knowledge is built on and
> corresponds to facts or physical reality. Science is said to be an intellectual
> endeavour remote from and unsullied by social, political and economic influence
> and science presents general universal theories or laws of nature. It is knowledge
> admitting to no exceptions.
> Jacobs, 1993

Given such status, practices that are justified in the name of science are not questioned at
community level. They have become part of the fabric of the dominant discourse and
hence, by definition are embraced as common sense by industry.

Quality systems and safety systems have nestled under the scientific banner and given
companies status as productive enterprises that are reliable, knowledgeable and in control
of their industry practices. When Carcare was adopted by its multinational parent, it was
quickly pressured to gain accreditation under a bevy of authorities to certify the company
as a participant in the dominant scientific management discourse. A risk management
consultant conducted a numerical profile assessment in occupational health and safety and
later in environmental management to begin to accumulate the credits for compliance for
accreditation. Compliance is measured by a set of observable criteria said to encapsulate
good practice in OH&S. Compliance is calculated by the company's score on the criteria
tick sheet, giving it quantifiable accountability and therefore, orthodoxy under a scientific
banner (Marceau 1995).

The first letter of support for funded training mentioned ISO compliance as a reason to take up the training. The company was quality accredited to AS3902 / ISO9002 and also held a Q1 rating (Q101) from Ford Motor Company and was working towards safety and environmental accreditation. The accreditation would demonstrate that the company had established a paper-based system which adhered to externally set principles of best practice. The descriptors of practices were said to reflect actual practice. The principles and requirements were to be objective, rational and comparable. They claimed to have distilled the essence of the practices that delivered high levels of standardisation in procedures that produce the service or goods sold to the customer. Compliance was systematised and measurable and hence companies could be rated. Auditors worked through the detail of the paper trail matching documents with the generic model, but they were not required to assess the effectiveness or appropriacy of the procedure or the product (Jackson 1995).

Scientific systems are valued currency in industry. Carcare's computerised 'Vehicle Tracking System' is regarded as its competitive edge and evidence of the high value put on customer priorities. It is evidence of the company's commitment to modernism[73] which Jaakkola et al. (1995) define as emanating from Weberian thought. Rational organisational activity is 'calculable, impersonal and knowledge based' (Jaakkola et al. 1995:26). They quote Brubaker's summary of Weberian rationalisation as:

> The depersonalisation of social relationships, the refinement of techniques of calculation, the enhancement of the social importance of specialised knowledge, and the extension of technically rational control over both natural and social processes.
> Jaakkola et al., 1995:26

Since these values have become synonymous with good management, they have motivated the development of the skills assessment systems throughout industry (Sandberg 2000). Assessment systems are founded on a belief that the essence of any skill can be analysed into a generic set of objective, measurable criteria standardised across industries. Carcare spent considerable resources developing such a system. This was the first WLI project at the company. The project required that all skills within the workplace be named, analysed

for criteria and categorised for levels of complexity. A patterned, repeatable and comparable approach has more credibility with the auditors.

Recourse to systems, as the mediator of human relations and the moderator of human foibles and misdemeanour, is evidence of the employer's conviction in Weberian scientific management. Systems do not tolerate deviations. A non-compliance has to be corrected because fidelity to the system is paramount. The individual within it is subservient to the system. Hence the quality system lists desirable work procedures and reports non-compliant behaviour treating each event as a statistical occurrence to be plotted and eliminated.

Scientific management creates a set of inevitabilities and urgencies - the Kanban System[74] creates an urgency for product; the ANDON[75] system creates an urgency for workers to maintain pace with the production line; lean management systems create an inevitability for redundancies and outsourcing to meet lowered staffing and financial ceilings. Validated by scientifically measured productivity and efficiency goals, the systems are beyond contestation. It is the system that is the enemy, not the people who manage it.

Discursive formations which fill the dictionary of scientific management such as 'Total Quality Control', 'World Class Manufacturing', 'Benchmarking', 'Self Managing Teams', 'Waste Minimisation' (or 'Muda'[76] at Toyota), 'Continuous Improvement' (or 'Kaizen'[77] at Toyota), are the terminology that management and workers have come to share in talking about work. With the introduction of each new system come new terminology and a renaming and reprioritising of work activity within a new order. As the system is technologised into a place of prominence, the contesting discourse is concealed or silenced.

At Carcare, the Vehicle Tracking System can locate a car at any point in the process. At the same time it acts as a surveillance system because it identifies who is working on the product, what job they are doing, how long it has taken to this point and approximately how long it will be before the worker starts the next one. In this way management can calculate the productivity of each individual and the number and type of errors they make. However the system is not called a surveillance system, it is called a product tracking system. The codes and processes have quaint names, often derived from acronyms, which are now part of everyday interchange on the floor such as Status 10, 15 and 30 or Quality Alert. The terminology references the system not the operator, keeping attention on the

standardised practice. The language has become a secondary Discourse (Gee 1990) that Carcare workers and managers have been required to adopt.

Carcare struggled to establish scientific management practices against a tradition where contracts were sealed with a nudge and a wink and business conquests were won and lost. As a result, customer contracts were often unrealistic and unplanned. The company promised a productivity level that could only be met if there was no absenteeism, if correct parts were available on the line and no unforeseeable glitches occurred during the working day. However the new order, introduced by the corporate owners, promised a more scientific system based on efficiency measurement and profit planning:

> We're putting in some structures. We'll make some major changes and, uh, this year we'll make some money.
>
> Ryan, (Financial Controller)

7.2.2 Science and the Discourse of Training

Weberian scientific management has not confined itself to the domain of industry's management groups. It has permeated most areas of industry, not least of all, education. In the 80s, the demand for quantifiable, comparative data grew and scientific management, under the guise of economic rationalism, became the dominant discourse of government and eventually of education.

Language and literacy competence is an area where any comparative measure is, at best, dubious (Edelsky 1991). By the early 80's, language educators had come to acknowledge the existence of various literacies and the way language competence is loosely segmented into genres (Diehl and Mikulecky 1980, Halliday 1978). Such understandings disqualified the notion of a single score and a single measure to classify language and literacy. However, to play the 'quality management' game, a single comparative measure was required. Professionals in the field protested but the strategists recognised the political potency of 'scientific methods'. Multi-dimensional instruments were devised (Wickert 1989, Coates 1994, Griffin et al. 1992) to account for the complexity of the communication field that could, at the same time, provide a scientifically based score. Initially, resistance in providing a measuring instrument threatened to disqualify language, literacy and basic

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education as players in the burgeoning field of industry and adult community education. When measuring tools were applied, through language and literacy 'audits', money was freed into the system. Audits graphically exposed an inarticulate, barely literate Australian adult population. Hence, professionals were coerced into constructing a mathematical paradigm around communication knowledge and practice. WELL submissions demanded that language and literacy levels be scored providing concrete evidence of a need for remediation. Scores taken at the end of training programs measured growth giving evidence of responsible use of government funds.

> In modern efficiency, that which is efficient is defined as that which is measurable as efficient. Consequently whatever is not measurable is not efficient and does not exist.
>
> Solondz, 1995: 214

The same could be said of almost any workplace 'problem' whether it be literacy, OH&S, skill development or improvement to work organisation. Problems are invisible until they are measured and demonstrated with figures to be more economical to solve than to ignore. Hence educationalists in industry spend much of their time teaching measurement and company systems to shop floor training participants.

CBT achieved legitimacy by reference to scientific knowledge and scientific measurability. These features were most evident in the early models. CBT was based on notions that knowledge could be modularised into competencies and analysed into elements like chemical or mechanical structures. CBT competencies were written in the scientific genre of a laboratory experiment. Here is an example of a competency from the first VIC curriculum:

> Active Listening Techniques (Following Instructions)
> (Suggested Time Allocation : 1 hour)

> On successful completion of this topic you will be able to :
> Performance:
>> Identify key elements that must be considered when following instructions.

Conditions:

    Given : participation in a variety of listening skills exercises.

Standard:

The trainee must:

    -identify a minimum of four key active listening elements.

Aside from the flawed educational principles upon which this 'competency' is based[78] (Gribble 1990, Brown 1991, Jackson 1993), the preoccupation is with theoretical knowledge based on an analysis of listening activity shaped by cognitive science rather than on contextualised practice designed to enhance communicative skills in the workplace (Deakin 1994). The predominance of passive verb forms distances the learner and creates an unequivocal authority. Founded on a 'realist position', the knowledge presumes that there is 'a single, tangible reality, the truth of which is able to be discovered' (Caulley 1994: 4). Consistent with positivist experiments, the theory cannot be transferred to real work activity (Caulley ibid.).

The training materials for one of the communication modules within the VIC reads as follows:

> Communication happens when we send a message and it is received and understood by the other person. It can be one way or two way. When it is one way the receiver gets the information but doesn't answer. When it is two way the receiver gets the information and answers back.
> The three main types of communication are written , verbal (speaking), and non-verbal body language which includes gestures, posture and tone of voice. Non-verbal communication makes up 70 - 85% of face to face communication.....
> Ford VIC Unit, 'Communication Models', 1992

The material presents a mechanistic model of communication. Its theoretical substance lays claim to scientific authenticity by describing an objective process removed from context such as in laboratory conditions. It includes the mandatory numerical information (70 – 85%) as if the phenomenon of communication were context free, standardisable and measurable along a single modality.

One is prompted to ask whose knowledge is this and what is its purpose? It appears that the curriculum writers are more concerned to assert the dominant discourse (Jackson 1991) than to effect the reform in workplace communication which was the mandate of the Training Reform Agenda. The underlying values assert that knowledge is mysterious, it is remote from real work activity and circumscribes an unreachable culture which is the domain of management and academics. On the other hand the learning material is simplistic and formulaic and does not resemble skills and knowledge on the floor (Chaiklin and Lave 1993, O' Connor 1995, Sefton et al.1994). As with the Noise Control and Hearing Conservation Notice, it ambiguously invites the shop floor to share the knowledge by participating in the training while effectively excluding them through its abstraction. It offers no legitimacy to workers' active knowledge and at the same time provides no level of engagement or relevance to their experience of work. The competency test (identify a minimum of four active listening elements) requires rote repetition projecting values of unquestioned obedience to cultural knowledge that is alien and alienating for workers. The achievement of the competency demands subservience to a system of training that refuses career progression to those who do not/will not repeat the text material. Competency Based Training has been interpreted by the NTRA as competency to pass the test, in this case, competency to regurgitate meaningless information losing sight of the rationale for its introduction in the first place.

CBT has continued to evolve since these early models. CBT models range from those samples above (which can still be found in industry education) to variations upon the Integrated Model[79] pioneered by WLI (Sefton et al. 1994).

The more recent shift to the NTF has dispensed with specified curriculum and allows customisation in the interpretation of the competencies, however industry standards can only be credentialed if the stipulated performance objectives are met. This has given greater prominence to assessment mechanisms. Emphasis on assessment has overtaken that of learning so that inevitably assessment requirements are driving education. It is not a response to the concerns of the education lobby but rather to industry demanding training systems that fit their industrial priorities and to government and industry seeking to reduce costs of training.

The expectation of the case study company was that training offered to the shop floor would be 'scientific' in the tradition of popular models of CBT. There would be a learning package similar to those constructed by the company to meet the ISO accreditation. At the Training Committee meeting, company representatives tabled examples of the training said to be conducted by the company when inducting new employees. The learning program was modularised and set out in a progressive sequence. The presentation time was specified along with training aids and stationery requirements. The format of each module was almost exactly the same; in fact the predominant feature of the program was its sameness. Learning was content driven and the learner's role was usually passive. The module objective and the assessment were prescribed following behaviourist models. It presumed that all learners would achieve competence through the ascribed method in the same time. (See Appendix 2) The outstanding features of the page layout were the authorising signatures and the coding system which located the session within the module structure. The body of the text gives equal emphasis to organisational trivia eg. whiteboard, overhead, as it does to features of pedagogical significance such as objectives and outcomes.

Adherence to these features links the Carcare training program with training programs of other companies participating in the ISO global community. Carcare's membership is recognised by the adoption of the shared discourse. Training is therefore an item on the quality agenda that functions as a legitimising process rather than an educative one.

7.3   The Quality Economy Discourse

Science, in the positivist sense, as the fundamental epistemology of industry, is evident in most activity undertaken by corporations. It is the authorising voice in training, but its status within the quality discourse elevates quality to the primary controlling ideology of the workplace. Jackson (1995) forewarned that 'quality management or quality assurance systems were emerging as a key ingredient of a market oriented regulatory system' (1995:2). The regulatory system provides the means of apparent control over production systems and the quality of output. Specified standards and performance conditions appear to guarantee internal work standards and qualify out-sourced companies as suppliers. The ISO standards are seen as global uniform markers of quality. However, as Jackson points

out, 'quality' is a code word. The system is part of the mechanism for social and economic control for transnational companies and has little bearing on the actual quality of production and service.

Farrell (2001) argues that the discourse of globalised industry functions as the means of disrupting the local workplace discourse in order to shift the legitimate practices of the company away from local authority structures to parent companies. Parent companies and customer companies need to control the product, quality and cost structures of their supplier companies. Geographic separation calls for a mechanism of control that spans any distance. ISO, Q1, WCM and CBT as subsets of these systems, perform this function. Companies qualify to supply parts and services to major companies by meeting the requirements of set indicators. Likewise they may be disqualified if they are audited and found wanting. The indicators are applied throughout the global network and are the primary mechanism of policing compliance. The activities of the supplier company are legitimated by adherence to the qualifying indicators therefore information, knowledge and activity must be translated into the language that is sanctioned and recognised by authorising bodies otherwise it is dismissed as having no authority or consequence. Education has likewise been 're-languaged' as a service provider to industry and therefore subject to the quality discourse. Funding and reporting on outcomes is controlled through adherence to the conceptual structures of the quality system.

This imposition of the standardised 'quality' requirements is a process of intertextuality, technologised by large transnational companies and government bodies. It is heavily sanctioned and carefully defined in both ideology and identity markers.

The work of Gee et al. (1996), Farrell (1998 & 2000) and others demonstrate how the quality discourse translates into the global knowledge economy discourse in the daily interchange in the workplace. The quality discourse is a lever to shift working identities towards a new set of values which embrace anomalies such as worker autonomy and team knowledge, standardised outcomes and innovative creativity, text based bureaucratisation and flexible approaches to process improvement, co-operative localised learning and international communication systems (Farrell 2001). To be successful in the global economy, enterprises are required to be dynamic, knowledge generators but at the same

time to speak a universal language whereby processes and practices can be recognised, classified and controlled globally.

The Carcare experience exemplifies how this discursive shift was played out in the workplace.

7.3.1 Carcare and the New Quality Economy

At the Carcare site, the dynamics of global discourse generation and control were evident although not fully understood by any of the stakeholders. Each stakeholder engaged with the quality discourse in their own terms assuming a shared meaning with other stakeholders. No party used the global discourse strategically or capitalised on its legitimising power. As a result each stakeholder claimed adherence to quality principles in the terms that matched their capacity and interest. The union engaged with the discourse as part of the 'common interest' agenda of enterprise bargaining seeking to trade adherence for improved wages and conditions. Myself and WLI recognised that the quality discourse was the dominant language of power. Trainees needed fluency in the discourse in order to access decision making. However, under WLI influence, their fluency was to be a critical one based upon reflective practice within an educational framework of empowerment. The adherence of Carcare managers was quite different. They saw themselves as meeting compliance requirements of the parent company or the out-sourcer. Compliance 'to meet requirements' did not mean 'in the spirit' of the requirement. For example the official induction program was never activated, nor the skills assessment procedure. Perhaps the managers were the party that best understood the discourse. They knew how to use it to meet their needs without having it possess them.

Although each stakeholder operated different definitions, we could all claim a legitimate interest in quality. None of us saw ourselves as the servant of the global discourse that had subjugated our integrity to its service.

Carcare was keen to advertise its credentials as a player in the quality stakes. Standardised, high quality, universally-applied customer service was the feature by which the company identified itself in its brochure:

Carcare's uniqueness arises from its many important attributes which enable the company to process and prepare large numbers of vehicles to exacting standards within a short time frame … Carcare offers on a national basis, a consistent and uniform standard of vehicle preparation.

The transparency of processes was put forward as the competitive edge by which the company submitted itself to customer scrutiny:

Unique in Australia, Carcare's Vehicle Tracking System (VTS) is direct evidence of the company's industry leadership and its commitment to offer unparalleled communication to its customers. Every aspect of production and stock management of process, storage and fleet build up can be accurately monitored at a keystroke. Clients can track the progress of vehicles through our facilities, managing stock movements and storage duration more easily. For even greater efficiency, direct modern interface with client's computers allows real time analysis, direct allocation and stock control.

The VTS served to disrupt the local workplace conversation about the workplace tasks, customer requirements and who was responsible. The VTS had created new authority with reference to accountability, traceability and quality standards.

On the other hand, the union called upon the quality discourse to justify their right to a seat at the decision making table:

The purpose of the Consultative Committee is to consider proposals that can improve the competitiveness of the enterprise as well as providing employees with opportunities to enhance skills and job satisfaction.

Without limiting the scope of consultation, the matters which may be considered include:
Measures, as agreed in the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, designed to improve productivity, efficiency and flexibility
Implementation of such change
Involvement in the development and review of performance indicators

Review of targets in relation to performance indicators

Development of the Continuous Improvement Program

Implementation of the Training Agreement

Equal Employment Opportunity

Enterprise Agreement as drafted by the AMWU (Vehicle Division)

My work as an educationalist working on site at the company demonstrated an on-going promotion of the quality discourse. As the lingua franca of the organisation, it was important for employees to master the vocabulary. Following the classroom visit of a workplace specialist or company manager, the trainee group recalled the information exchanged during discussion in a note taking exercise and later completed a 'fill the gap' exercise to consolidate the vocabulary and key concepts. The class members were assisted in reading workplace documents and reports, particularly graphs and numerical representation of data. The language and the representation of quality in the workplace were discussed. Memos were written to managers and committees expressing opinions and concerns. Customer satisfaction surveys were designed, conducted and the data was analysed and reported. Participants investigated the needs of their internal customers[80]. The final presentations were formal with speakers and topics introduced, using projector transparencies identifying key points, incorporating graphic and statistical information and problem solving 'tools' where applicable.

The language of the shop floor was intercepted with a new way of speaking about work goals. Everyday interaction and worker knowledge was translated into corporate discourse modes and workers were taught to reframe their experience within new discourse boundaries. The workers struggled and resisted reshaping their knowledge into a corporate framework but succumbed under pressure to meet the course requirements.

The quality discourse provided a common theme that each stakeholder held as a fundamental reference point which could not be by-passed. However the discourse was capable of broad variation in interpretation. The activities of each party may nor have been judged as calling upon the same discourse if observed by an objective adjudicator.

7.4 The Discourse of WLI

The discourse of WLI presents a marked contrast to that of scientific management. While WLI paid due homage to the quality discourse, we attempted to introduce a new discourse around learning and learning organisation (Sefton et al. 1995). Carcare had recently been initiated into a training discourse under the pressure of ISO accreditation. Their training discourse spoke in terms of practical measurable outcomes and the delivery of training that fitted within ISO discourse and the production model that was familiar to these industrialists. The production model was one that included input, processing and outputs. We sought to disrupt this discourse by fusing training purpose and outcomes with values of equity, open communication, skills recognition and RPL. While similar values were mentioned as policy items in the Carcare induction program, we put them forward as the measures against which programs should be evaluated, as processes for implementation and as the responsibilities of workplace assessors and frontline managers to uphold and foster. We used educational, moral, social and political reference points while Carcare used fiscal reference points.

WLI tabled a proposal for frontline management training with the Training Committee. It set out 6 guiding principles. The first one stated:

Workplace leadership can come from many sources, not least of all those traditionally denied opportunities to contribute, listening can be as important as talking, reflection must balance action.

The notion of some employees being 'denied' opportunities is a political divide that most managers would have found unlikely, if not fictitious. Likewise the notion of 'reflection' may seem to find uncomfortable companionship with an agenda of efficiency, performance measurement and profit maximisation.

Subsequent guiding principles, referred to in the proposal, talked about interpersonal relationships, positioning them as central to 'a respectful workplace culture', 'an holistic understanding of the business and the rationale behind work processes and organisational systems'. At Carcare, managers are less likely to talk about abstractions such as 'rationale'

and 'culture' or the 'quality of their relationships' than to translate them into concrete terms such as discipline, authority, supervision and positions of responsibility.

The Carcare assessment project (the 'CBT in Action' project, the first training project at the company) included a mandatory entrance and exit survey which asked participants about their understanding and experience of 'action learning' and 'competency based training'. These were terms which reframed workers' everyday workplace activity. It could be argued that work activities were being appropriated and colonised into an educational discourse. Work activity was restructured into a hierarchy of skills, analysed as requiring pre-requisite knowledge, formalised into a sequence and assessed for measurable elements of competence. Work activity that had previously been owned by workers and accomplished in ways they knew best, had now become the domain of other authorities.

Taking such a view one could extrapolate to the assessment system devised at Carcare. The assessment system could be evaluated as a cumbersome, unworkable product that was incompatible with company processes. In its attempt to foster equity and workers' aspirations, assessment interviews could take more than an hour. The system attempted to mediate between company needs and individual skill development interests, giving equal value to each. It included self-assessment, skills recognition and career planning. Added to this, the system required complex management processes, record keeping and consultation as skills were fostered, opportunities were made for learning and assessment and the worker was encouraged to take the next step in designing his own skill development. The system was an unlikely adjunct to this company.

Carcare had neither a strong nurturing or management culture, nor did it have talking and democratic traditions. There was no consultation with workers up to this point[81]. Workers were not individuals with potential to develop and contribute to the company, they were labourers employed to perform functional duties as requested by management.

In practice the system set up a raft of demarcations by recognising levels of probationary skill development and by reclassifying levels of responsibility where previously there had been an open, unstructured system where the work got done whichever way. However, from a union perspective, the assessment system provided levels of progression for skills (and pay) recognition and opportunities for all members to access a career path. From a

training provider's perspective, the system was true to the values of the NTRA within a structured, developmental environment. It valued learning and mediated the introduction of life long learning principles.

The challenge for WLI was to seek points of convergence between the science-based quality discourse and that of the democratic, participative learning organisation. The dominant discourse could not be toppled, but could it be exploited to embrace links with progressive models of education. Since we were not in control of the discourse or strategic in our manipulation of intertextual opportunities, there appeared to be little potential for convergence.

7.5   The Discourse of Managerialism

Managerialism, like the quality discourse, is authenticated by science but it presents itself as the discourse of everyman. Managerialism overlaid management discourse with a new ideology, that of co-operation and shared vision in the striving for better quality. This discourse sprang from the adoption of psychology and people-centred practice in labour management (See chapter 5). Evidence of the transition is observable in the examples quoted earlier within the chapter. The Ford VIC training materials were not written in the same style as the hearing notice. The training materials have been softened by managerialism. While science offers the authority, managerialism humanises the tone.

The key strategy within managerialism is hegemony, where, in developed examples, the employees design and implement their own efficiency measures and police their own compliance (Unteweger 1992, Gee et al. 1995). Managerialism depends upon a coercive discourse which is controlled and managed (Kitay 1997). It infiltrates the language of the shop floor through training programs and discursive formations (ways of naming activities and processes on the floor). Gee writes:

> Business cannot succeed today without all workers buying into the
> ends/goals/vision of the organisation. They must proactively take responsibility for
> the total ramifications of their work on the organisation as a whole, as well as for
> the results (productivity) of the whole organisation. This will only happen if

workers actively <u>choose</u> to believe in the ends/goals/vision of the organisation and totally dedicate themselves - in public and private life - to them. But at the same time, these ends/goals/vision are set by visionary leaders (elites), as well as the parameters of the quality Discourse itself, not by the workers (partners). If the workers don't "buy into them", they are "out".

Gee, 1994: 13

Scientific management has given industry 'performance indicators' and the means to measure them. It has offered a series of procedures and tools with which the efficiency of employees can be measured, eg. reject rates, Just-in-Time production systems, benchmarking programs, key performance indicators. Managerialism has given industry a culture of co-operation through which the procedures and tools may be applied to workplace operations.

In contrast to scientific management, managerialism recognises the role of emotions and relationships in creating commitment, identity and hard work. Corporate identity is fostered by notions of the company 'family', competitive teams and awards which come with signs and posters displayed around the workplace. Managerialism is rich with slogans such as 'do it right the first time'; and symbols such as logos and emblems eg. 'C.A.R.E. <u>C</u>ustomers <u>A</u>re <u>R</u>eally <u>E</u>verything – Woolworths' FIRST Commandment'. Some companies even have songs which may be better described as anthems.

Managerialism gave rise to a new management identity. Managers replaced their suits and ties for parkas with company logos or dust jackets coloured so as to mark them from those on the floor. They spent more time in workers' spaces. Plain English training programs were made available to managers to soften and localise the discourse and make it accessible in order to bridge the communication gap and fashion a new 'mutuality' (Kitay 1997). Information issued during the International Year of Literacy, 1990, pointed out the economic sense of plain English but managers struggled to find the middle ground that allowed them both authority and intelligibility in their discourse. The 'democratisation' (See Chapter 4) of the discourse veiled the traditional presentation of authority. However, mutuality threatened to extract a cost to management sovereignty which many managers were not prepared to risk.

The following example of management communication from another company, illustrates the fusion of a coercive tone alongside an authoritative recourse to legalism. This company has embraced consultative practices and a number of managerialist practices.

Company Response
6 June

The company has carefully considered the decision of the union meeting held on 30 May. It continues to be the Company's view that wages improvements for our employees are best achieved by remaining with the Industrial Relations Commission system. Having taken account of the request for flexibility as outlined in the resolution we have introduced additional elements to our recommendation based on the original Option 1.

As discussed with all our employees during the Team Briefing last week on-going productivity and efficiency improvements remain one of the essential elements for our Company's recovery and on-going viability.

All of us agree on the need to get back around the table. The quickest way to ensure the best possible outcome for both our employees and the Company is to submit an application to the Arbitration Commission quickly...

Managers at this company have had extensive plain English training and there is evidence of attempts to avoid unnecessary complexity, even to lapse into casual tone 'to get back around the table'. However embedded clauses and complex sentence openings provide the legalistic authority that assert the hand of management eg. 'It continues to be the Company's view...', 'Having taken account of the request ...' The key decision announcing sentence is passive, removing authorship from any individual/s. At the same time coercive language features give credence to the employees as players in the discussion whose opinions have not been ignored eg. 'The Company has carefully considered the decision...', 'All of us agree...' Management has offered an explanation for their position as if to include employees into management's planning discussion. Employees are given a sense of inclusion by the use of the anaphoric pronoun 'our employees'.

Tom, Carcare's National Business Development Manager, embodies these values. His sense of mutuality is explicit:

You're part of the company. We're all here. If it goes broke we're all on the street so... we're all on the John Howard scholarship[82].

Training Session

Managerialism has appropriated elements from a number of other discourses. Industry has permeated the borders that separated home from work, community from industry, religion from money making, morality from an honest day's work. The mission statement below provides a colourful example. Using a verse format reminiscent of an evangelical preacher, the statement reads as a boy scout's pledge of 'total dedication'. The judgement alluded to in the final line resonates with religious intertextuality where one is called to account for one's life work in service to the customer rather than to God. The inclusive 'we' presumes the assent of all employees who are proud members of the 'whole Nissan family':

Our priority is total dedication to anticipating and satisfying customer needs. This dedication is the common thread in every product we sell and every service we provide.

We affirm that delivering quality and value are the cornerstone to operating successfully in the marketplace.

We will go further to be unsurpassed by any competitor in our recognition of customer needs prior to purchase and our delivery of ownership satisfaction on every vehicle we sell.

We will be responsible to the communities in which we live and work. We must support good work and causes, particularly road and driver safety.

Only this course of action will enable us to build a network where the whole Nissan family will be proud to work and set a standard for our industry that will become the benchmark.

These are the demands by which all of us will be judged.

The New Nissan Mission Statement

An ideology is created around the company identity and work activity. Declarative grammatical structures is an intertextual feature adopted from religious and political sources. Managerialism has contributed the capacity to manage the perceptions of employees through discoursal means.

The text below is an example of the way colloquial teenage interchange (awesome) and advertising jargon (delight) has been colonised to create a workplace ideology. It is a quote from a training program in the retail industry which gives a dictionary of terms:

Delight = Providing something which might have been expected, but nevertheless surprises and pleases the Customer when it does happen.

Awesome Service = Taking the extra steps to Delight the Customer and provide Memorable service.

Woolworths' Induction Training Program

Carcare is less in control of its discourse than these more disciplined companies working within a managerialist paradigm. Its training and workplace communication mechanisms are not well developed. Nonetheless it has absorbed those elements of the discourse of managerialism that relate to customer focus. Like other examples of the discourse, it assumes supremacy in the field:

True to its name, Carcare Australia is an Australian company that **'cares'**. By looking after your products, we enhance your bottom line performance. Which is why Carcare is the nation's premier company in vehicle pre-marketing and support service.

Carcare brochure (author's emphasis)

Care, a word appropriated from a nursing and psychological health environment, has established a foothold in industrial communication.

Whereas scientific management conducted a one way interchange, from management to employee, managerialism expects employees to share and contribute to the discourse. In another workplace, shop floor employees are encouraged to publicise their values and their willingness to abide by enterprise principles. Shop floor employees testify their commitment to the company, sometimes in public presentations (eg. Quality Awards, training presentations) and newsletters. Here are some quotes from two appreciative graduates of a quality training 'clinic' printed in the company newsletter. Note that these employees have attended a scientifically endowed clinic rather than an ill-defined training program. The clinic clearly values the discipline of regulated procedures in quality management:

I now realise that I can play an important role in the Quality Improvement process, because of a better understanding of the 14 Steps, the 4 Absolutes of Total Quality Management and the 5 Steps of Elimination that help me in 'Doing It Right The First Time'.

Quality Matters, newsletter of Containers Packaging Food Can Group, Winter 1992

The QIP (Quality Improvement Process) Clinic greatly broadened my understanding of the QIP process and how it should operate in our workplace. This has enabled me to take a more active and positive part in making the quality process work at our company.

Quality Matters, newsletter of Containers Packaging Food Can Group, Winter 1992

Another means of disseminating the discourse is through Quality Circles (QC) or continuous improvement groups, however they are named in different companies. Formalised procedures are followed in line with scientific management principles. Managerialism however has provided the mechanisms to access the knowledge of the shop floor and reshape it into the framework of the dominant discourse. The process of controlling the Ideological Discoursal Formation (Fairclough, 1992 a) has been thorough. The following example, written by a shop floor participant in a QC program, reiterates commitment to the 'customer satisfaction' principle:

"The benefits gained from doing this project have been:
- a better understanding of our customer needs
- improved communication between groups through using the group feedback system
- more confidence in solving future problems and
- last but not least, achieving zero quality defects resulting in happier customers."
Year of My Customer Presentation, Toyota Altona Production Plant, 1994

Carcare is yet to learn the power of the two-way interchange in nurturing a discourse of mutuality. The company did not recognise the potential of training as an enculturation mechanism albeit a critical one in the hands of the prevailing training provider. Nonetheless, trainees were asked to write a report on the gains they had made through the training program as part of the evaluation process. Quotations from their reports reveal that

they have imbibed the values of mutuality, company commitment and the understanding of the organic nature of industry:

I gained an understanding that the company does not centre around an individual section. I am able to give supervisors more latitude when things are not done quickly. I take pride in my work

We acknowledge that management has trusted us this opportunity to learn and we wish to express our gratitude
Dan

I am now more confident in asking how something operates. I know what to ask for and how to follow things through. I am more confident to chase up a query. I used to let others handle problems in the past. I now fill in Quality Alert Reports. I understand the tracking form better and why it is important.
Tony

Management could have publicised these statements and celebrated the values they express. They could have incorporated the ideology into their interchange with the shop floor. They could have used the trainees as advocates for a reformed workplace culture. If they were to use these communication mechanisms to advance lean management and work intensification goals they would be using managerialism in a politically powerful way. To do so however, the company would need to inculcate a deep seated belief in the ability of their workforce to achieve quality production and profitability and to endow them with authority in communication. As it happened, the company relied upon systems, punishment and supervision to achieve quality and production goals.

In other companies, managerialism has provided management with the tools to harness the power of discourse to reconstruct the experience of work and link it with worker identity. Hegemonic processes have nurtured an accepting workforce that feels empowered, albeit a bounded empowerment confined to domains of productivity improvement (Gee and Lankshear 1995).

The face of management has been humanised as workers now sit alongside managers in the canteen, in problem solving meetings, in consultative groups. Values of loyalty and belonging have dispelled or at least lowered the barriers between the groups. Hegemony has allowed workers to co-operate in the implementation of globalism through processes such as down-sizing, wage restraint, work intensification.

At Carcare the assessment system could also have been used as a tool of managerialism to assist in reducing wages growth and to create the flexibility the company required, but it needed a committed, trained and focused set of managers to apply managerialism strategically.

7.6 The Discourse of Unionism

The discourse of unionism appears to be more fractured than the discourses discussed earlier. The explanation for this phenomenon lies in the longevity of the movement and the breadth of its membership. Union discourse lacks the cohesion of some of the above discourses that maintain fidelity to an ideology with no attachment to its membership. By contrast, unionism tolerates contradiction in its embrace of members.

The discourse of unions has its origins in a very different tradition to that of managerialism. Frankel (1992) claims that its roots are founded within the working class legends of class solidarity and the struggles of the early labour movement in Australia. Newman (1993, 1994) also gives credence to the 'struggle' as important in union iconography:

> The sense of being 'us' against 'them', of being unionists against management, of
> being in continual struggle to guard and promote the interests of ordinary people
> like oneself is a powerful unifying factor.
> Newman, 1993: 17

He refers to the notion of comradeship and the protection of each other as the central tenet of the union culture:

> Union history is about people acting collectively not only to protect themselves but
> to protect others.
> Newman, 1993: 19

Despite a constant reference to the common man, it is interesting that, until the introduction of Communist artistic representation, the union movement chose to dignify its achievements with reference to classical architecture and art forms - a significant monument being Trades Hall in Melbourne modelled on the classical Parthenon blueprint and adorned inside with classical heroic figures. Old style banners, placards and symbols likewise pay homage to classical figures - images from a competing discourse it would seem[83].

Leaving this anomaly aside, union mythology has been nourished on an adversarial discourse. Union battles were won by persistent refusal to comply and by calls for solidarity across many industries. The local heroes were those who gave impassioned speeches and galvanised the will of workers to fight the good fight. Driven by moral rectitude and embellished with colourful expression of disdain for management, union discourse presented a stark contrast to the bureaucratic, dispassionate discourse of management.

The persuasive power of the union however built its armoury on legal expertise - the ability to win in the industrial relations court and the ability to interpret subtle, complex and often poorly expressed legal prose within awards and industrial decisions. Shop stewards were also required to become adept with such weaponry. They acquired the ability to fathom the depths of legalistic ambiguous texts when dealing with local grievances and disputes. Texts such as the following are an example. Here the first sentence contradicts the second:

> Currently VBEF members are required to be notified the day before overtime is
> required, otherwise they will be paid a meal allowance.
> This provides that an employee may be notified up to mid-shift on the day in which
> overtime is to be worked and that if overtime is required in excess of three (3)
> hours they will be paid meal allowance.
> VBEF Award, 1992

The consensus values of the Industry Restructuring movement attempted to disarm the traditional adversarial union discourse. Mud slinging oratory, courage and defiance were moderated by practices of negotiation and consultation. The Age newspaper, in its bicentennial supplement, made reference to 'New Labor' recognising the emergence of a new union discourse :

> The trade union movement or at least its leadership, has also been transformed in the 80s. It too has become "New Labor".
> *The Age*, Saturday December 31, 1988, Supplement p 19

The 'New Labor' discourse had a voice around the board rooms of large companies and government instrumentalities. It was a voice that gave recognition and respect to conflicting points of view. It was a persona that inhabited the dominant paradigm - taking a chair at the polished board room table, sinking into the large leather lounges, drinking tea from fine china. Its voice did not pale in the heavy silence of the soft furnishings.

The changing culture was aptly described to the training group by Anna, the training officer from the central union office:

> The old style of trade unions, you know, basically you know, you sit around the table and you thump the table and you say, if you don't give it to us, we're out the door, up your's, we're gone... Gone are the days where basically the unions can walk in and say you know, we want $10, we want it now or we're out, we're on the grass. We have to, unions themselves have had to have learnt to get smarter, to know the industry. I mean, you know, our senior officials of management rub shoulders with senior officials of management, rub shoulders with senior politicians etcetera cause that's, that's, that's where the main game is set. So we've adapted to being smarter trade union officials.
> Training Session

For many however the cost of working smarter was compromise and coercion. According to Deetz (1995) quality systems and the new work order can only be achieved in a consensual environment.

Discourses of conflict sustain a cultural purity. Values are fortified and strengthened by their identification as opposite to the opposing party. Once discourse groups agree to co-operate, they influence each other and 'contaminate' their identity and values (Clendennin 1991).

Union officialdom has been accused repeatedly of sharing a management discourse, abandoning its grass-roots membership (Lowenstein 1997[84], IR survey 1997[85]. The introduction to Rees and Rodley's book (1995) opens with a discussion of a Peace and Conflict Studies conference. The radio program covering the conference drew links between peace and managerialism:

> to focus on the attainment of peace is to identify the direct and indirect means to coerce others.
> Rees and Rodley, 1995: 1

It can be argued however that unions had little choice but to learn the language of productivity and how to use it powerfully in order to advance their cause within a consensus culture where the dominant discourse was controlled by management. Consultation did not carry any compulsion to comply on the part of management. Union representatives had to convince management of the efficacy of their advice.

The Trade Union Training Authority (TUTA) was established in 1975 through an act of parliament initiated by the Whitlam government. In the 1980s, its activities expanded considerably as OH&S and consultative committee representatives learned new roles and discoursal positions. TUTA attempted to teach the discourse critically. Newman (1993) reports a vibrant and powerful training energy as union representatives wrestled with new concepts and new language. A project application (1994) submitted by the AMWU for government training funds to develop the skills of shop stewards includes amongst its skills needs 'develop a log of claims', 'involve members and put the recommendations for final endorsement', 'negotiate the claim as part of a Single Bargaining Unit', 'monitor the implementation of all aspects of the Agreement'.

The shop steward in his/her role as worker representative on a consultative committee, negotiated assent to ideas that were generated in worker/management forums. With a stake

in the development of such plans, the stewards' subjectivity was usually transparent. New ideas were privileged in a manner that had not been available to management before. Some unionists were swept away by hegemonic forces where they were doing the work that was previously the domain of management (Virgona 1994).

Unionists who continued to apply adversarial principles and did not learn the art of coercion and consensus, found that the progress of consultation at their company was at least hindered (Foley and Morris 1995), if not terminated. Most struggled to master the discourse, with varying levels of success. The following was an example. This shop steward has been undergoing an intensive training course. As his final project, he attempted to frame an argument to management:

> The major concern in relation to this (job loss) is over the resulting lack of job
> security and lack of guarantees that 'jobs' will be replaced with something else.
> In future we request that the company acts more responsibly towards the job
> security of its employees by ensuring that no job is given away or lost, unless it is
> to be directly and immediately replaced by an alternative job - that is, unless the
> company can guarantee a straight forward 'swap' of one job for another.
> Union Training Program, 1992

This steward has managed to make the transition from oral to written discourse incorporating language features such as 'in relation to', 'over the resulting', 'ensuring'. His request is unambiguous and unemotional but his appeal is only to principle. There is no recognition of management's economic imperative.

Stewards' lack of control of the discourse was evidenced by the deteriorating conditions of labour over the years of direct negotiation of workplace agreements. At the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Action Coalition (ALBSAC) conference in 1994, Smith reported on her study having taken account of how women were faring under the EBA system. Predictably, women had lost ground on virtually all indices. Heiler (1997) undertook a similar study. Monitoring enterprise agreements over the 5 years to 1997, she reported that workers' conditions deteriorated considerably under the EBA arrangements, particularly in regard to increased hours of work (loss of RDOs, equalisation of time across a 1 year or 2 year time span, longer shifts etc.). Union bargaining power appears not to be strong, each agreement

delivering worse conditions than the one before with deteriorating levels of OH&S, and increased stress, pace of work and longer hours (Britton 1995).

The challenge for the union movement has been to create a discourse that embraces the changing values of an increasingly diverse workforce, which is persuasive at the consultative table and which is palatable to the public.

The traditional working class discourse resonates with a constantly diminishing group as working people identify themselves increasingly with the middle class[86]. Working people strive for consumer status and educational goals for their children equivalent to those sought by the middle class (Mackay 1993). Private sector services, middle class discourse features and consumption patterns were the order of the day for shop floor Carcare workers. Identity markers of the blue-singleted Aussie battler were hard to find. Blue collar workers were keen to measure the distance between themselves and the growing unemployed underclass.

The profile of blue collar workers in low paid work has changed. With the influence of globalisation, companies have closed down and unemployment has risen. At Carcare, a number of employees had come to the company via an agency that found employment for older workers. Many of these workers brought with them long standing and significant industrial experience. There were ex-foremen, supervisors and middle managers. They had been retrenched or their companies had closed down and they had found it impossible to get work at the equivalent levels. Some were tradespeople, a few from the air force who had worked in highly disciplined environments in aircraft construction or safety equipment installation. Their trades had disappeared from the local scene with the closing of the aircraft building facility in Australia. There were a number of people who owned their own businesses, usually working in a related area like vehicle air conditioners and repair workshops. There were people who were owner-drivers involved in cartage operations. There were crane drivers and storespeople. 60% of the workforce were over 40 and they brought with them a wealth of skills, credentials and experience in fields where initiative and entrepreneurial skills were essential.

Consistent with national employment profiles, most of the young recently employed had completed VCE[87] (Victorian Certificate of Education). 38% of the workforce had achieved

year 11 or 12. Like their older highly trained compatriots, younger members had taken this job at Carcare as a temporary stop gap since no other work was available. Their intention was to realise their potential when the opportunity arose. However, years later, they found themselves still in the same job.

As union members however, many brought with them different aspirations and cultural identities from their predecessors. Frankel makes this point:

> social movements pursuing feminist, environmentalist and other cultural agendas also reject key elements of the mythical and historical working-class culture. Concepts such as working class solidarity were deemed to be masculinist and totalizing. Whether radical nationalist or internationalist, the concept of class solidarity denotes markedly different values to those feminist and subcultural groups who prefer 'difference' and pluralism rather than being subsumed into a common culture.
> Frankel, 1992: 23

Traditional blue collar unionists, who still hold positions of power, have largely failed to expand their discourse to make room for non-traditional members.

In a column in the *Labor Herald*, the newspaper of the ALP, Stan Sharkey, National Secretary of the CFMEU (Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union) reported on a dispute with CSR (a large multi-national company involved in the manufacture of construction materials). The report is marked by hybridity:

> Unless workers at CSR operations come to understand and fight against this bastardry, it will be repeated plant by plant across Australia ...
> Remember all this happened when the workers concerned said they wanted the union to represent them! Their choice, their collective decision, was ignored. What does Reith say about that?...
> The battle standard around which these dogs of industrial war have rallied is to the Howard government's anti-worker laws. The corporate philosophy underpinning their creation of a new era in industrial relations runs no deeper then 'The Marijuana Syndrome' - the more you suck, the higher you get.
> Sharkey, *Labor Herald*, May 1997

The rhetoric is founded on oral traditions. The language is colourful, direct, emotive and powerful giving an urgency to the call to action. Intertextual reference to the 'dogs of war' calls upon Marxist social construction juxtaposed with allusions that border on the vulgar.

An appeal for action is motivated through a sense of indignation and injustice, given immediacy by a quote from a unionist:

> The company 'offered' us or more precisely shoved down our throats, an 'agreement' to make us all salaried staff with sweeteners such as a 50 cents pay rise and not much else ... The way it looks we will have to sign this contract. This will be the end of free enterprise bargaining for us mob here at CSR Humes. It is a sad day, fear has prevailed. We have no choice.
> Sharkey, *Labor Herald*, May 1997

Many union strategies are still focused on brute strength, resistance and disdain for authority. Their talk is still tough, masculine, emotive, gritty, unscientific and often contemptuous of the opposition. Its character comes from dispute and adversarial indictment. Its authority comes from defiance and victory in battle.

Union discourse still sustains many contradictory voices from the ungarnished prose of a traditional blue collar battler to the silver tongue of union politicians.

7.7   The Conflicting Discourses of Industry

The above text contrasts sharply with the other dominant voice of industry - the carefully groomed managerial discourse. An advertisement for Hamersley Iron celebrates the achievement of a union-free workplace in heroic terms:

> When everyone pulls together in the same direction, small groups can achieve great goals ... When more than 1300 Hamersley workers recently exercised their freedom of choice under state legislation to accept staff conditions of employment, they laid the foundations for a new structure that ensures Hamersley is best equipped to meet the challenges of an increasingly competitive marketplace ... Hamersley people

industry.

The advertisement expresses certainty in 'warranting' tone (See Chapter 4). It does not argue the case but lays a claim. It contrasts with previously quoted management discourse, illustrating the shift from the formal, remote and impersonally scientific to the evocative and coercive. The picture at the top of the advertisement depicts a group of men pulling vigorously on a rope, teeth gritted and muscles taut.

Teamwork wins

WHEN everyone pulls together in the same direction, small groups can achieve great goals. That's the principle of the teamwork that is changing the face of Hamersley Iron. The company's new one structure organisation is a key component in keeping Hamersley internationally competitive.

It also makes Hamersley's people a true team - one group with one set of values and conditions; one organisation with one goal: To be the supplier of choice to the world's steelmakers.

When more than 1300 Hamersley workers recently exercised their freedom of choice under State legislation to accept staff conditions of employment, they laid the foundations for a new structure that ensures Hamersley is best equipped to meet the challenges of an increasingly competitive marketplace. Major steel industries are in recession and competition among iron ore producers for a greater share of the international iron ore market is intensifying.

Hamersley has accepted the challenge to work smarter and more creatively. It means Hamersley is more efficient; it also means Hamersley's customers continue to receive reliable and consistent supply of quality products. To underwrite this, the company is progressing to establish a culture in which people readily share ideas for improving the way work is done; where the contribution of the individual and the team is recognised and rewarded. Where people can achieve their best.

Hamersley people know it is the only way the company can maintain the competitive edge in a tough industry. Their reward lies in knowing that when determined teams take up the challenge, they can be world-beaters.

And that's good for everyone.

H·I

HAMERSLEY IRON
Hamersley Iron Pty. Limited ACN 004 558 276
152 - 158 St George's Terrace Perth WA 6000   Tel.: (09) 327 2327

Managerial discourse has transposed the concept of solidarity from the moral imperative of the union movement to the profit imperative of the company. The company has found a way of recognising the individual within the commercial effort, constructing the identity of a 'winner', creating a sense of significance subsumed in company goals. The heroes, the myths, the energy, the challenge are woven into the text capturing the values of contemporary aspirations (Gee et al. 1995). The text is convincing in its assertion that Hamersley people are seizing the moment to fight adversity and achieve significance for themselves and the company.

Managerial texts have co-opted and recoloured the energy of union texts. The general manager of Nike, interviewed on 3RN on the Sports Factor declared 'This is not a business, it's a mission', words that might have been more aptly applied to the social endeavours of the union movement in years gone by. Managerialism has extended beyond the workplace to perceptions of society and social roles:

> The users of the new language have succeeded in making indisputable what are, in
> fact, highly diverse and debatable assumptions about how a society, in this case
> Australian society, works.
> Marceau, 1995: 116

Hamersley Iron makes no reference to the competing discourse or the bitter fray with the union that preceded the current work agreements. Its business is not to defend its actions but to construct a discourse of opportunity around the new Hamersley people.

Drucker explains the shift in consciousness as follows:

> 'Loyalty' from now on cannot be obtained by the paycheck; it will have to be
> earned by proving to knowledge employees that the organisation which presently
> employs them can offer them exceptional opportunities to be effective. Not so long
> ago we talked about 'labor'; increasingly now we are talking about 'human
> resources'. This implies that it is the individual knowledge employee who decides
> in large measure what he or she will contribute, and how great the yield from his or
> her knowledge can or should be.[88]
> Drucker, 1993:66

The traditional discourse of unionism expresses a fidelity to an old morality formed around fixed principles and group goals, such as, protecting minimum wages, equal pay for equal work and protection against job loss. The modern pragmatic discourse however, has traded steadfast principle for policy free political positions driven only by an economic religiosity and individual advantage. Union culture seeks to create an identification with the union and the industry rather than the company. The company unifies its members by constructing a nebulous 'enemy' that has no dimensions except as the obverse of the stated values. The team leader is your coach and middle management your confidant, there to support you, and there to work along with you to create your potential self.

> ... the company is progressing to establish a culture in which people readily share
> ideas for improving the way work is done; where the contribution of the individual
> and the team is recognised and rewarded. Where people can achieve their best.
> *Weekend Australian* July 4, 1994 (Hamersley Iron advertisement)

Managerial discourse, in describing its enterprise, assumes consensus, asserts its subjectivity and role-casts others within it. It rarely expresses anger. By contrast union discourse rages. In dissenting mode, managerialism confines itself to impassive, rational scientifically deduced inevitabilities, distancing itself from decisions that create stress and distress. However, shop stewards and union officials are given to outrage and emotional expression.

In union-strong workplaces, management seems to view the union as petulant, irrational, volatile and greedy (Virgona 1994). Management humours union representatives, afraid of a petulant and hysterical outburst. This would appear to be the case at Carcare which explains, in part, management's compliant relationship with the union. On previous occasions the steward had reached such a point of frustration that he had walked out of a meeting slamming doors behind him. On another occasion he had resigned his role as steward on the spot and refused to negotiate a meliorating position. Such behaviour was not unique to Carcare.

These responses left the management without resources or strategies to deal with the moment. The union could, and had, exercised their power to call the workforce out on strike without warning. During the period of this study the workforce walked off the job

when a computer failed for two weeks in a row to pay the wages on time. On this occasion the central union delegates intervened to call the workers back to work.

Management believed the workforce was volatile and unpredictable and were very anxious about aggravating frustration.

7.8   Unionism at Carcare

Within Carcare, all the voices of unionism were audible. The union had established its purpose as the defender of the vulnerable. Anna, the central union representative, reasserts her motives as altruistic:

> We were pretty pissed off with the way everyone who had trade qualifications and above trade qualifications reckoned they had all the skills in the industry, whereas the majority of our workers were non-trade, and we knew you had skills, the bosses know you had skills ...so why shouldn't that be recognised as well.
> Anna (Union Training Officer)Training Session

The divide between 'them' and 'us' is clearly drawn along traditional union lines:

> We might as well take the opportunity, seeing there's no management in the room, to have a good chat to each other.
> Anna (Union Training Officer)Training Session

Both the shop steward and the union representative indulge freely in demonising the enemy:

> Of the people I deal with, and this would be no, you know, skin off anyone's nose, they'd know it too, Andrew Smith is the biggest arse hole in the world as far as the training committee goes.
> Anna (Union Training Officer)Training Session

This is a stance familiar to union members, particularly the older ones, but the culture has shifted. A new union discourse has emerged where many members could not find an identity. Puzzled union members recalled years when the union was visible. They talked about times when 'you knew you belonged to the union' because the battle lines were defined and the talk was tough. Now they complained that they didn't know their organiser. 'What's that bloke's name?' 'We never see him.' 'We only see him as he disappears into the boss's office'. They also expressed dissatisfaction with the steward. 'He doesn't do anything when you go to him.' Union meetings were dull and bureaucratic and the rousing oral traditions were forgotten. Union stoushes were fought behind closed doors often over issues the members did not even consider important, such as training.

But Ron, the shop steward, claimed to have achieved some successes on behalf of the workforce. While other workplaces had lost conditions and real wages, Carcare had maintained conditions and achieved a steady increase in wages. All employees were paid over the award and had sustained penalty rates, morning and afternoon breaks and other conditions. Despite their best efforts, management had failed to achieve the flexibility that would allow employees to match their working hours to the arrival of car laden ships. At the same time, the union boasted about achieving a wage progression agreement for the workers that exceeded expectations:

> It is one of the best training agreements in the whole RS&R area. All you have to do is basically 80 hours training and I know that sounds like a lot ... and you get equivalent to trade pay...There's no other RS&R company ...in Victoria that I know that will give its members that.
> Anna (Union Training Officer)Training Session

The union had made these gains through their acceptance of a stance of common interest with the management. They had bargained on the basis of multi-skilling and the promise of industrial peace in exchange for a wages deal based on training.

The union was therefore characterised by contradiction at workplace level, particularly the role of the shop steward. Ron was both supervisor and shop steward. Acclaimed by his manager, Andrew, as a good worker, 'our best painter' and a trusted employee, he spent as much time in negotiation with management and on union business as he did on the shop

floor. He generally had little to say during Training Committee Meetings, but on two notable occasions he co-operated with Andrew challenging the union position (See Chapter 8, Interactional Event No. 4). He upheld Andrew's position when he declared that the CSRs had been assessed although Ron knew it to be untrue. He aligned with Andrew in contesting the pay increase of the new graduates. He assisted Reno, the factory manager, in allocating new classification positions to the shop floor. The allocation was not based on assessment. In fact Ron by-passed the assessment structure that he had a principal role in establishing and that Anna asserted to be a bulwark against arbitrary management pay decisions. He allowed management to attend a strike meeting. When members queried their presence he offered no explanation but grunted 'Its okay!' presuming the power of his authority would silence further questioning. Ron had absorbed the 'new labour' role to a point that provided concern, even frustration and suspicion, to the central union office.

Ron was simultaneously loved and hated by both workers and managers. When he resigned from his role as steward because he refused 'to take any more shit from the members', the role remained vacant for months. Who could unravel its ambiguities or assume such contradictory relationships? After a few months, Ron was cajoled back into the position by the central union and left to manage the incongruities on his own.

Many members were suspicious of the relationship between the union and management. They queried why the management paid their union fees and maintained a closed shop. Union officials were invited to the Christmas lunch and were greeted by management with back-slapping joviality and seated at the managers' table.

With the changing profile of the workforce, many members distanced themselves from old adversarial methods. Most expressed a level of mutuality. They acknowledged that their career prospects were locked up with that of the company but they also acknowledged their powerlessness and the limitations of the information they could access. They knew that information was controlled. As Anna explains:

> I mean what this management guy[89] was in before telling you about how much each car loses and all that sort of stuff, I mean, well all I can say is if the company's losing that much money with each car they buy without closing down, then they're

gotta be making money too. It's swings and roundabouts. But the fact is the automotive industry in Australia is very lean, profits are very tight.
Anna (Union Training Officer)Training Session

The members were left bewildered, never certain who to trust and knowing their information emanating from both sides was incomplete. They were reassured by the union's statements of strength. These statements however referred to legal weaponry rather than statements of solidarity as they did in the past:

> We've got the agreement. It's signed. We know we can win in the Commission every time on it.
> Anna (Union Training Officer)Training Session

Minutes of meetings are part of the armoury. When a management omission occurred during a meeting, Anna instructed the meeting secretary: 'that should be minuted and reminded.' Minutes could be presented in the Commission as legal evidence. But a paper war was remote from the shop floor.

In their uncertainty, union members were easily swayed, co-opted into the management discourse at one minute and the union discourse in the next.

7.9   Conclusion

Managerialism has permeated the boundaries that divided management, union and social discourse. The new discourse has destabilised the old, appropriating language features and ideological positions from the other competing discourses (Fairclough 1992). As a result the old union ideology has been problematised. While union discourse flounders, managerialism has captured the discoursal energy within the community allowing it almost unbridled power to redefine social institutions and the avenues of influence.

Managerialism, along with economic rationalism and the values of globalism, spawned new industry practices - the growth of contract labour to replace permanent workforces, the privatisation of public provision, the loss of memberships of unions and the deterioration

of wages and working conditions. An orthodoxy created around economic rationalism has silenced the competing voices in decision making forums.

> Today few will defend economics as a science, since its principles are neither verifiable or disprovable. Economics as a profession is too often a form of social engineering that is beyond accountability.
> Henderson (1996:284), in Mulqueeny 1998:335

In industry discourse, cost cutting, value adding and waste reduction are also the concerns of unions as they are forced to negotiate on the grounds of structural efficiency and skills training wages through the EBA processes.

Adversarial industrial relations have largely disappeared in the terms that characterised the workforce pre 1980s. Corroded by the forces of the consensus culture, adversarial systems have now given way to managerial workplaces which are managed through discoursal practices. The business of the new industrial discourse is to construct an ideology through self-idealisation. Carcare managers had not embraced managerialism sufficiently to construct a dialectic relationship with the shop floor. Nonetheless the new culture of mutuality has become generalised throughout industry. It has permeated community beliefs so that workers recognised the goals towards which they were meant to be striving without conscious policy dissemination on the part of management.

Managerialism has redefined industrial relations and workplace development as the business of negotiated identity rather than industrial action. At one level this has the potential to create a listening industrial society as one party responds to the other. Both parties create and re-create goals and ideals reframing them as opportunities with common benefits. In the next chapter, Anna demonstrates the dynamics of this process in dealing with her renegade steward in a Training Committee meeting.

Publicly articulating shared beliefs and common interests functions as a way of publicising and generalising an understanding between industrial parties. Training, as exemplified in this case study, can play a potent role in negotiating identity and assisting both parties in furthering their ideals. This is a political function and skills exercised in negotiating and generalising the political vision are an important corollary. Training is therefore best

understood as a political and economic endeavour embedded in the ideology and identity of workers and companies.

WLI attempted to complement and intervene in the discourse to create an ideologically invested training culture but the markets were mismatched and failed to engage management.

Despite Carcare's poorly controlled management discourse, workers have learned a new set of values influenced by managerial principles. Although the residue of the old union discourse can still be heard, managerialist values have been well integrated into the dominant discourse. As a result, worker identity has shifted from an adversarial stance to one of uncertainty, ambiguity and contradiction. They trust neither the union, with its seemingly contradictory behaviour, nor the management. Chapter 8 takes up this argument further by analysing the way the management and the union negotiate their identity with the workers.

Max Weber (1947) was the sociologist who analysed bureaucracies as an organisational mechanism to make human behaviour rational, predictable and controllable. Weberian models of social organisation are disciplined and methodical measures directed towards achieving specified goals.

Modernism is based on a belief in evolutionary progression - a belief that there is a better way which should discredit and supersede lesser knowledge and social practice. The truth

> is an instrumental commodity which may be used to enhance control of the natural and social worlds for the greater common good of humanity. Entailed in this view is a belief that universal truths and principles can be discovered and that we have good (objective) grounds, independent of social conventions or traditions for believing in the superiority of some beliefs over others. These grounds or foundations are defined by the scientific, philosophical or political programs in which knowledge is legitimated.
> Bagnall 1994:4

The Kanban (or Just in Time) System is a feature of the Japanese Manufacturing System that has been imported into Australia. It eliminates the storage of items made ahead of orders and pushes the cost of this down the line to the supplier. Parts are delivered directly from the supplier to the line at the time when they are ready to be used. Its purpose is to reduce costs and to control suppliers.

The ANDON system consists of a set of lights indicating the ease with which the production is moving on a production line. A green light indicates that all workstations are keeping pace with the line. An amber light indicates a level of stress there are some hold ups. A red light indicates the line has stopped. A siren sounds and the workstation at fault is identified.

'Muda' is the Japanese word for waste. Within the industrial context, it is used to connote a particular process of waste elimination.

'Kaizen' is the Japanese word for continuous improvement and also associated with a defined process by which groups manage quality improvement.

Competency in active listening cannot be measured by naming the elements to be considered when following instructions.

The Integrated Model contradicted many of the features that had attached themselves to CBT such as modularisation and sparse functional learning limited to a narrow interpretation of the competency. The Integrated Model draws heavily on the workplace context to provide a field of application and the employees as the experts and knowledge generators.

The curriculum is collaboratively developed and knowledge is explored using action learning methods of inquiry and project-based work.

[80] Internal customers refer to those who are the next recipient of the protagonist's work within the workplace. In a production workplace it would be the worker who performs the next operation in the production process or the person who moves the product to the next workstation.

[81] The EBA was negotiated with the shop steward and central union delegates. Union members were informed about its contents rather than encouraged to contribute to its detail.

[82] The 'John Howard scholarship' refers to unemployment benefits paid by the government to those who have no other source of income.

[83] James (2000) traces union iconography to the influence of Freemasonry and benefit societies which may explain its classical reference.

[84] Lowenstein reported that union members defeated in the Roper River dispute would have celebrated had the union officials whom they believe 'sold them out' been killed on the way back to their offices in the city.

[85] The 1997 IR survey expresses a lack of faith in both union officials and employers whom union members saw as in league.

[86] Probert (2000) notes that 'In Australia opinion surveys consistently found that over half of all Australians considered themselves to be middle class - far more than any objective measure would allow' 2000:6

[87] Victorian Certificate of Education is the certificate achieved at the end of Year 12 and represents the completion of schooling education.

[88] The knowledge worker descriptor is applied mostly to those working in fields where innovation and initiative is expected, however shop floor workers have acquired higher levels of responsibility as authority has been devolved. Knowledge of product, customers and markets is required (Virgona et al. , 1999). While Carcare management dismissed this claim, the training program was built on this belief.

[89] Anna's address had followed that of Ryan, the financial controller.

CHAPTER 8: - DISCOURSE ANALYSIS – CARCARE PROFILES

Balloon metaphor:

This chapter looks at the personalities in the basket and the ideologies they call upon in relating to each other and in making sense of the superstructure that is driving them along.

8.1 Overview

To date this study has focused on the discourses of industry, particularly the industry restructure movement. It has sought to understand the evolution of its discourses and their aspirations. It has observed the mismatch between the discourse ideologies and the living examples in industry particularly in the case study company where the working face of the industry discourses presented only a shadow of the restructure ideals and nothing of its optimism. While many industry texts have constructed change as an inevitability for survival, the case study company has trod a tentative pathway, cautiously resisting any significant reframing of company identity.

This chapter takes a more microscopic view. It gives a detailed analysis of how the change agenda worked its way through the company. It analyses a number of interactional events within the workplace observing how workplace personnel have interpreted the changing discourses of globalism, from that of democratic restructuring to managerialism. Each protagonist presents an interpretation of the workplace and its future as inevitable and the most viable. Each one involves change and they beckon, coerce, cajole, demand, request or threaten change in line with the ideology they present.

Most workplace personnel do not fit neatly into one school of thought but mix discourses. The interactional events provide the data to probe the question of identity – what discourses do Carcare personnel call upon as they construct themselves in their roles as managers, workers, union delegates, and how are they constructed by others? How do they negotiate relationships with each other, particularly up and down the authority hierarchy?

Where do they take their place within the social discourse traditions of the company? How are they discursively situated in each of these interactional events?

The analysis seeks to identify the dynamics that

- negotiate workplace relations;
- create social identity;
- create and sustain institutional identity;
- engender change.

For the purposes of this study, interactional events are discourse events that have been recorded and analysed. They are events where workplace people have come together for a formal purpose - a meeting, a training session, a training presentation. Each event is therefore prolonged in time involving at least thirty minutes of recorded text. Each event was audio taped or video taped and transcribed. The selected moments presented in this chapter analyse the construction and challenge of working identity within the company.

There are a total of five interactional events discussed, each one selected in order to

- understand the way relationships are negotiated between management and shop floor
- reflect the way industry discourses have been interpreted at the company
- explore contrasting and sometimes conflicting working identities
- demonstrate the competing discourses that struggle for supremacy at the company

8.2   Who is Management?

A number of discourses vie for supremacy among the management personnel. The parochial, RS&R style of previous years is being gradually superseded by that of the major multi-national that has bought out the company. The multi-national has grafted styles of managerialism onto the old stock with various levels of success. The old rough 'cowboy' discourse is still audible along with that of the consensus culture of the restructuring era. The new management discourse is now attempting to out-shout the others so that old style managers reflect multiple discourses.

During the data gathering stage, new management faces took up residence at the work-site and office refurbishments were underway to reconstruct the face of the company as a modern business entity. The dowdy offices described in Chapter 2 were replaced with clean surfaces and open spaces in understated pastel colours. New managers modelled themselves on the prevailing authority formula of industry discussed previously (see Chapter 7). They conformed, in varying degrees, to the stereotypes founded on a belief in the supremacy of scientific knowledge and the power of dispassionate authority. Senior managers were therefore disinclined to display emotion. Ryan, the subject of the first interactional event, adopted a communication style that was unflustered, objective and detached. Even the meeting wrangle (Interactional Event No.3) was tempered by the mores of courteous debate as was the conflict between Lev and Andrew in the final interactional event. While issues of identity were at stake, managerialist values, moderated through rationality and reasonableness, ensured a somewhat gracious execution of industrial will.

All the interactional events focus on the negotiation of relationships between workers, managers and union. The first two interactional events contrast competing workplace management identities. The first draws upon the new corporate discourse through the person of Ryan, the financial controller; the second, upon the democratic management discourse of the 80s through the person of Tom, the National Business Development Manager.

The third interactional event observes the dynamics of the negotiation process as conflicting parties struggle to reach a consensus decision that meets their own ideological stance. This event is a Training Committee meeting where industrial parties are jostling for a win.

Each interactional event is discussed under the following headings:

- Background – where the reader is oriented to the characters and the details of the situation that gave rise to the interaction
- Central issue – where the issues to be explored are laid out
- Text and Analysis – where the data is presented and discussed.

In reading the discourse interactional texts, a square bracket preceding a turn indicates that a speaker is talking at the same time as the speaker above.

8.2 1 Interactional Event No. 1 – Ryan: the new broom

Background

As the financial controller, Ryan held a position of considerable authority in the company. He was a recent import from the parent multi-national whose task was to transform the ailing company into a profit-making venture[90]. His experience was with the transport rather than the processing side of the operation. The interactional event at which we observe him is his address to the training group. He was invited as a representative of senior management to discuss the company's future directions. The new multinational ideology recognised the value of workplace culture, communication and training in achieving production goals, so Ryan was not in a position to refuse the invitation to attend the session. He therefore made his way to the dingy training room and offered the training group about 1 hour of his time.

Central Issue

Ryan's visit to the class is of interest in this thesis because he represents the new discourse of management. The way he validates the new authority structure and negotiates a relationship with the shop floor is of particular interest because he exemplifies the link between the industry discourse of managerialism and its particular interpretation at this workplace.

Text and Analysis

At the time of his address, Ryan had been at the work-site only 4 weeks. He was young to have achieved a senior role within management, being in his early 30s, but he had mastered the business parlance - the tone, the figures, the facts. He talked in a near monotone indicating no emotion. He spoke rapidly expressing a sharp thinking, fast acting orientation. He visited the training group with a degree of impatience expressing frustration at the intrusion into his busy timetable. It was clear that this address was not a high priority for him. His information, however, was unequivocal and direct:

> The place is a basket case. Now this is not a reflection on you guys whatsoever, it's a reflection on us. I mean the place is a mess...
> Our insurance costs this year were.. is..ah..2 ½ million and that is just through plain stupidity... We wrecked a car recently. It was a 1942 Rolls Royce and the guy who put it up on the truck, forgot to put the hand brake on, the car rolled back off the truck, hit the ground, bounced off, you know, one of those battery trailers, bounced off and landed straight on top of that and went straight through the floor. Cost us fifty odd thousand dollars. We charged the guy $295 to move, to move their car so technically we just lost $57,695 on that car. Now that is more than this site has made all year.

Delivered deadpan and hardly stopping to draw breath, it was a practised style. The class participants rocked with laughter. It was the laughter of release as though the group was relieved that it wasn't their work that provided the source material for this slapstick comedy. Ryan continued in the same manner explaining the consequences:

> That's just negligence. That's just stupidity. That guy no longer drives for us now. He was a sub contractor .... we can just get rid of them and stop their work like (click of the fingers).

The clipped precision of his language and the detail of his figures, down to the last dollar, communicated a command of the facts. Ryan assumed an authority that belied his age. The unequivocal strength of his judgements was carried by his apparent superiority of opinion. He spent no time establishing his credentials to symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1991). As such, he took on a normalising function (Luke 1995) asserting the uncontestable nature of management's action.

The evidence for 'the basket case' was given purely in monetary terms. Ryan talked about the money 'we' lost and the car 'we' wrecked but also the contractor 'we' got rid of. Deftly cutting out the festering part of the 'we', he constructed a 'they' who were the negligent and stupid ones whom he could get rid of with a click of the fingers. The 'we' he referred to is management who had not been clever or ruthless enough to get rid of stupid employees. Those whom he was addressing were 'the guys'. The 'guys' were the workers, the trainees, the guy who destroyed the Rolls Royce. The implicit assumption was that at

any point, any of these 'guys' in the training room could become one of the 'them' if they were sufficiently negligent and stupid.

Ryan went on to compare ACME's car carrying performance with its major competitor. Not only were the competitor's fleet and facilities better, there was a different culture in their workforce. With cutting humour he added to the litany of stupidity of the guys:

> Their drivers are more disciplined than ours, they take care. They don't do dumb things like leaving Porsches out in the middle of the street, next to a bus stop with the keys in them at 5 o'clock in the morning.

The embedded phrases cram in the detail.

Ryan promised a new regime of greater discipline and ledger-based decision making practices. Many agreements made with clients, he told us, had been maintained without objectively assessing their value. Some contracts were costing the company as much as $80 per car. But these were the unaccountable management practices of the past. The new guard understood business and money making. Ryan promised change and gave assurance that profitability was not only possible but a certainty:

> … we'll make some major changes and uh this year we'll make some money… This business can make money. We've got some crazy scenarios …I'm not going to mention who they are and that…

But Ryan's certainty indicated that the problem and the people were in hand.

The company had recently dispensed with some of these agreements:

> We lost a few contracts recently, small ones, ah, now, the way we lost them was we... we basically pissed them off so badly they took them away from us.

The use of 'we' lays claim to a level of agency. This admission of failure appeared to contradict the identity of this hard-nosed, disciplined businessman, but Ryan went on to explain that these contracts were not profitable. The young financial controller was the new

broom. He promised a break with tradition by reassessing past practices, particularly contracts.

Managerialism valued ledger-driven approaches which extended to industrial relations and the contracting out of work. Contracting created more 'theys' upon whom the 'wes' could manage the business processes. Car detailing was one such example. Detailing was contracted out to a separate company that worked on the same site. Ryan explained the advantages of this system:

> They have to be trained on how to do it. I know its something simple but you still require training, so there's a cost to the company. These guys come in and they get paid per vehicle. They don't get paid per hour. If they sit out there for three hours and don't do anything, they don't get paid, so we make it a set rate per vehicle. The beauty of that is when we draw up their contract, they're charging us say $5 a car, we can charge the client $10 a car. We know what it costs us.

Extraneous issues did not cloud the focus on fiscal priorities. Price was the factor that legitimised practices and rationalised company direction to the exclusion of all other values, it would appear. This was further exemplified in the OH&S area, particularly in the dewaxing process.

Imported vehicles arrive at the port with a coating of wax to protect the duco. The wax was dissolved using aggressive chemicals applied with hot water through pressure hoses. It was recognised as a hazardous job. Scotty, a class participant, told us:

> Yeah, breathing all the chemicals and all the crap that you use up there, you, you're crook, you get crook a lot from doing it …I mean it's all bloody spraying back on ya, you walk out of there you'd be soaked with kero, diesel whatever ya using, all through.

People employed for the work were mostly recently arrived South East Asian immigrants working for the same sub-contractor as the detailers. Ryan explained:

We sub-contracted it out purely for OH&S reasons. As far as whether it is our liability or theirs, it's their liability. They sign the contract when they take on the work. All risk will be borne by them, um, rather than our own people doing it. We wouldn't want our own people doing it.

The 'we' were now the protected inner circle while the 'they' were liable and vulnerable and the class group sat within the protected glow of the 'we'.

The only trace of hesitancy or uncertainty in Ryan's delivery occurred where he alluded to the consequences that would befall those who failed to embrace the new order:

> If people won't change, then, well ... I mean it sounds pretty hard, but if people won't change to what we want to do... we don't have a lot of time to turn this place around... We don't (Indecipherable) on the way bump our heads against the wall for people who won't change. If you don't want to change...change is as good as a holiday.... We've got no hidden agendas guys, we're here to make change. We'll only make change that's useful. Change is good. If you work with it, change is very good.

Change is entrusted to management. Although he stopped short of spelling out the detail of the ultimatum three times, it was clear that the 'click of the finger' would befall those who found that unpalatable. A selective few, who constituted the exclusive 'we', were carving out a new work identity. Membership however was somewhat nebulous.

Except for the odd question requesting information, the class participants had little to say during the session. Their laughter colluded in Ryan's mockery of stupid guys. They were uncritical of his dismissive judgement of the events. His style did not invite discussion. The class participants affirmed his stance through non-discursive signifiers, nodding assurance, laughing. Comments such as the following indicated the workers' affirmation of the new style, at the same time sought assurance that the interests of the 'blokes' would be protected:

Participant: You'd always keep it sub-contracted because it would be hard to keep blokes or to employ blokes who would be able to stay firm in dewaxing work. After a week or so they say 'stuff this!'

Ryan: Well, the little Japanese blokes, they love it.

Ryan had no interest in making deals with the 'blokes', only in establishing the moral efficacy of the work arrangements. Here the 'they' specified not only a social class divide but also a racial divide. Once again the class members were reassured. They were the protected ones. There were no 'little Japanese blokes' here.

No one challenged Ryan either during the session or after it. His firm claim to the agency in the 'we' statements throughout the text, convinced the group of the unequivocal pathway along which he was driving the company. He made no use of modalities in his delivery. The class participants welcomed his authority, his values and his information. No one questioned his ethics. His stance communicated a certainty that management was rational, in charge and set on a course to profitability. The class participants distanced themselves from the failed practices of the past and stupid workers. Their responses, after he left the room, demonstrated engagement with the information and a sense of security in Ryan's leadership. No one stopped to muse over the implications of the promised change.

Ryan's strategy involved disqualifying his predecessors and asserting the authority of the new order. Throughout his address, he attended to little that was not fiscal but his delivery recognised the managerial value of worker communication. His language and presentation had something of the zest of Peter's (1994) style of writing. It was accessible to the shop floor on the one hand, but invited little interchange on the other. The communication went only one way. There was clearly no negotiation in his argument. However, he beckoned a level of trust as he disclosed management secrets. At the same time, he exposed his poor understanding of this group of employees and their work by encouraging the group to master the new IT system, in order to add to their repertoire of computer skills. He argued that this would increase their promotional potential. He seemingly did not realise that these people had minimal interaction with computers and had no application for the new computer package. He was referring to skills and a labour market vision that was out of

reach to those working on the floor. Nonetheless, no one presumed to question Ryan's advice.

Ryan was previously unknown to the employees. He never visited the worksheds and his office was out of bounds for employees. Shop floor workers would only venture into his hallowed territory if they were called in for a special meeting. A notice that had been recently circulated further cemented the divide. It reprimanded shop floor employees for using the reception entrance passing the senior management offices. They were instructed to walk around the building and enter directly into the worksheds.

At face value, the gulf between Ryan and the shop floor would seem to be almost impossible to span and yet his authenticity and authority were unquestioned. His authority was validated by the discourse of scientific fiscal management. Supported by a 'warranting' manner, Ryan's style expressed unquestioning assurance, reaffirming the height of the hierarchy. While science provided the tools for validity, managerialism provided the language to contact the shop floor. The informality and accessibility of his language and the trading of inside information created an inclusive 'us' which left space for the blokes in the 'family' of the company. Managerialism also supplied the principles of management that allow individuals to stand detached in order to exercise the inevitabilities of lean management.

8.2.2   Interactional Event No. 2 – Tom: the 'liberal humanist'

Background

A manager who represented a direct contrast to Ryan was Tom, the national customer relations manager. Tom also occupied one of the comparatively elegant new offices in the refurbished administration building. He visited the training group a week after Ryan, having been invited to address the group on issues of company structure and business activity.

Up to the point when the smaller company was taken over by the larger multinational, Tom was the national manager. When he was first employed at Carcare about 7 years prior, he was a familiar face around the shop floor. He knew Bluey and worked under Danny. He

was never one to get his hands dirty, but he enjoyed the workforce bravado. Tom however did not have an RS&R background. He worked in a management role in a large Japanese manufacturing firm before coming to Carcare. At the Japanese company, the restructuring culture was strong. Much of Tom's management ideology originated from there, where he imbibed the values of consultation and open communication.

Central Issue

This analysis observed how the discourse of liberal humanist management is played out and how the workers negotiate a survival position for themselves within a discourse that contradicts their workplace experience. It calls upon a workplace identity that assumes family, harmony and consensus.

Text and Analysis

Tom was rarely seen around the shop floor these days, though he still liked to identify himself as a mate of 'the boys', as he called them. His identity as everyman's friend created ambiguities that caused him to struggle in taking possession of the management mantle that would give him the authenticity of a Ryan.

Tom was a man whom the union have found fairly agreeable, according to Anna, the union representative:

Now Tom... if we have a problem we go to, um, I think he is fairly genuine...

Most of the industrial agreements were negotiated with him. He liked to see himself as a reasonable man. It was Tom who negotiated the EBA and the training agreement. As Anna pointed out:

It is one of the best agreements in the whole RS&R area.

In the training room, Tom spoke about the company as one whose managers were benign and humanist and whose doors were always open. It was a narrative that the participants

struggled to integrate with their experience of work at Carcare. He talked about the trainees developing a 'wish list' that would be sent to the senior management.

> We've spent a little money, as you can understand asking for your opinion. A few things flowed through from last time (last training group). We want more to flow through this time. That's what it's about. Alright? ...

The group looked puzzled. They quizzed him measuring the credibility of his construct of management's commitment to open dialogue with the workforce. They had seen no evidence of things that 'flowed through from last time'. They wanted to know who would receive the wish list and what sorts of things could be included.

In the context of open door communication, the discussion moved on to Spiros's concern. Spiros, a class participant, had had his workspace moved to a smaller and less workable location. Spiros was seeking an explanation. Tom responded:

> What are you doing at the moment? What do you do? Do you talk to Reno? Do you talk to Andrew?

Spiros: I talked to Reno and he said that's what they want me to do.

Tom: Yeah, you know, that's not a cop out because those who know me know I'll stand up for it. If you've got a real problem go to Reno and Andrew and say, 'shit this is...' if you don't think it works, just tell them ... go to the supervisors and you know ... if you can't go through Reno, he doesn't listen, grab Smithy on the way around the yard. Do something, you know, force the issue yourself. You know, get... You're part of the company. We're all here. If it goes broke we're all on the street ...

Tom stepped back from taking on the confrontation himself and approaching management colleagues on behalf of Spiros. He invited the participants to deal directly with their concerns as if the territory were safe and uncomplicated.

The participants exchanged looks of disbelief and shuffled in their chairs. Who was this 'we'? Did Tom mean to say that management and workers were linked in some contract of

equality? And who was this Smithy? Surely not the man they worked to? This man was never referred to using a diminutive on the shop floor. The 'synthetic personalisation' (See Chapter 4) and the inclusive 'we' failed to ring true for the participants. They knew that the management, particularly 'Smithy', could be very volatile if one was bold enough to 'force the issue'. The conversation continued:

Tom: Don't be put off... if you're pissed off about your space, pursue it till you get a reasonable answer to it, you know, don't just sort of, don't be fobbed off

Scotty: (makes a vulgar gesture of disbelief) You gotta be ...

Crina: Cheeky isn't he! (jokingly)

Tom: Scotty? He's like a bloody...

Scotty: That's all you get from Smith. That's all you get.

Tom: Did that ever stop you? You're like a bloody... You're like a bloody Rottweiler. You just keep going. (spoken light-heartedly)

Scotty: Yeah, but look where it bloody got me this time. Stuck me out in the shittiest job he could find. That's what happened.[91]

The group laughed with back slapping joviality in support of Scotty.

Scotty was providing an example of the perils of following Tom's advice. Tom however was indicating that Scotty was interpreting him too literally. The miscommunication was lost on the group who were more interested in the humour of Scotty's misfortune. Laughing rather too loudly, they were closed to Tom's attempt to shift culpability. The interaction of power and resistance was palpable.

Scotty challenged the integrity of Tom's interpretation of power relations, refusing to be colonised into a submissive assent to a fanciful narrative about management's open-door

policy. It was a narrative that contradicted Scotty's experience and his candour urged him to challenge it. Tom's reaction was not to convince the group of the validity of his narrative but to regain supremacy by undermining the challenger, casting him aside as a foolish agitator. As with Spiros earlier, he minimised the interlocutor's response into one that allowed him to maintain his stance. Despite his declared position as one who would 'stand up for it', he offered no assistance to either Spiros or Scotty. The group's hilarity expressed a resigned inevitability where humour was the only acceptable release. Their shared experience and exchange of looks gave a private meaning to their laughter, since many had suffered a similar fate at the hands of 'Smithy' as confirmed by the chatter after Tom left the room.

Scotty was the only one to challenge Tom's narrative though the discussion after the session indicated that Scotty was speaking on behalf of all of them. The interchange concluded with Spiros meekly agreeing to follow Tom's advice, though intending to ignore it in practice.

Tom went on:

> Andy and I started doing this (the training) to ... because we never had anything like it and ah... but he's (the managing director) very keen on it so he'll be involved in it. Okay?

Tom presented management as the workers' ally and a cohesive decision making unit. However the group had never met the managing director. His interest in training was not in evidence. 'Wish list' relationships was not the way the company conducted its industrial relations, in fact worker consultation was foreign to this management. Tom was assuming a discourse that had no credibility in this work environment. His words urged the participants to transgress their habitus and co-operate in a discourse which assumed an ideology where consultation, open communication, training and equity had a legitimate prominence and where they too could share his company belongingness and use diminutives when referring to seniors. Maybe he hoped that the symbolic capital that resided in his station, along with his suit and tie, would silence any challenge to his narrative.

When he left the room, the group was abuzz with indignation over the impossibility of engaging with someone who would only maintain a discourse that belied their experience. All talking together, the following statements were audible:

> 'Talk to Smith, God!'
> 'Isn't it marvellous how they pass the buck'.
> 'How much can we really believe. The scope is so big for them to bull shit to us ..... how do we know what's going on in Brisbane.'
> 'They need to work out there in the mud ... If they did that ... they'd show some thanks...'

They exchanged stories of what happened to those who 'stood up' to Andrew in the past - people who were fired and then reinstated under pressure from the union, people who were demoted and lost their leading hand allowance, people who had been forced to resign. The workers understood how savagely the power relations were guarded.

However, in face to face interchange, the workers silently acquiesced, enacting the 'complicit worker' identity. Except for Scotty, they did not ask confronting questions or challenge the narrative presented to them. Spiros feigned an acceptance of Tom's advice to humour him but would not be wooed into a relationship of trust when Tom shared some inside information:

> Now the last couple of years, a few of them (ex-managers) made big promises. They're gunna do this, this and this. Make big bucks. But they didn't eventuate and eventually those guys (top management and shareholders) say ..... bugger the bullshit. Let's have a bit of a change of the guard. That's why some of the people aren't with us now.

Tom judiciously separated himself from these aberrant managers using the third person. Like Ryan, he contested the discourse of former managers, making a claim to membership of the new management group, but there was a disjuncture between the two. Tom offered no sense of direction, no vision for the future.

The unspoken promise between those who occupied the different hierarchical strata was a pact of face saving: workers would be complicit, managers would lead unquestioned. Neither party would expose the other. Tom would find a culprit for wrong-doing and financial loss outside the Carcare family, among the 'them' rather than the 'us'.

Unlike Ryan, Tom put a high value on acceptance from the floor. He adopted some of their idiom, particularly their profanities. His sentences were often truncated as he searched for signs of acceptance from his audience. He often adopted the co-operative interactive device of back channelling - tailing the words of his interlocutor (Willing, 1992). For example:

> Participant: So maybe [something 'll get done.
> Tom: [something will get done.

Tom encouraged interchange with the group but he offered empty promises in return. Tom rarely said no. Yes, he would give feedback to the training group on their memo; yes, he would follow up on the queries raised by the training group; yes, he would attend the training group presentations; yes, he would read the training reports; but he did none of these things - a fact that did not go unnoticed by the shop floor. His behaviour appeared not to be influenced by his own narrative. However, the participants' exchange, in the privacy of the training room after Tom left, demonstrated that the work force would not be colonised or submit to a belief system beyond what the politeness code required them to feign.

Tom's rhetoric was reactive, moulded by his interpretation of his audience's wishes and in particular his desire to maintain a strife free workplace. He was calling upon a different management discourse from that of Ryan. Tom made no attempt to emulate the scientific management discourse that Ryan exemplified. He made no reference to fiscal arguments, he spoke with hesitancy, he expressed values of equality and open communication. His hesitancy was not one that engaged modals but one that was immersed in a fantasy that he appeared to believe. He adopted the discourse of consensus where information was freely exchanged, issues were resolved co-operatively and everyone shared the company identity. In this context however these values are a sham. They had lost currency with this

workforce. Here was a case of discourse failure where the capital was fraudulently claimed.

Tom monitored the interlocutors' reactions in order to decide whether he should continue or whether he needed to duck or weave to escape confrontation. His interchange was punctuated with requests for co-operative signifiers: 'okay', 'alright'. Despite the more humanist values projected by Tom, the training group was intensely critical of him. They dismissed him as patronising, foolish and dishonest. The assertive authority of Ryan silenced the group into concern about the company's well being. They trusted in the new vision uncritically, untroubled by his ethics, his poor understanding of his work or his lack of consultative values. Tom however could not convince the group of his authority or his authenticity. Ryan's words were transforming. They recast the business and worker relations within a managerialist paradigm. Tom's words however were rejected as irrelevant. He left the room seemingly oblivious of the group's reaction.

8.3   The Tussle Between Major Stakeholders-

8.3.1   Interactional Event No. 3 – Training Committee Meeting: consultation and coercion

Background

The next interactional event to be analysed is a Training Committee Meeting. The Training Committee members were made up of representatives from the central union, the training group and the management. There were also the shop steward and myself, the trainer[92]. The meeting had legal industrial status, therefore I was deemed to be 'in attendance' since WLI was not one of the industrial parties who was a signatory to the agreement.

Training Committee Meetings were normally held monthly but the meeting that was the subject of this analysis, was the first after a pause of three months. Andrew, the State Manager and management representative on the Committee, found reason to postpone the intervening meetings. Andrew is the 'Smithy' from the previously reported interchange. He had been with the company for about 4 years but his background was within the RS&R sector. There were evident links between the RS&R traditions and his business principles and industrial relations management style.

The business of the Committee was to oversee the formal skills development across the company and, in particular, to administer the Training Agreement which was part of the Enterprise Agreement. However, since there was no other training taking place at the company and no interest in establishing developments of this nature, the Committee confined itself to the VIC program and job classification issues for union members.

Central Issue

This interactional event is particularly interesting in that it profiles management and union representatives struggling to sustain their discourse against the challenge of the counter-discourse. It also provides a view on the strategies and dynamics of co-option, coercion and discourse maintenance. As well, it profiles another management identity that contrasts and sometimes conflicts with those of the previous interactional events.

Text and Analysis

The workplace skills assessor program was conducted as a precursor to the VIC training and in response to the requirements of the EBA to reclassify employees in line with the restructured RS&R award. The workplace skills assessor program developed a structure for the classification of jobs and skills within the company. It provided guidelines for the classification and assessment of the workforce and it trained workplace personnel to undertake assessments. Issues around the implementation of the structure had been recurrent items on the Training Committee agenda.

In fact the meeting agenda had many recurrent items. The agenda for this meeting looked remarkably similar to that of 6 months before. Tasks assigned to workplace personnel, both management and workers, were almost never fulfilled.

Frustration over the lack of progress on certain items was expressed directly by the union representative (Anna) on one occasion when the state manager failed to appear yet again at an earlier meeting:

It's just not good enough. I'm pissed off. Do you want that in the minutes? We have had CSRs assessed on the bloody minutes for at least 4 months.

Management has said that Howie will do the CSRs. I don't know, I'll go back. It's probably November/ December. Now there've been all sorts of problems and it looks great on paper. It's a perfectly acceptable problem - someone had a heart attack, someone won Tattslotto, who gives a damn but once again it's just one excuse on top of another and in the meantime those women in the CSR area have had no training. Everything has been put on hold until we assess them. Now is it fair that one group of workers have had access to training for the last 12 months and another group have just been basically stuffed around? The answer is no, it's not fair.
May meeting

The arguments were moral and righteous, confronting and challenging, calling upon the classic features of the traditional union discourse (See Chapter 7). Anna challenged the rules of decorum that usually control the protocol of meeting interchange. However the substance of this indignant outburst was modified in tone and character when next face to face with the primary catalyst for the frustration – the management representative, Andrew Smith. In the August meeting, which was the subject of this analysis, frustration in relation to management's neglectful attitude towards its training responsibilities took refuge behind a more flippant tone:

Andrew: Welcome ...welcome to our postponed…
         (Laughter)
         Training Committee Meeting

Anna: So we don't have to start off with 'once upon a time' (ironic tone)…

Andrew: June, July

Anna: It's really happening now?

Andrew: June July ... We've only missed two months.

Crina: It was May.

Andrew: According to ... the new group, the group went out... So we've only missed a month between groups.

Anna: If you want to call it that way, that's the way Andrew, that's fine by us (ridiculing).
(General laughter)

Anna's tone was cynical and irreverent. She did not demand accountability directly, preferring to patronise Andrew as foolish. Andrew's protest was whimsical. The tone set by Anna allowed him to feign ignorance and play the clown a little. While everyone colluded in the game, Andrew could laugh along with the others. He was not pushed to be either defensive or accountable and expressed no compunction to measure the time more accurately between the May and August meetings.

As the business of the meeting progressed, Anna took control of the interchange. Her tone hardened into cynicism knowing that Andrew would not have made any progress on the outstanding agenda items:

Now we need to look at what's been done. Reclassification of the CSRs. Andrew assured us that that would happen by the nineteenth of May.

Having delivered her line, Anna sat back looking fixedly at Andrew waiting for his meagre excuse, but no, this time Andrew affirmed that the work has been accomplished along with a number of other items outstanding on the agenda. Taken aback, her cynicism gave way to a more conversational tone. However, later in the meeting Andrew was confronted with questions he could not answer about the detail of the CSRs' assessments. He was forced to admit that the work had not been done after all. It would appear that Anna intimidated Andrew sufficiently to shame him into deception.

Andrew's style of management aligned him more closely to Tom than Ryan. He appeased his challengers and manipulated the facts to save his skin even if the strategy provided only short term gains. His RS&R origins were evident where his skills were concentrated in working pragmatically with the moment. There was no agreed plan directed towards a measured outcome.

Before Andrew's admission of deception, the discussion moved on to the recent graduates. According to the Agreement, these people were eligible for a $20 per week pay rise on completion of their course. It was now three months later and the graduates had not received their pay increase.

Crina: So will they be back-paid?

Andrew: [Oh, we're thinking about that. We might have a meeting. We'll have to discuss it.

Crina: They're under the impression they'll be back paid.

Anna: [I'm certainly under the impression that they should be back paid from when they graduated.

Andrew: [Who gave them that impression Crina? (almost accusing)

Crina: They...um...

Anna: I might have. (spoken defiantly)

Andrew: Did you talk to them Anna?

Anna: [Most definitely. Their classification levels count from the day they graduate.

Crina: [I thought that had been said to them.

Andrew: Well I thought that we had ...we had a change, given they were all over the uh… classification base rate.

This brief interchange captured the roles played out by the members - the seemingly well meaning and confused Andrew, the commanding and assertive Anna and myself, attempting to drive the agenda forward but hoping to appear fair and impartial. My presence at the meeting was conditional on the grace of both parties and I needed to remind myself to appear politically unaligned.

Andrew blamelessly referred to conversational evidence 'we had' that he appeared to have fabricated since it was not shared by anyone else. Andrew checked my involvement. Could he accuse me of partisan support? Had I overstepped the training brief to venture into the realm of industrial relations? Fortunately Anna came to the rescue, briskly claiming the industrial relations territory. Meanwhile, I sought safety behind the passive sentence form, disguising the authorship of the information. As Anna confirmed the lack of ambiguity in the Agreement, Andrew assessed the solidity of the industrial mechanisms claiming a level of uncertainty - not just 'his' uncertainty: it was 'we' who 'had a change'. If he could extend agency to the Committee, he could absolve himself of belligerence on grounds of confusion.

These roles were repeatedly played out by the Committee members. Andrew's apparent confusion invited others to expose their position. He could then perhaps distinguish the hard ground from the soft malleable surfaces. At the same time, his confusion left the leadership role vacant. Anna was quick to grasp it and claimed vast tracts of hard unnegotiable ground. She had an impressive command of the information and her presentation was definitive. Since Andrew was never too sure about things, Anna was free to claim certainty and mark the pathway ahead with definition. Her authority lay in the power of the legally binding agreement of the EBA.

The wrestle continued over the pay arrangements. The miscommunication that followed, arose because Anna assumed that Andrew understood the Agreement and that he was confused by the inconsistent pay rates throughout the workforce, an outcome of 'the old system'. However Andrew's responses indicated that either he had forgotten the detail of the Agreement or, maybe, he was probing it for durability and porosity. He used this

strategy repeatedly. He appeared to fail to understand but at the same time to agree with the challenger, allowing confusion to set in.

Anna: Until such time as you've got a new fresh batch of people that have basically um.. come in at the pay levels that are different to these, the new agreed pay levels. Right?

Crina: umm…

Anna: and what we'll do in future is we've got ten blokes that go through training, they get assessed by the assessors as far as their skill level goes and we give them a one, two or a three. They then progress through the training. Everyone who does twenty hours of training gets a pay rate, ah increase. Everyone who does forty hours of training, everyone...and when they get up to eighty they get the top pay level. Right?

Andrew: Right.

Anna: Now, that can't apply across the board to this lot because of the different pay rates.

Andrew: Yeah.

Anna: And so, because it can't apply to this lot we, okay, we'll give them a flat twenty bucks.

Andrew: Right.

Anna: Now I **certainly** was under the impression and I know the discussions I've had with Peter Brown and yourself and Tom in this room was that these blokes will be paid **when** they graduated. Now, they graduated way back in June at the latest, May ...

Crina: It was the fourteenth of May

Anna: the fourteenth of May at the latest, that um, so that's when I'm saying that the twenty bucks is paid from. Now, if we're in dispute with that, I need to know we're in dispute about it.

Andrew: [You are!

Anna: [Because that's what I will take…

Andrew: [Yeah you are, I'm certainly saying that.

Anna: On what are you basing that we can't give the twenty dollars?

Andrew: Well, not, it's not based on training alone Anna. I take, I take objection to what you just said, when they do those hours they automatically get the money. The whole basis of it, they've got to show skill level as well … doing the training.

Anna: Yeah, yeah, there's no problem with it, but these blokes have already been assessed.

The situation gathered heat, but only the heat of the boardroom where voices remain subdued and controlled in keeping with the protocol of a business meeting. Note Anna's reconstruction from Andrew's 'you' (who is in dispute) to 'it' (which is the contested issue). Consensus values avoid accusation.

The argument had now shifted to a dispute about how the Agreement was to be interpreted. From Anna's point of view the pay levels recorded in the Agreement were those that applied only to new employees. Old inconsistencies between employee pay levels could only be brought into line as pay increases equalise out into a new ceiling[93]. Recognising this, the industrial parties agreed that all employees achieve a $20 pay increase after completing the training. The Agreement states:

It is acknowledged by the parties that the move to the above classification structure and career progression model will require time and patience to fully implement and that as current employees who are not paid as per the new classification structure and who participate in the training program (including recent graduates) will be paid as follows:

initial   40 hours training - $10 per week above current level

additional   20 hours training - $5 per week extra

additional   20 hours training - $5 per week extra

Therefore at the completion of 80 hours training the accumulated increase for these employees will be $20.

From Andrew's point of view he could justifiably hold out on pay increases if the skills of employees had not changed to his satisfaction. The training included skill development on the floor facilitated by management personnel, as well as classroom achievements. Anna accepted this as a concept associated with award restructuring pay progression. However she asserted the graduates' skills assessment verified that they had already achieved the skill level requirement for their new classification. Since the assessment system was not operational, the skill requirement was not defined.

The dispute was a tussle between the reading of the agreement and the legislation, both parties arguing for their own privileged reading of the documents.

Andrew was jostled through the above conversation nudged by Anna's requests for feedback – 'right?' 'okay?' Andrew, needing to grasp control of the interaction, could not afford to weaken his position by querying her meaning.

Anna led the way buoyed by the knowledge that the legal status of the agreement gave them potency, even though the system was not active and therefore was neither effective nor comprehensive as a tool for accurately recording skill levels. Most employees were never assessed but just bestowed a classification level at the discretion of the factory manager and the shop steward guessing at their skill level. Andrew never read the assessment documents or involved himself in the reclassification process. As a

consequence his information was patchy as to how the system operated, what skills were required for promotion and how people were assessed.

Anna chose not to open these questions. Her political purpose was best served by affirming the system as impregnable and authentic. The original assessment outcomes followed due process sufficiently. They were endorsed by the supervisors and the Committee in line with the agreement. The Training Committee was therefore the arbitrator. Anna asserted this authority in her use of 'we' as the body that would grant or deny the twenty dollar pay rise. She deftly laid claim to an extended 'circuit of power' (See Chapter 4) bestowed by the Training Agreement. At no point did Andrew's sentence structures endorse the Committee as having the authority to bestow pay rises.

At about this point however, Andrew found himself with an ally, Ron, the shop steward, usually a silent member of the meeting. The shift in allegiances called for new dynamics to resolve the debate:

Anna: ...you've got to move people around to give them opportunities

Ron: Yeah people have been moved around, that's what I'm saying.

Anna: So if they've been moved around then they should be assessed as having the skills.

Ron: And if they don't come up as suited in that position, what? Do they still go back to the Fleet area? What can you do?

Anna: But, but at some stage you say, okay, they don't have certain aspects of this particular assessment, so we've gotta teach them so they do have it.

Crina: umm...

Anna: Otherwise what good are people to Andrew?

Ron: But they can do it, it's the, um 'time factor' involved in it.

Anna: What 'time factor' involved in it?

Crina: They're not doing it fast enough (offering an explanation to Anna).

Ron: um...

Crina: but that's a training issue or an experience issue, they should be given a reasonable opportunity to pick up their time.

Anna: How are you going to pick up your time if you're not given a chance to work on it for longer? ...
            Management are saying they'll be worth more to us if in fact they have skills in other areas too.

Andrew: Yeah.

Anna: So that's when we said, okay rather than just be assessed in your own area you pick up skills in other areas. Now there's more than one other area...

Crina: So why don't ...... if a person is in the yar.., ah, in the Mitsubishi area, they can also pick up skills in the , the fleet or the yard or in another fitment area.

Andrew: They're given the opportunity *to*, it's whether or not they *can.*

Crina: Yeah but I mean I think there's a level of choice, there's quite a broad level of choice there, isn't there?

Andrew: Oh yeah, we try to get them the best area that suits them and suits us. Sometimes that's ah ..., sometimes that doesn't succeed unfortunately.

Ron: the rework factor, the rework factor is the main thing. That causes ...

Andrew: [that causes
            grief to everyone

The co-operative strategies between the shop steward and Andrew challenged the traditional alignments. Andrew's 'we' in the penultimate turn appeared to embrace both him and Ron. Ron contested Anna's point of view in the first set of turns and by the end of this interchange, the co-operative relationship has developed to the point that Andrew completed Ron's sentence. Ron, conscious of the unholy alliance between himself and management, veiled the agent of the productivity problems by using nominalisations – it's the 'time factor' or the 'rework factor'. In his second turn, he resisted the use of an inclusive (union-management) 'we', but settled for an undefined agency 'what can you do'.

Recognising that her foot soldier appeared to have defected, Anna was intent upon building bridges so as not to expose the gulf in the union ranks. She called upon the industrial consensus discourse and adopted a conciliatory role showing concern for Andrew's interests in productivity ('otherwise what good are people to Andrew'). She acknowledged that it was 'we' who had the responsibility to train the workers and to look after management's interests in skill development ('they'll be worth more to us if …'). She demonstrated that we all had the same concerns attempting to reconcile her position with that of the steward.

Andrew co-operated. He mirrored Anna's conciliatory tone and dropped his voice stating that 'unfortunately' the selection of areas for multiskilling did not always 'succeed', assiduously avoiding reference to a perpetrator. His tone intimated empathy for the employees but it was 'they', sadly, who had the problem, despite the opportunities 'we' had offered them. Andrew's 'we' referred to management but Anna's 'we' referred to the Committee, both seeking validation outside themselves. The muted tones with which this discussion was undertaken censored out any apparent overt emotional investment or reaction.

The alignments continued in the next interchange to the point where one might question if Ron had been co-opted as a model of management acquiescence:

Anna: Do these blokes understand that if they don't get multiskilled in another area, that they won't get a pay increase. Just say that's the case. Do they understand that?

Ron: Yeah they understand that.

Anna: Now what's gunna happen when say four out of the ones that, that, of the eight that are left in fact get the pay increase and it's back dated from when they graduated and the other four don't – what's going to happen out on the floor?

Ron: It's up to them to improve really, isn't it, really.

Anna: It's not just up to them to improve.

Ron: [Show or show..

Anna: [it's up to us to actually provide them with every opportunity to improve…

Andrew: But I think that's lack of understanding of what the process is about?

Anna: That's most definitely true! I mean so ... to say "I don't want to go out in the yard because its wet and its cold" rather than "I'll get another twenty bucks increase if I do it" ...there's some lack of understanding of the process.

Andrew: [That's what Ron's saying, there's gotta be…

Ron: [I think I'm saying that...

Anna: But that... I mean Andrew said one of these blokes had been given opportunities and he won't go out, he won't go from where he is because he doesn't want to go out in the yard because it's wet and he's cold.

Ron: [I think we're talking about Adam ...

Anna: [Has the same ...has the same bloke been told, until you go out into the yard, or somewhere else and develop your skills, you won't get a twenty dollar pay rise.

Crina: And that's it, I mean you know ...

Anna: [I mean it's the way things are said.

Crina: There are also other opportunities. He doesn't have to go out into the wet and the cold.

Anna: [No that's right.

Crina: [There are other opportunities. I mean given that his health ...

Andrew: That is part of the problem Crina, we've got to get back ... Ron goes out in the bloody sun, rain and cold 'cause someone has to do it. Now he's a tradesman, our best painter, out in the wind and rain for two days, working out there because the company needs someone to do it. He doesn't want to do it.

Ron nods in agreement.

Andrew directed his last comment pointedly at me because I represented a softer target. His voice had risen and he became quite impassioned. He knew I had limited right of reply but his message was for Anna. The protocols of consultation insulated the parties from too much direct conflict. Unemotional, apparently rational debate was the meeting genre.

The last two text samples were peppered with the word 'opportunity'. It appears to have two meanings which were perhaps the nub of the dispute. For myself and for Anna (except when she was operating in consensus mode), an 'opportunity' was the offer of supported multi-skilling training in a work area where skill development interested the employee and where the company needed more labour; for Andrew and Ron, an 'opportunity' was a demand for an employee to work in another work area because of work needs, regardless

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of the skills, interests or limitations of the employee. For Andrew and Ron, there was an 'opportunity' to *show* one's skills rather than learn them in a supportive environment. One was a training opportunity; the other was an opportunity to demonstrate co-operation or maybe compliance and, along the way, skills already achieved.

The intertextual function of the company's use of the word was to colour a work demand with overtones of positivity. The investment of meaning included worker compliance with resultant financial benefits to the company.

Andrew was contesting the way in which training was constructed:

This is part of probably where we lacked communication to them (the training group). It's not a want, it's a bloody need. That's what gets up my nose and that's what ... What I want to get is that fact, going on to the next group, that they do the training and they don't add anything to this company ... they're not gunna get a pay rise.

Despite Andrew's protests there were a number of people who preferred working out in the yard. The man in question was an older employee who saw yard work as an OH&S risk and far less challenging than his current work.

The quarrel was drawn to a close without anyone losing face, but at the same time without any commitment to action in relation to improving the skills training system.

Payments were not made to the employees in question until a threatening letter was sent to Tom, the National Business Development Manager, by the Victorian Secretary of the union. I did not see the letter but Andrew complained that he 'took exception' to it and it was 'completely unnecessary'.

This interaction was particularly interesting as an observation of shifting alliances. Values of consultation precluded direct confrontation. All parties were at pains to demonstrate their acceptance of the other's priorities and to recast the disagreement as a simple misunderstanding. Anna was a master at this, constantly reminding Andrew indirectly that the union supports his interests - his concern for skills development, the advantages of

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multi-skilling and the efficiencies gained by in-house assessors. The exercise was one of not alienating the other party, particularly in the case of Ron whom both sides wished to claim as an ally. Asserting mutual interest opened the possibility of a shared construction of the problem and a transforming discourse. While Anna was convinced the problem was management's belligerent refusal to comply with the Agreement, she constructed it as a training management short fall. Andrew and Ron however would not succumb to a construction of the problem that was sympathetic to the union position. They construct it as worker incompetence and a resistance problem.

The point of unity between Ron and Andrew was worker resistance. In the past it was only managers who had to drive change initiatives. But now, 'new labour' shop stewards of the 90s had become change drivers. The ambiguity of the consensus culture has left shop stewards uncomfortably alienated from the shop floor and, as here, the central union also. Stewards have become unwittingly corruptible. From Anna's point of view, Ron had succumbed to corruption. He had demonstrated that he was not trustworthy as a union negotiator.

In such a debate, the training agenda disappears from sight. Despite Andrew's apparent concern for skill development, his preoccupation was with the wages bill and worker obedience. Anna's was with the pay and conditions of workers. Interest in a skills development structure was no more than an industrial tool. Skills development per se failed to capture the Committee's attention despite efforts in subsequent meetings- a fact which exemplifies the role of training as an industrial lever. Trainers are left wondering whether multi-skilling is really of any interest to managers as a means to increased productivity, job satisfaction or better OH&S. Is it just a metaphor for common interest between industrial parties?

The interaction also demonstrates the power of the legislation. Apparent compliance with the registered Agreement was the undisputed arbiter of decisions. The fact that the legislation had been established to facilitate skills growth and to match skills to pay levels was not a point of discussion.

Most of all the interaction demonstrates the union's failure to develop a transformative discourse. Despite the willingness of both parties to exercise constraint, to ignore

contradiction and profess fidelity to pretend training structures, a point of unity does not emerge. Anna's attempt to share the territory of skills management was met with resistance. While Andrew was not convincing as the leader of the management defence team, he won the discourse battle. He paid the wages bill but he held steadfast to his discourse buttressed by the steward's support.

8.4   Who is the Union?

8.4.1   Interactional Event No. 4 – Anna: the voice of unionism

Background

The next interactional event to investigate is the occasion of the union representative's visit to the class. Anna was invited to attend in order to talk as a primary stakeholder about training. Also there had been recent unrest that culminated in a walk out by the workers. The dispute arose over the payment of overtime. There had been delays in payments and, after the company had assured workers that the problems would be rectified, the computer broke down delaying payment yet again. For the employees, it was the last straw.

Anna was to talk about the recently passed industrial relations bill. There were also other issues to discuss - training and the EBA, as well as union and employee relations. Many participants had expressed anger and disenchantment with the union, believing the company was in league with the union in opposition to the workers. Evidence for this, they said, was that management pays their union fees for them. Added to this, they barely know the organiser and the steward pays only lip service to their concerns, they said. The session was therefore given over to Anna to conduct the interchange as she saw fit. Ron the shop steward was invited to attend as a guest for this session.

Central Issue

This interaction is of interest to this study because it demonstrates the dynamics of negotiation whereby the union and its members seek a relationship. Chapter 6 discussed the contradictory nature of the union role as the consensus culture has shifted the union identity from one of adversity to one of co-operation. The ambiguities that this shift throws up were evident within the last interactional event and are further exemplified here. The

way in which the relationship is managed to recover a positive union identity, is the subject of this analysis.

Text and Analysis

In appearance Anna could easily have been mistaken for a management representative. She was well groomed, wore shoulder pads and maintained a certainty of presence. Her demeanour symbolised the competing discourses she moved between. She had developed a carefully crafted facility with the discourses she assumed. Her self expression was unapologetic and self assured. She was quick with words, definite and unambiguous in her opinions.

She invited discussion with this opening remark:

> We may as well take the opportunity, seeing there is no management in the room, to have a good chat to each other.

Her invitation indicated that this is a time when secrets and fidelities could be exchanged without censorship. This was an intertextual reference to the discourse of old unionism where demarcation lines between union and management were clearly defined. The effect was to settle the participants into an old habitus that had some comfort for long standing members.

While Anna herself explained to this group that adversarial relationships between union and management were no longer the way industrial relations was done (Chapter 6), she was well aware that the union could only sustain a presence if the shop floor supported this changed identity. On the other hand, the union needed to demonstrate value to the management in order to edge into a partnership role in the management of the company. This was the relationship as conceived in the restructuring literature. If management valued the role the union played as the communication link with the shop floor, then it followed that management would not undermine or sabotage union work. From a management perspective, the union offered a structured process for negotiation with the shop floor and therefore promised to minimise industrial strife. This put union officials in an inherently contradictory position. Anna needed to convince both management and

members that she, as union representative, was working for both their interests, that she was sufficiently informed to provide an enlightened industrial direction and sufficiently strong to lead and enforce agreements. In the last interactional event we observed her at work in a committee forum. In this interactional event she was working directly with her members playing out a role which is complex, subtle and contradictory.

In the current climate of negotiation and conciliation, the interchange between the union and management was often invisible to the members. It came as something of a surprise to the members to learn that the union had been working for many years on their behalf to achieve the training program in which they were now participating:

> We have been negotiating now for about ..uh .... 8 years to get training agreements with all those companies. And the training agreements are about the Vehicle Industry Certificate. It's a nationally accredited certificate. It gives people in the vehicle industry a chance to get accredited in a certificate that is recognised across the board so you can move from one place to another and take your qualifications with you. The reason that we wanted to get this in a number of years ago now was basically we were pretty pissed off with the way everyone who had trade qualifications and above trade qualifications reckoned, you know, that they had all the skill in the industry whereas the majority of our workers were non-trade and <u>we</u> <u>knew</u> that you <u>had</u> skills and the bosses knew you had skills. The work that you do means you've got skills in the vehicle industry so why shouldn't that be recognised as well. So the union was successful in getting the Vehicle Industry Certificate up and running.

Anna claimed the union as the agent of change but she spoke of a union that operated in a manner that was foreign to these members. They knew about the union battles of the past because some of them were part of them. They recalled 'going out on the grass' and forcing management to its knees, but they knew little about the new union battles. Battles over training happened behind closed doors. They were invisible to members and were not obviously one of the core issues for the members. Yet some of the old rhetoric connected this representative with those they had known before. Her recurrent use of the word 'bosses' reaffirmed the line in the sand that the old unionists recognise. Her interest in non-trades employees, as apart from trades employees, bonded them as the forgotten and

disadvantaged industrial group. Anna juxtaposed the new discourse with the old, utilising an effective mechanism for discourse change. Her breadth of experience laid claim to cultural capital that had credibility.

Anna personalised the struggle that had happened out of reach of these members: 'we knew that you had skills'. She was articulating their need to be acknowledged for their skill and their contribution to the company. She continued:

> In little places like this it was like pushing you know up the hill because.. um.. I don't know how long you blokes have have been at this place but.. um .. training isn't one of the things they reckon they ought to spend their money on, but the majority of you people, you know, any dickhead who comes in off the street can do the job, all you need is a week or so to learn it and then that'll be fine (spoken cynically). That totally negates anything we know about the types of jobs you people do and that is you do develop skills, you do develop knowledge while you're here and the training you have and the value you are to management. The sooner they realise that then the sooner they are going to get the company into the red, instead of, ah, into the black instead of the red.

Anna incorporated the workers' dialect into her speech in a way that boldly claimed the idiom as her own. At the same time, she mixed it with a legalistic turn of phrase such as 'totally negates'. Her business acumen was asserted in her diagnosis of the company's faltering profitability. Her unequivocal tone drew the listeners into a shared conviction that the bosses were not only short sighted but also bereft of business skills.

Anna was speaking to the heart of the members' work identity. Her message challenged the sense of worthlessness that management communicated to its workforce. She separated them from the construct of the 'them' she attributed to management: 'any dickhead who comes in off the street'.

Anna pointed out the advantages of their situation, particularly in relation to the trade wages they achieve after 80 hours of classroom training[94]:

There's no other RS&R company, Retail, Service and Repair in Victoria, 'cause I work only in Victoria, that I know of will give its members that ...
You're not doing too badly as far as training goes. You've got training during company time whereas a lot of other places actually have a mixture of some of your own time , some of company time. You've got in-house assessors who have got more chance of knowing the skills because they're the ones that actually work in the area as well. But the most important thing is you've got an industrial agreement that says if the bosses don't do it, we take them to the Commission and they have to.

Anna presented her case as fact. There was no element of defensive persuasion in her words. There was no passion in her voice but her conviction was transparent. Until now, these members had not considered themselves particularly fortunate or well looked after by the union. They didn't know that they wanted or needed training or in-house assessors. Most participants complained bitterly about the union. They felt abandoned and powerless. Anna however constructed a narrative around their experience that demonstrated that the union was clever and capable in promoting their interests.

She built a commonality of purpose in part by sharing the fidelities of the promised 'good chat'. She discussed Andrew's resistance to paying the wage increase to the course graduates:

> I think it's just a little thing that Andrew likes to do. He just likes to hold up things as long as he can. You know, he likes to...

Participants: Play games

> [he likes to test, you know, he likes to test it. You know. If he holds it up for three months

Ron: Saves a few thousand

> [and the union comes in and says 'no pay it', he say 'ooh I suppose I've gotta pay it. How about I pay it only for a month and a half', you know and if

we're stupid enough to say you know, 'ooh all right, we'll meet you half way'. He's saved a month and a half's pay hasn't he?

Participants: Yeah

The co-operation between the participants and Anna indicated the group's endorsement of her narrative. They seemed to acquiesce to the understanding that Andrew was not only a bit stupid, he was also a loser - a point which came over emphatically in the following statement:

> Until there's actual threats and until it's at the stage when I know the blokes will take action over it, nothing happens. Now that is so bloody stupid because all that happens is Andrew looks like he gets rolled by the union each time, and he does. And it's easy to roll Andrew on these issues because we've got the industrial agreements...I think it is so foolish because all it does is, it reinforces with the blokes that the only way they get things done is to bring in the union, threaten action and then they get it done. So time and time again Andrew is being seen as losing ... it makes me look good doesn't it... I don't know whether it's because Andrew doesn't understand what's with industrial relations, I don't know whether he's a naturally belligerent prick that basically likes to operate this way all the time or whether he's under pressure too.

Anna shared her analysis of the industrial relations game, giving the group a sense that they were being trusted with inside information. She acknowledged the process of identity construction. Clearly the union was strong and management was a laughing stock. The conversation was punctuated with affirmation from the participants.

Anna's simplicity of expression was not unlike Ryan's style. The flow of language was continuous, though not rapid like Ryan's. It was firm, confronting and authoritative. Anna used story telling and role play as an explanatory device, making situations tangible and simple. As with Ryan's narrative, there were winners and losers in this game and, for both, the speakers were the winners.

I'll show you copies of letters that we had to send basically to Tom saying, if Andrew doesn't pull his finger out at the next meeting we are going to have a dispute and we'll be in the Industrial Relations Commission.

She confirmed that if the members stood behind her, they were on the winning team:

> But I've gotta say, I don't care. We've got the agreement. It's signed. We know we can win in the Commission every time on it. We've got in-house um um assessors, so we know you blokes are going to get assessed by the people who know the job. We've got training in the company's time so it's not costing you a cent. And in the end of the day you've got a three classification point structure, we get three pay rises out of it. So the Andrew Smiths of the world can have their attitude because we've done the work and we've got the agreements.

The sentences were clipped and clear. There was no doubt who was the winner. As the meeting progressed, the members put aside the concerns they had with the union that had abandoned them and became absorbed in the union that not only established pay and training opportunities for them but also recognised their frustration with an incompetent and belittling management. The participant who was the most constant critic of the union affirmed the new system asking:

> Why didn't the union do this fifteen years ago?

Before she left, Anna unfolded the industrial relations process as a game where everyone had a part to play, including the members, but where the union was indispensable:

> If I was a boss also, I would want to be paying you the least amount of money I could possibly pay you. That's the job. A boss has to do that, okay. So that's why we come in and say, 'Nup. We want it in writing. We want a signed agreement that's registered in the Industrial Relations Commission that says this is fair to everyone'.

As with Ryan, the trust of the group was not shaken by revelations of marginal interests or contradiction. They were drawn by the strength of the identity both speakers presented and

the sense of purpose and strategic direction that made sense of the anomalies in their working world. On both occasions, the participants asked few questions. They sat entranced, basking in the glow of certainty. Both Anna and Ryan contrast with Tom and Andrew in the strength of their leadership. The fact that Ryan displayed almost no understanding of their work situation did not seem to detract nor the fact that each stood in opposing political corners.

One of the striking features about Anna was her ability to move between contrasting discourse roles. She was a master of 'situational literacy' (See Chapter 4), able to read nuance and adapt to the demands of the discourse. The first text of the Interactional Situation No 4 portrays a union powered by righteous anger. One can hear the echoes of the old union movement driven by idealism and outrage. Her language is tough and confronting. The intertextual list of excuses for management's lack of action paint the opposition as phoney, self serving and mendacious. It left the one management representative at the meeting[95] disempowered and apologetic. He mumbled his agreement with Anna's stance but was stopped short of overt support. This was Anna the fighter. In the last interaction in the committee meeting, we met Anna the negotiator. Anna the negotiator was capable of recasting potential conflict into a bridge building exchange but one where the bridges were carefully guarded. Here, in interaction with the training group, we met Anna the leader and proselytist, able to read workers' concerns and co-opt them to her cause; able to find clarity where there appeared to be only uncertainty. Anna was unequivocal about her task:

> My job is to come in and get agreements and make sure they work so my members
> get the best possible deal they can, that's it.

While the central point remains constant, the dance around the circle requires multiple steps, costumes and personalities.

8.5 Who are the Workers?

8.5.1 Interactional Event No 5 – Training Presentation, Calling in the Wind

Background

This interactional situation was one where the training participants presented their end-of-course project to management. A number of people had been invited, managers, people who had visited the class from both inside and outside the company, union and training company representatives. They have gathered in the board room giving this event some sense of formality.

The participants had completed 80 hours of training which was the total offering of the course. Their final task was to prepare and deliver a brief presentation. Most had chosen to research the work procedures and work flow in their area. They explained how the work was done and the problems and glitches in the process. They also suggested ways to improve efficiency or safety in the area. They had prepared overheads and displays, and some had brought in car parts to illustrate stages of the process.

The event had been designed to give them an opportunity to demonstrate their skills to management, and, along the way, to challenge the worker identity traditionally recognised by management. There was also an opportunity here for individuals to distinguish themselves from the crowd and impress management.

Central Issue

The central question to explore here is, who are the employees and how do they construct themselves and their work to management? How do they negotiate a relationship with management?

Text and Analysis

About 12 guests arrived, most from within the company. The participants gathered at the front of the room and an awkward silence descended as one stood, welcomed the visitors and called upon the first speaker.

Some of the participants were very nervous. Their voices quivered and their prompt notes tangled but they had all come to realise that there was no escape from the ordeal. It was mandatory if they wished to complete the course and qualify for the pay rise.

Jack began his presentation:

Carcare won contr...

He fiddled with the overhead trying to position the slide correctly. He seemed to hit on every possibility except the correct one. His notes spilled.

I'm as nervous as a ...

Andrew: Don't worry mate, we are too

Andrew's flippancy released the pressure into a general outburst of laughter and Jack continued unfolding a level of care and commitment to work that contradicted the management's construction of the workforce.

He presented a graph showing the number of Mitsubishis that were built up over the previous 6 months. He explained a drop in the graph, 'due to depleted stock'.

Jim took the floor and outlined the procedure further. Fitting radios sounded fairly simple but

90% of time a simple task does not work out easily, we have to fiddle to get it in.

The time allocation for the fitment does not allow for much fiddling.

Jack returned to the podium to suggest a way in which the work space could be reorganised to allow easier access to the work area. He put up a diagram to illustrate how the shed should be reorganised to free access and entrance points:

As um Stan said, sort of, time's money. I mean the faster we get cars built up, out, washed and um over to the compound, I mean, that's our job finished, I mean so if, if management or anyone who's in charge could have a look at that. I *know* we haven't um got much room about the place. I mean we are looking for room, but, um it seems to be the Mitsubishi and the Toyota shed get blockages at the door, um, you know, really, I mean if, if the flow of traffic out, once the cars were built up, was a lot smoother, I think the operations would go a lot, a lot better than what it is, is at the moment.

Andrew: Can you get that diagram Reno and get them to fix that shed.
(laughter)
No, its a good idea Jack really, it is. No, I'll get a copy of that.

Jack's suggestion was tentative. Anxious not to create a fuss he justified his suggestion in terms of time saving, an issue of high priority for management. He referred to his colleague Stan to shore up his justification. His request of management was deferential and nervous.

Andrew's initial response was perhaps facetious or at least interpreted as such by the group. His corrected response however sounded genuine. There was conviction in his voice and Jack settled back in his seat with a look of satisfaction encouraged in the belief that he had made a useful contribution.

Nick sprung to his feet next ready for his presentation. Among other things, he explained how the Toyota decals were the best ones because they come with their own template. The alternative was to use a jig but jigs can scratch the paint he said. He told us that you needed to watch for dust under the wax that can scratch the duco when it was cleaned with prepsol. Nick displayed concern for the detail of the job that measured the difference between just getting the job done and doing it very well.

Adam commenced his presentation next. He outlined the procedures for the build up of mobile workshop vehicles as a first off. They were given process sheets from the manufacturer but experience had demonstrated that a careful testing of them was essential:

Now the first off, every time we get a new contract we are very careful in how we go about it because the measurements and the fittings that are supplied don't correspond. Sometimes there's only two hold down bolts so we are very careful. So before we get into the contract properly we make sure there is a first-off done. Even though the manufacturers have told us there has been a prototype made, we don't believe them. It is better that we do it ourselves. Measure everything correctly with um power drills and drill stocks because underneath the floor of the vehicle you've got fuel tanks, you've got hydraulic um lines and you've got all the suspension so if any of these holes are out, you're going to drill through vital things so we're very careful. And once we've made sure that these measurements and the the interior um supplies are alright, then we can go ahead and make a a a jig so we can spot through the holes we've already made, spot through from the bottom and get a pattern, so we can go and make a flow of them and pre-drill all the vehicles and that will help us to build the vehicles faster, but the first one is very important… It's a legally binding document - anything goes wrong, your name and manager's name is on the paper.

Adam was intensely aware of the responsibility he carried on behalf of the company. Its reputation stood in part on the standard of his work. Like those who spoke before him, Adam expressed the core values of the quality system - 'get it right the first time'. Focused on devising a speedy and efficient work procedure, Adam set about a complex measurement, comparison and adjustment process to produce new standard operating procedures that could provide trouble free fitment for subsequent build ups. He had to decide independently how many hold down bolts were required regardless of the manufacturer's stipulations. He needed sufficient mechanical knowledge to know which parts could be drilled and which parts could not. He also needed a structural understanding of the chassis and body to identify the strongest support points on the vehicle. As well, he needed to select the type of bolts that should be used to hold the fixtures. Having decided and trialed these solutions, he needed to translate them into a document to make them accessible to his work mates.

Adam spoke with confidence, proud of his knowledge and sure of its accuracy. He was given no special remuneration for these skills.

It was Mike's turn next. Mike explained how he cut the back tray off the small Suzuki trucks and fitted a new one with different dimensions and features. He told us this was really the work of a panel beater but he learned these skills when he was working with his father and uncle who owned a smash repair business. Since the qualified panel beater left Carcare, Mike had been doing the work. He had also almost doubled the output of his predecessor. He was not trade qualified and was paid at pre-trade levels.

Mike gave an overview of the process, the things that go wrong and the problems he needed to solve. Following the overview, the group engaged in discussion on whether a plasma cutter should be used on the job in order to increase productivity and to overcome the noise pollution that was a significant safety hazard in the shed when Mike was cutting the panels.

Andrew appeared to be quite impressed with Mike's presentation:

> The interesting thing about this is, I went to see Suzuki yesterday and the managing director, Mr. Uka Uka, says this is a very easy job, 'why do you charge so much. I'm gunna find someone else to do it'. 'You're quite welcome, please do, but come out and have a look.' So Mike, what you've got there, we'll give this same presentation to Mr Uka Uka when he comes out. He can look through this and I think he'll go away saying 'I'd better keep quiet.'

Andrew appeared to be proud of his employee's skill and offered to stand along side him in the presentation 'we' would give.

Sadly Mr Uka Uka never came or Mike was never invited to give his presentation, just as the other suggestions that Andrew promised to implement were forgotten at the close of the graduation event.

Once the participants had given their presentations, they became more adventurous in their discussion. Having gained the ear of management, they entertained the thought that maybe they could influence change. Their suggestions opened out into a general discussion with everyone contributing around the room. The presence of guests in the room did not daunt Jack as he launched into a more delicate debate:

There's a big communication gap. I mean people, um people, um people wipe their hand with the same arse, their arse with the same hand as everybody else, so I mean, you aren't better than me and I aren't better than you. We're a team whether it be me, Adam, Ray or what. I mean this is a team effort - this um, you know, ACME Carcare. Uh, it's not them against us.

Adam: [If it doesn't run properly, we're all out of a job

Jack: [That's the attitude, that's the attitude a lot of them
          have got

Jack who opened his address with such nervousness at the beginning of the session, had become quite forthright in his view of the short-comings of the company. Fired by a belief in mutual co-operation, it was a speech that might credibly have come from management with some genre modifications. It was a plea from one who had found his voice. The unspecified 'them', who is not 'us', was management.

Spontaneous applause broke out as Jack fell silent. A little embarrassed by the directness of the emotion, everyone shuffled a little and management grunted in agreement. Despite Jack's direct assault on management's behaviour, he had been spared reprisal. His reference to core values of the dominant discourse left management defenceless. If this was a call for management to recognise the benefits of skill development, it passed without response.

Buoyed by the openness of the discussion, Lev, a Hungarian speaker, ventured further:

Lev: One more question is uh, how you feel, how you feel for us. We was
          finished this   training. Is that of benefit especially to the company or is
          just...

Andrew: Well I ...that's a hard question Lev.

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Lev: [Because of last announcement in some letter, why you was um, if I understand good, there was the words what was used, you used ...(indecipherable) the wrong way (indecipherable)

Andrew: What was it saying?

Lev :   This was saying, that is ... , um, some is untrainable. Some person is untrainable. I don't know.

Andrew: That was mainly you

          (laughter)

Lev: It better not be!

Anna: [And you prove him wrong Lev.

Andrew: [I don't know what you are talking about there.

Lev: [There was a letter coming out by you and it was saying on the last part of of the letter (interruption at the door) Excuse me. Some of these people is untrainable. Anyone agree on that?

Trainees: Yes

Andrew: [Who's seen the letter? No I honestly don't know what you're talking about.

Lev: [Signed by management...

Andrew: [I actually don't know what you're talking about.

Reno: [Have you got a copy of the memo?

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Lev: [I haven't got a copy with me. I haven't got that memo.

Reno: [That wasn't from GM was it?

Lev: [What?

Reno: That wasn't from GM?

Andrew: That was from General Motors Holden, that was from General Motors
            Holden to **us.**

Anna: [Saying that the
            management of ACME Carcare was untrainable.

Lev: [Anyone agree?

Trainees: [Yeah.

Crina: But there was also um …There was also a memo, a summary from the
            quality department that mentioned that very statement.

Andrew: It was General Motors Holden. It was from Henry and Greg who are the
            Holden people down in the bottom shed. Let me finish Lev ... writing to
            Tom James to say that they were a bit concerned about the level of training
            in the Holden shed and that some people in their opinion were untrainable.
            Right? That was from Holden to us. That is what you are talking about.

Lev: [No.

Adam: [That was it.

Andrew: We took umbrage at that. We weren't happy with that and we went back to
            them and we've had a meeting with them and told them we don't believe

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that was the case and we've put things in place that will fix that. Alright?
That's what you're talking about.

Adam: Yes that's right, yeah.

Andrew: [Everyone okay?

Adam: He didn't say it but those two guys …(indecipherable)

Reno: [(indecipherable) talk in front of the camera.

Andrew: [No, I'm happy with that. But to
            answer your question, do I see benefits from the group?

Lev: I am sorry if I said wrong but anyway...(indecipherable)

Andrew: No that's alright. But I think you've got to be careful... you've gotta be very
            careful, before you open up on something, that you are aware of the facts
            and that is the facts.

As with the meeting in interactional Event No 3, one could observe the choreography of
shifting alignments. An uneasy silence descended upon the room when Lev launched into
his courageous (or foolish) attempt to open discussion on management's attitudes. The
melee that followed appeared to be clarifying the information but was it also about
negotiating alignments? Lev initially appeared strongly supported by the other trainees
while Andrew re-employed his old strategy of confusion surveying the field for alliances
and escape holes. However, once Andrew was rescued by Reno, the works manager, the
hubbub died down. Anna was the only one whose political alignment allowed her to
directly challenge the power structure but her power had no currency in this management
market and her contestation was ignored; likewise for myself as the trainer. Gradually,
Lev's voice hung in the centre of the room, his case was discredited, leaving him alone
reprimanded, disqualified, silenced and confused.

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But Lev had reason to be confused. There may well have been a letter that preceded the memo but no one on the floor would have had access to it. They had however read the Quality Report which was an internal document which was often pinned on the notice board. The Quality Report which had national distribution, summarised customer feedback and rework rates. It read:

> Victoria does not paint a very good picture for the same half of 1996. The 'operator error' related problem increased from 9.26% to 53.13% for this period. Victorian management needs to drive the operator training program vigorously. On the subject of training, A. Smith also commented that there may be some individuals in the Victorian Branch who may not be trainable. This factor could contribute to this increasing trend.
>
> Carcare National Quality Report

Andrew would have reviewed the report before it was made public and could have altered inaccuracies. Despite the fact that many of us knew there was substance in Lev's argument, we were silenced into a lame acceptance of Andrew's institutionally sanctioned reading of the events. Gagged, we stood by and watched as Andrew exerted his management prerogative.

The document itself was an interesting slide of problem analysis. The framing of both the problem and the solution was simplistic and misleading. Further investigation revealed that the figures took into account the use of a new form introduced in Victoria which, if not signed off correctly by the operator, was calculated as an 'operator error'. It was not a production error but a bureaucratic omission. The report did not offer this explanation.

Throughout this interchange, Andrew's voice was unfaltering. His initial response recognised the document to which Lev was referring, but then he claimed to have no knowledge of it. However he settled into a pattern of certainty when Reno offered a plausible explanation. His position was further buttressed with the support of Adam, allowing Andrew to righteously reprimand Lev. He leaned forward wagging his finger, issuing a public humiliation.

A few days after presentation day, Lev was moved out of the Holden shed to another work station, then sacked a week or two later on grounds of incompetence.

Had Lev, as an NESB worker, not fully understood the 'social practice' (See Chapter 4) of this particular event? But Jack had opened up the dangerous territory in his questioning of equity values and was greeted with applause. Did Lev include inadmissible knowledge? Maybe, but Lev's discourse failure was in calling an individual manager to account in a public forum. Jack's fluency with the discourse strategies (See Chapter 4) would have led him away from this discourse error.

The issue of recognition of competence is central in the workers' concerns. The unifying statement of their presentations championed the central tenets of a productive workforce. Their presentations were a declaration of their competence and a demonstration of their understanding and commitment to principles of efficiency and quality in production. They had constructed their workplace activity as skilled, knowledge based and dependent on cultural understanding of the company business processes. Their presentations indirectly contested the notion of worker activity projected by management – that of functionaries who needed only to follow instructions which anybody off the street could do. For a number of them, the training presentations offered an opportunity for management to validate their competence. This is transparent in Jack's heartfelt fumblings:

> um you know, and having this multi-skilled um training program means if, if for instance four of us have got an RDO on the same day and that area of that ... four people in Ray's shed, with the Fleet, being, you know, always on the go. I mean, everyone knows how his area is on the go. But it should make it there ah … if if Brian and Adam have an RDO they'll be able to put some people from another section in there to give Ray a hand because for the simple reason that area does, you know, flow a lot. You know all the time. But the same as with the other, putting radios in Mitsubishis or for instance the Mussos. Anne's with the Mussos... Yeah an' us being multi-skilled, um it gives, uh, there's somebody down, down in Ray's shed or um Mitso shed or um Toyota shed, they slot someone else in…and that's the whole idea of this thing, being multi-skilled. And the reason I started and I think everybody else was to get a, at the end of it to get a certificate to say, well you are competent in what you're doing.

This is a statement of worker identity that begs endorsement from management. The investment of personal identity and the plea for work to be meaningful is transparent.

Jack continued, weaving the concerns of management, fellow workers, the office and customers into a single vision of workplace co-operation and support. Training offered them hope of recognition.

In the concluding remarks, Ilias, one of the trainees, requested the opportunity to complete the remaining 120 hours of off-the-job training to qualify for the accredited VIC certificate:

> Some of the things we've discussed over ... what ... the 80 hours we've spent together, the majority of the group feels not that it's worthless that we've completed the 80 hours, but they think it would be worthwhile to complete the 200 hours of um training we've been doing in order um to receive an accredited certificate. Some of these blokes who volunteered for the training group, that's what they were told they'd be getting at the end of the, um , the 200 hours and also um there is some like monetary benefits at the end of the 200 hours I'd say and I, the majority of us would, like I said, see it as a worthwhile thing to have at the end of the whole thing. I'd like to see the training completed um seeing we were, we were the first ones to do the 80 hours. I'd like um see the rest of the 120 hours completed. Now um it's up to management and union and whatever to discuss these things and we would like to, we'd like to thank management and union people for making this thing go ahead and we'd like to see it completed.

Ilias was very deferential. He realistically acknowledged the trainees' powerlessness in changing decisions. There was little chance that their request would receive a positive reception. Management entered into the 80 hour agreement in order to relieve themselves of a 200 hour production loss for each participant released from work to attend training. On the other hand, the union wanted to achieve a pay rise for their members in minimal time. Issues of educational interest or employee concerns for qualifications and skill recognition did not enter the discussion.

Andrew's final words could be interpreted as a glimmer of hope for workplace change:

> As far as the group, I think it's been good. What concerns me exactly what you spoke about Lev, and communication about the place is poor. Right? Both ways. And there's one thing I'd like to see come out of it. If you're having these training groups and you **do** come up with ideas about your workplace or better ways of doing it, then we should really try and follow them through. Now its going to be difficult as Anna said. You're the first group and you'll find stoppers because you'll come up like, why's the rack in the Toyota shed. Don't ask me why it's there, it's bloody useless being there, but there'll be a stopper. Someone made a decision and put it there. If we move it you know they take it personally.

Andrew acknowledged that there was need for repair to the communication processes. He appeared to be encouraging the trainees to take a proactive role, with the support of management, to make changes to the workplace. But it was 'you' who were choosing to have the training group and 'you' who were going to meet the opposition. Although it was 'we' who should follow up in order to benefit from the activity, the heavy responsibility carried by the 'yous' provided a set of buffers against action. One year later, there had been no follow up on any of the suggestions put forward.

The participants demonstrated a shift in their discourse as they attempted to incorporate management concerns for cost and efficiency benefits into their discussion. They spoke about their work differently in comparison to many of their workmates who had not participated in training. Each participant trod cautiously sometimes venturing into an alien discourse. They seemed to be consciously constructing themselves as Potter and Wetherall (1987) have named it. At the same time the maxim of worker solidarity exercised editorial authority over their discourse ensuring identity was clearly located with the workers.

A quote from the end-of-course reports exemplifies this:

> Through the training program I have learned to keep my eyes open for quality problems in the Toyota shed. These days when a quality problem occurs, I know exactly who to see and what to do about it. I am also more confident in raising problems which otherwise would be left alone. I have also learned how other

departments deal with problems that are unique to them and the different jobs that they do which in turn keep the company running as one.

Nick

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter is about change and resistance. It is about the dynamics of discourse construction, discourse recruitment and discourse change among this group of individuals at this moment in industrial history. Each speaker appeared to exploit the instability of the workplace discourse to recruit support for their ideology. The interplay of discourse strategies and rhetorical devices is interesting in itself but this is not the central concern of this study. The concern is to understand the identities constructed in the workplace and the relationships the parties negotiated with each other as they contested the competing discourses and attempted to recruit support for the supremacy of their own. In the process, the analysis profiles the workplace identities and answers the questions who is management, who is the union and who are the workers within their social, political and historical context?

The study observes the diminishing capital of the old liberal discourse and the rise of the new labour/new managerialism identity. In answer to the question 'who is management?', these interactional events demonstrate that management had many faces but persistent within them all was the presentation of management as friend to the workers – informal, jovial, known by first names, professing an open-door policy and a willingness to listen. Whether the discourse was rooted in the 80s, when the ideology was liberal and people-centred, or in the late 90s, when corporate competitiveness was the prevailing ethos, management was reaching out for a positive role with workers. Managers sought to share their industry ideology with their workers to achieve greater productivity and industrial peace. Although they followed a faltering course, they recognised that such a co-operative relationship must be an outcome of conviction rather than suppression.

The workers were likewise reaching out to management and attempting to reconstruct themselves as reliable, skilled and committed. In many ways the trainees demonstrated a greater commitment to the goals of new management than the managers themselves. They

had translated the principles of quality and productivity to their own jobs. They attempted open communication on the hard topics of demoralisation, poor communication and skill improvement. They offered their ideas to improve efficiency and demonstrate their willingness to participate in discussion on such topics. They were careful not to transcend their role, speaking with deference and respect to those occupying lofty positions on the authority hierarchy, recognising the prudence of acquiescence in preference to confrontation when other avenues appeared to be exhausted. In many ways they were model employees emulating the values professed by the management rhetoric. Most of all they were seeking to demonstrate that they deserved to be valued and respected individually and collectively.

At the same time the union was also reaching out to its members pursuing recognition and identity as the true workers' friend. Working in unobserved and sometimes obscure ways, the union professed to have never lost sight of workers' interests and to offer them the respect and trust that they deserve. But a relationship of distrust with management was no longer entirely palatable in the current workplace culture. The participants' presentation session (Interactional Event No. 5) professed an identity that sought a direct relationship with management negotiated on the basis of mutuality and shared business responsibility. They resisted subservience to a union-mediated indirect relationship with management. Anna however confirmed their conviction that they would be naive and foolish to be co-opted into the management discourse. She endeavoured to impress upon the workers that the union was uniquely placed to manipulate the enigma of devious business practice, to protect and progress their interests by wielding legalistic weapons.

It was clear that the industry restructure discourse had passed on but it had left behind, in the minds of workers, a belief in their 'right' to be consulted and in the value of equity within the hierarchy. They recognised their integral role in the viability of the company although consultation, as it is practiced in the company, had not given more power and information to the workers.

Management was also touched by the discourse of the restructure movement. However they shaped their response to the pressures of globalism in their embrace of managerialism. The consultative discourse of industry restructuring had been reframed within the managerialist paradigm. Nonetheless, the primacy of workplace relationships modified the

practice of profit making, giving space to worker interests and particularly the negotiation of worker perceptions. The primary discourse has shifted from a consultative one to a managerialist one based on common goals and business interests. Management and union are not only asking workers for input and opinion but also for support and mutuality albeit a double edged mutuality.

The old identities had been permeated and new ones were struggling for a foothold. The analysis demonstrates that strength lay in finding points of convergence, sometimes between dissonant discourses. This made for constant ambiguities. The workers struggled between a demonstrably untrustworthy and contradictory management on the one hand and a culturally mismatched identity mediated through their union advocate on the other. Management fought within its ranks to find an ideology that offered convincing leadership to an increasingly aware and critical workforce but which also increased the profit margin.

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[*] The company has not made a profit since it was bought out by ACME.

[*] Scotty had been demoted due to a communication breakdown concerning scheduling which resulted in Andrew publicly bawling out Scotty. After Scotty raised an objection with the union, Andrew was forced to apologise to Scotty at a general meeting of employees. Nonetheless, Scotty was not reinstated.

[*] Earlier meetings included a total of three employee and three management representatives but the members were pared back since none of them performed their representative function or contributed to the meeting. The discussion centred on the most senior management representative and Anna, the central union representative.

[*] Chapter 2 explains how pay levels have evolved to become inconsistent across the company

[*] EBAs in the automotive manufacturing sector resulted in a $75 per week pay rise, however this followed the achievement of a full VIC involving approximately 200 hours of knowledge and 200 hours of skills training. Anna boasted that the Carcare agreement was a good one because it offers $20 after 80 hours of knowledge training and no specified skills outcomes. At the same time no second stage had been negotiated so it is a moot point as to whether the agreement was a good one.

[*] Andrew had sent a proxy in his place to that particular meeting, but he was someone with no power and a meagre presence.

CHAPTER 9: – VET DIRECTIONS AND DEFINITIONS – WHOSE VOICES ARE HEARD?

Balloon metaphor:

This chapter views the balloon from the ground and tries to understand how it managed to achieve lift-off momentum in rather inhospitable conditions and how those conditions determined some of the inmates of the basket.

9.1 Overview

This chapter attempts to explain the hybridity of industry education, particularly of site based industry education. Industry education has been so heavily invested as an instrument of political and economic manipulation that the fields that separate it from industrial relations and economic prosperity have blurred. Other stakeholders have made decisions that would have been made by educators in other realms of education. Industry, has exercised such persuasion that the models, frameworks and culture of industry education have formed a unique hybrid.

This chapter takes a second look at some of the experiences already related throughout this study and observes how the genre of industry education has been shaped, firstly by the culture of convergence, secondly by industrial supply models, and thirdly by funding arrangements. All have served to create an environment where the educator plays a secondary role in shaping the values and designing the process through which industry education is realised. In some instances, as at Carcare, industrial relations and business decisions masquerade as educational management.

The chapter begins with an in-depth exploration of the processes of convergence in the consultative culture of industry which has facilitated the supremacy of CBT.

This thesis has made recurrent reference to the phenomenon of convergence as a mechanism of consultative decision making. The struggle for convergence helps to explain

how CBT rose to a predominant position and critical education was sidelined in the development of industrial education.

9.2   The 'Dance of Convergence' in Industry Decision Making

The new consultative culture of industry restructuring replaced the previous adversarial culture and has persisted in a modified form in the post-restructuring period. In consultative decision making processes, progress can only be made when those who are party to the decision making reach a point of convergence. The observer witnesses a 'dance of convergence' as different discourses strike a meeting point or else fail to engage each other. Those that find a meeting point gain political ground and dominant discourse status if powerfully aligned. Hence different, sometimes traditionally conflicting bodies, form a coalition. Competing discourses that fail to find a meeting point maintain a dissenting role but are gradually overpowered or absorbed.

This process is observable at both the macro and the micro levels. At the macro level one can observe the points of   vergence at the level of political and industrial policy and planning. The chapters on the industry and training context discussed the struggle between the discourses as they argued to achieve persuasive power and influence the course of decision making.

The industry restructure movement was remarkable for its success in finding points of convergence so that industry, unions and government appeared to speak with one voice. Old discourses were destabilised and new ones asserted.

At the micro level, in the case study, one can observe the 'dance of convergence' between groups and individuals. Within the Training Committee the moments of convergence between the union and the management groups were insufficient to sustain significant political and industrial change, while the alliance between the union and the training provider was not strategically powerful enough to influence the discourse at Carcare.

The case study company provides an opportunity to observe the negotiation of convergence. The reduction of the training course to an 80-hour program was one instance.

Both union and employers recognised their interests being met by this agreement. The agreement over the skills based pay structure was another instance. On these occasions, the training management role assumed by the union was tolerated, even perhaps endorsed by the company.

Within the Training Committee meetings (as illustrated in Interactional Event No 3) one witnesses the parties finding and losing meeting points, seeking never to stray too far from the negotiable positions. This is the way industrial relations is conducted when the parties have signed up to the non-adversarial, collaborative, high trust culture of industry[96].

The history of industry training itself offers another example. The story below explains how industry training was forged from conflicting traditions towards a point of resolution between the predominant parties.

9.3   Finding Convergence between Conflicting Learning Traditions
9.3.1   The Learning Traditions of Industry

The educational endeavour associated with industry restructuring marked itself off from pedagogical educational movements in that its subjects were adults, working within an industrial environment. It was not an extension of the educational traditions of the secondary and tertiary systems. It was a new hybrid influenced by the apprenticeship traditions mixed with industrial politics and spiced with a little critical education when adult educators could angle their way in. It might be viewed as an industrial truce between the management and union training.

The union movement had strong learning traditions according to Newman (1993). Union traditions harken back to the mechanics institutes and working men's colleges of last century. These were established in Australia as a colonial manifestation of the British trade union movement. The colleges provided skill development for blue-collar workers. According to Newman, the tradition of the trade union movement:

... is a story peopled with ... committed self-educated people and thousands of men and women striving after an education that in the normal order of events only the elite with access to school and university could enjoy

Newman, 1993:46

Union training also draws upon the Freirean discourse of community education based on principles of emancipation and educational activism (Freire 1971). (See 7.6 and 8.4)

Newman contrasts the union tradition with the management tradition in education which is distinguished, he argues, on the basis of the trainer's relationship with knowledge and with the participants. He asserts that management training is validated by its ability to meet organisational objectives. It owes allegiance to facts and beliefs known to experts and external to the learners. The needs of individuals are not the trainer's primary interest. Union training, however, vigorously negotiates the program, the style of interaction and the learning activities with the training group. Based on the notion that 'the union *are* the members' (Newman 1993:38), their ownership of the institution and its training empowers the participants to make demands on the course, shaping it to their needs. (Evident in 8.5)

Management schools may debate Newman's conclusions. Regardless, energetic and rigorous education programs grew up under the auspices of the employer organisations to foster the needs of white-collar employees. They operated independently of the government education system providing technical up-dates on product developments, seminars on financial management and industrial relations and short courses on maximising efficiency in the workplace. Training was usually practical and based on 'how to' approaches. (See Appendix 2) Of some significance have been the proliferation of business related courses in universities. This 'fascination with management' (Rees 1995:18) has meant that business related course enrolments more than doubled during the 1980's. The Harvard MBA has created a model for aspiring business educators internationally (Rees 1995).

9.3.2 Finding a Point of Convergence in CBT

Starting from such divergent points of political and social opposition, the achievement of a shared skill-development vision under the NTRA was a significant milestone. A truce was made between the industrial parties with CBT as the point of intersection.

The designers of the restructuring training movement were socio-political in their orientation rather than educational. ANTA and the NTB, were 'established without the inclusion of practitioners, administrators or academics' (Crudden 1992:143)[97]. Ryan (1999) holds that Dawkins (the minister for DEET during the Hawke government) saw his role as moving TAFE aside in order to establish an economic and instrumental view of education and of 'coaching the two sides of industry on how to claim their inheritance' (Ryan 1999:111). Their inheritance was dominion over industry training. Ewer, a unionist, involved in the design of the NTRA, writes:

> Training reform was about solving a whole series of industrial rather than pedagogical problems. And I hasten to add, this was just as well, because we were singularly badly qualified to analyse CBT as a pedagogy.
> Ewer, 1996: 13

The drafting pen was in the hands of trade unionist and industrial leaders. Educationalists had input status but were employed in the service of the industrial parties. Educationalists were called upon to develop a product that did not conflict with the political and economic aspirations of the industrial parties and that matched the educational understandings that the primary stakeholders brought to the task. (See 8.3.) Hence the boards called upon the services of the trade tradition rather than the adult educators working in the critical education tradition. Trade teachers had industrial and technical expertise and credibility.

The popular thinking of trade teachers at the time championed CBT and self paced teaching as the new apprenticeship training experiment (Brown 2000). Based on behaviourism, the new training model promised greater control and tangible outcomes. Marsick (1991) tells us that the model originated from the military, drawn from World War 2 experience. She explains that the model was already dated when imported to serve the needs of industry restructuring. It no longer complemented the structures that typify war and much less, the industrial organisation of today. However these criticisms were camouflaged behind the simplicity and uniformity of the CBT concept.

CBT provided a seemingly neutral, educational framework which did not threaten the political stance of either union or employer bodies; furthermore it served the need of government as a forthright intervention in skills development. It therefore became the core

of the vision. Worsnop (1993), whose affiliations were with the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, summarised the educational recipe:

> The essence of CBT is that it is concentrated on the end product.
> Worsnop, 1993: 2

Agreement was found between the industrial parties by a focus on skill as the content of industry training, leaving the separate learning traditions and ideologies of union and management intact and independent of the NTRA. Its workability lay as much in what it promised not to do as in what it said it would achieve. It became a powerful 'social organiser' (Jackson 1995:1) binding a common understanding in a single discourse. Skills could be analysed as a sequence of actions and patterns that were simple to train. Even Key Competencies could be 'neutered' by focusing on skill outcomes. Skills growth could be accounted for as a contributor to economic growth. The model could be analysed in terms of inputs and outputs which sat well with the economic managers calling for educational accountability. (See 6.2.) CBT was consistent with the emerging philosophy of economic rationalism, hence the discourse market was well matched to the capital (Bourdieu, 1991).

9.3.3 Educational Compromise and CBT

Where industrialists had found a point around which to build an educational framework, educationalists fought between themselves, vigorously debating the educational and philosophical meaning of the CBT paradigm. The point of convergence for the most part eluded the educationalist factions working in the field.

CBT was grasped as an important catalyst for reform within the apprenticeship training systems. It had the power to resolve some points of criticism against the system. Apprenticeship training was criticised for its inflexibility at its entry and exit points. The length of the course and the topic areas were set. It was also criticised for its inability to cope with individual difference in learning and its lack in national uniformity of standard. Self-paced learning, combined with CBT, answered these criticisms. At the same time it gave a sense of control and transparency to industry – the principal client of the system. It replaced the intangible art of the professional pedagogist with concrete and visible steps towards skill acquisition. (See 7.2.2.) It allowed industry to develop trainers so that one of

their tribe could control learning rather than submitting to erudite outsiders. It appeared that CBT would allow the training system to directly address 'performity' and augment the power of industry (Lyotard 1984). Early examples of CBT were based on manufacturing models whereby the trainer followed a prescribed procedure creating efficiencies and fixed outputs. (See 6.2.1.) While it took the 'teacher out of teaching' (Sefton 2000:25), it spoke a language that industry understood.

Ever since the emergence of Award Restructuring, critical educationalists had been agitating for a pedagogical approach that recognised the role of critical thinking, research and language skills. Critical educators argued that 'knowledge, thinking and evaluation are equal elements of skill' (Jaakkola et al. 1995:30) to technical skills. But VET was somewhat 'anti-intellectual' and had 'no tradition of critical analysis' (Jackson 1997 a). While generic skills experienced an impetus under the influence of Finn (1991), Carmichael (1992) and Mayer (1992), the practical application of Key Competencies translated into 'patchy and variable' (Kearns 2001:46) practice at best[98].

The early emphasis on enabling skills in the NTRA, particularly literacy skills, was an initial triumph for critical educationalists. It allowed the educational brief to be broadened, although significant concessions had to be made for the sake of convergence. Lo Bianco (1989) notes that the conceptual frame for discussing literacy had shifted from a welfare model to an industrial model. It shifted from the marginal needy to

> 'an important corollary of labour market programs, of economic restructuring, of the adaptability, mobility and more highly skilled type of workforce for the 'productive culture' which economic prescriptions of Australia argue is essential'
> Lo Bianco 1989:vii

The discourse of education as a democratic right was replaced with an instrumental discourse with points of reference to industry and the economy (Sanguinetti 2001). Within the field, critical educators debated whether they had been colonised into an economic rationalist paradigm to the detriment of the core principles of critical developmental education (Cunningham 1993, Angwin 1997, Mulqueeny 1998). Educationalists, having adopted the industry discourse of instrumentalisation and economic benefit, had found a point of convergence if only with tentative commitment from their industry partners.

As the decade progressed, literacy faded as a frontline initiative[99] but the battle between the learning traditions continued in educational forums. Industrialists remained oblivious to the issues.

Critical educators recognised education as always ideologically invested. Industrialists had achieved a truce by constructing education as ideologically neutral which of course it could never be. However, critical educators could not draw a line between education and politics.

> The English teacher can co-operate in her own marginalisation by seeing herself as 'a language teacher' with no connection to such social and political issues. Or she can accept the paradox of literacy (language) as a form of interethnic communication which often involves conflicts of values and identities, and accept her role as one who socialises students into a world view that, given its power here and abroad, must be viewed critically, comparatively, and with a constant sense of possibilities for change. Like it or not, the English teacher stands at the very heart of the most crucial educational, cultural and political issues of our time.
> Gee, 1990: 67-68

Critical educators recognised the education process and work itself to be inextricably enmeshed with issues of identity and meaning (Mulqueeny 1998). Hart (1992) argues that those who construct skill as value-neutral and apolitical subscribe to a patriarchal framework. Such an accusation could be levelled against the signatories of the NTRA. In a consensus climate it was not within their interests to give too much volume to the contesting voice of critical educationalists.

9.4   VET as a Supplier to Industry

Another formative influence on industry education was its relationship to industry. Industry bodies shaped a role for education as a service provider to be managed as a supplier in the production chain rather than as a planner and shaper of the social and political capital of the nation[100]. The role cast for education stands VET apart, particularly site-based VET, from other strands of education. (See 6.2)

At the work-site[101], training providers were to be given specifications to meet and they were to be managed applying the same systems as those used for other industrial suppliers

eg parts suppliers, cleaning services. ANTA endorsed this position and recast its role to fit 'a rational actor model which privileges neo-liberal concepts of free markets' (Butler1998:8). Educationalists submitted to the role carved out for them, most without a whimper. (See Chapter 6)

Educators do not come from a robust, critical tradition it appears. Hall (1996) observes that educators do not question policy decisions. An analysis of 40 research publications on the school/TAFE interface revealed that:

> none questioned the policy statements upon which major changes were based. This is true of most VET Research: policy has been accepted, not questioned.
> 1996: 12.

Sanguinetti (2001) reports resistance on the part of teachers to aspects of the NTRA, but she also notes the concomitant progression of the discourse of performity colonising teacher discussion and values.

VET policy decisions were not based on pedagogical understandings[102]. Hall goes on to say:

> comparisons with other countries are usually made before training reform is carried out in Australia. Those comparisons are rarely research reports
> 1996: 15.

Hall's observations put VET policy and funding into perspective as a politically driven phenomenon rather than an educational one. While this is true of all education systems, VET has certain unique qualities which serve to further gag the educationalist.

VET does not simply teach the skills of industry as subjects are taught in schools. Industry is the senior teaching partner voiced through the training boards and through ANTA and, at the work-site, directly through site management. Industry has the right of veto. Educational protagonists that cannot establish credibility among industry decision makers are dismissed.

> Corporate literature invokes learning as meaning a tool which serves the bottom line: learning is a commodity which can yield a competitive edge. ... The workplace

context positions learning as a continuous, strategically used process integrated with and running parallel to work.

Falk, 1997: 2

This has put new dimensions around the practices and the social function of education.

Training services are bought to complement and extend the vision of the company. Educators are suppliers who negotiate the products that the enterprise wishes to buy (Billett 1998b). At the same time educational institutions have developed an entrepreneurial identity. Customer relations demand that educators view company training ideology, policy and practice as marketing opportunities.

In site based industry education the proximity of the 'customer' amplifies these features resulting in a further hybridity within the already hybrid VET sector. A separation has developed between site-based training and campus-based training making one unrecognisable as the corollary of the other in many instances (Falk 1998). In site-based training, the industry sector is subservient to the enterprise. In campus-based examples, the sector is said to define the needs in terms of industry competencies, but it does so at arm's length. The User Choice policy allows companies to exercise greater control over who will provide training and Training Packages invite more liberal customisation.

Campus-based training contrasts with site-based training in that trainees do not have to demonstrate their learned values and outcomes in their practices outside the classroom. They are not constantly evaluated for their interpretation of those values and practices in their daily activity. Enterprise-based education must demonstrate its effectiveness in changing behaviour in a permanent and observable way (See 8.3), not just at the moment of assessment but as part of an on-going progression. In campus based VET, the educator's task is to teach the skill based units of competence in the process of accumulating credentials towards a qualification. The task of the enterprise-based educationalist is to listen and translate the workplace talk into pedagogical activity[103]. Hence educationalists in site-based training are subservient to the vision, beliefs and economic function workplace power brokers favour at individual work sites. (See 8.5.)

Had Carcare personnel been sent off-site for training, the expectations of the company, union and participants would have been different. The provider would have assessed employees and reclassified them in line with their interpretation of the Award. VIC classes would have followed a generalist program based on the endorsed curriculum. Questions of co-management and transformative education would not have arisen.

9.5 Funding Policy as a Manager of Training

Government and industry policy further shaped the role of training educationalists in industry. (See 6.3.) Under the Labor government, funding was offered only to companies that had established a consultative training committee. Practitioners who wished to participate in funded programs had to demonstrate commitment to the ideology. Funding would not be granted for training per se regardless of the demonstrable needs of the training participants. Funding would only be granted if it was said to be CBT, offered to an endorsed target group in order to achieve accredited training qualifications. Funding arrangements were paid per student contact hour.

Subsequent governments have applied further restrictions. Competition policy applied to training and more conditional funding have excluded support for pre-course research and training needs analyses. In order to cover the cost of the teacher's salary, in state funded programs, groups of 15 or more learners needed to participate, favouring class based models or, in some instances, distance learning models.

Economic rationalist principles have been increasingly applied to VET so that the government has achieved a cost reduction of 9.7% in publicly funded VET delivery since 1997 (ANTA 2001). The absence of funding for pre-course research and program development forced many practitioners away from context-based, customised programs and towards 'off the shelf', standardised curriculum materials. EBT models have become a rarity. Such funding arrangements have threatened the features upon which WLI quality has been defined. It resulted in reduced teacher availability at the work site and/or increased financial contribution from companies.

The prevailing industry education model cast a role for educators where no space was allowed for criticism of policy decisions. The managers of training providers became proselytists for the training system as they attempted to coalesce the energy of their staff into the favoured pedagogical stance – CBT, CBA, RPL ... They needed to sell the ideology to their colleagues and then, to industry. With the introduction of the NTRA and subsequent VET initiatives, educationalists played an advocacy role in winning workplace support, normalising the new skills development language and adapting the new system to different enterprises. Industrial educators were not the independent voice of educational consultancy. Regardless of their epistemological orientation, their new role was firstly that of entrepreneur and salesperson on behalf of the NTRA, and then, supplier to the enterprise.

9.6   Strengthening Employer Autonomy and Authority in VET

The activity of industry is set by its economic and political imperatives. Could educational goals be achieved at the same time? Those minding the political and economic score board were oblivious to the educational one in this case study. Industrialists had developed some interest in skills extension for its economic value, but none in the broader issues of education. They gave no credence to educators as contributors in planning for the development of the social and intellectual infrastructure of industry.

> Training reform was going to deliver a 'high skill-high wage economy'.... Here is
> the first and most fundamental problem with training reform from a union and
> social democratic perspective - put simply, training reform was expected to carry
> too much weight in economic and political terms.
> Ewer, 1996: 13-16

The fact that employers saw the NTRA as educationally driven (Fitzgerald 1994), and educationalists saw it as industry driven (Fitzsimmons 1996) and unionists saw it as ideologically driven (Ewer 1996) suggests that nobody was getting what they wanted from it. However government policy makers have heard the voice of employers to the exclusion of others.

Subsequent developments within VET, namely the National Training Framework, have consolidated the position of employers as customers and managers within the training system. Neo-liberal policies have excluded unions from training roles. Where the Accord-NTRA relationship made strategic, political and systemic connections between VET and skill development, neo-liberal governments have sought to dislocate this structure in favour of individual 'bargaining' and contracts[104]. Such policies of the Labor government were accelerated by the Liberal Coalition when it gained office in 1996. The edges were hardened and safety nets removed (Brown 2000). Unions were increasingly excluded from decision making and training management roles. The link between wages and endorsed qualifications became negotiable[105]. The Training Framework removed the persuasive power of the union and deregulated the field, leaving workers at the mercy of management to deem training as they saw fit. Training, as a negotiable item within EBAs, diminished. Hence training was separated from industrial relations and decision making around the politics of labour. VET is now a 'silo' activity (Schofield 2001) grafted on to industry but impotent as a force in industrial relations.

In site-based training, convergence is now the business of training providers to find in selling their products to employers. Looking from another vantage point of this case study, one could conclude that employers have always had control of training. The case study demonstrates that training that is not vigorously supported by management, is doomed to a tokenistic role. It illustrates that in site-based training the role taken up by management is pivotal to the functioning and effectiveness of training. WLI research (Sefton et al. 1994, Sefton et al. 1995, Virgona et al. 1998) further supports this conclusion. Employers will determine the educational value of training initiatives in the workplace.

9.7   Defining Training at Carcare

The Carcare case study reflects similar relationships and discourse positioning as played out between the pressure groups on the national training canvas. With the industrial parties embroiled in the political struggle, they were hardly conscious of the educational implications of their decisions. Educational issues rarely emerged from the dust of the battle field and failed to engage if they did. Discussion about training at Carcare never encompassed learning. It was always about industrial relations and expediency. (See 8.3)

Training presented the edifice behind which the essential industry restructuring battles were fought. The central (though unspoken) battle was whether the personnel management of the company was to be shared with the union within a consultative model. Training, as a tradeable item in industrial relations, provided the context for the battle, but training, as an educational activity, was incidental.

The CBT model, to the extent that it was understood, was uncontested. Training was said to be about skill development despite the contradictory evidence of workplace practice at the company[106].

One could argue that the resistance of workplace personnel to engage with training or to negotiate the curriculum was part of the unspoken pact of co-operation between the union and management. The trade off in the consultation environment was the avoidance of confrontation except at points of crisis. Engagement in curriculum matters could perhaps lead to crisis. However, they played a game of pretence about the match between course content and skills development and the extent to which skills could be applied on the floor:

> '... after they've done the training by lack of .. lack of application of the skill that they've got through the training group, they're not gunna get a pay rise.'
> Andrew, Training Committee Meeting

No one showed any real interest in having the classroom activity complement workplace skills, nor in fact in ensuring that skills growth took place at all. The importance of skills assessment and its occurrence within the workplace was frequently claimed by both industrial parties. It was spoken of as if it were in operation when everyone knew that assessments were not conducted and the assessors had a role in name only. The classification status of individual workers was decided in meetings between Reno, the works manager, and Ron the shop steward. Although Ron was a trained workplace assessor he did not conduct formal workplace assessments. Nobody did. The style of assessment had not changed despite the training and the development of a new system. The assessment was on the level of 'I reckon he's worth about a 3'. 'Well I'd give him a 2' 'Yeah okay'. There was no reference to the agreed criteria.

The assessors were said to have assessed everyone within the workplace and to have reassessed the training graduates following the training program. Anna asserted the democratic power that follows when there are in-house shop floor based assessors (Interactional Event No 4). To Andrew, she affirmed the practical value of in-house assessors:

> That's the reason that, that we went in the first place for in-house assessors, so it can be an on-going process rather than having to wait, you know, for the first of the month every three months to have some TAFE college come in and do it.
> Training Committee Meeting

Claiming a shared agency she assumed a shared motivation in establishing the assessment system. Andrew agreed even though he had only a minimal understanding of the system and no knowledge of how it originated beyond a response to industrial pressure. Both Andrew and Anna placed a high value on being seen to be playing by the rules. The knowledge that the training and assessment system existed was what mattered. As long as assessment and assessors had a nominal role, the training system could claim political integrity. The game of pretence was willingly subscribed to by all parties and was an important component of their attempted mutuality and their searching for common ground.

The debate over educational veracity had no place. Andrew explained that employees join the training 'to ensure you've got job security' (August meeting, 1997), although the experience of the graduates contradicted this. Of the seventeen who completed the VIC course, only twelve remained three months after graduating[107]. Anna told us that training was about money:

> You've got to get something for having participated in the training otherwise why participate?
> Anna (Union Training Officer) Training Committee Meeting

Educational values had no credence and off-the-job training was of no consequence:

> Anna: ...let's not look at the classroom work as training.

Andrew: [No, no.

Anna: The training is in fact the learning on the job stuff and the assessments.

Training Committee Meeting

The irony was that neither of these, the learning on the job or the assessments, formally occurred.

The training participants likewise shared the view that training was instrumental rather than valuable in its own right. According to Anna:

> They very clearly understand that there are two reasons for doing this training, one is it will give them something towards a certificate that is national etcetera … and that there is career progression out of it.
> Training Committee Meeting

Andrew affirmed this as correct. Convergence on training matters was negotiated at Carcare by disqualifying the educational agenda. Speaking to the class, however, Anna allowed a toe-hold for educational values in her summary of Andrew's approach to training:

> If Andrew was genuine and really understood the value of training. And people complain of other things industrially, about absenteeism or blokes not wanting to have a go at different jobs or you know, all of these other things that are his big problems. If he actually had half a brain about it, he would realise that a training component will assist him with all of those things as well.
> Training Session

Andrew asserted the importance of training in building skills but did not follow through by establishing a strategic system for supported skills development. For the company, training was like taxes. One was forced to pay up only when every option to ignore the demand or reclassify the activity was exhausted. The notion of training being beneficial in its own

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right was never contemplated. It was a burden and a cost, regulated by the force of law. In Anna's words:

> I still maintain that this company does not understand the value of training. They are still saying 'It's a bloody waste of time. It's a wank. It's costing us money. We should have the blokes out on the job. You know, … we're training them for things they already have'. All of these types of things.
> Training Session

Like all of us working in the field, Anna's role was a contradictory one. On the one hand she was an industrial officer where her single responsibility was to win improved conditions for members, on the other she was a training officer who knew the potential of training beyond that of an industrial lever.

9.7.1 Failure by Omission

The NTRA failed to achieve any significant reform at Carcare for many reasons. Firstly the NTRA was a culture centred initiative as well as an instrumental one. Its pre-requisites for success were a set of cultural features and ideological relationships. Reform was to be achieved through consultation and communication. If this is true then its starting point was to establish a level of trust between management and the shop floor built on a belief in the workers as an integral part of the growth of the business. The Carcare management was not willing to risk trust and saw no strategic value in working with its people, despite Tom's rhetoric.

Workers were constructed by management as static and untrustworthy. They were viewed as unco-operative and uncommitted to their work. Despite the high level of personal investment and specialist expertise they manifested during the presentation session, Andrew had little to say in praise of them at the next Training Committee meeting:

Andrew: They had to also show the necessary skill.

Anna: Right, so you have to get them to the skill level.

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Andrew: [Some of these have. He has. Those
              two have left so it ... Ilias probably has. Mike hasn't. Nick probably has.
              Jack. is a query. Adam is a query. Stan is a query. Brian is a query to get
              more pay above the rates... Stan sort of bounces up and down on the one
              spot ... Mike? Well, poor old Mike ...

These were the same people to whom Andrew communicated a sense of pride during their
training presentation. He now dismissed them as of dubious value on the basis of a code of
unspecified principles adopted to fit the moment. Some of the workers he 'queried' were
the recognised workplace experts in specific areas and key workers within the company.
His 'query' classification came not only as a surprise but a betrayal of some of his most
committed and skilled workers.

An entry in the minutes from the April meeting permits some insight into management
thinking. It re

> The meeting discussed a memo sent to management on improving morale in the
> workplace. The union representative requested that the minutes record a response
> from management as quoted:
> 'The enterprise agreement requires that we provide a safe work environment but
> not necessarily a happy one'
> Minutes, April 1997

Andrew, who was absent from the April meeting, denied knowledge, explanation or
authorship of the comments at the May meeting.

Another significant reason for the failure of the reform agenda at Carcare was the
unspoken pact of co-operation that quarantined disagreement in the interaction between the
consulting parties. The level of trust between the industrial parties was so fragile that they
were constantly tentative in their dealings with each other.

Issues of change were assiduously avoided by all parties at the training committee
meetings but it was the principal topic of discussion in the training sessions. Each visitor to
the class was there on a mission to recruit members to their ideology. Each spoke of a

status quo that was unsatisfactory and a new direction that needed to be pursued, yet in the
consultative forum, the protocols of consensus and mutuality insulated the parties from
significant confrontation on their polarised positions. It was only in aggravated conflict
situations that union and management expressed a need for change. The code of mutuality
allowed the parties to perpetuate further inconsistencies and contradictions uncensored.
Such an approach meant that progress was extremely slow. It silenced any discussion about
what I was trying to achieve. If the issue was unavoidable, all parties resorted to pretence
propped by theoretical industrial agreements. A change agenda could be pursued only if
parallels and convergences could be found. Issues of power and ideology were
circumnavigated. Management constantly broke promises and changed explanations so that
the good will between the parties was deeply perforated. As a result the parties were unable
to negotiate a credible, common standpoint from which to progress.

The third reason for the failure of the NTRA at Carcare was that the company policy was
ill defined. The management had no shared vision of the future and was unable to present a
cohesive view for the direction of the company.

Managers appeared to act unilaterally. When things went wrong, blaming was the reflex
reaction. Management personalities jockeyed for power professing the validity of their
point of view over that of others. They reacted to camouflage their mistakes and
inefficiencies. Management was unable to provide leadership through a sustained and
credible ideology, hence its members were undisciplined and uncertain.

It therefore comes as no surprise that training was beset with contradiction. There were
implicit boundaries around training and around learning that trivialised its significance and
prevented identification with its processes. Despite Tom's explicit statements to the
contrary and Andrew's insistence that training was wedded to increased skill, training was
insulated from affecting work activity.

My experience indicates that companies that react with suspicion to training offered by
external training providers, usually fall broadly into two categories. There are those that
are tightly controlled and who fear intrusion into their control over the workforce. They
understand the power of training to intercept the established management discourse. On the
other hand there are those who believe their workers contribute only labour to company

profitability and therefore education is of no value and an unnecessary cost. The latter are often companies that are reactive in their industrial relations. These companies focus on labour hours and short cuts as the means to achieve success.

Carcare was one such example. It was a workplace in constant negotiation about worker, management and company identity. Deetz (1995) argues that an unstable discourse offers opportunities for redefinition and refinement if discussion is not stifled. Carcare however was not self reflective. Discussion was not valued and alternative views were not explored. The discussion that began with the trainees on presentation day was not viewed as a valid contribution in the construction of a new culture of communication. It was seen as an attack on the prevailing power structure and the management response was to close ranks.

In the unpredictable climate of the company, trainees were being asked to contradict their habitus in attending training. The workers were often ordered to start an urgent job at training time. Sessions usually began with me wrestling with managers in an attempt to corral participants. Their identity as co-operative, committed workers concerned about the company's well-being was the nexus of a dilemma. Should they attend training, rhetorically endorsed by the company, or stay on the job, which was the unspoken message of company management? Within this domain, the power of the trainer was of no significance in comparison to the manager.

Training therefore maintained an insecure tenure propped by the insistence of the union, until, having grown tired of the battle, the union along with us, the training provider, walked away from the battle field. From the union's point of view, management was deaf to the introduction of a transformative discourse and from an industrial relations point of view, the investment far outweighed the gains. 8 or 10 members with a pay increase of $20 per week was a poor return on 6 months of meetings in a resistant environment. From our point of view, the lack of co-operation at the company meant that the link between learning and workplace change would never connect within the car processing side of the business. There was little hope of establishing a training culture, providing for better communication or even workplace improvement in physical terms. The union therefore decided to seek pay increases through the EBA and industrial pressure, thus abandoning the Training Reform Agenda on this site.

9.8   Willingness to Find Convergence

The NTRA achieved major reform within industry. It convinced some companies and industry sectors that they had a role in guiding and managing the national training systems and they had a responsibility to the development of their workforce. Despite the progress made, ANTA spokespersons bemoan the fact that we still have a long way to go to achieve true enterprise commitment to skill development (Scollay 2001) [108]. The points of action she identified in 2001 would have been equally as relevant 15 years ago:

- Organisations need to be 'high performing', and
- Workforce needs to become 'highly skilled'.
  Scollay, 2001

Nonetheless progress overall was remarkable given the animosity and the disparate nature of the negotiating parties. Success stories were marked by a willingness to find points of convergence and sufficient fidelity to agreed ground rules. In such circumstances a practice of good will was established among parties.

This would appear to be the missing ingredient among critical educators in the formation of the NTRA and among the negotiating parties at Carcare. When one compares the principles driving decision making at Carcare there appears to be sufficient points of complementarity to create a viable consultative process.

What Carcare valued in its workers.	What the Union valued in its members	What I was looking for in my learners
Knowledge and Skills:		
Unbridled flexibility in work skills	Sufficient flexibility to meet classification criteria	Willingness to learn & share knowledge and skills & to adapt when necessary
Fast effective learning of new skills	Easy skills acquisition and recognition	Willingness & ability to transfer learning between jobs & from classroom

Ability to interpret company values	Ability to mediate company values in the light of worker interests	Ability to apply a critical perspective within a survival priority. Capacity building
Ability to work in a team	Good communication and feedback skills	Team based communication, feedback and learning skills
Ability to take initiative appropriately	Willingness to speak out & to be assertive in protecting union positions	Independence and initiative in learning and problem solving. Building capability
Ability to read and follow company system eg quality	Ability to read and follow union procedures and systems	Ability to read critically & make judgements about following systems
Orientation		
Uncritical acceptance of demand	Critical watchfulness of unjust demand	Ability to appreciate a range of discourse positions
Recognition of economic imperative and company survival	Recognition of economic imperative and company survival	Recognition of economic imperative and company survival
Loyalty		
Company loyalty	Solidarity & respect for union	Balance between individual and social loyalties
Obedience to authority	Willingness to participate and be outspoken in workplace democratic forums	Critical participation in debate

However, what this table fails to acknowledge are the points of impasse that could not be negotiated through within the consultative environment we had constructed. In particular, there was no need or urgency and hence no will on the part of management to embrace

change. From management's perspective, the principles upon which they had been operating in the past had not been convincingly drawn into question and the direction offered by the negotiating parties did not indicate greater profitability and prosperity for the company. Points of convergence therefore needed to be synchronised with need and urgency.

The NTRA was relatively successful in drawing together these elements as discussed in earlier chapters, although most companies were slow to react (Carmichael 1993, 2001, Scollay 2001). The NTRA however was ambitious in its goals. It attempted to catalyse cultural change by introducing a transformative discourse around training, which positioned shop floor employees as the major protagonists and equal parties in decision making[109]. However companies such as Carcare showed no inclination to change until threatened by legislation. The measure between compliance and reform was leagues apart. In such a training compliance climate, education is reduced to a set of external features which can be ticked off to give the appearance of adherence. The Carcare experience suggests that education, ideological change and commitment cannot be industrially legislated.

9.9   Conclusion

The Carcare example demonstrates that educational decisions are subservient to the political, cultural and historical context, particularly in site-based programs. Nonetheless, there are many companies that have used the NTRA to achieve a level of transformation. WLI publications offer some case study examples. In such companies however, outcomes were achieved not by legislation and regulation but by the willingness of all parties to seek a better way of relating and to open up to the possibility of convergence and common objectives. There was a shift in the discourse that both parties embraced. This was not just an industrial stance. It came with a determination to achieve reform and was concurrent with the exercise of refining skills in people and systems management. The skill of managing training was one of managing identity and recognising opportunities where common ground could be negotiated.

Reflecting upon these indicators of success, the hybridity of site-based training is amplified. College-based training is focused on the individual but site-based training

(except for the increasingly popular apprenticeship and traineeship programs) is enterprise focused. It is concerned with issues of change, identity and accountability to the enterprise training management. Educators are not equal partners; they are suppliers to the enterprise. As suppliers they can offer advice and guidance and may negotiate points of value but the terms of the relationship and the final product will be determined by the customer.

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[96] It should be noted that such values may not describe the experience of those within it, the ideals however persist and shape the style of interaction and the decision making process – the activity type that prevails. It has already been stated that shop stewards activity changed from one of agitator to one of conciliator following the restructure movement.

[97] ANTA and the ITBs have been made up of union and employer representatives on a 50:50 balance. However the Victorian government in 2001 has advised the state level training boards that they may include training providers on their boards if they wish.

[98] While employers sa_ Key Competencies are important, research tells us that teachers do not understand them and fail to teach them directly (Down 1997). ALNARC (Haines and Brand 2000, Sanguinetti and Hartley 2000) research states that 'built in' competencies risk being overshadowed and allow no capacity to negotiate resources.

[99] 'Some even say that adult literacy in Australia is as badly served as it was before the ALLP, with a dying commitment from federal and state governments resulting in poorly coordinated action, fragmented, under-resourced provision and lack of appropriate accountability measures.' (Literacy Link, Oct 2001)

[100] This relationship is spelled out in the 'Review of Industry Training Boards Victoria' report (1993): 'ITBs expect Colleges to recognise ITBs as being truly representative of industry' and to 'adopt and implement fully industry training plan recommendations ...' Review 1993.37

[101] Site-based programs come in a number of different forms. Some teachers attend the work-site only to 'deliver training'; others work as Enterprise Based Teachers (EBT) placed within an enterprise for one or several days per week to work on a range of training initiatives. My appointment to Carcare could be best described as a modified EBT arrangement. My contract was only to the VIC training but because of the way we work within WLI, and because of my involvement in assessment and as a member of the Training Committee, I spent most of the day at the company.

[102] There is a wealth of research data and government advice (referred to in Chapter 6), that problematises CBT, transferability of skills and processes for skills growth. Very little of this appears to reflect in change to the structures, funding and policy of VET in action. However Selby Smith (1999) investigated the impact of R&D on VET decision making which demonstrated that the question is too complex to provide a simple answer but in general VET does exercise some influence over certain decisions.

[103] The current system of traineeships has introduced another educational model into site-based training. Traineeships are one-to-one or small group training arrangements that require a minimum of 4 face-to-face visits on the part of training providers. They depend upon workplace expertise for learning content and should involve mentor relationships. Most are concerned to skill personnel to maintain workplace standards and are not engaged with workplace change.

[104] The contradiction to this is that some older manufacturing industries, under the umbrella of the AMWU, CFMEU and some food manufacturing unions, have largely maintained the conditions of training agreements forged in the early days of the NTRA.

[105] Only a few awards demanded that wage levels reflect endorsed qualifications at operator level

[106] In fact no formal technical skills training took place. People were sometimes moved to different areas in the workplace in the belief that they would pick up the skills there but there was no coach, no published standard and no assessment of skills acquired. The trained assessors were sidelined and their services were never employed.

[107] Three were sacked and one left enraged by his demotion. Another left having found another position.

[108] Enterprises still expect governments to pay for the provision and, if possible, the release of workers (Scollay 2001).

[109] The Metals and Engineering Award Variation of March 20 1990 includes structural efficiency legislation. Clause 6B states:
a. The parties to this award are committed to co-operating positively to increase the efficiency, productivity and international competitiveness of the metal and engineering industry and to enhance the career opportunities and job security of employees in the industry.
b. At each plant or enterprise, an employer, the employees and their relevant union or unions shall establish a consultative mechanism and procedures appropriate to the size, structure and needs of that plant or enterprise. Measures raised by the employer, employees or union or unions for consideration consistent with the objective of subclause (a) herein shall be processed through that consultative mechanism and procedures.
The Steel Industry Development Agreement (SIDA) and the Agreed National Consultative Guidelines for the Textile Clothing and Footwear Industries similarly pledge a commitment to consultation, even consensus in the case of the SIDA.

CHAPTER 10: – KNOWLEDGE: A LENS ON THE ISSUES OF WORKPLACE EDUCATION

Balloon metaphor:
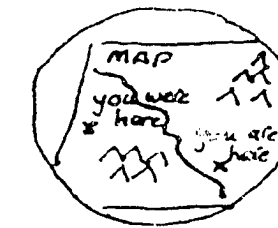
This chapter again takes a vantage point from the ground. It observes the trajectory the balloon has taken and compares it to the grid reference of current industry training balloons. It identifies the trajectory locations that our balloon was following and that are recognisable as the course of current industry training balloons.

10.1 Overview

In reviewing the period over which this study has been conducted, certain questions rise to the surface. A major one concerns knowledge and knowledge generation within industrial workplaces. Knowledge that was seen as important for shop floor certificate curricula in the industry restructuring period now forms only a part of the knowledge that operators are expected to exhibit. Managerialism has triumphed and harnessed workers' procedural and 'dispositional'[110] knowledge to itself. It has refocused the boundaries around industrial knowledge throughout the course of this research period and absorbed company culture and identity as knowledge. The implications for educators are significant particularly those working in site-based training.

One perspective on the period would profess that knowledge has narrowed from industry to enterprise, from divergent and inclusive to singular and exclusive in scope, from widely heteroglossic to narrow and controlled within a homogeneous discourse. While it has widened to include areas not previously recognised as knowledge, it has narrowed in diversity.

This chapter will identify the ways knowledge has been refocused and redefined. It will discuss:

1) the reduction in the range of voices heard in post-restructuring workplaces with the rise of an imperious quality discourse to which knowledge has become servile;

2) the development of a hybrid in site-based training, as training providers have responded to the knowledge needs identified by employers.

3) the shift from a focus on skills to one of corporate culturalism, facilitated by workplace educators.

10.2 Narrowing of the Knowledge Boundaries

Industry restructuring was a heteroglossic discourse. The discourse shifted the site of knowledge from the industry specialists, particularly engineers, to the domain of all employees. The introduction of consultation, training and structural efficiency legislation were measures designed to expose and access workers' knowledge. At one level knowledge construction was reconceived as a co-operative endeavour. Productivity would be achieved through the combined wisdom of people at all levels of the organisation. A task within the industry restructure movement was to expand the decision making discourse to find a place for divergent and even conflicting power bases. The movement was conceived with notions of sharing decision making as a means to achieve greater workforce ownership of change decisions on the path to greater profitability. Consultative committees and training sub-committees were enshrined in legislation. Notwithstanding, democracy was instrumental to profitability rather than an end in itself.

However, the period has ended with a strengthening of corporate culturalism, the muting of alternative discourses and the supremacy of just one - the quality, customer-focused discourse (Payne 2000). During this research period, managerial discourse has all but obliterated the egalitarian discourse of industry restructuring in site based training. Hence the knowledge that might have evolved in a structure based on egalitarian notions of social capital is not the knowledge found in site-based training programs. Trainers do not spend their time assisting learners to develop cogent arguments and to critically compare discourses. Rather they spend their time assisting learners to understand workplace systems and to participate appropriately within them. Their inadvertent purpose is to reduce the range of discourses and channel them into the framework of company systems and values. Furthermore, the narrowing threatens to become formalised. Pressure for international parity and competitiveness is encouraging VET to formalise values, attitudes and behaviour as legitimate generic skills to be taught and assessed (Kearns 2001). This has now become the new 'knowledge' around which site-based training programs are proposed.

New industry is characterised by devolved authority structures. On the surface, devolution has dispersed decision making power, but devolved authority is only as dependable as the strength of the company identity. The industry restructuring goal of employee-shared decision making has been achieved at some level but it is not within the paradigm proposed by union spokespersons at the beginning of the era. The power equation is fixed. Employers are unequivocally in charge. Ownership of decisions has been dispersed but in most instances, it has been relinquished carefully, buttressed by a strong company identity that has been technologised throughout the workforce.

Companies like Carcare attempted to devolve authority without building a high trust culture. People such as Scotty held supervisory positions. But Scotty had little respect for or trust in the company. It was a significant risk to endow him with the task of disseminating company values and interpreting them appropriately in the decisions he made on the floor. After his public stoush with 'Smithy', the risk was even greater. Similarly Carcare management took a risk in allowing quality inspectors to interact freely with operators without building a trust and knowledge base. Devolved authority goes hand in hand with high trust cultures and a strong commitment to corporate values.

Employees work within the boundaries of the quality system to interpret the standard that is acceptable on the basis of enterprise values and customer awareness. Responsibility for product quality has been devolved so that companies are dependent on workers internalising standards, monitoring and maintaining them. Workers adjust their production on their understanding of the tolerance levels of different customers. In speaking to customers, suppliers or quality inspectors and auditors, they are expected to project the prescribed company identity whether that be racy and adaptable or educated and exclusive or warm and humane or subservient and customer submissive. Workers' knowledge has hence come to include the interpretation of company values at the point of application.

The construction of the quality orthodoxy has taken the place of heterodoxies. Formal, documented procedures have overridden divergent knowledge and individual authorities in the workplace. Processes have been standardised and controlled eliminating individual ways of conducting and organising work. Values of auditable consistency have rendered eclecticism illegitimate (Bagnal 1994). Diversity in all its forms has been absorbed by fidelity to the corporation.

Carcare was characterised by its heteroglossic qualities, however the movement to silence divergent voices was evident in 1997. It was clear that Ryan's task was in part to discredit the old RS&R discourse along with the woolly humanist thinking of Tom. The tight, efficient economic focus of the financial controller would lead them out of the chaos that other discourses had created. This was a company-instigated initiative. But the drive towards a more quality focused discourse (and away from worker led organisational practices) began before Ryan arrived at the company. It was initiated by customers.

The external inspectors in the GM shed dictated work practices and work organisation that discredited and superseded the knowledge and autonomy of the operators. But the practice was not uniform throughout the workplace. Carcare was not quick to embrace change. It moved away from traditional practices only when forced. It was only in those areas where customers demanded a quality-led production strategy that the quality systems and customer satisfaction discourse dulled and formalised the localised knowledge and self managing practices. In the Fleet area, control of the work was still within the hands of the operators as described by Adam. Likewise Mike managed his own work. His knowledge and skills application dictated his analysis of the job demands. His work was low volume but in the high volume areas, such as the Toyota shed, lean management practices applied. The operators were required to do more in less time and devise ways to accomplish it – the bar was always being raised. Inspectors from the customer company observed workplace practices and demanded tasks be conducted in certain ways. Gradually variation was being stamped out and standardisation was being enforced. The tracking system was another example where an initiative provided transparency and controls for the benefit of customer and management, superseding worker-controlled procedures. Knowledge about work processes has gradually shifted from that which workers owned and developed to that which was owned by quality systems. The quality systems described, monitored and assessed the work practices.

During the early and middle restructure years, training activity was preoccupied with procedural knowledge, the use of tools and technical procedures. The later years saw a shift in training interests, particularly in site-based training activity. Interest has now lighted upon the enculturation of values and company identity. Training has become more 'aspirational'[111] around company values and contexts. With the absence of the union voice, social justice, equity and democratisation have fallen off the agenda. They belong to heteroglossic environments. They have been replaced with a concern for performity and refining the 'regulatory gaze' (Seddon and Modra 2000). Training groups and workplace teams develop their own KPIs, evaluate their performance against the targets and devise measures to increase efficiency and profitability. Workplace assessors learn to measure the standardisation of skill application. The Carcare program could be described as an aspirational program in part. It was certainly coloured by these values.

Site-based aspirational training is one strategy, alongside others, designed to narrow the discourses of industry. Induction and recruitment practices have a role to play. Recruitment has become increasingly dominated by psychological methods, which measure attitudinal attributes and qualities such as capacity for creativity, enthusiasm and willingness to participate in company initiatives (Kearns 2001, Schofield 2001). Induction programs in some companies extend to one week as new inductees learn the language and culture of the company. This is the new knowledge they are expected to master. Identity markers are reinforced in many companies with mandatory company uniforms. Employees at most levels of the hierarchy are uniformed, subsuming the individual identity to the corporate. This has been generalised from customer service industries such as banks, retail outlets and airlines to manufacturing companies and technical repair organisations such as telcos and even educational institutions such as TAFE colleges.

At many work sites, technical know-how is no longer the primary qualification that leads to promotion. As one manager stated, 'we can always teach that' (Symex Aust.). Employees can also acquire these skills in external courses. Thinking skills, leadership, creativity, flexibility and willingness to identify with the company are the areas that are most valuable[112]. Operational skills are being progressively mechanised in order to ensure consistency of product and to allow non-trade employees to undertake trade jobs[113]. Hence we have moved from a notion of career, based on skill development, to one framed around attitude, values and generic skills[114] (Schofield 2001). These features are said to be

portable as the individual moves from job to job. The 'portfolio' employee is seen to offer greater potential for high performance. Portfolio employees demonstrate their job suitability through a range of employment experience gathered often under contractual arrangements across many workplaces, often in unrelated jobs. The skill they demonstrate is a high level of adaptability and an ability to recognise systems and to work effectively within them. The job suitability they demonstrate is in generic skills rather than in specialist expertise. 'Situated loyalty'[115] allows employees to transfer the behaviours of loyalty from job to job, applied and retracted with each change, but conditional upon the terms of the contract (Waterhouse et al. 1999). Does this spell the end of career as we have known it?, asks Schofield (2001). According to Pink (2001) it does, as 'free agents' increasingly choose to manage their own work lives and abandon the security and stability of full-time single-company employment.

10.3 The Divide between Site-based and Institution-based Training

These new values around employability and workplace skill have had a dramatic effect upon site-based training and the domain of knowledge. When one compares enterprise training activity and priorities with that of the national training system, the mismatch is stark. The national training system is founded on notions of career, based on skill accumulation assessed through observable competencies. On the other hand, the enterprise interprets competence and competencies as performity. Performity is actualised differently in each enterprise. It is a highly contextualised phenomenon embedded in a unique set of relationships and a community of practice. Competency standards are assumed to be generic. When taught in isolation from the work site, attention is confined to the mechanics of skill and testable knowledge. Enterprises are looking for skills applied within the workplace systems that come with commitment to the company-badged job standards, and fidelity to the organisation's reputation and identity, geared to higher productivity and profitability – 'performity' (Townsend et al. 2002). Framed in this way it is understandable that employers are less interested in formal qualifications offered by institutions (Smith 2000).

Carcare managers did not hope for commitment and fidelity but nor were they interested in generalised industry-level skills. They could not see how the work at their site was

reflected in the industry competencies standards. They did not want to expend energy on competencies they saw as irrelevant even if they contributed to a qualification[116]. Thus, Carcare, under the advice of the union, decided to develop a site-specific job classification, assessment and training system that was built around their own work activity. The starting point was to be Carcare work rather than general industry competencies. How these skills were referenced back to industry competencies and accredited certificates were the trainer's problem.

Carcare management did not put great stock upon technical know-how. They had already made it clear that the skill demand of the work was minimal. To them, the operational expertise of the workers did not register as knowledge, only as tasks to be done. When the ISO accreditation called upon management to conduct a training needs analysis, the emphasis was not on technical skills but on the Carcare systems. The headings were:

> Literacy and numeracy
> Quality Systems and Procedures
> > SOP applications
> > process control
> > non-conformance
> > quality alerts
> > team problem solving
> Production Systems and Procedures
> > SOP applications
> > production control
> > tools and equipment
> > materials handling
> Health and Safety Procedures
> > housekeeping
> > hazardous materials
> > waste disposal
> > fire fighting

This therefore would appear to be the knowledge that management considered most important. Operational skills were subsumed in 'SOP applications' within the production

system. It was systems understanding and compliance that the Carcare management valued.

Most of the above items were included as assessable items within the assessment system devised by Carcare training participants (except for literacy and numeracy) but they were pitched alongside a weighty bulk of technical knowledge and an understanding of the context of production and team interaction. Likewise, within the training program, such items were not taught primarily as items within a system but as activities within a social and political context where systems prevailed. (See Appendix 1)

The units of competence of most of the Training Packages of the National Training Framework, as with that of the earlier industry certificate courses such as the VIC, are constructed around know-how and technical definitions of skill. Each package has compulsory units on teamwork, communication, OH&S and quality, particularly at the lower end of the qualifications hierarchy, but as skills progress, the weight of the credential is heavily towards technical operations within most Training Packages (Haines and Bickmore Brand 2000)[117]. By contrast, the definition of competence in operation within enterprises has moved to focus hard on the measures of workplace excellence (performity) and systems application. The stress is often not on technical skills. Employers expect a specific and individualised reading of their enterprise needs. When training for technical competence, employers expect trainers to integrate workplace values, communities of practice and niche skills. They also expect them to address continuous improvement issues at the same time.

> The principle emphasis is on *training to adapt* to and *manage the changing realities of the workplace*. Thus a medium-sized horticulture company in rural Tasmania expects training to facilitate 'the ability of employees to adapt to change … to build in flexibility where people are committed … hearts and minds stuff - commitment'.
> (authors' emphasis) Mulcahy and James, 1999b: 95

The mode in which employees apply their skills requires them to interpret the industrial culture and to disseminate and accelerate the company values and identity (Virgona et al.

1998). This approach is articulated in the Frontline Management Competencies where supervisors drive and manage the culture down the line.

User Choice policies and the increased capacity for customisation in Packages give more authority to employers to create designer qualifications within the national training system, but institution-based interpretations of industry competencies have held fast to technical definitions rather than affective, dispositional knowledge and Key Competencies. ANTA and the ITABs have given increasing significance to generic skills, but reference to Key Competencies is perfunctory in many Training Packages eg Transport and Distribution. In on-site training however, these skills are interpreted in company specific ways as demanded by managers.

There is still a call for TAFE programs to be more flexible, responsive and relevant[118] (Schofield 2000b, Harris and Simons 1999). Compared to on-site training they have changed little over the years[119]. The disparity between the knowledges offered by the primary training sites has become polarised.

The rise in enterprise-based training is reflected in the popularity of trainer and assessor qualifications among industry employees. One might interpret this to mean that employers are seeking greater dominion over the mechanisms which control standards. Traineeships, which have a large component of site-based training, have a high take-up rate in industry. Many involve little or no attendance at a learning institution although the involvement of an RTO is mandatory to oversee the quality of training provision, even though there may be no formal training per se. The learning effectiveness of this trend is questionable and (Schofield 2000a) recommends that the 'education-free' traineeships be discouraged. However it appears that many companies, particularly larger ones, are looking to provide their own training rather than depending on external assistance[120]. Many employers are moving away from accredited training (Smith 2000). In an attempt to provide more competitive standards, some global companies have established their own competency standards a notch higher than national ones for their industry Schofield (2000a). The shift is therefore away from industry knowledge specialists, offered in institution-based programs[121], to enterprise knowledge specialists available in site-based training[122]. The implication is that professional teaching skills are of secondary value when traded for corporate/enterprise knowledge. At the same time there is concern about the low standards

required to register as an RTO. Schofield (2000a) remarks on the increasing number of industry bodies who are seeking their own industry specific provider registration at a level that is higher than current requirements and that is more competitive with global standards. Some corporations have gone as far as to establish their own learning institutions as is the case at Ford. There is now a Honda and a Coles university, among others. These institutions appear to have the best of both worlds from a corporate perspective.

As industry has increased its dominion in the field, education has changed its boundaries and definitions. A significant casualty has been that of broader educational values to do with community and cultural capital whereby learners develop their capacity as cultural contributors, life long learners and citizens of a democracy (Anderson 2001). Some TAFE industry related programs make a contribution here, but site-based training in particular has no time for such non-essentials.

Carcare was still struggling to define its knowledge interests at the time of our training program. While managers were not quite content with what they were getting, they knew the answers lay within the site-based, needs-based training model already established. They were not convinced by the 'learning organisation' values put forward by WLI. That was not the knowledge they were looking for. Values that relate to learning organisations and theories of human capital did not yet resonate with the prevailing company identity. At the same time there was no interest in handing the training to TAFE particularly in sending trainees off-site. Managers acknowledged that it was valuable to have a training program designed specifically for Carcare but they were unsure what knowledge should make up the content.

This divide between the two modes of industry provision (on-site and off-site training), raises the question of how formal qualifications, issued by the national training system, are regarded by the employers and within the larger community[123]. The Carcare experience demonstrates a low regard for the value of qualifications both in training and in recruitment policy. The managers were surprised to read the lists of qualifications that employees brought with them on joining the company. Their skills and qualifications were reported in my training needs analysis. There was an untapped wealth of forklift drivers, trade skills and even higher education qualifications. However the company chose not to use any of them. One can only speculate why. In the case of Carcare one could surmise that a

contributing factor was that the company was not sufficiently adaptable to absorb unforeseen skills and opportunities.

Within the Australian workforce, completion rates suggest that trainees do not value qualifications as much as the training systems upholds their value. According to NCVER figures, only 55% of enrolled trainees complete Certificate 2 (Robinson 2001). Most use it as an employment lever and are successful in achieving work by entering the workplace on a traineeship (Robinson 2001). However, it appears that, in many cases, neither the new employers nor the trainees consider the learning or the qualification valuable enough to complete. According to the NCVER survey, 'Employer Satisfaction with Vocational Education and Training 1997' (Fairweather 1998), employers strongly supported demonstrated competence on a few identified units of competence rather than the full qualification.

It would seem therefore that workers' knowledge is located differently for employers than for those who design the qualifications. It would also seem that the role of the site-based educator is quite different from that of the college-based educator.

10.4 Educators in the New Knowledge Economy

In many work sites, educators have played a major role in shifting the culture towards global corporate managerialism. Their relationship with learners gives them the capacity to influence the workforce in the use and application of targeted discourses. They have therefore contributed significantly in creating and developing workers' knowledge.

According to Farrell (2001), the educator is instrumental in manoeuvring the company discourse into place, particularly in relation to the power shift from local to global authority. She encapsulates the work of educationalists as that of discourse technologists as understood by Fairclough. The teacher's function is to engineer discourse change, making links between the local knowledge and the global quality discourse in the process of formulating a hybrid that bridges the two. Workplace educators teach the quality discourse and assist operators and supervisors to interpret it and apply it to their own activity. She points out that this is the service that managers of transnational companies are purchasing

from workplace educators. She warns educationalists not to be blindly seduced into this role but to maintain a critical perspective. Teachers have grasped the role of discourse mediator as meaningful and potent. They are motivated to assist learners to access the discourse of power within the workplace and to make meaning in industry. As such, they function as protagonists of the global economy and part of a broader agenda of workplace change and enculturation referred to earlier. Attracted by the significance given to learning and the learning community they are building, critical adult educationalists are enjoying a new moment in the sun in some enterprises. Within the new context, learning takes on many aspects of liberal education. It values the soft skills of communication and thinking. It encourages the exploration of the company identity and problem solving approaches and the mastery of functional skills in a more contextual team based environment. It values learners as active, change proponents within enterprises. We drew upon this discourse in the Carecare program.

10.5 Workers' Knowledge

In the new workplace culture where decisions are devolved, management recognises the significance of the role played by operators. It is imperative that they generalise workplace values to everyday practice and disseminate company values and attitudes throughout the workforce because their activities determine the quality and competitiveness of the company. Managements recognise that the finer points of operational improvement is a province of knowledge that is inaccessible to them. It is the workers' knowledge that will create efficiencies and refine workplace activity to better meet customer needs.

Carecare managers were somewhat ambivalent in their acknowledgment of this corporate vision. They had not progressed in devolving authority in any systematic way and had not developed a customer consciousness within their employees. Managers were uncertain about the value of the exercise when the VIC participants were taken off-site to visit customers. Some managers thought it was irrelevant to their work. Customer satisfaction was a matter of enforcing quality specifications rather than investigating customers' needs and work context. However, managers were interested in capturing the unique nature of Carecare work and customisation activity. They encouraged Toyota inspectors to speak to operators about customer priorities and Toyota values. They wanted operators working in

the Fleet area to understand the responsibility the company faced if they made a serious mistake.

Carecare does not provide a well developed example of new workplace practices; however the new management at the company was attempting to drive a new discourse through the transport (as apart from the processing) side of the business. The new managing director called upon the employees as the generators of knowledge to assist in solving problems and improving business practice. He wrote in the newsletter:

> Our objectives are to provide higher standards of vehicle processing and distribution than was achieved by those who did it before us. If we cannot do this, then our 'reason for being' will diminish.

> The question becomes who is responsible, whose job is it to improve efficiency and practice. I am proud to say the drivers of Melbourne knew the answer.

> At their initiative we have commenced regular meetings to discuss performance obstacles and in view of the pressure on them at the time, this move is unselfish and demonstrates what I suggest is what we all want, a pleasant and secure working environment.
> Newsletter, Aug 1997

The new managing director's message implies new values yet to emerge among the old management in the processing side of the company. It recognises that operators have specialist knowledge and sets up a relationship based on a partnership of different, but essential, expertise. It calls on company commitment as a moral virtue and refers to the mutual advantage that promises a viable future.

Such an approach challenges the knowledge values evident in early examples of VIC training materials developed under the NTRA which required learners to be passive and to express competence by repeating information in test situations. The new culture has a new definition of knowledge and recasts working relationships. It demands different answers to the following questions:

- what knowledge is displayed in the workforce?
- how is it useful?
- who owns it?
- what is its status?
- what role does the educator play in promoting and developing it?

The knowledge of the shop floor is out of reach of management yet integral in achieving a leading edge over competitors. It is the type of knowledge that allows operators to 'push a dent'[124] in place of panel beating a damaged car, saving money and customer time. It is the knowledge to organise the work to create a more efficient flow and to save labour. However such knowledge will not be shared unless workers hold dear the new workplace identity of common purpose with all employees gathered under the banner of a particular enterprise. They are expected to believe that such values are worthy and that they should contribute their knowledge in common cause with management to build a stronger company. This may require a shift from values of worker solidarity to enterprise loyalty; at the very least it requires that employees play the game of enterprise loyalty.

I worked consistently with the training group to establish a belief in themselves and a recognition of the company purpose. While I encouraged open discussion of company methods and management values, we explored the company identity and invited management into the class to talk about it. I assisted participants to recognise their specialist expertise and encouraged them to showcase their knowledge and self-honed enterprise learning in preparation for the presentation session. The group struggled with this new discourse position where they were invited to interact about company identity and business practices. They knew it was alien to the company and unlikely to be valued or welcomed. Under my tutelage, they gave some credence to company values and demonstrated something of their expertise. However the training program was something of an aberration of normal workplace practice both in activity type[125] and in discourse position. My experience exposes the enterprise based teacher as the one who configures the dance of convergence. She is both subject to it and mediator of the conflicting discourses of regulation and avoidance, education and practice, insider and outsider.

Carcare was not ready for a new understanding of workers' knowledge or for notions of a knowledge economy or for workplace learning as we had presented it. However that was not the case with many other companies. For others, the new discourse opened

opportunities for organisations such as WLI to explore new dimensions in knowledge. Discussion of worker knowledge and its embrace of workplace operations has meant that operational knowledge has become a site for analysis and theorising. It was previously seen to be understood best by engineers and management experts. It was to be harnessed and controlled through SOPs. However the new workplace discourse has opened new ways of thinking and talking about processes making them subject to new normative pressures. The field is ambiguous and politically invested. It recasts workers' knowledge within a framework of corporate knowledge. It has the capacity to force educators into ideological alliances where values, attitudes and behaviour, as defined by corporations, provide the learning content and outcomes. Training, along with problem solving groups, are a mechanism to encourage workers to develop and share their knowledge. It is a long way from the role of educators as the objective third party there to teach a pre-ordained curriculum or as educational consultants advising on the educational growth of workplace citizens. Such ambiguities are not unfamiliar to workplace educators.

10.6 A New Construction of Workplace Knowledge

Educators struggle to weigh the significance of these trends. A commonly held belief among more 'left leaning' VET thinkers is that the new workplace culture is designed to bleed the worker of his/her knowledge with no recompense (Seddon & Modra 2000, Sefton 2000). This issue has been debated within WLI for some years. Whereas in the past, knowledge was traded through craft-based unions, in the new industrial climate, EBAs, the restructuring of awards and industrial relations systems have broken down the traditional ownership barriers around knowledge and skill. The new workplace culture has reconstructed the worker and his/her relationship to knowledge and skills. In order to participate in work, the employee is now expected to create new efficiencies, improve labour and machine utilisation and to become involved in continuous improvement as part of the ordinary experience of work whether it be process work or executive work. The new workplace culture views knowledge generation, innovation and the development of intellectual capital as the competitive edge of the new economy.

Traditional Marxists hold that knowledge and skill are the only currency of labour. Workers own it and unions are the vehicle for marketing it. Attempts on the part of management to appropriate it and rename it within the knowledge economy is a form of

industrial theft. However notions of a 'community of practice' (Lave 1990, Gee 1997, Deetz 1995) prompt a new way of framing skills, knowledge and competence. Knowledge and competence are viewed as fluid and negotiated on the job (Mulcahy and James 1998, Ellstrom 1997). Workplace VET has shifted its emphasis from notions of skill and knowledge acquisition to 'knowledge creation and navigation' and from IQ as intelligence to 'broader notions of capability' (Hase, Cairns & Mullock 1998, Cairns 1999, Scollay 2001). Knowledge is particularised by workplace circumstances and customer requirements. Knowledge and skill therefore are as much a part of the job as they are the portable qualities that individuals bring to the job. In this environment, production employees are respected as the money generators of the business and their developmental and performance needs are paramount. Management's responsibility is to service the needs of the workers. In this environment, individuals market their capacity to transfer and apply their skills. Jobs are changing and many are becoming more mechanised but to label them as deskilled is to take a simplistic view (Dench, 1997). They are becoming more information and knowledge based, more enterprise specific, more values based[126] and less dependent upon manual skill.

In these environments, the quality discourse prospers and its global function is enhanced. Jackson (1995) describes a case study where nursing home employees were manoeuvred into surrendering their autonomy and professional standards of care when new globally referenced quality standards were imposed upon them. The program usurped their ability to exercise judgement and respond directly to patient needs. The unspoken intention of the program was to shift control from local to global authorities and to reduce costs. While such examples prevail in many sectors, others present a more positive experience of the knowledge economy where employees are listened to and they have the capacity to influence the way their work is conducted. The new environment need not disqualify workers from input nor need it deprofessionalise their work.

The NTF has spawned a variety of workplace training practices that range from those that are not about learning at all to those that are about shifting the discourse towards global authorities, to those that provide exemplars of educational excellence. In each case it appears that the old paradigm no longer really fits. Within the new economy, industry defined technical skills are no longer the primary trading currency. Skills are developed within enterprise communities each with a unique balance between the generic and the

enterprise specific. The site of knowledge generation and development has shifted from the industry to the enterprise. The transferable element pertains to the individual's capacity for adaptability. This makes for an industrial environment where corporations dominate and individuals are vulnerable.

The consequence for unions is monumental. The basis of their identity and their organising principles have been rendered powerless. This represents perhaps the third major phase in labour organisation, the first being the guild system whereby craft skills were formalised, owned and organised under knowledge and skill divisions; the second being the shift in work venue from craft shops to factory sites giving employers greater control over the organisation of production (Probert 1989). Now, in the third phase, the workforce is organised within enterprise groupings where worker solidarity has been fragmented into individual competitive units, or else workers are self-employed 'free' agents. The capacity for work units to innovate, to read the market and to find better ways to achieve their goals, are the skills that are rewarded and that lead to enterprise prosperity. Trade unions by their very name are bereft of a role. Brain tells the union story as follows:

> The decline in relevance of the union reflected not only the triumph of neo-liberalism; it reflected the rising success of the new knowledge-industry model. The basis of trade unionism has been the ability of workers with particular skills to combine to negotiate wages and conditions with employers who need those skills. But what is to happen now that skills are in constant state of flux and large employers are dissolving into networks of consultancies? In such a world, the role of traditional unions disappears – to be replaced perhaps by bodies which maximise their members' chances of remunerative employment by assisting with upgrading and adapting skills, and generally by assisting with the generation of regional employment opportunities. It will take some time for unions to adapt to the new modes of production.
> Brain, 1999: 216-217

In such a reincarnation, unions can only claim a loose connection with that organisation described by Newman and labour academics.

Leaving aside the union concerns, how do educators achieve a constructive relationship with the new framework of workers' knowledge? The Carcare case study demonstrates that in most cases a mismatched discourse market will result in a marginalised program unable to affect organisational change. As educators, we need to work with the globalised quality discourse to maximise opportunities for our client group. In some companies, the new workplace culture provides opportunities for empowerment, education and dignity as never before. The ANTA Best Practice Project Opening Doors: Enterprise Based Training in Practice (Virgona et al. 1998), is an example of an educational program that gives status to the workplace values and configures skills development within the context of workplace practice and values. Here, the training program invited company participation at all levels, particularly in the identification of skills and knowledge and the assessment of trainees' achievements in keeping with the company identity. It located skills, knowledge and recognition within a team-centred community of practice where knowledge was viewed as the cumulative experience of the group. To succeed in the project, participants had to reflect company values and processes in the team task of building a billy cart.

This was a WLI program that made space for the contradictions inherent in the modern industrial environment. The program was achieved as a result of discussions where a point of convergence was embraced by all parties. It was facilitated primarily by a cultural alignment and a willingness by all parties to progress, neither of which were ever available at Carcare. The WLI program at Burgess provides another example of practical alignments that facilitated successful change oriented training. The project is reported in Waterhouse et al. 2000.

WLI subscribes to the overarching principles of the Marxist political divide. At the same time, its members recognise learning opportunities presented by the global quality culture. The new workplace culture offers opportunity for educational growth and workplace change. It holds sufficient ambiguity to allow for capacity building (Seddon & Modra 2000) and the 'win-win' learning situations referred to by Sefton. We believe we mediate the discourse by providing a critical stance. However in the trade off in the negotiation of customer satisfaction, grey areas darken, often imperceptibly to the players on the ground. The seduction to which Farrell refers is sometimes only recognisable after the event.

At Carcare, there was no risk of seduction. The union guarded the political boundaries[127]. There was a lack of awareness that demonstrated that we were not able to respond strategically to the discourses that surrounded us. This was evident in the market mismatch which we failed to bridge: our incompatible definitions of knowledge and beliefs about its acquisition and application. The company did not recognise my contribution to an evolving quality and aspirational culture although it was considerable. At the same time I did not articulate the discourse sufficiently to convince management of the value of my contribution. The terms with which I discussed my work with management were within an industrial education frame. I failed to recognise quality as the potent dominant discourse which could have been my primary reference point. Rather I sought to demonstrate my professionalism by calling upon the educational discourse. CBT, equal opportunity, literacy and accredited qualifications were the issues of the industrial education community and the union.

These items showed no real integration of the needs as perceived by the managers. Managers were looking for their particular interpretation of performity. This entailed workers' commitment to resolving company crises, thereby putting aside personal priorities for enterprise priorities. Secondly it involved obedience to and respect for authority structures and company systems. The meta-discourse here involved subscription to the role of the worker as unskilled and unqualified to contribute to enterprise knowledge (at least within the processing side of the business). Global references had a role to play as external influences: those forced upon them by parent and outsourcing powers. They were seen as compliance requirements instrumental in allowing profit making activity to proceed but a distraction from the core business endeavour. The activities I initiated through training were viewed similarly. The skills classification and assessment process subscribed to values that placed no priority on profit making as uppermost. It was founded on a mechanism for the recognition and progression of shop floor skills within a negotiated process. Individuals were encouraged to assess themselves and select their own career development. The system recognised experience both within the company and in previous employment environments. The analysis of skills was meticulous and carefully layered in order to recognise stages of skill development. The selection criteria for assessors included 'a capacity to relate in a non-discriminatory way' and 'confidence and respect for other workers' although it also included expertise in departmental skills. Were these the values

that managers had in mind when they signed the training agreement which opened with the sentence:

> The parties to this agreement recognise that in order to increase the productive capacity of Carcare Australia and to achieve industry goals, a commitment to training and skill development is essential.

The union and I, as a VET practitioner, attempted to change the orders of discourse and the discursive practices at Carcare. We attempted to grow a set of values within the company in the belief that these were best practice values and were therefore inherently convincing. However there were at least two ways of viewing our activity. As noted earlier, the final assessment system could be viewed as cumbersome, time consuming and bureaucratic. It could be seen as putting into place a set of demarcations to supersede a process that had been fluid and open ended if haphazard and inconsistent. On the other hand the new system could be valued as just, democratic and supportive of workers. It fitted the values held by the union when drafting the Training Agreement. The commitment of the Training Agreement was to career progression and hence skills recognition through a competency based system. The principles were to equal opportunity in access to training and therefore to language and literacy support. It demanded a fixed process for analysing company and individual needs, job rotation and paid training time and a transparent, systematic and agreed assessment process. It also demanded worker input in design and management of the system.

Although 'signed off' by the management, the ideology represented was far removed from the company's core values. For WLI, knowledge is generated in fostering a participative and democratic industrial environment within the context of skill development. The company focus was squarely on productive performance and meeting mandatory requirements through complying with the systems in place in the organisation. For the union, knowledge was about building and recognising skills for remuneration. As a by-product, the union hoped that training would give workers an understanding of the industrial relations game and how to use it to achieve their collective ends.

Underpinning the union's involvement in training was a belief that the NTRA could deliver for workers. However Ewer argues, from a union perspective, that training failed

the workers because 'VET reinforces the rhetoric of competitiveness and flexibility and does not do what it claims to and that is to empower people with a broader set of skills they can build on' (June 17 1996 PD session). Embedded in Ewer's critique was the sustaining of an industry organised skill definition insulated from individual accountability and competition. The gaze was to be deflected from productivity performance measures and on to accumulated skill. Ewer's demand was consistent with the design of the system at Carcare but it exceeded our capacity to influence the tide of discourse that had already established the direction of things to come. The fact was that human capital measurement had shifted from the collective accumulation of skill to the individual in industry discourse (Marginson 1995).

The Carcare training and assessment system could not stem this tide, but it had introduced a conversation around issues of competitiveness and created a level of empowerment. However that became something of a liability in the face of the old values still sustained in the company and maybe the new ones foreshadowed. In the circumstances, the system did little for the workers' progressive skill recognition. The case study demonstrates how well intentioned programs still failed to disrupt the power balance. Union and training interests remained subservient to employer interests even when employers were somewhat inept.

It appears that a partnership could not be won by stealth. Training in this enterprise was a tool used by industrial parties to achieve certain outcomes. It was impotent on its own. The statements of the new managing director suggested that we could have achieved better educational and cultural outcomes for the worker client group had we persisted at the site. I may have found a point of convergence between our understandings of knowledge had he been sitting at the negotiation table. However the attitude of the company to a partnership with the union held little potential for the future in the new workplace culture emerging at Carcare. We were unwilling and probably unable to change alliances or to trade our ethical position for a more subservient (though maybe more profitable) training role. That would be to succumb to the seduction. But it could be argued that more could have been achieved on the change agenda and that some of the resistance and contradiction could have been resolved had we grasped the management discourse with greater clarity.

Our practice has been established in the belief that the task of the critical educator has always been and will continue to be that of contesting the discourse to protect and promote

the values of critical education. This principle is increasingly challenged in the new workplace. We still need to find convergence, but now our allies are more varied and less discernible. We need to negotiate each one independently and hence we are more susceptible to seduction.

10.7 Conclusion

In many ways this thesis asks the question – what is industry education about? Perhaps more than any other educational stream, industry education is about economics and power, which define the epistemology that is applied. This is particularly true in site-based training where the power brokers are gathered face to face at the point where training delivery and accountability are observed and measured. Industry education therefore finds itself reacting to economic and political pressures rather than facilitating skill and knowledge development anchored to a future vision of society and industrial activity. In the past, educators' attempts to take a leadership role, as in the early years of industry restructuring, were met with resistance and a demand for greater industry control. Carcare managers demonstrated this. Industry education has therefore 'renormed' itself as the servant of industry rather than what it sought to be, the beacon pointing the way.

Butler describes the approach of VET as:

> broad sweeping interventions to define, package, transmit, reproduce and capture 'mercantilized knowledges' (Lyontard 1984:5) through various design technologies, with the blessing and assistance of our 'clever'/catalytic state and its privileged stakeholders.
>
> Butler 1998:11

However the case study and training experience demonstrates that interventions occur only on behalf of industry and with their active support and consolidation effort. Furthermore the state cannot claim a catalytic role. If the call of the state is not echoed by industry, it will dissipate into the wind. Educators therefore need to listen for the links in the discourse that connect industry values with education values where both can flourish. The educators' role is therefore a polemical one particularly in site-based education where there are no

institutional protagonists to drive the policy. It is the way industry education is framed and the discourses that colour it that stake out its significance, its direction and definition. The discourses are constantly contested and will always be unstable. The new call for life long learning and generic skills is now seeking inclusion but it will not gather force unless industry reads it as value adding. At the moment industry appears to be showing interest on condition that it can control the definitions (Curtis & McKenzie 2002). Points of convergence appear to be coalescing, reshaping the boundaries of industry education yet again.

WLI is an organisation that is less interested in selling education to industry than in creating change that is committed to political and social outcomes. However it is clear that the politics of the moment will decide what education will deliver to industry. WLI deliberates about each industry phase to find where the points of convergence can be wrought. It is work that inevitably involves negotiating contradictions, compromise and constant reflection to preserve our ethical integrity. We measure the balance between our willingness to play a role in shaping the direction of the discourse and our desire to make a contribution to the betterment of the lives of workers. Sometimes, with the clarity of hindsight, we realise that perhaps both have been sadly minimal. Nevertheless, such lessons fuel critical reflective practice and a commitment to maintain the struggle.

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[110] Dispositional knowledge refers to values, beliefs and attitudes.

[111] 'Aspirational' training refers to training covering a broad range of competencies such as communication, leadership, quality systems and other company systems when taught within a framework of company values.

[112] ABS statistics (1996) compare fields of training offered on-house with those offered externally. Areas such as general supervision, personal development and sales, office and personal services are strongly favoured as in-house training rather than external.

[113] A well known automotive company accomplishes very complex jobs such as changing the drive side from left to right on imported cars without employing any trades people. With the assistance of jigs and templates the complexities become a set of routine and repetitive tasks.

[114] In one company where I have been working, an employee was promoted to a position as an engineer although he had no formal engineering qualifications.

[115] A term coined by Balzary in a presentation to the _Union@Work_ conference (2001). The term refers to the conditional loyalty offered by workers where they expect only short term employment.

[116] This attitude is corroborated by many employers as reported in research conducted by Townsend et al. NCVER (2002)

[117] The trend appears to be changing as some new and revised Packages such as those in automotive manufacturing and RS&R centre around process and systems management and teamwork.

[118] Frustration with TAFE appears to undercut many of the policies of the NTRA. The tension is transparent in the Review of Industry Training Boards (1993). ITBs are constructed as having superior wisdom in interpreting curriculum and industry needs – a role that was previously the preserve of TAFE. It begs the question; had TAFE been so unresponsive and so intractable to change as to warrant an overlord?

[119] Harris and Simons's study (1999) of on- and off-job training indicate an apprentices' work world that has changed considerably but a TAFE world where the training response has been unable to provide an innovative alternative to keep pace with industry.

[120] 1996 figures, the most current available through ABS show that two thirds of training is conducted in-house maybe with the assistance of an external provider, in contrast to courses conducted for the general population (ABS, 1996).

[121] This is contradicted by the fact that many newer teachers employed by RTOs are qualified with the Certificate 4 or Diploma in Workplace Assessor and Trainer which many industrialists have regarded as inadequate according to Schofield (2000).

[122] While the rhetoric is stronger than the reality, provision has been made for apprentices and trainees (on traineeships) to have all their training conducted in industry rather than in a mix of TAFE and work. The new model is slowly achieving acceptance, however apprenticeships in traditional trades eg automotive trades have hardly registered the new possibilities and most are offered with the same mix of on and off site training as before.

[123] This question is being investigated at some level by research sponsored by NCVER. WLI is researching under the topic heading 'The Use and Value of Qualifications to Employers' The data is endorsing the observation that the two modes are in fact quite separate.

[124] Carcare lingua franca for repairing slight panel damage perfected by Carcare operators which avoids more extensive repair work.

[125] Company training had never before involved open discussion between management and shop floor nor had it involved presentations to management and company guests.

[126] Payne (2000) points out the dangerous absurdity where a smile or tone of voice has been described as a skill.

[127] Carcare is a remnant of an old discourse. The experience is instructive for its links with the new and our attempts to grapple with both.

APPENDIX 1   CARCARE TRAINING PROGRAM SUMMARY

Initial 80 Hours

Topic	*Activity*
Topic 1: The Company (approx 12 hours)	
• Who's who • How are decisions made? (eg Business IR) • Where are we as a company and where are we going?	Case study questions – group seeks solutions using company resources • Organisational tree • Company bulletins, minutes and information sheets • Management and union speakers to attend class
Topic 2: Carcare Customers (approx 12 hours)	
• Who are they • How are they secured • What do they want – how do they determine quality?	• Speakers from customer companies invited to address class • Sales and customer service personnel to discuss their work – reading customer needs • Class to identify customer values • Visit to car dealer
Topic 3: Safety (approx 12 hours)	
• How safe is our workplace? • How safe are our workplace practices? • How can we improve on safety? • What mechanisms are in place to improve safety? • Activating the mechanisms	How are decisions made about safety in the workplace? • Hazard identification and assessment • Safety problem solving – groups to identify a safety problem and activate the process to solve it
Topic 4: How do we get things done? (approx 16 hours)	
• How is production organised? • Follow the production process from wharf to customer • Where are the glitches? • How does the quality system work? • How can we improve production?	Overview of the process from CRSs perspective • Visit to wharf to conduct first survey • Development of flow diagram • Identification of problem areas • Basic problem solving • Working the quality system • Flying Starship Simulation
Topic 5: Waste Management (approx 12 hours)	
• How wasteful are we – how do we measure it? • What is the cost of improvement? • Proposing solutions	• Conduct waste audit • Assessing the cost of waste versus the cost of improvement • Basic problem solving
Topic 6: Research and Assessment – Group Presentations (approx 12 preparation, 4 hours presentation)	
Individuals or small groups pose questions, research and prepare presentation on area of interest	• Collect and collate information • Prepare charts • Prepare overheads • Prepare presentation

APPENDIX 2   EMPLOYEE INDUCTION: PROGRAM DETAILS

Carcare Australia Pty Limited (Incorporated in Victoria)			
Program: Employee Induction – Program details	Section 6.2	Rev 1	Page 1 of 14

Program Details for module TMI as follows:

Presentation Time: 10 minutes

Materials/Stationery/Training Aids Required:

    (a)   Before Presentation: Transparency, White board. 'Employee Relations' manual, organisational chart (national and branch)

(b)   During Presentation: Projector; Relevant Sections of the 'Employee Relations' Manual

Module Objectives: To introduce Carcare functions activities and organisation to a new employee

Summary of Technique/Method used in instruction:
    Lecture, discussion, 'question and answer' sessions

Methods used to verify achievement of objective:
    Questionnaire

Special/Other support or follow up requirements:
    By supervisor after the introduction session

Prepared by:	Approved by:	Date Issued:	Issue No:
signature	signature	8 February, 1994	One

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