

UNION PARTICIPATION IN COOKIE LAND

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"Be careful, the centers can be hot," warned our host.

"Hum! That is warm!" replied the visitor who thought twice before taking another fig nutten off a computer integrated tray line.

Today, crackers, cookies and bakery goods have gone high tech as a labor management group from Peru and Ecuador and I discovered during a ten day visit to Nabisco, U.S.A. Four labor and two management representatives from Nabisco subsidiaries had the opportunity to see how the Bakery, Confectionery & Tobacco Workers International Union and Nabisco tackle the questions of technology, collective bargaining and building a productive partnership. Would this experience provide clues on how management and the unions at Field and Royal Peru and Nabisco Royal of Ecuador could make their businesses more competitive and a better place to work?

Quickly, we discovered that we had to reinterpret the words we use. Technology is not just new machines or computers but a more extended and integrated concept:

"Technology is best defined as how things are done. Technology is therefore ideas, skills and knowledge embodied in machines and production systems." (1)

The second part of our mission was to find out how labor and management cooperate. How do workers and their union participate with management in solving problems and improving production processes around commonly agreed to goals. "The Bakery, Confectionery and Tobacco Workers Union and Nabisco Inc. mutually agree and pledge themselves to pursue a partnership which promotes cooperation and the mutual gain of the company and its employees," states the opening paragraph of the BC&T and Nabisco Participating Work Agreement.

The third challenge was to think how the visiting Nabisco management and unions could employ the concepts we observed in a useful way. At present the white and blue collar unions in Peru are negotiating their first collective bargaining agreement with the new Nabisco management. In the past the relationship between the old Field management and production workers was tense and difficult. A contract contained only economic and benefit related clauses, nothing else. There was no grievance procedure, safety and health clauses or other provisions which limited what management could do

to the work force. The proposal for 1995 - 96 from the production workers union continued this concentration on economic questions. Yet, as a result of the visit, the union's Secretary General announced that worker participation would be put forward once the contract was negotiated. While this is a new concept to most workers, they acknowledge that the old relationship will not guarantee success for their company and jobs for the future.

This raises a question for the company. How much control of the planning, education and production processes is it willing to share with workers and their unions? Field will install a new oven and begin new product lines in 1996. A training program for some operators has already begun at management's initiative. Recently, the General Manager told a joint union management meeting in Lima that training was a number one priority for the coming technological changes the company wishes to introduce. Doctor Lira also stressed that everything possible would be done to insure that permanent workers kept their employment, but not necessarily the same job, at Nabisco.

NABISCO HEADQUARTERS

"This agreement specifically promotes the continued development of a labor management partnership fostered by openness, trust and understanding resulting in a working environment which recognizes the full worth and dignity of all employees and facilitates their individual growth and accomplishments toward the continued needs for effective and efficient bakery operations."

Under the still dominant management system of scientific management or Taylorism, the BC&T and Nabisco Participating Work Agreement would not only be unthinkable but heresy. In his 1911 publication "Principles of Scientific Management", Frederick Winslow Taylor describes how management gathers and classifies all the traditional knowledge of the factory floor and uses this to develop the best ways of doing the different jobs. Management develops a science for establishing each element of a job and then "scientifically selects and then trains, teaches and develops the workmen". Engineers and supervisors "cooperate" with the workers to see that the job is carried out as it was designed by the planning department. "There is an almost equal division of the work and the responsibility between the management and workers." Management thinks, plans and evaluates while the workman executes the job in the assigned way. "It is through enforced standardization of methods, enforced adoption of the best

implements and working conditions and enforced cooperation that this faster work can be assured." (2)

Vice President For Human Resources John Butler described how a 1969 strike against Nabisco gave one of its most serious competitors, Keebler, the opportunity to double its business. Then in the 1980s when Nabisco was playing hard ball with its unions, it discovered that its employees were not prepared for the automated equipment the company was purchasing or the reorganization of work around teams. The employees needed to understand the business better if they were to become fully productive. This is especially true today as Nabisco wants to raise its gross sales from 3.5 billion dollars to 6 billion in the year 2000.

John's counterpart from the union Gene McDonald, Secretary Treasurer of BC&T, explained that the 6,500 BC&T affiliated workers at Nabisco had accepted a four year collective bargaining agreement in 1992 in pursuit of a more stable relationship. The agreement signed by the BC&T national leadership and Nabisco headquarters gives workers in 11 plants the same wages and benefits. One clause states that "the Headquarters Steering Committee will take a broader role in reviewing and discussing long term field initiatives that benefit both the Union and the Company". Another refers to successorship. In the event of the sale or transfer by the present owners, the conditions of transfer will include an obligation by the new owner to respect the bargaining agreement and recognize the BC&T as "the bargaining representative within the existing unit". This last clause is extremely important because Nabisco went through two major changes in ownership in 1984 and 1989. Recently the shareholders of RJR voted against selling off its subsidiary Nabisco.

The BC&T represents 120,000 bakery workers in the United States and Canada. Another 120,000 work in non-union plants where wages and benefits can be as low as 50% of what BC&T members make. A strike or a dip in productivity due to tense labor management relations can result in the loss of market share by Nabisco to the non-union companies. One year ago the union and management decided to reformulate their strategy for making Nabisco a high performance company in part because their relationship was experiencing too many ups and downs. The participating agreement was not functioning to the liking of either party.

The other force driving union policy is that jobs change and change drastically as technology develops. Will workers become "an extension of their technology" or will "the

technology become an extension of their brain"? (3) The BC&T wants the new technological driven work, built around computers and software, to remain on the shop floor within the job responsibilities of union members. Because the new computer aided technology has the ability to either upgrade or downgrade the responsibilities and skill levels needed by the work force, the union has a life and death stake in the concepts behind and the technological design adopted by the company.

In late 1994 international union and local leaders and management from headquarters and individual plants meet for several days to reshape their participatory goals and procedures. Both sides reaffirmed their desire to make the partnership work and agreed upon the need of a nationally focused vision document to help guide all future endeavors. The working draft looks to "a manufacturing environment which places the employee at the center of the work system".

The draft document envisions front line workers to be empowered and "to participate in making decisions for improving quality, safety, and productivity". This requires that workers be given "the opportunity to learn how to handle the impact of new and existing technologies and processes". Pay for knowledge and multiple skilling are a natural outcome of this worker empowerment and are being studied at both the national and local levels. In turn this requires acceptance of lifetime learning by the worker, union and management. Because changes at work are so rapid, what a worker knows today will be outdated tomorrow unless he or she is constantly keeping up with the new and revised production and organizational processes.

One of the groups most radically affected by this work redesign is supervisory staff. "Management and the Union seek to create a flat, non-authoritarian, cross-functional structure and a work group based culture that is mutually supportive of Company and Union goals. The role of supervisor will become that of a coach and facilitator providing resources to employee work groups responsible for their own performance." This redesigned role flies in the face of Taylor's functional management which "consists in so dividing the work of management that each man from the Assistant Superintendent down should have as few functions as possible to perform. If practicable the work of each man in management should be confined to the performance of a single leading function." (4) Gang, speed, inspection and repair bosses are no longer needed because the autonomous work team carries out their functions in an integrated way. In fact, the number of supervisors goes well below 50% of the old number in this new work system. Therefore, supervisors can be the worst enemy of this change unless offered

training in the new skills needed and/or alternative work.

Yet as much as workers want to participate in a job where they improve productivity, they are worried about the number of jobs which will remain when production per worker goes up. Gene was very frank to say that the new technology trends to lower the workforce needed in manufacturing. The Nabisco-BC&T Vision Document addresses this fear:

"As much as businesses conditions will allow, no employee will involuntarily lose their employment with Nabisco due to partnership-related work redesign. We will also seek to establish core employment levels and new methods to smooth the ups and down of production cycles. Current bargaining unit work will be preserved and may expand as employees take on new duties."

To make this promise reality, Nabisco is bringing back work it has customarily contracted out. "Automation allows us to have small crew lines. So if we bring in work by co-packers (contractors), we can keep the same number of workers," remarked a management representative.

Should unions oppose new technology? No says the BC&T. "Look at Sunshine. It has not brought in the new technology. It is on the verge of bankruptcy. This does not preserve jobs," observed BC&T's Secretary Treasurer.

"The issue is not whether we [in the labor movement] cooperate with management. The issue is whether, and how, we are involved in management. Only if we are involved can we fight for corporate strategies that serve our goals of worker empowerment and union building while contributing to company competitiveness." (5)

COMPUTERS, SOFTWARE AND ORGANIZATIONAL MENTALITY

Computer-aided manufacturing (CAM) and computer-integrated manufacturing (CIM), or programmable automation (PA), are just some of the newer concepts trade unionists must understand. These developments in manufacturing are part of the an informational revolution which the well known author of futurist books Alvin Toffler calls the Third Wave. He and other observers feel that some countries are presently entering a new era based on the generation and utilization of information, an era just as

revolutionary as was the industrial revolution of the last 300 years.

"Programmable automation (PA), or computer-integrated manufacturing (CIM) technology, refers to a class of innovations in which computer software and microelectronic control devices are used to direct and monitor such ordinary production operations as machining, welding, testing and inspecting. The special character which distinguishes PA from previous generations of productivity-enhancing technology is that the instructions controlling the operations of the machines are incorporated into software rather than hardware. As a result, it is a very flexible innovation that can be used to reduce the costs of large-volume and small batch production even in the smallest of companies, in a wide variety of industries." (6)

The hardware is a machine, the computer which operates at faster and faster speeds with ever increasing memory and command power delivered from microscopic chips made of silicon. The brain of the hardware is software which "is the language of our technical informational society; it communicates rules and commands that direct computers to use data to solve problems". (7)

This introduction of machine and process flexibility creates what Morton Bahr, President of the Communications Workers of America, calls indirect work. "If an employer wants to get higher productivity out of technological improvement, workers must be trained to perform more indirect work, because machines, robots and computers do most of the direct work today.

Indirect work is different from anything most of our members have experienced in the past. It involves monitoring the production process, solving problems on the job, and making improvements, and most of us aren't prepared for this new role." (8)

In the 1980s many manufacturers thought that new machines alone would make them more productive and competitive. General Motors is estimated to have wasted approximately 20% of its 40 billion dollar investment (8 billion) in technology over a 10 year period starting in the 1980s. "After a \$650-million investment at one G.M. facility, there was no increase in productivity and an actual increase in defect rates." (9)

More and more research in the United States, Europe and Japan is showing that technology by itself is not the answer to increasing productivity. It is how we manage

technology which seems to be the key. Some organizational structures and mentalities are more capable of using the new technology than others because the atmosphere and organization encourage widespread sharing of important information and the rapid development of ideas by individuals and work groups.

A 1994 U. S. Department of Labor study says that getting the most from new technology "typically depends more on how technology is used and less on the type or brand of technology chosen... Existing research and case studies point to three key technological practices as important to achieving success with new technologies:

1. Training workers to use technology,
2. giving workers control of technology, and
3. involving workers in technology design and implementation decisions." (10)

PLANT VISITS: FAIR LAWN AND RICHMOND

In the Fairlawn and Richmond bakeries we observed how the high performance strategy outlined in the partnership agreement was being implemented at the plant level and on the shop floor. It is here where Nabisco and its workers will gain the competitive edge through quality products at a competitive price when the customer wants them.

Nabisco headquarters judges its bakeries by a standard set of criteria:

- Quality
- Customer Service
- Productivity/Costs
- Capital Utilization
- Developing People
- Safety
- Technology
- Planning

Fair Lawn ranks well in the evaluation. It is estimating a record 170 million pounds of product for 1995. It has added new product lines and, after initially laying off workers, has offered employment to some 240 new workers. Headquarters has approved the investment in a tenth oven in a space set aside for this purpose 37 years ago.

There is a plant level labor management committee to oversee the implementation of the national participation agreement in Fair Lawn. The partnership has set in motion a training and education program. The first group of 117 employees out of a 1,200 total work force have finished a special 18 month training program at a local community college.

Multiskilling is an important concern at the plant. From 1988 to 1994 the union and management redesigned job classifications to take into consideration the changing job requirements and the need for workers with multiple skills. Union members were consulted on the types of skills they thought they needed. Because multiskilling is a new experience and continually being revised due to technological change, it will be a major subject of discussion between the local union and plant management in the 1996 contract negotiations.

However as the local union leader pointed out, there are limits to how many skills a person can learn to do well. As a general rule at Fair Lawn, a worker does well in three major and one minor skills. Pushing multiskilling to an extreme would not guarantee the best use of people's skills and could lower productivity.

To determine the competitive capabilities of Fair Lawn the labor management committee studies the competition and measures its internal capabilities against the standards, quality and productivity of other companies both national and international. This is "benchmarking- A goal-setting technique for improving quality by identifying a standard of excellence and measuring performance against that standard". (11)

Management, workers and the union have designed a macro plan for change. Some 550 volunteers out of a 1,200 man work force (46%) have participated in creating redesign proposals for the different departments and shops. These macro and micro redesign proposals must have the approval of the plant labor management steering committee and its counterpart on the national level. No parts of the plan can violate the national collective bargaining agreement or assume decision making powers exclusively designated to the national bargaining process.

Implementation of this massive organizational change takes time and patience. It implies an acceptance of a new definition of work. "So before we move into the new roles our reorganization calls for, we will need an extensive education process for all. This was an important lesson we learned in multiskilling."

The Richmond bakery has a huge area (100 acres), concentrates on high volume lines and extended runs, proposes to export and is determined to be the best bakery of the Nabisco group. It is recognized for its training and education center.

Like Fair Lawn the Richmond plant and BC&T Local 358 have begun a major redesign of the production process as a result of the 1994 Participating Work Agreement. This rethinking of the business is guided by five core elements which were inspired by policies of the AFL-CIO. (12)

"In striving toward the achievement of high performance workplaces, the Union and Company are committed to maximizing company and employee profitability through the attainment of 5 core patternship elements:

- *Empowerment
- *Work Redesign
- *Changing Roles & Responsibilities
- *Employment Security
- *Rewards"

"We view our labor management situation as a competitive advantage. We are taking a new look at how we operate the facility. We are using jointly agreed upon consultants and involve all in the process. We want to extend decision making to the shop floor within the limits of workers' knowledge and abilities," commented the Human Resources Manager. Gains from incremental improvements are producing smaller and smaller results. Therefore, the Richmond Nabisco facility has begun a major redesign process which could take up to 18 months to implement.

A process for redesign has been defined but not the final outcome. This is not the common approach to redesign where a design team puts together the project and then has to sell it to workers and management. Multifunctional groups will gather information and ideas through some 20 to 30 meetings with large groups of employees. Consultants, subcommittees and any other procedures for tackling problems will be employed.

In the discussion on new machines and work systems, past plant experience will be helpful. There was a plan to introduce more new technology than took place. The plan was scaled back because the needs of the proposed machines and the peoples'

skills were out of balance. The question is not just a technology, but how do you use it efficiently (training) and how do you make sure that the company has the right people on the spot to iron out all the bugs and problems.

The importance of their Technology and Training Center can not be over emphasized in this process. Workers can train individually on multimedia software in a growing number of areas from safety and health to the requirements of special tasks. They can improve their written, mathematical and blue print reading skills, including preparation for the high school equivalency exam. Some need to study English. Others get help in pursuing their interests in technical schools and in university studies. On-the-job training on the shop floor also figures prominently in the program.

The Center incorporates new training as it is needed. All members of the plant can offer suggestions on how to improve its quality and effectiveness. The proliferation of new computer programs allows for increased training opportunities. And, something which is not common, the Center offers workers and their elected union leaders the chance to study the business and further develop their abilities in problem solving and creative thinking.

BC&T HEADQUARTERS

We were received at union headquarters by Secretary Treasurer Gene McDonald and Ray Scannell, Director of Research and Special projects. During the day we also conversed with BC&T's President, Frank Hurt, its Executive Vice President, David Durkee and the Executive Director of the joint union/employer managed pension fund. When we had last seen Gene, he was going back into a meeting with Nabisco management to iron out problems, including the question of what is a fair days work.

For all the cooperation and participation in Nabisco, there are important differences in the constituencies (workers as opposed to stock holders and managers) which labor and management represent. Gene repeatedly stressed the need for a strong union or management would be tempted to ignore the workers and impose its conditions unilaterally. Strong unions make management "walk the talk" about real worker and union involvement.

"Although joint programs stress the responsibility of the individual in performance,

the unions can use them to challenge the systematic conditions that shape and thwart the individual's ability to contribute. While the perspective that U. S. industry and business is failing because of lazy, uncaring or ignorant workers has been widespread, poor management practices and performance shape the environments in which workers operate. Managements find it easier to focus on employee performance issues than systematic changes that demand change of them. The union must ensure that its initiatives address these management-controlled conditions." (Maureen Sheahan, UAW) (13)

The BC&T is over 100 years old and represents 165,000 workers, of which 15,000 are located in Canada. This is the reason why BC&T is considered an international union. It has 168 local unions ranging from as few as 50 workers to 5-6 thousand. It has a dues structure where each member pays approximately \$25 per month. Eight dollars goes to the headquarter's operation. Part of this money pays dues to the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), which unites all but one important union in one national, trade union structure.

Union officer come up through the ranks. "All from the industry." Gene was a local union official before being elected to international office. "We are elected or hired as staff because of our knowledge and experience in the industry."

Collective bargaining with Nabisco takes place every three or four years and is a two tiered process. First there are negotiations at the 11 plants where BC&T represents the workers. Unresolved local issues go the national negotiations where economic and big picture issues are addressed. This structure insures that all workers get the same wages, benefits and major job security protection whether in a free bargaining or right-to-work state. The general issues addressed by these two processes are listed below:

LOCAL UNION ISSUES

Membership
Check-off
Continuous Service
Seniority
Relief and Lunch Periods
Normal Workday and Workweek

NATIONAL AGREEMENT ISSUES

Wages
Health Care Benefits
Pension

Leave & Absence	401 (K) Plan
Jury Duty	
Vacation Pay	Headquarters Steering Committee
Temporary Classifications	
Safety	Special Situations Successorship
(Work Redesign Agreements)	(Participating Work Agreement)

The Participating Work Agreement and national Vision Document are also the responsibility of the headquarters staff. But once these are agreed to, local unions can negotiate similar accords to take into consideration the specific conditions of each plant.

Job security has become a much more important issue than it was 15 years ago which is why it is prominently addressed in the Vision Document. Nabisco has no temporary or part time workers at lower rates of pay. 95% of its workforce is permanent. A most important issue for the union is to negotiate levels of core employment (permanent workers) and that of seasonal workers.

The union recognizes that the company has primary responsibility for running the business, but it can challenge any change in manning (reducing a team from 5 to 3 for example). If no agreement with the company is forthcoming, it can then invoke status quo or no changes until the issue has been decided by an arbitrator. Very few companies will accept this status quo clause in their union contracts.

BC&T has not had a problem with workers refusing training. In those few cases where older workers do not find the new skills based system to their liking, they will be offered incentives to retire. The Union does not accept that they be just swept out the door after so many years of service in favor of Nabisco.

In a survey 9 years ago, the BC&T membership indicated to their Union that the areas of technology/work redesign, building leadership and youth participation in unions were of great importance to them. As a result the Union has a Union Technology Committee and is active in selling the model of a high performance workplace to managements. As scientific management comes under increasing attack as being

outdated, the BC&T observes two different directions company take: the anti-worker low road based on lowering labor costs or, in a lesser number of cases, the high road to good wages and working conditions and high quality and productive work.

LOW ROAD

HIGH ROAD

Competitive Capacity	Rentless cost cutting, esp. in labor costs, safety and health, and obligations to the local community. Training costs are kept to a minimum. There is a tendency to recreate sweat shop conditions.	Workers increase work, problem solving and team participation skills. Importance of training and education and balancing levels of technology to the knowledge of the workforce. Costs are reduced because of increased productivity, better quality and product flexibility.
Role of Workers	Workers give individual knowledge about jobs to the employer which uses this information to increase work loads and productivity while reducing the work force. New technology tends to deskill work. FEAR.	"Quality Cost Reduction". Workers and the union work with management, sharing their knowledge and increasing quality in exchange for greater job security, better salaries and benefits, etc. Workers manage the new technology and create more productive and interesting jobs.
Role of Unions	Changes are imposed by management. Labor relations are adversarial. Much anti-unionism. Unions are seen as an enemy.	This partnership is a negotiated process. The union is accepted by management as part of the solution.
Examples of Companies	FRITO LAY	NABISCO and CAMPBELL TAGGART.

The BC&T has been working on technological issues since 1987 because technology can either deskill jobs and replace workers or increase their participation, productivity and job satisfaction. This has led the BC&T to carry out comparative studies between the way European and American firms design and implement new technology.

The American approach is "machine centered, directed toward labor savings, not labor enhancements. Thus design efforts traditionally have paid little or no attention to the benefit of user involvement in technological design." (14)

European companies use American software such as "Windows" but design their machinery very differently. David Durkee explained how at a trade show in 1994, a

major U. S. machinery company emphasized the labor saving advantages of its products while German manufacturers pointed out how their machines would integrate with workers employing user friendly software. The Germans also guaranteed that they could train a worker in the proper use of the machinery in one to two weeks. Europeans think that machinery should be the responsibility of those on the shop floor closest to the production process and not, as many Americans, that control should be concentrated in the hands of a few technicians and management representatives.

Once again the question of management control and rights rears its head. Will workers become simple button pushers and gage readers or users of the new technology to assure the highest quality and productivity on the shop floor? The BC&T and other unions are fighting to keep the new "indirect" work in the hands of workers and empower them to participate in all aspects of their business. Fortunately, some companies like Nabisco are willing to experiment in this direction.

Edward Lawler of the Graduate School of Business Administration of the University of Southern California told a forum of Colombian businessmen that specific jobs are gone in the modern enterprise. Employees need to perform tasks which require multiple technical knowledge in servicing, repairing and programming machines and to learn thinking and social skills related to working in teams. Remuneration will change from a job based system where the worker gets paid for the type of job independent of how well he or she does the job to one based on how well people perform needed skills.

Yet who will determine what an additional skill is worth in the pay envelop? In the case of Nabisco this value is determined in negotiations between national union officers and Nabisco headquarters. Once agreed to, the rate is applied to all plants equally. This would be impossible in a non-union setting and very difficult in a company with a weak union.

THE ORGANIZING MODEL OF UNIONISM

As we observed with corporations, not all union structures are well equipped or have that flexibility for learning to take on the new challenges described above. Rigidities in decision making and limited participation by the membership hold them back.

There is a growing debate in the U. S. labor movement about the effectiveness of the service model of unionism and whether unions put enough emphasis on member participation and organizing. The events of the October 1995, AFL-CIO Convention show that there is a tremendous frustration with the state of organized labor today and that the desire to experiment with change is growing rapidly.

Part of this debate revolves around two general types of union models. The dominant model today emphasizes services to the members by a professional staff and union leadership. The second looks back to the pre-1950s and especially, the massive organizing of the 1930s in an effort to tackle the new problems of labor within a world economy. What seems to be developing is some hybrid of the two in which professional skills become focused on providing an empowered union membership the specific knowledge and skills needed to confront the issues of technology and a changing economy. The one sure thing this debate requires is a disposition by all workers to look at the issues in new ways and be willing to experiment with new strategies and tactics.

"The service model of unionism ... is the predominant form of unionism in the United States today. At its basis is the assumption that unions are professional organizations which employ a staff or full-time officers to solve problems for union members. Under this model of unionism, members purchase a service that will protect them against the arbitrary actions of the employer and that will deliver higher wages and benefits on a regular basis."

The model relies on extensive contracts and elaborate grievance procedure and arbitration jurisprudence. Today, experience is demonstrating that it is not a flexible way of confronting the challenges of the world economy and has become highly vulnerable to the escalating anti-unionism of most American firms.

"The organizing model is a form of unionism which does not solve problems for people; rather, it finds ways of getting union members involved in solving the problems. The key component of the organizing model is its emphasis on mobilization of the rank and file to do the work of the union. The organizing model was the major form of unionism ... prior to the 1950s and almost all major unions were founded on its principles..."

The organizing model is more effective than the service model because people

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