

**THE PERSISTENCE OF THE INTERNAL
LABOUR MARKET IN CHANGING
CIRCUMSTANCES: THE BRITISH FILM
PRODUCTION INDUSTRY DURING AND
AFTER THE CLOSED SHOP**

**THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY BY
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Abstract

Internal labour market theory states that the administrative rules and customs that restrict access and regulate the deployment of labour in craft markets will eventually be converted by trade unions into formal collective agreements, preferably enforced by closed shops. However there have been few opportunities to examine what happens when that process is reversed and the protection of those two institutions are removed.

The demise of the closed shop in Britain is generally attributed to Mrs Thatcher's Conservative governments whose successive Employment Acts were intended to remove obstacles to the free functioning of the labour market. However, this research will argue, using the example of the British film production industry, that regardless of the political action it is unlikely that the pre-entry closed shop would have survived the technical and social changes of the 1980s. It also shows that many of the constraining practices and principles associated with the industry's internal labour market persist.

By tracing the origins of organised labour in the early British film production industry, this research considers whether that closed shop, created by unusual war-time circumstances, merely endorsed the informal rules and customs that characterised an established closed craft community. It will demonstrate that continuity has been possible because internal labour market practices ensure that on-the-job training is only available to those likely to perpetuate the established working practices and demarcation. Furthermore, management are complicit because the efficiencies in screening and training means that a compatible trained workforce is always available.

For contrast, it will be shown that in television and video production, seemingly similar sectors, an unrestricted, competitive labour market has been created by the demise of the closed shop, the workers' inability to create a substitute informal network, the unbridled influence of capital and government efforts to assist access to employment.

Declaration

This is to verify that the work presented in this doctoral thesis and submitted for examination is mine alone.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Iain Reid". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Iain Reid

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Chapter 1 THE UNIQUE CONTINUITY OF THE BRITISH FILM INDUSTRY

The stimulus for this research was the anecdotal evidence¹ that little had changed in film production work practices since the demise of the closed shop. Those who worked in the industry in the post-war years until the late 1980s remember a rigidly enforced, pre-entry closed shop operated by the film sector unions to ensure adherence to prescribed crewing levels and remuneration agreements. Yet union potency extended far beyond the basic contracts because it maintained, some would say imposed, a gamut of peripheral working practices that often had little to do with the functional requirements of film production: how many menu options should be provided at meal breaks²; the class of aircraft seats acceptable for foreign travel; the provision of “wash up” time; and clear demarcation between the various grades and unions.

Twenty-five years on, those influential production unions of the 1970s and 1980s are no longer extant and their successor has only a nominal presence. The National Association of Theatrical, Television and Kine Employees (NATKE) and the Association of Cinematographic, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT), plus the BBC’s Association of Broadcasting Staff (ABS), were amalgamated in two stages between February 1989 and January 1991 to form the Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union (BECTU). But BECTU has never managed to assume the central and influential role achieved by its predecessors. As the official BECTU website admits, these have not been happy years for the union:

Hostile government legislation, technological and structural changes in the industries in which they organised, sustained attacks by

¹ Evidence collected in unstructured interviews when exploring the prevalence of royalty payment systems in the film industry.

² My first experience of a film production industrial dispute was when the caterer was accused of putting margarine and not butter on the breakfast croissants.

employers on the employment, contractual status, pay and conditions of service of union members have left BECTU with a paid-up membership (25,000 at December 1999) significantly smaller than the 60,000 or so members collectively claimed by ABS, ACTT and ATTKE in the early 1980s.

(<http://www.bectu.org.uk/about/history/hist05.html> 12 Sept 2004)

What arouses curiosity, which subsequent chapters will explore, is that while these “sustained attacks” may have shattered the cohesiveness between the union and the workforce (and the BECTU statement does not acknowledge its own failure to organise within the new technologies), the immediate, cursory impression is that employment practices for the majority of established film production crew have carried on much as before. The decline in union influence was not marked by any cataclysmic change such as was imposed on the printers at Wapping (Littlejohn 1992; Greenslade 2003:476), on the miners in 1984 (Goodman 1985:195) or on the film workers’ close cousins, the television workers, at TV-am in 1987 (Maksymiwiw 1990:27). While there have been some adjustments (and some skills and trades have disappeared) the majority of processes and skills of film production remain unchanged - while access to the film industry remains as mysterious as ever. The remuneration of feature film production workers may have slipped a little from the peaks that they achieved when the closed shop operated, but this remains a sector where the primary influences on employment and reward will be always the demands of a global market and exchange rate fluctuations. Despite those factors, it is a sector where 65% of workers can earn in excess of £1,000 per week and 21% more than £1,800 per week (2002 figures from UK Film Council 2005:107). However, it will also be shown that while the employment conditions of film production workers have been largely preserved, those of other seemingly similar workers, in what is now termed the audio-visual industry³, have been steadily eroded.

³ It is not easy to establish when the term “audio-visual” was first used. It is not defined in the Oxford English dictionary of 1970, nor is it used in the Institute of Manpower study into “Television Film and Video Industry Employment Patterns and Needs” (Varlaam et al 1990). However, the term was used in 1992 to define the scope of the newly-established Skillset’s activities: “Audio visual, in this instance, includes radio, television, film, video and interactive media” (Skillset submission to the DCMS/DTI 2002)

Before identifying the question, it is necessary to clearly define the sectors under consideration and the first section will explain the position of the film production workforce (approximately 9,700 workers) in the much larger audio-visual workforce (approximately 145,000 workers) and cite the preliminary indications that they have remained a distinctive and autonomous body. Section 1.2 will demonstrate why film production workers are possibly unique amongst the closed shop occupations of the 1960s and 1970s in maintaining their distinctive trades. It will be shown that the continuity of film trades can be proven since 1938 (and probably much earlier) through to the present day and the third section will explain the relationship and hierarchy of those trades and the grading within departments. Section 1.4 will set out the research questions and section 1.5 the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Defining the film production workforce⁴

Although the detailed examination of the differences in the sectors will be explained in later chapters, it is essential to understand at the outset the identity of the film production workforce that is the focus of this research. The general term ‘the film industry’ comprises three distinctive activities, production, distribution and exhibition, and these evolved as separate activities before the First World War. The pioneers of film made and exhibited their own films, but as the demand for film grew the activities separated and eventually the fairground and music hall exhibitors began to bid competitively for the most popular films. Because British producers could not keep up with demand, or even then match the Hollywood product, a system of distribution arose that soon to become “the most crucial element of film supply”, brokering the deals and organising the supply chain (Street 1997:5). As will be demonstrated in Chapter 7, there would be no production industry without the financial sponsorship of the distributors and the commercial activities of the exhibitors which create consumer demand, however

⁴ This section, intended to set the scope of the sector under consideration, includes many statements which will be justified in later chapters

this research will concentrate on the working practices and relationships of those who actually make film: the feature film production workforce.

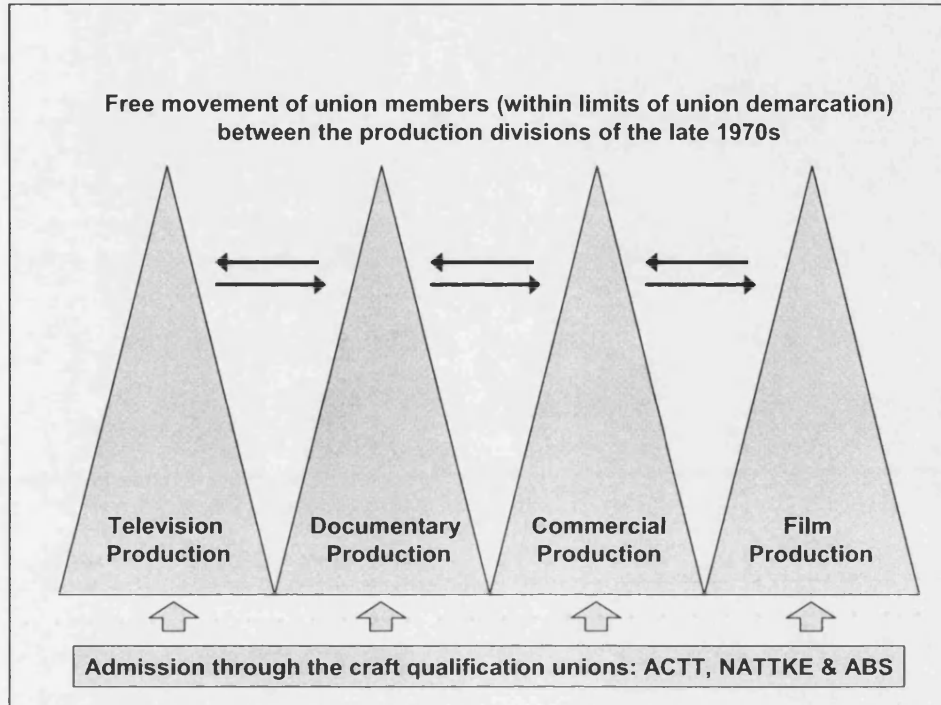
Between the late 1950s and the late 1980s, it would have been reasonable to associate the feature film production workforce with three others: terrestrial television (BBC and ITV1); commercials; and documentaries. Some overlap existed between the workforces because feature film crew also worked on high-end television and, from the 1970s onwards, commercials. Similarly, from the 1970s, documentary production became synonymous with television as community cinema societies and school use of film moved to video⁵ - but those documentary producers could equally adapt to the growing market for corporate or training productions. Overall, the whole production industry was small, contained within recognisable boundaries and the barrier of union admission kept new entrants to a trickle. Production employment was invariably arranged in accordance with the appropriate union agreement and indeed it was the authority of those agreements that effectively maintained the clear distinctions between the four major sectors. As already indicated, it is estimated that the total employment of the industry in 1979 was 60,000 employees (including the laboratory technicians).

An accurate matrix of how that workforce of the late 1970s was distributed is now difficult to reconstruct because they were members of different, now defunct, unions whose records are no longer available. And, even if the figures were available, they would provide little true indication because many members were freelance workers who could move seamlessly between divisions as demand required; perhaps starting a week working dailies on a feature or television production, and ending that week working on a commercial. The only restriction to their employment within the industry was inter-union demarcation - the ACTT controlling production and technical staff, and NATKE controlling art department and construction. (The BBC was less accessible because it had its own union agreements with the ABS but, as will be shown, inter-union transfers were

⁵ By the early 1980s, even the famous Shell Film Unit had abandoned film and switched to video production.

possible.) The structure of the late 1970s workforce is shown schematically in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Organisation of the production workforce in the 1970s



Furthermore, within each workforce there existed a natural hierarchy amongst production crew which was based upon qualities that even the uninitiated would have recognised: in features between a Hammer Horror and *Chariots of Fire*; in television between one of the formulaic sit-coms and *Brideshead Revisited*; in commercials between the rough and ready promotion of Allied Carpets and the sophistication of *Cinzano* promoted by Joan Collins and Leonard Rossiter. Anyone within the industry would have been instantly able to assess the status, experience and probably (given the unions' comprehensive control of rates, terms and conditions) the income of a co-worker by the nature of his or her work, and the productions on which they crewed.

However, from the early 1980s, the emergence of video technology, followed soon after by computer graphics, meant that there was rapid growth in new audio-visual sectors which, by the early 21st century, were numerically far larger than the feature film production sector (a fuller explanation appears in Chapter 8). That the latter

remained a separate and distinctive workforce was acknowledged in the introduction to the more general audio-visual workforce survey of 2003 to explain why those working in film had been excluded from that first survey:

Previous experience has established that the modus operandi of the film industry is sufficiently different from the rest of the audio-visual industries to merit a completely different methodology. (Skillset 2003c:15)

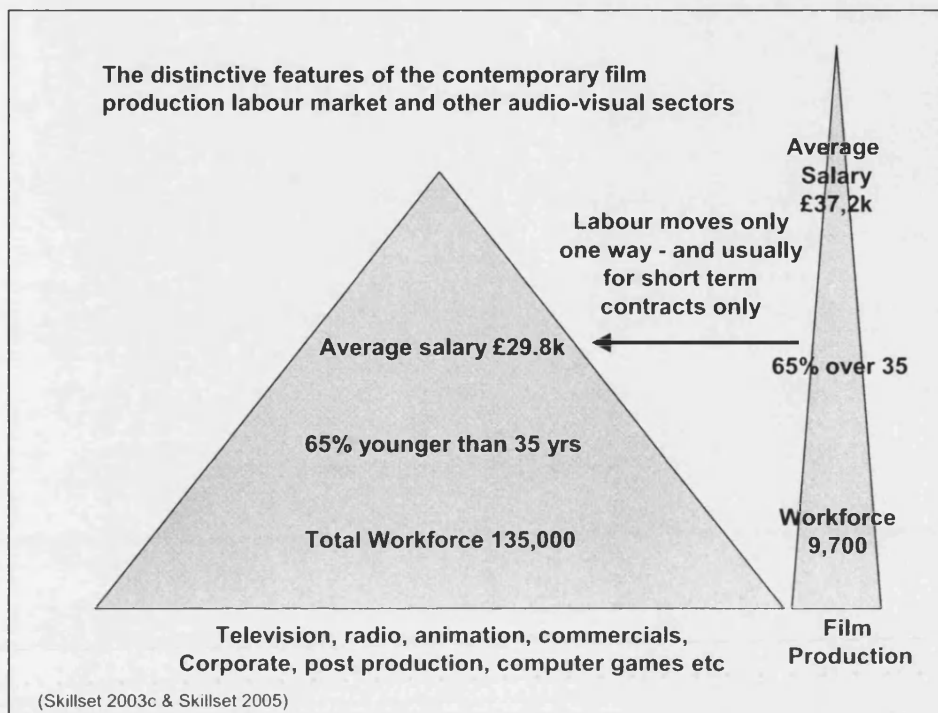
That different methodology was undertaken in 2004 and focussed on British individuals who, in 2002, had worked on productions that lasted eighty minutes or longer and that had a budget in excess of £½m⁶ (Skillset 2005:19), i.e. those films invariably made in the “classic” mode, utilising the crewing structure, production methods and invariably 35mm equipment, that was largely unchanged since the 1930s or 1940s. That 2005 survey estimated that there were approximately 9,700 employed in the feature film sector (Skillset 2005:19) and, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 7, they are very distinct in character, work practices and procedures from those employed in the other audio-visual sectors.

Thus, by 2005, the total industry encompassed two separate labour markets that possessed very different characteristics. Those different characteristics and the reason for those differences will be examined in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, but it will also be shown that workers in the primary labour market⁷ (feature film production) can move effortlessly between the two labour markets, often by taking short term contracts (days or weeks) in the wider audio-visual sectors to occupy time between feature productions. However, movement by those employed in the other, secondary, audio-visual labour markets into film production is invariably blocked by their lack of the necessary experience, contacts or appropriate skills. The contemporary production industry workforce can thus be schematically illustrated by Figure 2. (The characteristics of the two labour markets, shown in this figure to illustrate the differences, are explored more fully in later chapters)

⁶ £½m was a low figure but it allowed the survey to include 109 productions. Notable UK productions of 2002 included *Cold Mountain* (£48m), *Die Another Day* (£62m), *Calendar Girls* (£8m), and *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (£11½) (BFI 2004)

⁷ The use of Doeringer & Piore’s (1971) terminology, primary and secondary, is useful to differentiate the labour markets, although it has to be accepted that not all their criteria (e.g. workers in the secondary sector “engage more freely in petty theft and pilferage”(1971:166)) are implied.

Figure 2: The two labour markets of the contemporary production industry, 2005



This transformation and expansion of the production industry has been effected in a period of some fifteen years, although, as will be shown in Chapter 6, the causes and roots of the transformation extend back at least a further ten years. However, what is significant is that the film production workforce survived the ending of the closed shop and the subsequent deregulation as a recognisable sector and that its workforce is still employed in the same grades and departments that pre-date the closed shop. In this, as the next section shows, the film production sector may be unique.

1.2 The unique continuity of film industry trades

"There is a British film industry." (Department of Culture, Media & Sport Committee Report 2003:3)

In its Annual Report of 2005, the UK Film Council reported that the British film and video industry was employing 46% more workers than it had been in 1994,

whereas the increase in the national workforce had been only 11% (UK Film Council 2005:102) thus demonstrating that the film and video industry survives in Britain. That the industry survives and flourishes goes some way in justifying the film trades as a suitable longitudinal case study but it is useful to demonstrate why the other more conspicuous pre-entry, craft qualification closed shops (McCarthy 1964:45) of the 1960s and 1970s such as print, textiles, shipbuilding and dock labour are not also suitable vehicles for study. In many respects those industries may appear more dynamic and colourful examples with far more established pedigrees - but they share the common failing that they are sectors that have changed so radically in the last twenty years that any longitudinal study is meaningless, whereas the majority of film industry trades have survived into the twenty-first century. In addition, the hierarchy of skills and grades within film remain largely unchanged, so that realistic comparisons can be made between the nature of employment that existed before the demise of the closed shop and the practices that operated twenty years later in 2005.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the fate of many craft-related closed shops was inevitably bound to the fate of their host industries. The reasons for the decline of those industries are varied, but an examination of the list of McCarthy's "Comprehensively Closed Trades" of 1964 (Table 1) demonstrates that the majority are unsuitable for any longitudinal study because most of these occupational groups are defunct, most conspicuously the coal miners who in the early 1960s topped McCarthy's list with 600,000 miners. By March 2006 the changed requirements for power, and a disastrous confrontation with the Thatcher government in 1984 (Goodman 1985), meant that the British coal industry employed just 5,903 workers. (www.coal.gov.uk/services 2 Jun 06)

Table 1: The "comprehensively closed trades" of the 1960s

	Employees
Coal miners	600,000
Craftsmen and other manual workers in printing	250,000
Process workers in iron & steel	160,000
Craftsmen and other manual workers in commercial shipyards	150,000
Sailors and other deckhands	70,000
Dockers in commercial dockyards	68,000
Bus workers & staff employed by LT	50,000
Craftsmen in cotton & other textiles	45,000
Scottish bakers	14,000
Workers in London's wholesale markets	10,000
Film production workers	7,000
Hatters	4,000
Draughtsmen in commercial shipyards	4,000
Teleprinters and proof readers	5,000
Musicians	25,000
Trade Union and Labour Party Officers and staff	8,000
TOTAL	1,470,000

(McCarthy 1964:31)

Similarly, another of McCarthy's categories within the labour supply shop (1964:38), the 45,000 textile workers, are long diluted and the cotton industry's tapesizers, warp dressers and chain beamers and their associated practices and complex interactions which Turner had described in such detail (1962) have gone.⁸ By the late 1970s, the London Docks, which had been the largest and most developed centre of the labour pool shop (McCarthy 1964:42), were closed and the docks themselves were in the hands of a property development corporation (LDDC 1982).

The traditional, time-serving craft apprenticeships which had supplied the craftsmen for engineering and shipbuilding had been in decline for some decades before the 1970s (Williams 1957; Connelly 1960; Donovan 1968; Vickerstaff

⁸ The General Union of Loom Overlookers still recorded 286 members in 2004 but no new loom workers were being trained (Telephone conversation with the General Secretary GULO)

2003) but were virtually eliminated by the collapse of those industries in the 1970s and 1980s, thereby destroying the accepted means of entry to the engineering craft unions and the natural progression on which the closed shop depended. In 1978, British shipyards had delivered 1.3 million tonnes of shipping, but by 1988 this had been reduced to a mere 32,000 tonnes (Economist 1988) and with a consequent decline in the employment and association of shipyard craftsmen, manual workers and draughtsmen.⁹

The promotion veto shops (McCarthy 1964:49), which McCarthy had illustrated with the 145,000 workers in iron and steel, were in an industry which reached a peak of 165,000 employees in 1978. However, by 2002 British Steel had been merged into Corus, which employed only 25,400 UK employees in an industry transformed by technology (Blyton & Turnbull 2004:217 & 218).

In 1964, the printing trades had been cited as a prime example of the labour supply shop, but there is evidence (Martin 1981; Dunn & Gennard 1984) that the practices and skills which marked the demarcation between the trades were already being eroded by new technology long before Warrington (1983) and Wapping (1986). Thus, while the printing trades may have seemed all powerful until the late 1970s, and while anecdotes of the old Fleet Street remain a maxim for closed shop practices, the methods within the industry have since changed so radically that one would have to search long and hard in 2005 to locate a working compositor, a lithographic printer, a linotype operator or any remnant of that formerly much valued employment. With the demise of these historic trades went too the hierarchies and the training and apprenticeship systems which had been so well delineated by their separate unions; GGA, SOGAT, GATSOPA and SLADE.¹⁰

There remain some sectors where the nature of employment remains distinctive and recognisable, but invariably the sector has changed so radically that it is difficult to

⁹ There have been some signs of a revival in shipbuilding. In 2003, the GMB reported that in the 1990s there had been a mere few hundred people working in shipbuilding on the Tyne, but now this had risen to about 5,000 (Economist 1 Nov 2003). However, it can be assumed that the nature and demarcation of contemporary work is very different to that of the 1970s.

¹⁰ So diluted has the print industry become that it can no longer sustain one union. By 1991, all the former print unions had merged into the Graphical, Paper and Media Union (GPMU) which was then itself merged into Amicus in 2004.

make comparisons of entry and promotion over the twenty year period. For example, sailors and deckhands of the merchant navy still perform the same functions. However, the move of British ships to flags of convenience and the replacement of British crew with cheaper third world nationals continued after Dunn & Gennard's (1984) study which had shown that by 1982 the National Union of Seamen's closed shop membership had already been reduced from McCarthy's 70,000 to 45,000 (1984:28). The trend continued throughout the 1980s as unions and employers alike attempted to contend with competition from international sub-standard or subsidised shipping until, by the late 1990s, there were fewer than 9,000 British ratings employed worldwide (DoT 1998). A union report of June 2007, highlighted that the average age of seagoing officers had risen in twenty-five years from 34 to 43.5 years and that in the same period the number of cadets in training had fallen from 4,259 to 1,050 (Caulius 2007:4). Thus, this is "a diminishing and ageing pool" (DoT 1998) attracting few new entrants and therefore the sector is probably unsuitable for comparison or longitudinal study.

Thus, among all these radically changed industries and trades, the film industry stands probably unique in being a sector where technological advances, although significant, have never changed the nature of employment¹¹. Many of the current grades and trades (e.g. property masters, loaders, focus pullers, assistant directors, scenic artistes and script continuity) can be traced back to the earliest days of studio production¹² and yet survive through to the twenty first century in a recognisable form.

The consistency of some specific film trades is shown in Table 2 which compares the 1938 list used in the Gater Report (1949) with those of the ACTT rate card of 1978, the Relph Report of 2002 (which tried to demonstrate that crew demarcation could be diluted) and the Skillset Feature Film Production Workforce Survey of 2005.

¹¹ Musicians too remain a distinctive and recognisable category of employment and, unusually, have a greater union membership in 2006 (30,000) than McCarthy's 1964 estimate.

¹² Low describes how the crafts had started to emerge before WWI when there was growing specialisation in lighting, photography, set construction, painting and assistant directors. In particular, she cites a 1913 reference to "a man ... employed solely to watch the costumes of the artistes" (Low 1949:122)

Table 2: The continuity of film trades 1938 - 2005

	Gater Report rates for 1938	ACTT Rate card 1978	Relph Report 2002	Skillset Report 2005
Art Director	✓	✓	✓	✓
Boilerman	✓	a	-	-
Boom Operator	✓	✓	✓	✓
Camera Operator	✓	✓	-	✓
Carpenter	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continuity	✓	✓	✓	✓
Draughtsman	✓	✓	-	✓
Editor	✓	✓	✓	✓
Electrician Maintenance	✓	a	✓	✓
Electrician Studio lighting	✓	a	✓	✓
First Assistant Director	✓	✓	✓	✓
First Assistant Editor	✓	✓	✓	✓
Floor electrician	✓	a	✓	✓
Follow Focus	✓	✓	✓	✓
General labourer	✓	a		✓
Hairdresser	✓	a	-	✓
Library Editor	✓	✓	-	b
Maintenance Engineer Sound	✓	✓	-	✓
Make-up artist	✓	a	✓	✓
Painter	✓	a	✓	✓
Plasterer	✓	a	✓	✓
Plumber	✓	a	✓	✓
Powerhouse Assistant	✓	a	-	-
Property Maker	✓	a	-	✓
Propertyman	✓	a	✓	✓
Sound Camera Operator	✓	✓	-	✓
Sound Recordist	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stage Hand	✓	✓	✓	✓
Still Cameraman	✓	✓	-	✓
Unit Production Manager	✓	✓	✓	✓

a. These were extant grades in the 1970s but not ACTT grades, being either EETPU or □ATTKE.

b. The functions of Library Editor now undertaken by the Researcher/Archive grade.

Sources: Gater Report (1949:25); ACTT (FTT June 1978); Relph Report (2002); Skillset (2005:139-141)

It should be noted that the Gater Report, on which Table 2 is based, was selective and concentrated on the production processes - those studio skills necessary to put images 'into the camera'. In the contemporary film industry there are over one hundred and seventy separate skills or grades (listed at Appendix 1) that may be utilised at various stages in the production of a feature film, however, the majority

of these grades would still be immediately recognised by anyone who had worked in the industry in the 1930s.

However, some grades have disappeared. Two relatively unskilled grades that have been overtaken by technical advances were the Boilerman and the Powerhouse Assistant, necessary only until the late 1980s when the greater capacity of the national grid and the improved sensitivity of film stock meant that studio power plants were no longer required.

Elsewhere, the major change of skills, if not in job titles, has been in post-production where digital technology has revolutionised, and invariably replaced, the old processes of film cutting, editing and post-production which had been honed and perfected in the first century of the industry. Digital editing still requires good record-keeping and a good visual memory, but the skills and dexterity necessary to organise a film bin, to physically cut film, Sellotape new joins, file the removed frames and then adjust the separate sound track by the same number of frames, are as redundant as hot metal setting in the print industry. Although the post-production workforce and the production workforce were very distinct bodies, it will be shown that the change in the composition of the former was a major factor in the ending of the closed shop restrictions amongst the latter.

Thus the majority of trades remain, and it is this continuity of the skills and grading within film production, and the transition from a craft qualification, pre-entry closed shop to the contemporary free labour market, that makes employment within the sector an ideal case study for the examination of the demise of the closed shop and what persists of those employment practices.

1.3 The hierarchy of employment in film production

“...it is true to say that, particularly in the production parts of the industry where freelancing is so high, at 90%, that the little black book and who you know is very important” (DCMS 2003:Q23)

The structure of a film crew is hierarchical, almost military, in its organisation.¹³ In command is either the director or the producer, and primacy, since the demise of the big studios when the producers, representing capital, always dominated, probably depends on who has initiated the project. If a director has written or developed a script he or she will then seek out a producer willing to take the project forward by raising the funds. Alternatively, if a producer has bought the rights to a book, developed the script and raised some funds, then they will appoint an appropriate director to turn the script into a visual reality.¹⁴ Thus, it is probable that one will have identified and recruited the other¹⁵ - and that may have some effect on their relationship - but the result must be a resilient partnership in which the director will be responsible for the visual result while the producer is responsible for the financial and administrative entity. Thus each has very different functions but must recognise and draw on the strength, experience and guidance of the other:

Film is a very odd medium because the director has a great deal of power in the process, and sometimes there can be a massive rush of blood to the head in the process, so there can be occasions where it can be combative when it doesn't need to be. What we seek is a real collaboration between producer, writer and director – between the filmmakers. (Tim Bevan, producer, cited by de Winter 2006:98)

The production organisation will be returned to later, but its role is to provide the director with all that he needs to realise the production within the agreed budgetary parameters. On the film set the director has sole authority and operates through an organisational structure which has changed little in the last seventy years, shown in a simplified form at Figure 3.

¹³ The term “sir” is still used, in context and without embarrassment, in day to day conversation of a film set.

¹⁴ It may be advantageous for the producer to have a named director and noteworthy cast when approaching potential financiers.

¹⁵ But not invariably. Some director / producer partnerships become very long standing: James Ivory and Ismail Merchant being one of the most notable of recent times; Alan Marshall and Alan Parker made eight films together in the 1980s.

The director's immediate team consists of the script supervisor, who will provide the timings and reminders of the requirements of each scene, a personal assistant to arrange all administrative needs and a team of assistant directors and floor runners. The latter will communicate the director's intentions, requirements and comments to the remainder of the crew: ensuring that the next scenes are being prepared; that cast emerge from make-up to arrive at the set at appropriate time; controlling the silence required when the camera is turning; releasing crew members and cast when their task for that day is completed - and many other tasks which ensure the efficient running of the studio floor.

Over/.....

Figure 3: Hierarchy of the crew available to a director on a feature film set.

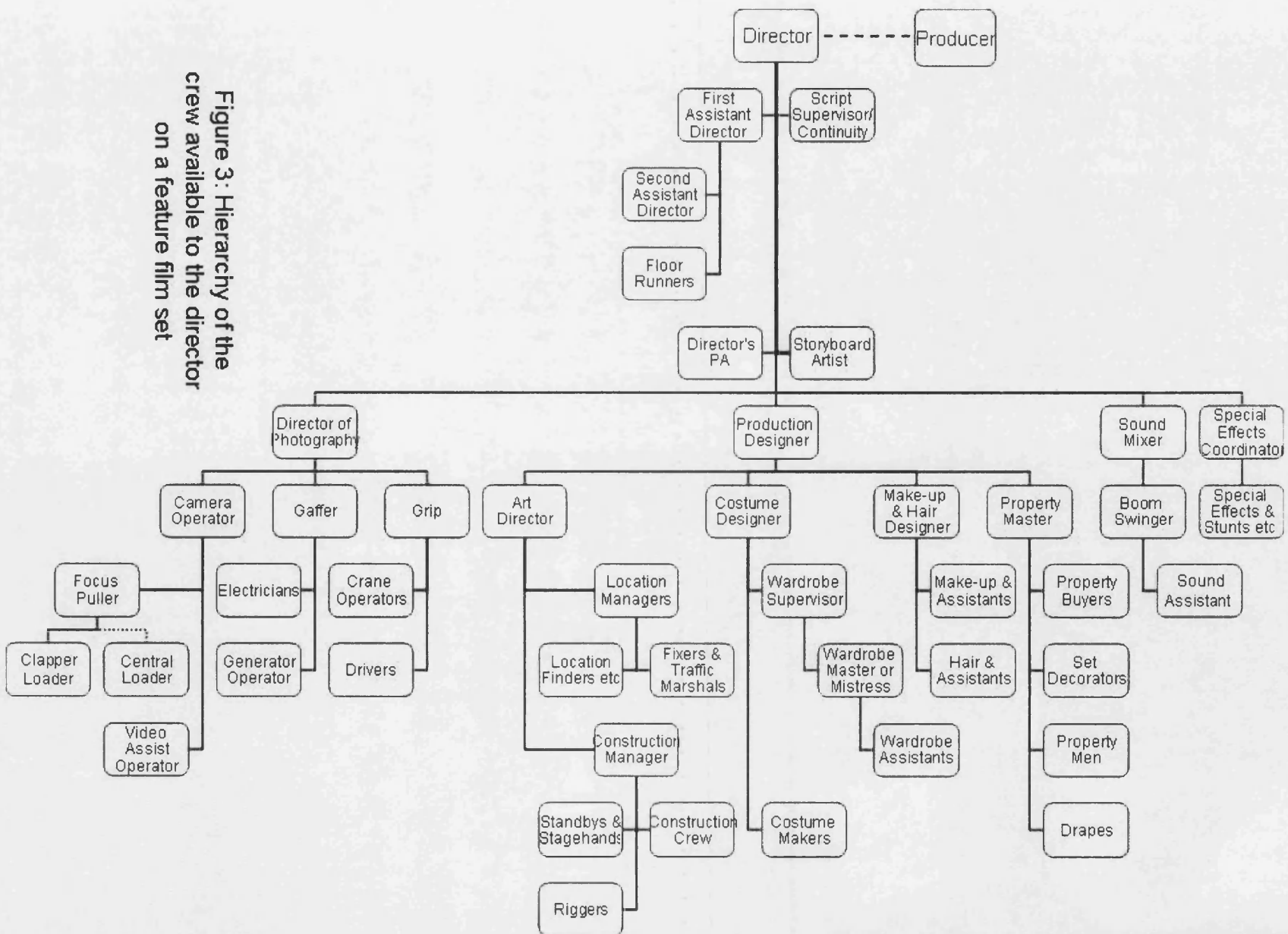


Figure 3: Hierarchy of the crew available to the director on a feature film set

The director's departmental support will be provided through the Heads of Department (HoDs) who will all have been selected and appointed by the director i.e. the director of photography, the production designer, and the heads of sound, special effects and any other specialist departments required. They in turn will have assembled their known and preferred teams. Thus the director of photography (DoP), who is responsible to the director for the 'look and feel' of the film, will have selected the camera operator, who frames each shot and operates the camera, the focus puller and the gaffer who will organise the electricians lighting the sets. The DoP may also have selected the grip, who will assemble the dolly carrying the camera and move it when tracking movements are required, but selection may have been delegated to the operator with whom the grip works most closely. Similarly, the selection of the clapper loader, who will load the film magazines onto the camera, record all film used and mark the film (with a board) for sound and image as each take commences, may have been delegated to the focus puller. A central loader loads the film stock into the magazines if several cameras are being used – only one board being needed for all cameras.

The same hierarchical selection process is effected in each department. Thus the property master will nominate all the prop men¹⁶, the sound mixer will name the boom swinger and sound assistant, the art director will select the location managers and the set construction manager – each of whom will then recommend their own subordinates. However, once nominated, all film workers must negotiate their own individual contract with the production department who are the legal employers and responsible for the budget. As will be shown in Chapter 7, there are certain conventions of pay parity, and differentiation, between grades which are invariably observed, but the producer's role is to negotiate an acceptable deal with each individual worker, knowing that if the deal is rejected by a nominated crew member then the departmental head, unwilling to work without their preferred team, may also decline the project – an outcome which the producer will have to justify to the director.

¹⁶ They are invariably male, although the Skillset list makes an attempt to remove gender by describing them as "props" (see Appendix 1).

Because each feature film is a separate project and the crew freelance, a new crew will be assembled for each specific production. The Skillset 2002 survey showed that the average number of productions undertaken by film workers in the last two years was four, and nearly 70% had worked between six and thirty weeks on their last production (2005:37&38), although those figures include wide variations because while production, art departments and construction are involved in the lengthy development and pre-production stages, other departments, such as electrical, camera and sound, are only employed for the shorter, more intensive periods of production. Thirty-five percent of production staff continue to be involved in the post-production phase too (2005:44).

Whatever the department, the project characteristics of production means that as a crew assemble they are expected to function immediately in their assigned role without any formal statement of their tasks and responsibilities. Some of the characteristics which make the skills so specific and their acquisition so challenging will be described in Chapter 7, but even those in relatively minor trades are critical to the successful progress of a production:

The standby crew is so called because their job is to 'stand by' the camera until needed. There is a carpenter, a painter, a plasterer, a rigger and a stage hand. Although each has his craft, they work as a team. They build camera rigs, platforms and towers out of scaffolding, tubing and wood. The painter touches up where the paint is scratched. On location a piece of white rock might catch the sun and cause a glare. The painter will spray it with black washable paint. They do a hundred and one jobs. (Boorman 1985:165)

Thus, the challenge for all crew members is that every day of every production is a very public assessment of their skill and proficiency on which their future employment may depend: "You're only as good as your last job" was the title Blair (2001) accurately used for her analysis of the film labour market process. Engaged in such highly pressured and creative tasks, departmental heads and crew members are reluctant to oversee an unknown who may prove to be a passenger, or worse a liability and therefore they invariably select those that they have worked with before and who they know can perform the necessary tasks: 88% of assistant directors, 82% of camera crew and 80% of costume workers were directly approached for their last production (Skillset 2005:86).

The role of the production department is to ensure that the director has as many resources as are practical to deliver the production. Having raised the funds, negotiated the crew contracts, arranged the locations, booked the studios, organised the transport and all the other requirements necessary for a six to ten week shoot, the producer hands over control of the studio floor to the director. Thereafter, the production department will be unobtrusive but ubiquitous: ensuring that the correct crew members are available each day; fixing the time and place of the call; ensuring that the correct transport and equipment is on hand; that the meals are offered when required; and delivering the schedules and checklists on which the whole crew depend. However, besides these 'service' functions, the production department are also the book keepers and auditors – constantly monitoring the budget and schedule because it is they who will be ultimately responsible for any overruns. Thus they constantly shadow the production, watching, helping, advising – and monitoring:

I'm around – I'll get to the set if there are problems.... I will know – because I can't get rid of my old line producer habits – exactly what is going on every hour. I'll know what shot they're on, whether they're behind [schedule], how the day went et cetera. (Eric Fellner, producer cited by de Winter 2006:98)

A film unit in production is thus a complex organisation that functions because of tacit conventions with few formal controls or documentation. The focus of activity may appear to be the creative elements: the director; the cameraman; the camera crew; make-up; wardrobe; sound crew and set dressers. But supporting them are tiers of support workers, each making their own invaluable contribution: the stand-bys; electricians; prop men; costume makers; wig fitters; central loaders; video assist; floor runners; production runners; catering; drivers and riggers. All must work seamlessly to ensure continuous working with minimum downtime, each knowing what the next scene will require and ensuring that their part is ready. The whole process will be monitored, regulated and overseen by the production department who have budgetary and scheduling responsibilities – but this entire team, perhaps sixty to one hundred and fifty workers, will have been assembled

without the involvement of any formal human resource management, there will be no formal job specifications and often no written contracts.

1.4 The research questions

“...the questions that were both interesting and capable of investigation became apparent only gradually” (Brown 1993:2)

If it is accepted that there has been a continuity of the skills and trades of the film production sector and if it can be shown that that this group have largely managed to maintain their elite status and distinctive characteristics then this is especially noteworthy because the assumption during the post-war period, demonstrated by several government initiated investigations into the film industry (Gater 1949; CIR 1973; MMC 1989), was that many abnormal and unnecessary work practices were only maintained through union intransigence and the coercion of the closed shop. The continuity of so many of those practices, fifteen years after the closed shop ceased to be legal, would seem to make that assumption questionable.

Therefore, this thesis will attempt to address one primary research question:

How has the workers' control of employment practices and demarcation been perpetuated in the contemporary feature film production industry despite the removal of the enforcement implicit in the closed shop?

But in order to answer that question, it is necessary to first address several subsidiary questions:

1. How do workers obtain and exercise power in the workplace?
- 2: How were employment practices and associations first established in the film production sector?
- 3: How did the closed shop affect employment practices?
- 4: What factors contributed to the demise of the ACTT closed shop?
- 5: What has been the outcome in those audio-visual sectors where established employment practices have not been maintained?
- 6: What has been the role of the employers?

The answers to these questions could have significance in a number of different areas. First, if a viable British film industry is to be perpetuated, then the industry must be continually drawing in new members and new talent. It will be seen in subsequent chapters that there have been a number of government initiatives and considerable investment made to ensure the supply of technically qualified trainees because “the British film industry is extremely important to the country, both culturally and economically” (DCMS 2003:8). However, it will also be shown that, for many, those technical skills are insufficient to gain access to the film sector because they lack the necessary social characteristics, financial backing or contacts for entry. Determining how employment really functions in the production industry could help policy-makers, first to develop a more realistic preparation for trainees and, second, to understand the concerns and interests of the existing practitioners.

Second, although it is not intended to deal with the professions in this thesis, there are many parallels between the restrictions operated by the closed shop and the closure operated by the professions:

there are examples among certain professional groups such as lawyers and doctors of compulsory membership of the relevant organisation and/or job security practices similar to those operated by skilled and craft unions (Hansen et al.1982:8).

But recently, the professions have come under more scrutiny (Coady & Bloch 1996) and there has been the potential legislative threat of the Bolkestein Directive (EU Directive Proposal 13 January 2004) which aimed to break the monopolies operated by national, professional institutes. The Bolkestein proposals were later emasculated (Economist 10 Mar 2005) but it remains possible that the professions may be stripped of their traditional protections¹⁷. Therefore, it may be of interest to see how, despite the easing of closure, the British film unions’ practices have survived.

Lastly, if film sector workers have retained control over access to their sector and thus maintained their negotiating position even though the supporting institutions

¹⁷ In November 2007, the British Psychological Society is fighting proposals that the Department of Health take over its regulatory authority.

have been rendered powerless by legislation, then this does raise further questions about the effectiveness of political action. The objectives of the Conservative government regarding the pre-entry closed shop were set out clearly in the Green Paper *Removing Barriers to Employment* (March 1989):

The Government consider that it is time to take action against the pre-entry closed shop. This is a restrictive practice, limiting the number of people who can obtain employment in the area it covers... It has a particularly damaging effect on the supply of skilled workers by restricting access to training places (DE 1989:3)

The resulting Act was thus intended as the death knell to the closed shop and was certainly perceived as such: “The 1990 Employment Act concluded the long process of whittling away at the closed shop which had held so many in its vicious thrall in the 1970s”¹⁸ (Thatcher 1993:669). If, as this thesis hopes to demonstrate, many of the practices implicit in the closed shop have survived and the true reasons for the collapse of the closed shop were changes in technology and society, then it can be questioned whether legislation can be effective when strong informal institutions exist.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

Having set out in broad statements the characteristics of the film production sector and the unique position it appears to have established, the structure of the thesis will be as follows.

Chapter 2 explains the methodology adopted for this research and the reasons why these methods were selected. There are challenges in researching employment in the film production industry because, there being a strong creative element, many workers do not conform to the expected conventions of employment. Similarly, the term ‘British film industry’ is possibly an oxymoron if an industry is defined as “a branch of economic or commercial activity” (OED) because British film production rarely achieves either. Since the 1950s, British film production has depended on entrepreneurs operating through short-lived companies that leave few records.

¹⁸ Sadly, she did not specifically explain why the 1970s were specific in this context.

Furthermore, the industry's unions have amalgamated beyond recognition leaving no archives. The researcher is thus obliged to draw on film literature (which largely ignores the production workforce and concentrates on their creative output), official reports and statistics, oral history and interviews. The chapter then explains the various routes, methods and challenges encountered in the preparation of the thesis and lastly describes the process by which respondents were located and interviewed.

Chapter 3 will explore the history and some of the literature illustrating how workers have sought to establish power and autonomy. First, it will be shown that innate talent and acquired skill alone are not sufficient to provide assured power in the workplace. Skill must be coupled with social activity to ensure closure as practised by the 19th century craftsmen to control entry to the 'mystery'. Having secured a monopoly of the trade they were in a strengthened position to protect their status and livelihood, although never as successfully as the professions who could not only control supply, but initiate demand. The unskilled worker had no such unique property and so utilised the power of numbers; the general and industrial unions that encompassed all available labour thus ensuring that the employers were obliged to bargain. This principle of inclusiveness eventually absorbed the craft unions too, although there remained distinctions largely, but not completely, designated by the various forms of the closed shop. However, even in working environments regulated by formal collective agreements, there were opportunities for worker autonomy through informal rules of custom and practice and it will be shown that similar influence can be realised through networks and social capital. Lastly, it will be shown how internal labour market theory brings together many of these elements of defined boundaries and the dependence on rules. However, the theory also shows that employers may also gain efficiencies through lowered turnover and reduced recruitment, screening and training costs.

The next two chapters will first examine how the film industry came to be, to use McCarthy's (1964) terminology, a craft qualification, pre-entry closed shop (i.e. an enforced internal labour market) and then describe the detail of how the closed shop was operated and enforced at its zenith. Chapter 4 will first show how the early association of film production workers conformed closely to the template set

by craft workers a century earlier so that, by the late 1930s, the film technicians' union was a craft-based association with the same priority of craft exclusivity. The formalities of closed shop exclusivity were to be accomplished by an unusual combination of events in the opening stages of the Second World War, but the post war fortunes of British film production were to change frequently and the last section will explore the union's attempts to adapt to them.

Chapter 5 will examine how the ACTT could maintain a closed shop in what was, by the 1970s, a loosely controlled community of workers where many individuals negotiated their own contracts - two factors which McCarthy (1964) had identified as likely to diminish the discipline and practicality of any closed shop. It will be shown that the admission procedures for those wishing to join the union effectively screened out all but the most determined, while the final section will demonstrate how the measures available to the union to regulate the seemingly disparate production membership were not strong. However, the union could ensure the membership's compliance through the employers who could be coerced through their dependence on the unionised laboratories

Chapter 6 will consider whether it was political measures alone that caused the demise of the film industry closed shop or whether technology and social change were greater influences. Section one will consider the union's muted reaction to the various Employment Acts of the 1980s while section two considers the impact which changing technology had upon the stranglehold previously operated by the film laboratories. By 1987, the union felt obliged to deny the existence of any closed shop to a Monopolies and Mergers Commission enquiry and the reasons for that, and the effects of the TV-am dispute of 1987, will be considered in section three. Section four will assess the social changes that further eroded the likelihood that all newcomers would automatically conform to conventions of union membership that their predecessors had accepted unquestioningly.

However, Chapter 7 will show that despite these challenges, a distinctive feature film workforce persists and that it conforms to Doeringer & Piore's four "heuristic" tests (1971:5) of an internal labour market. Thus, the first section will show that there is longevity to the rules covering wage determination and the allocation of film production labour. Section two will demonstrate that commentary exists to

show that the rules and practices are inconsistent with the operation of a competitive market. Section three will show that labour remains a key element in the production of film and that on-the-job training provides both industry specific skills and induction into the informal networks that maintain the customary laws discussed in Section four. The final section explains how producers - the employers - have allowed the internal labour market to persist because they utilise the stability and efficiency that Doeringer & Piore predicted that it would provide (1971:29-31).

For comparison, Chapter 8 will contrast the very different outcome for worker autonomy in the other audio visual industries, i.e. all those except the feature film workforce. Section one will show how decline in union density in all the audio-visual industries made it impossible for BECTU to retain any real influence over evolving employment practices, while the second section will show that the demands of capital and competitive tendering has driven producers to seek cheaper, less well-qualified labour. The supply of such labour has come from the growing media training sector and section three examines why formal training has received so much governmental support, but also how many graduating students are susceptible because they emerge into the job market without the socialisation implicit in on-the-job training. Furthermore, section four shows that many students emerge with little skill specificity and so have to rely on trial and error in their initial placements in the hope of gaining more marketable skills.

Finally, Chapter 9 will present a summary of the findings and consider briefly the implications of the findings for trade unions, for those seeking employment in the audio-visual industry and for government policy in these areas. These conclusions will include a discussion of the limitations and strengths of the research.

Chapter 2 METHODOLOGY

Throughout this research I had the advantage of having worked for over twenty years in film production, mainly producing commercials, and for the fourteen years 1978 to 1992 I had worked almost exclusively with British crews. As a producer I was ‘management’, responsible for securing film commissions and then the assembly, employment and deployment of the skilled teams who would effect the production. However, like all my contemporaries of that period, I was only able to work as a producer because I was a union member, having served an informal ‘apprenticeship’ in a variety of minor positions that eventually secured my election to the ACTT in 1983.¹ I remain a member of BECTU.

Having worked in the sector is an advantage for a researcher: one is readily accepted as being part of the film production community; one understands the technical and industry specific vocabulary; recognises the hierarchies; knows some of the personalities; and can empathise with the experiences that are expressed about working conditions, hours, location shooting, studios and remuneration. That familiarity made it much easier for individuals to explain their careers, meant I was able to participate in the BECTU history group and also able to recognise the significance of some evidence in the literature, statistics and interviews that a less attuned researcher might have ignored.

Conversely, there is the challenge that being so familiar with the workings of the industry means that there are aspects that are so engrained that one passes them by unnoticed. As someone who worked for ten years within the rigid crewing confines of “four, four and four” (see page 145) it was disquieting when surprise

¹ This requirement, that everyone employed in key appointments in film production was required to be a union member, will be explored further in Chapter 4 (page 100).

was expressed at academic presentations that such a rule could ever have existed. Any researcher who has been immersed in any field for many years has to take care to be assimilating only the evidence that is assembled and presented, and not allowing familiarity and pre-conceived ideas to influence the interpretation of that evidence: Blaumer observed when asked to appraise Thomas & Znaniecki's *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*:

their *particular* interpretations of Polish peasant life were not formed solely from the materials they present; we have to assume that the familiarity with Polish peasant life which enabled their interpretations was made in a number of ways. (Blaumer (1939) cited by Glaser & Strauss 1967:13)

Therefore, it has been necessary to utilise a familiarity with the workplace and the workforce to collect the data, but then to be as dispassionate as possible in its analysis. In practice, this has not proved as difficult as might be expected for two reasons. The first is that as a producer in the 1980s I worked comfortably within the accepted framework, never questioning the union rule-book and oblivious to the origins and wider implications of the closed shop.² If one wanted to work in film in the 1970s then admission to the union was a challenge to be overcome but, once a member, one was part of the community where everyone would exploit the collective agreements to their limits. Therefore, as an employer I noted any revisions to the collective agreement but that did not stop me, as an entrepreneur, negotiating private deals with crew members³ because, by and large, the union was just another player in the deals that were being haggled daily with crew, suppliers and clients. Therefore, much of the historical and theoretical material discovered in this research has been as much a revelation to me as it would be to any newcomer researching the sector.

The second reason which has facilitated detachment has been the growing awareness as the research progressed that for twenty years I was working *in* the film industry, but I was not completely *part of* that industry. As will become

² An example of the conditioning that is achieved by on-the-job training ?

³ A typical deal might be that when shooting in Spain either side of a weekend, Saturdays and Sundays would be unpaid, but the company would pay for the hotel and the additional baggage charges for the crews' golf clubs. Alternatively, it might pay partners' airfares. Both options were cheaper than paying two rest days for an entire crew.

clear, those who are truly part of the film industry are motivated by something far more significant than an economic activity because they are drawn to the creativity of film production and, as will be shown, they are therefore willing to make sacrifices to retain that affiliation with the end product and the community that achieved it. Stephen Woolley (producer of *Company of Wolves* and the *Crying Game*) expresses it thus:

Two things about film crew – one is that even though they may lie about it, most of them are drawn by the glamour of film – it’s more glamorous hammering a nail into the wall of a film set than the wall of a house. And another thing is that crews are fairly nomadic and so they’re used to pitching their tents and getting on with it, and there’s a sort of camaraderie, the same as you would get with a circus or any sort of travelling bunch of players. (cited by de Winter 2006:85)

With working on this research has come the realisation that I was always more interested making the film production process function than the end result and thus the opportunity to investigate, appreciate, analyse and tabulate that process has been especially rewarding.

However, before considering the stages of the research in detail, it is necessary to set out some of the basic challenges when researching the British film production sector.

2.1 Instability of the sector and the lack of coherent records

“any student soon discovers that no figures regarding British film finances are ever, under any circumstances, definite and indisputable”
(Wood 1952:62)

Although this research is considering employment within the film industry, the two terms, ‘employment’ and ‘industry’, must be treated cautiously and it should not be assumed that they have the same connotations and implications that might be applicable in other, more conventional, environments such as manufacturing.

As will become apparent as the thesis develops, it is probable that any career in film production will encounter many periods when the practitioner is not ‘employed’ within the normal accepted definitions that would involve a contract and an identifiable employer. Employment in production has always been a

precarious occupation and, except for a brief period from 1940 to the mid 1950s, the workforce has often been more stable than the employers. In the pre-war period, feature film production workers were theoretically in full-time employment but, because of the instability of production companies and the paucity of statutory protection, this meant little: “film employees worked then [1932], as many do now, for the duration of a picture and always received their notice a week before it finished” (Box 1974:114). After the late 1950s and the collapse of the big studios (see Chapter 5), the majority of the film production workforce became freelance workers with the associated unpredictability of rates, intervals of unemployment and the frequent obligation to assist, unpaid, in speculative and promotional work: i.e. “used to pitching their tents and getting on with it” or, as a more academic work expressed it:

For many technicians film making is not work, in the sense that work is conceptualised as a category of activity seldom enjoyed and undertaken exclusively out of strict economic necessity. (Seglow 1978:39)

Similarly, the term ‘industry’, which the OED defines as “a branch of economic or commercial activity”, may be a misnomer when applied to the context of film. Film making is an activity which often lacks any economic or commercial logic. It originated as a fairground novelty (Low & Manvell 1948), survived the inter-war years only through sympathetic legislation (Street 1997) and blossomed in the 1940s only because of the exceptional circumstances of WW2 (Oakley 1964:161). In the immediate post-war period, it was noted that the industry made films “with an ever increasing disregard of cost” (Gater 1949:7) and the re-admission of the American distributors to the British market through the Anglo-American Film Agreement in March 1948 again beleaguered, and then destroyed, the production empires that had been created in the 1940s by J Arthur Rank, British Lion, Gainsborough and others. These were companies whose structure, hierarchies and organisation fitted a manufacturing institution that would have been recognised by Commons (1934) and Sayles (1963) where boardroom strategies were executed by tiers of management through the co-ordination and deployment of specialist divisions: studio; construction; electrical; wardrobe; props; drapes and camera

(Wood 1952; Street 1997). It could be argued that the inability of those companies to survive once the protection of war-time legislation had been stripped away demonstrates that film as an “industry”, in the conventional definition used above, cannot survive in Britain.

Thereafter, British cinema survived and survives only through the enthusiasm of independent producers, the periodic interest of American financiers in the available skilled labour force and the occasional success in identifying the prevalent consumer demand and taste (Street 1997). The most recent parliamentary report on British film described it as an “under-capitalised industry based around entrepreneurial individuals driving single-project vehicles” (DCMS 2003:3), a view confirmed by one of Britain’s leading producers, Simon Channing-Williams (a Palme d’Or winner with *Secrets & Lies*): “... in the UK, probably ninety percent of more of independent producers begin working through a company they have started at home” (de Winter 2006:61).

The researcher thus has to accept that this is an employment environment with little stability, logic or consistency and where the end product, the exhibited film, is often the only tangible evidence that the production ever took place. Film companies in particular provide poor evidence for any longitudinal studies because of their inherent instability. As will be cited later, only twenty of the 643 film companies registered in the 1920s and 1930s remained in production by 1937 (Wood 1952:91). Since the collapse of the big studios in the 1950s, the majority of production companies exist only for the duration of the production of one film (the few exceptions to attempt successive productions, such as Goldcrest, have invariably collapsed⁴) and these short-lived organisations leave few records. The production employers’ organisations have also always been weak and have never been able to exercise control over their entrepreneurial members looking to seize competitive advantage over their fellow members (Levelle interview). In contemporary production, although a collective agreement technically exists between the Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television (PACT) and BECTU,

⁴ Goldcrest’s successes, *Chariots of Fire* (1981) and *Gandhi* (1982), were followed by the box office disasters of *Revolution*, *The Mission* and *Absolute Beginners* which effectively broke the company.

observance is largely voluntary and unenforced. BECTU now considers it more effective to negotiate with specific companies rather than through the employers' association (BECTU official interview).

□or are any union archives available. As already stated, the unions have merged beyond recognition: □ATTKE and ABS into BETA (1989) and BETA and ACTT into BECTU (1991). Given the focus in this thesis on film technicians, the more important records might have been those of the ACTT, but those archives that had not been disposed of during an office relocation in 1986 were either destroyed or sent, un-catalogued, to storage during the merger of the ACTT and BETA in January 1991. When it was suggested that, as part of this research, these documents could be retrieved and catalogued it was made clear that exercise would be pointless. Many filing cabinets had been precipitately emptied into innumerable, unmarked crates and so, even assuming the crates still existed and could be located, any sifting was more likely to find insignificant administrative paperwork than locating the minutes of critical Executive Committees (Reagan interview). The final ACTT documents were disposed of during the relocation of the BECTU office from Soho to Clapham in 2002.

Fortunately, the researcher can counter the instability, inconsistency and incongruity of the British film industry by identifying the more assured elements of the often imperfect or incomplete data available and cross referencing them, or preferably triangulating them, to arrive at supportable statements which, if not "fact", at least represent an account collaborated by several sources. The principal sources available are film literature, some academic literature, oral history and official, i.e. government or industry, reports and statistics.

2.2 Film related sources

"not everyone sees the same road accident, but there is no need to assume from the various accounts that anyone is lying" (Walker 19□□18)

The first challenge was the paucity of any original literature with references or analysis of employment practices in film production. Although the British Film Institute library catalogues over 50,000 books, most ignore the production labour

force and focus on the creative output of the film industry and the associated financiers, actors, writers and directors. The critic Alexander Walker observed that “most books about films dwell on their directors” (Walker 1974:16) and a more recent author confirmed the anomaly that “there exist plenty of books about directors and screenwriters but hardly anything about producers” (de Winter 2006:2).

Thus, despite the seemingly all-embracing title of Walker’s own highly regarded and authoritative book *“Hollywood England: The British Film Industry in the Sixties”* (1974), in nearly 500 pages there are no references to film crew, their terms and conditions of employment or the supposedly all-powerful unions. Walker’s only reference to camera equipment related to the creative changes made possible by their decreasing weight - and the only reference to laboratories was to cite the derogatory quote attributed to Tony Richardson (director of *Tom Jones* (1963) - a film which changed concepts of how colour stock could be used): “the trouble with labs is that they’re run by chemists, not artists” (1974:141).

So why is this an industry where the means of production is so invisible? There are possibly three factors. First, since around 1914, when the film industry first divided into three distinct sections of production, distribution and exhibition (Street 1997:5), workers in film production have been a numerical minority within the total film industry - and the subsequent addition of television employees (1950s), and then the expansion of the industry caused by video and computer generated imagery (1970s onwards) merely exacerbated that minority status. Thus, when a film historian, such as Low, does devote a chapter to “The organisation of labour” within the 1930s film industry, her prime interest is the 45,000 full-time exhibition workers (cinema projectionists, ushers, managers and box office) who were organised under 33 ATKE agreements (Low 1985:22) or the 14,000 lab workers, rather than the 1,389 registered as working in production (Low 1985:31).

Secondly, distribution and exhibition has always been where the big money was made; in 2004, the top twelve film companies in the UK were all distribution and exhibition companies (UK Film Council 2007:155). Much of the literature that focuses on the business aspects of the film industry ignores the actual process of production, unless it runs disastrously over budget, and concentrates on the

business fortunes of those who made film “happen”; e.g. *Money Behind the Screen* (Klingender & Legg 1937), *Mr Rank: A study of J Arthur Rank and British Films* (Wood 1952) or *A Competitive Cinema* (Kelly 1966). The last unusually, among over two hundred pages of statistics on box office receipts, cinema ownership and “the never ending crisis”, devoted six and half pages to “the Film Unions and employment prospects” and discussed topics such as the ACTT’s insistence on first class travel for overseas flights and a brief mention of the restrictive practice of closed shop admission (Kelly 1966:170-176).

Thirdly, as shown above, the creative elements of the film, the director, the actors and the script, are always more interesting to the layman than details of those that made it.

However, it is in those latter books that one finds the occasional, sometimes throwaway, anecdote which gives an insight into film industry employment at the time specific films were made. Many of these have been used in the body of the thesis to illustrate particular arguments and they include the exasperated American director crushing the technicians’ tea trolley on the set of *Alien* in 1986 (Shone 2004:165); Muriel Box having to join the union in 1941 (Box 1974:158-159); Richard E Grant having to subsidise the salary of the 2nd assistant to secure a 1st assistant (they would only work as a team) when the producer was unwilling to pay them both (Grant 2006:85); and for the detail of working conditions in the 1980s, the director John Boorman always delivered an insightful quote:

Wherever we shoot, the first question is how and where do we feed the crew. A film unit works long hours and they demand and expect an endless flow of food and drink. One of the less pleasant aspects of film-making with a British crew is that when you address them the answers are usually muffled by mouthfuls of food. (Boorman 1985:158)

Or:

When you are away on location you have to pay the technicians for the Saturday whether they work or not, therefore *not* to work becomes expensive. (Boorman 1985:133)

These instances all represent invaluable evidence but, as Glaser observed, “Being a good author of grounded theory requires a lot of reading.” (Glaser 1992:37).

Another source of data suitable for cross-referencing or triangulation (besides interviews which are considered in the final section of this chapter) were statistics.

At the outset of this research it was envisaged that some quantitative research would have to be done to substantiate the necessary propositions regarding the state of the current film production sector, the employment practices within it and the composition of the workforce. However, this project coincided with a growing governmental interest in the British feature film industry and the wider audio-visual industries. Therefore, concurrent with this research there has been a number of official surveys, reports and analysis relating to the specific skills demands of feature film production and the ancillary sectors. Titles published in the last six years include:

- *Freelance Survey* (Skillset 2001)
- *Relph Report : Examining the costs of lower budget UK films and their value in the world market* (UK Film Council 2002)
- *The British Film Industry* (DCMS 2003)
- *A Bigger Future: UK Film Skills Strategy* (Skillset 2003a)
- *Developing UK Film Talent* (Skillset 2003b)
- *Skillset Workforce Survey* (Skillset 2003c)
- *Feature Film Production Workplace Survey 2005* (Skillset 2005)
- *UK Film Council Annual Review* □ *Statistical Yearbook* (UK Film Council 2002; 2003; 2004;2005;2006)
- *British Film Institute Annual Report* (BFI 2001;BFI 2002 etc)
- *The Economic Impact of the UK Film Industry* (Oxford Economics 2007)
-

These publications alone represent over three thousand pages of statistics and carefully argued analysis of the UK industry's place in the world market place, in the British economy, in the cultural well-being of the country and, not least, in the labour market. Had the surveys been drafted specifically for this research it is possible that the different questions might have been asked – and the data presented more sympathetically. For example, the Feature Film Production Workplace Survey 2005 established that 33% of respondents were BECTU members, but did not provide any analysis by grade or trade. □evertheless, there is no doubt that the scale of these surveys (the Feature Film Production Survey sent out nearly 10,000 questionnaires to identified, working practitioners) meant that they provide a more

comprehensive depiction of the whole industry than could have been done with this researcher's limited resources.

In the interests of completeness, it should also be stated that there are few tests of efficiency in a creative "industry" such as film production. Various examples of production costs will be mentioned during the thesis, but the creative and style differences in films makes most efficiency comparisons meaningless: *Ladies in Lavender* cost £3.6m; *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, £100m (BFI 2005:28); *Secrets & Lies* cost \$6m to shoot and made \$53m; *Spice Girls: the Movie* cost \$6m to make and grossed over \$90m (de Winter 2006:58&198); when shooting a feature film without special effects, or special wardrobe requirements, a unit of forty or fifty crew members might expect to shoot two to four minutes of edited film each day (Apted interview); for a television "soap", a crew of fifteen or twenty members may shoot seven or eight minutes of edited material each day – more if on a fixed set such as *Eastenders* (Riley interview; Relph 2002:17)). How one judges the value of these various productions, their budgets and their manpower requirements is too subjective for fruitful evaluation.

Finally, I was also assisted by my participation in the BECTU Oral History Project. This project was started in 1986 by a small group of ACTT members who were keen to do something to record the experience of those who had contributed to the film and television industries. Over the last twenty years more than 550 interviews have been recorded and they are held at the National Film and Television Archive. Although only one interview is directly quoted in the text (Sydney Cole, producer director, 1908-1998) they provided a useful background and the project group themselves made helpful suggestions.

2.3 Details of interviews – the selection and schedule

"Think theory, talk everyday common sense English" (Glaser 1992:25)

Film industry workers have a reputation for being difficult to research. In her work on the American film industry, Professor Candice Jones recalled that it often took twenty or thirty calls to each respondent before she could arrange an interview

because of their natural instinct that only those showing true dedication were worthy of their interest:

They gave access to the industry according to a person's persistence and motivation. I had to prove that I was both persistent and motivated to do the interviews, before some of them would grant me the time. (Jones 1996:60)

In the UK the feature film workforce is not large, but there are no permanent employers able to supply a ready-made sample of workers, union density is only moderate and it is a fragmented workforce which relies on its own informal networks for communication. When one does obtain an individual's contact details the nature of a project-based industry means that if they are working then they are never available, and if they are not working they are geographically dispersed.

However, I had worked as a producer in commercials and, as the contemporary Skillset website states, "Commercials people live the filmmakers' dream. They are very well paid for concentrated periods of intense work" (www.skillset.org/commercials 6 Apr 06). For this reason many of those with whom I worked were primarily feature film crew filling the waiting time between major productions and, twelve years later, I was able to renew my contact with several who were kind enough to give me their opinions and recollections.

By using known contacts as my initial sample and then, in some instances following up their recommendations, the research followed the qualitative technique of 'snowballing', which is a suitable method for sampling populations which are difficult for researchers to access. However, the risk in this approach is that because successive interviewees will be associated with the already completed interviews, the researcher could be replicating the same characteristics and thus duplicating the same data twice and thus giving it a disproportionate, value:

as a rule, a snowball sampling will be strongly biased toward the inclusion of those who have many interrelationships with or are coupled to, a large number of individuals. In the absence of knowledge of individual inclusion possibilities in different waves of the snowball sample, unbiased estimation is not possible. (Berg 1988 cited by Salganik & Heckathorn 2004:197))

However, Salganik & Heckathorn concluded that material gained by this snowballing was, "when handled properly", relatively unbiased and, furthermore,

gave some insight into the role of networks which is, as already shown, critical to this research (2004:229-230). In practice, few of these secondary contacts were ever available for interview and, as a safeguard, all data collected through interview was cross-checked against data from other literature or survey sources. Thus, while only two interviews were conducted with representatives of ethnic minorities, their “ethnic” views corroborated the much more extensive work done among ethnic minority workers in the audio-visual industries by Campion (2005) and Holgate (2006) and the statistics of Skillset (2003c & 2005). Nevertheless, these two interviews did provide very useful, “non-ethnic” unique insights into the challenges of admission into the industry in the 1970s, the contemporary challenge of selecting the right path once admitted and of the barriers to all workers between television and film – which again were corroborated by other interviewees, literature and statistics.

Additionally, BECTU assisted by publishing a letter in *Stage Screen and Radio* that led to several new sources with whom the researcher had had no previous contact.

Nearly forty in-depth interviews were conducted and the breakdown is shown in Table 3. (Interviewees were not asked to state their age but an informed estimate has been made based on their experience and recollections.)

The sample shows a slight bias towards older respondents which could be a reflection of the researcher’s own age and contacts. However, it was essential to have some respondents who recalled the closed shop era and those respondents now had to be in their late 40s or early 50s. In practice, most of those in their 40s had no experience or few recollections of the closed shop.

In any event, the overall profile would appear to be a reasonable spread of respondents when compared to the statistical profile of the industry where over 60% are over the age of 35 (Skillset 2005:26). Few female crew were interviewed but the research emphasis was on technical rather than art department crew and that would seem appropriate when Skillset (2005) shows that 91% of camera and 100% of sound crews are male while women predominate in art, wardrobe and make-up (68%, 70% and 88% respectively). Similarly, the higher proportion of female

producers seems appropriate given that Skillset (2005) showed that 66% of production were female.

Table 3: Respondents' characteristics - occupation, gender & age

Crew	3 males	Aged in 20s
	1 female	40s
	2 males	40s
	2 males	50s
	3 males	60s
Directors	1 male	20s
	3 males	40s
	2 males	60s
	1 male	70s
Experts/commentators	1 female	40s
	1 female	50s
Producers	5 females	40s
	2 males	40s
	2 males	50s
	1 female	60s
	1 male	70s
Training / trainers	1 male	20s
	1 female	40s
	1 female	50s
Union	2 males	50s
	1 male	60s
	1 male	70s
Ex-industry	1 male	40s

It should be noted that there was some overlap between the occupational categories. Thus, while only one media related student was interviewed, the three crew members in their twenties had recently been students, or taken training courses. Furthermore, one of the union participants had been involved in industry

training since the 1970s. The one student was interviewed specifically to get some perspective on how admission was perceived by those who had not yet started that process. All their experiences were corroborated by reference to Holgate (2006).

The schedule was determined mainly by respondents' availability. The first and last interviews were with a BECTU official, the first because of the need to establish the availability of the ACTT records, the last because I needed to verify some of the material that I had collected in the intervening two years. Otherwise it would be an exaggeration to say that there was a preconceived plan because interviews had to be arranged around respondents' filming schedules. Several interviews were conducted at studios and although these were inevitably more fractured interviews, it was useful during the waiting times to refresh my recollection of how seamlessly British film crews function.

The interviews were unstructured, for two reasons. Firstly, to avoid any possibility that the researcher's own preconceptions might influence the respondent:

...the researcher never, never asks the question directly in the interviews as this would preconceive the emergence of data. Interview questions have to relate to what the interview is about empirically, so the researcher maximises the acquisition of non-forced data. These specific questions are in the thoughts and the analysis of the researcher. (Glaser 1992:25)

Unstructured interviews avoided steering the respondents towards any preconceived idea about the organisation of the industry. It was explained at the outset that the research related to admission to the film production industry. □ormally this would invoke a description of the interviewee's prior interest (or not) in the industry, their first encounters and their early experiences. This could then be developed into a more general discussion which would involve their career path, and their contacts, usually introducing more general observations on the industry. For those who had joined in the era of the closed shop, the question "how did you join the union" (being synonymous with "how did you start in film?") would similarly invariably trigger a complete chronology of their background, the contacts who had assisted their application and their early experiences. People generally enjoyed talking about their careers and successes – and their frustrations – and so it was often unnecessary for the interviewer to intervene, beyond general

steering questions, unless there were specific points which needed clarification or expansion. Allowing the respondent to tell of their experiences unprompted increased the likelihood that the evidence was coming from the informant's experience and not from the questions being asked.

The second reason why the interviews were unstructured was because the experience, vintage and sector of the interviewees varied. Thus some had first hand experience of admission to the closed shop, others only knew of its reputation and the younger interviewees knew nothing about it. Older respondents knew little about formal skills training. Some knew much more about specific sectors, such as post production or television, others only knew about film. Additionally, it should be admitted that there was a prior awareness that some respondents had specific experiences that the researcher wanted to explore: why had one individual left the industry having seemingly made a promising start? How had another effected the transfer from ATTKE to the ACTT? Why had another never joined the union? How automatic was the process of union membership when joining a television company in the 1970s? These were possibly unique experiences, but which needed exploration because often they gave new insights.

The majority of the interviews were recorded, there being a few occasions when it was not practical to record because of background noise, the impromptu nature of the meeting or the inappropriateness of the setting. The recordings were all done digitally and transferred to a computer at the earliest opportunity. One of the features of digital recordings is that particular items within an interview can be relocated very quickly, so very few interviews were transcribed in full because the nature of unstructured interviews is that it is, initially, often impossible to assess the value of the material. Therefore, at the first review, a summary of each topic covered would be listed, the time code recorded and the appropriate code noted into the headings shown in Table 4. Only later, when the material relating to a specific category was being analysed, would the material be reviewed and a verbatim transcript taken of the relevant sections.

The main contribution of the interviewees was to add the detail unavailable from other sources: how an individual was rejected by an ACTT admissions committee; how the laboratories could unofficially delay a production in dispute with the

union; the realities of contemporary work experience; the reactions of a television camera crewman working on a film set.

There were no significant contradictions in any of the evidence collected from respondents although there were areas of uncertainty. Some respondents were unsure about dates and sometimes chronologies became a little confused. A challenge when discussing events that happened twenty, thirty or forty years ago is that some interviewees readily admitted that they could remember very little, for example, about the closed shop because it had been such an accepted feature of their working life that they had never queried or thought about how or why it operated. In some instances, individuals could neither remember how they had been signed up, nor when their membership had lapsed, because it had been organised by their employer. For others, every detail of specific events, such as the battle to get the first official placement (John Keen) or the celebration when a sister's ticket had been approved (Belinda Harris), were still very vivid – and in some instances those specific incidents still rankled nearly fifty years on (Edward Joffe).

I encountered no outright refusals to a request for an interview although my request passed via the BECTU office to Linda Loakes (formerly the National Organiser of the ACTT) went unanswered. I had had frequent contact with Linda in the 1980s and am sure she would have been a useful source of information about the ACTT's admission processes. Although BECTU was extremely helpful in publishing a letter in *Stage Screen and Radio* unfortunately none of the respondents proved to have been a member of a closed shop era admission committee which had been my real objective. Sadly, Alan Sapper (General Secretary of the ACTT 1969 to 1991) was too ill for a meeting before he died (19 May 2006). Fortunately, I was able to interview Tudor Gates (ACTT President 1988 and later joint President of BECTU) before his death (14 January 2007).

Two other potential sources (Elizabeth McGiven and The Right Hon. The Viscountess Hood (formerly Flora Casement)) were approached because it was understood that they had been on the brink of ACTT membership in the 1980s and would thus have first hand experience of the admissions process. However, it became apparent from my preliminary contact that neither recalled anything of

what, for them, had been a fleeting phase and so the interviews were not followed up.

I am most grateful to all of those who gave their time to me and I hope that I have reflected their opinions accurately. I have tried within the text to avoid embarrassment by not attributing any quotation to the individual unless it is valuable to indicate the background of the author, and so place the opinion expressed in context. In addition, there were also innumerable more casual conversations and discussions that occurred, either on social occasions or when attending shoots, and the contents or sentiments of those are reflected in the text, or were used as leads to other quotable sources.

2.4 Stages of research

“The need to preconceive [the question] is strong when there is no trust in the discovery of a problem. The researcher should fight this....”
(Glaser 1992:2)

From the outset it was clear that this would be a longitudinal study because, if the anecdotal indications were correct and little had changed in the employment practices of the contemporary film production industry, it would be necessary to contrast those employment conditions with those of the closed shop era to confirm that there were similarities. Only then would it be practical to start an assessment of what conditions or features had made that continuity possible.

The second early assumption was that this would be a qualitative, sociological study. Although it was envisaged that some statistical data would have to be collected (in the event this was overtaken by the sudden flurry of statistical data emerging from Skillset) there was no expectation that sufficient quantitative data would emerge to provide a functional answer because, being a longitudinal exercise, there would be no standard template which would encompass every era and every field of production. Also, again for the reasons stated above, there was little documentary evidence available for the closed shop era and therefore the research would be dependent on the memories of interviewees and the few literary references available.

In practice, because it appeared at that early stage to be the most critical institution, the research started with the closed shop. The original submission for the research had stated:

.....proposes to concentrate on the [closed shop of the] British film and television industries. At their peak in 1979 the production industries' craft unions operated a pre-entry closed shop that covered 60,000 members, including many white collar grades. By regulating admission to the union (and thus employment) they controlled not only terms and conditions but also demarcation lines and manning levels throughout the UK's media production and distribution. The dissertation will explore the process by which the closed shop was dismantled, how this has changed employment relations, what kind of regulation has replaced it and what impact these changes have had on pay and conditions, work allocation, job descriptions and manning levels.

Surveys like WERS have revealed the demise of the closed shop but relatively little systematic research has been undertaken to reveal how an institution, traceable to the very start of the Industrial Revolution, could collapse in such a short-time. Understanding how this happened and discovering what emerged to replace the controls that the craft unions traditionally supplied will provide the core of my thesis. (Original research proposal 2002)

Having placed such emphasis on "an institution" it seemed necessary to have a complete understanding of early labour organisation, the emergence of the craft unions and the evolution of the general and industry unions and ultimately the closed shop. This was a literature research project guided by the objective of a complete understanding of the functions, operation and limitations of the closed shop and the results are reflected in Chapter 2.

The next stage of the research process was to prove a blind alley. The logic was that if the demise of the closed shop had been a political action, effected by the various Employment Acts of the 1980s, then there must have been strategic policy objectives that could be "tested" against contemporary film industry employment to see if those objectives had been achieved. However, while the research, using Hansard, the various Acts, contemporary press commentary, academic literature and many political memoirs was fascinating, it showed that the actions were largely pragmatic. The term 'step by step' is used in the opening paragraph of the 1987

Green Paper *Trade Unions and their Members* summarising the Government's industrial relations legislation to that date (DE 1987:1) and the phrase recurs frequently in the descriptions of the Conservative Governments' approach to industrial relations (Prior 1986; Thatcher 1993; Howe 1994). Howe, citing a memo from John Hoskyns, suggested that it was an error to be looking for a consistent strategy because that was not Mrs Thatcher's style:

the lack of a methodical mode of working... means that our chance of implementing a carefully worked out strategy – both in policy and communications – is very low indeed... (Howe 1994:249)

And, as confirmation, regarding the 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts: “the packages themselves had been rather randomly put together...” (Howe 1994:249)⁵. Eventually this research concluded that liberal ideology had dominated and that there had been no objective other than the elimination of what was perceived as an institution of the left that was disruptive to the labour market, best summarised by the statement that “Margaret's gut instincts were never well disposed towards trade unions” (Howe 1994:104). Therefore, this research path was abandoned, although the drafted chapter did provide useful references when it was later necessary to identify the reasons for the demise of the closed shop.

If the key was not political, the next attempt was to look for an economic validation: to identify statistics that would demonstrate that an abnormal income situation had persisted over several decades which would show that negotiated power, either through collective bargaining or informal autonomy, had been effective. Some general statistics regarding incomes in the contemporary sector were becoming available (Skillset 2003c; Skillset 2005) and it was assumed that interviewees would be able to provide further details. However, historical evidence regarding income was less easily identified. The sector has always been too small and too specialised to register on any national labour market statistics and therefore industry specific data had to be sought. The 1949 Gater report had made comparisons of pre- and post-war production wages and from this it was deduced

⁵ It should be acknowledged that Howe, who had long fallen out with Mrs Thatcher at the time of his memoirs and who had been one of the architects of the ill-fated 1971 IRA, might have taken an especially jaundiced view.

that in the late 1930s middle ranking skilled crew (boom operators, focus pullers, sound men and continuity⁶) were earning approximately £325pa. Post war, this had more than doubled to between £12.50 and £14.50 per week i.e. perhaps £702pa (Gater 1949:25).

This would equate to what Routh described as the “lower professions” (whose weighted average for 1936 was £308pa); qualified teachers, draughtsmen, and veterinary inspectors. This group too had approximately doubled their income (weighted average £708) by 1955 (Routh 1980:70). Sadly, these reference points and comparisons faltered thereafter. Fixed salaries for film crew ended with the decline of the big studios in 1960, no subsequent figures for the lower professions appear in Routh and the changing concepts of class would make it difficult to identify an analogous contemporary group to the “lower professions”. The only continuous information available for freelance film workers throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s was the minimum daily and weekly rates published periodically by the ACTT in *Film □ Television Technician*, but these only indicated the daily rate for the basic eight hour day and the formula for overtime; they gave no indication of what a technician might actually earn. For example, the published basic rate for a focus puller or boom operator in the summer of 1978 was £94.21 per week or, if hired for specific days, £27.09 per day (FTT June 1978). It will be shown that this is an industry where a ten or twelve hour day was, and remains, normal and thus a technician would expect to be earning at least double the daily rate when in work.

Even assuming no overtime, that meant a worker doing five dailies (working single days on a commercial or as supplementary crew on a feature) would earn 44% more than a worker doing a straight week, or 15% more if he (or, less likely, she) only worked four dailies. Assuming that the average crew person was employed forty weeks each year then a focus puller working only on weekly rates could have earned £3,770 while another focus puller averaging three or four days a week might earn £5,400 - but both figures could be doubled with overtime. Further reasons for

⁶ Boom operators, focus pullers etc were selected because they are middle ranking, but critical skills. Lower grades such as loaders may be not be consistent because they are in training while senior grades, operators and cameramen can be abnormally elevated because of specific qualities.

the unpredictability of income will be discussed in Chapter 7, but it was becoming clear that, given the uncertainty of what overtime might be expected or how many days an average crew member might have worked each year, the available basic data was so detached from the real wage income that the comparisons became meaningless.

Furthermore, the contemporary statistics also proved meaningless for this task. While it was clear that some workers were earning well, it was also clear that some workers were earning very little. The Skillset survey revealed that 30% of all respondents (remembering that these were all names taken from film call sheets) had been unemployed or earned less than £10,000 in the survey year, and only 7% had earned more than £75,000 despite 24% having a weekly rate in excess of £1,400 (2005:67&70). □or were the interviews to prove useful in this regard. Even when respondents were willing to discuss rates, it became clear that there were too many variables, not least that a worker might take lower pay on a specific film for economically irrational reasons: the project appealed to them; they were keen to work with the director; friends were working on the film; the schedule or location was convenient (these reasons will be examined further at page 195).

It will be apparent that there was some frustration at this stage. There appeared to be an anecdotal phenomenon (the persistence in certain employment practices in the British film production industry) but no framework was emerging against which, first to demonstrate that this was a reality and, second to identify why this state should have persisted. Up to this point, the majority of the research had been literature based and the interviewing was being constantly postponed until the specific and necessary questions could be identified; knowing that interviews would take time to arrange and each would be a one-off opportunity.

It was the preparation for those interviews that introduced a new concept: that the research should be carried out with no preconceptions that either the phenomenon or associated reasons exist:

The recorded in-depth interview, or oral history, is a specific research method within the general designation of qualitative methodology and is close to the basic principle of grounded theory. However,

grounded theory refers to other kinds of observation of behaviour besides the interview. Another important difference between oral history and grounded theory lies in the emphasis oral historians place on the formation of questions that guide the research. Proponents of grounded theory insist on approaching research without preconceptions – that is hypothesis. (Yow 2004:8)

By this stage a preconception of result, if not the reasons, did exist but it had only been formed through the anecdotes of earlier interviewing and the limited published data. Therefore it seemed appropriate to investigate grounded theory (Glaser & Straus 1967; Glaser 1992). Glaser (1992) was encouraging

...when a researcher flounders in getting started on a research project it is quite often the result of forcing on the data a preconceived problem that ought to take the data apart and give yield, but does not because of lack of relevancy. The researcher is lost and sees the data as recalcitrant. The grounded theory researcher bypasses this problem in getting started by simply studying what is to be studied with no preconception of what should be in advance of its emergence. (Glaser 1992:25-26)

He described the process as:

three major components (1) data collection, which soon becomes intricately involved in (2) the methods analysis, that soon generate the concepts, hypothesis and integration which result in the production of (3) written and verbal presentations. (1992:13)

Freed from the requirement to start with a fixed template of questions, the interviewing was started (that process is described more fully in the next section). As data became available (interview transcripts, survey details and literature) it was analysed and first coded to indicate the specific area to which the item related and then grouped in the most appropriate category. One aspect where Glaser appeared to offer no advice was when trying to code several different eras or sectors with almost identical codes and categories. (In this research, the closed shop era and the contemporary film production industry – plus the wider audio-visual industry which it became clear was very different.) This was resolved by coding and then consolidating all the available data into headings represented by the matrix at Table 4.

Table 4: Data codes & their grouping in categories

Categories & associated codes	The closed shop era	Contemporary Film production	Contemporary audio-visual sector
A. The state of the industry			
Budgets			
Crewing			
Production data			
Production statistics			
B. Entry			
First job			
Frustrated attempts			
Gate keeping			
The closed shop			
C. Skills			
Acquisition			
Failure			
Grades			
Progression			
Technical changes			
D. Lifestyle			
Frustrations			
Income			
Satisfactions			
Working conditions			
Perception of other sectors			
E. Association			
Closed shop enforcement			
Cohesion			
Departments			
Employers & associations			
Getting work			
Networks			
Unions			

This grouping of data and the comparison of the evidence “horizontally” (to use the terminology Table 4) certainly did reveal both similarities and differences that could be utilised to demonstrate that:

1. there were distinctive similarities in the experiences and employment practices between the closed shop era and those of the contemporary film production industry,
2. there were stark contrasts between the experiences and employment practices of the closed shop era and those of the contemporary audio-visual sector.
3. there were contrasts between the employment practices in the contemporary film production industry and the contemporary audio-visual sector.

These preliminary findings meant that there were at least two clear questions to be answered:

1. Why had so many employment practices of the closed shop era survived into the contemporary film production industry?
2. Why had these practices not persisted in the contemporary audio-visual sector?

Grounded theory would then suggest that the core variable will emerge as the analysis of the data continues, although Glaser and Strauss do appear to differ here:

It is not as Strauss says, ‘the process of selecting the core variable...’ For grounded theory selective coding only starts after and only when the analyst is sure that she has found the core variable. The core category simply emerges from the constant comparative coding and analysing the data. (Glaser 1992:73)

Inevitably, one can never be quite as detached as grounded theory generation requires and, as the thesis will demonstrate, one can still make some inadvertent assumptions because there are some aspects which are so engrained that no one ever mentions them.

At this stage of the research the core variable that appeared to emerge was “association” meaning the relationships and cohesion with others implicit in the closed shop, networks, social capital, collective bargaining, union membership and even mere friendship. Membership of some form of association appeared to be the key to the first employment, to career progression, to bargaining power, identity and thus livelihood and lifestyle. The absence of association in the audio-visual trades appeared to be the reason why individual workers were so vulnerable and why there appeared to be less coherent career paths.

Therefore association appeared to warrant further investigation: how had organised labour emerged in the early film industry? How had the complete closure through the pre-entry closed shop come about? How had it operated and been enforced? What had caused its demise? What had replaced it in the contemporary film production sector? The early stages of this research was to be predominately literary: contemporary commentary, the official, but relatively lightweight ACTT history (1983), the recollections of individuals or on back copies of the ACTT journal, *Film and Television Technician* (which proved useful in providing

commentary on the activities of the 1970s and 1980s). Similarly, the more recent BECTU journal, *Stage Screen* □ *Radio*, for more contemporary commentary on union activities and the obituaries that have been a useful record of how individuals joined the industry and the union in the past. The results of this research appear in Chapters 4 and 5 while Chapter 6 shows how the changing social and technical influences, and some political influence, broke down the traditional admission routes to the industry and thus the cohesion that held the many strands of the greater industry (film, television, documentaries and laboratories) together.

This clue that it was changing admission processes that influenced the nature of association led to the hypothesis that it was the admission process that established the viability of association; that there must be a system operated by existing practitioners of a critical skill to create barriers for new entrants so limiting the labour available and thus maintaining a strong bargaining position for those already qualified. The skill provision was necessary because that was the property that made the association unique, much as it had been mystery and exclusivity that had made the craft unions powerful.

It was clear that rigid admission processes had been the policy of the ACTT from the 1940s until the 1970s; therefore what needed to be shown was that some admission process persisted in the contemporary film industry. Thus the requirement became to demonstrate the requirement of specific skills which would be a valued property for employment and then the existence of association operating admission to those skills. To show there was an admission process it would be necessary to identify a barrier between those who had access, and those who were barred, from the possession of the skill. The result of this analysis forms the main theme of Chapter 5.

However, as will be seen in Chapter 3, a late factor impacted on the logic and findings, valid as they were. Glaser recommends that the researcher does not read other theory associated with the general area of study:

There is a need not to study any of the [related] literature in the substantive area under study. This dictum is brought about by the concern not to contaminate, to be constrained by, inhibit, stifle or otherwise impede the researcher's effort to generate categories, their properties, and theoretical codes from the data that truly fit, are

relevant and work with received or preconceived concepts that may really not fit, work or be relevant but appear to do so momentarily. (Glaser 1992:31)

To date, this researcher had ignored all other theory relating to labour markets and so encountering Doeringer & Piore (1971) at a late stage was a revelation. Here was theory, relating to craft markets, which needed no adjustment to fit the circumstances and evidence identified in the closed shop era and which had many parallels in the contemporary film production industry. However, Doeringer & Piore also identified one factor which had not been isolated as a core variable in the earlier analysis – the complicity of management in the internal labour market because of the “technical efficiencies in recruitment, screening and training” (Doeringer & Piore 1971:30). This, reflecting the different way in which the power of capital is used, will be shown as probably the prime reason why the “craft practices” have persisted, even been encouraged, in the contemporary film production industry and why the experience of the other audio-visual industries has been so different.

This description of the stage of research should not be closed without one further reference to Doeringer & Piore which this researcher took as some exoneration for the earlier, failed attempts to locate an economic proof of persistent, but irrational practices. Doeringer & Piore confirmed that testing that there are rigid laws which allow an internal labour market to function without being influenced by the external economic forces is not straightforward:

rigorous proof of the rigidity of the internal labour market in the face of economic forces would require (1) the specification of a set of economic variables which would in principle, govern the pricing and allocation of labor and (2) a demonstration that the rules which actually govern pricing and allocation are inconsistent with this set of variables. ... Unfortunately, the requisite measure of neoclassical economic variables are unavailable at the microeconomic level and the administrative rules which control internal labour markets in practice cannot be defined with sufficient precision to permit quantitative testing of their compatibility. As a result, the case for the internal labour market must rest on less satisfactory heuristic evidence. (Doeringer & Piore 1971:5).

Chapter 3 POWER AND LABOUR MARKETS

“Power is the ‘ghost at the bargaining table’” (Martin 1992:1)

If one can accept the premise, which will be expanded in later chapters, that workers in film production still possess significant autonomy¹ and control over the terms and conditions under which they are employed, then they have maintained that influence, or power, over an extended period of time and in changing circumstances. That some power must be present to maintain the autonomy of the film production workforce is based on the presumption that any workers in an employment relationship are invariably at a disadvantage because “the balance of power between management and unions is heavily weighted towards management” (Martin 1992:3).

The early nineteenth century commentator believed that in employment matters there were “three kinds of power, the power of wealth, of talents, of numbers” (*The Crisis* 3rd May 1834)² and, given its simplicity, this appears a useful statement to provide some starting framework to the examination of the characteristics and institutions through which workers have sought to apply their powers of talent and numbers to counter the power of wealth, invariably in the hands of the employers. As this chapter will show, the means by which workers have been able to harness the power of talents (i.e. skills) and numbers (through collectivity) have evolved, often responding to changing circumstances, but the examination ultimately

¹ “The right and responsibility to make choices about the methods and techniques used for a given task...” (Breagh & Becker 1987)

² In a contemporary setting, the power of state regulation should be added.

identifies specific conditions which will later provide benchmarks against which the employment of film production workers can be tested.

Section one will show that the weakness of talent alone is that it is insufficient to ensure the maintenance of power because the possessor of talent alone has no control over demand or supply.

Section two considers the power that was acquired by the closure of an occupation to only those who possessed specific talents or skills: “the price he [the worker] could get for his labour depended on his keeping it scarce” (Phelps-Brown 1959:118). Here the professional and the skilled worker shared objectives because both had invested in their training, but the skilled lacked the profession’s ability to invoke the public interest and so harness legislation and public opinion to safeguard their position. Thus the skilled workers’ only effective closure mechanism was by restricting access to their training - a mechanism which was often eroded by technical, social and legal changes.

The third section considers the power of numbers through defined, formal, labour organisations and collective bargaining. The growth through the early and mid twentieth century of the general and industrial unions, and in particular the utilisation of the closed shop, ensured that workers could use their numerical dominance of the labour market to influence employers and governments.

Section four will consider an alternative use of numbers through less well defined institutions and without formal agreements. It will be shown that unwritten custom and practice are just one example of the considerable influence that can be exercised in the work place through the informal institutions of networks and social capital.

The fifth section will review the theory relating to internal labour markets showing that the administrative rules and custom identified have many parallels with the trade union and informal institutions already identified in the preceding sections, thus providing a suitable template against which to test employment practices.

3.1 The power of talent

“Talent: special aptitude; natural ability or skill.” (OED 1939)

“a mechanic’s skill is to him what the capitalist’s money is to the capitalist” (cited by Cook 1996: titlepage)

Exceptional natural talent or special aptitude, e.g. as possessed by an outstanding musician, sportsman or artist, provides the owner with a negotiating power which they can utilise to their advantage; i.e. power is imbued through the rarity or the brilliance of their talent. However, through the consideration of the seeming simplicity of that power, it becomes apparent that talent, which is innate, or skill, which is acquired, may not provide assured power which can be replicated or relied upon to remain effective, it being vulnerable in two respects.

First, there is no control over the demand. The creation and erosion of demand will be examined further in the next section, but without demand for their services the employed have no power because they have nothing else with which to bargain except their labour, skilled or otherwise:

... the labourer instead of being in the position to sell commodities in which his labour is incorporated, must be obliged to offer for sale as a commodity that very labour power ... (Marx 1999:109)

The practitioners who rely solely upon the possession of some innate talent or acquired skill (“the capability of accomplishing something with precision and certainty” (OED 1979)), however unique it might be, have no control over the changing environment in which they operate and so changes in taste, consumption or technology may leave them vulnerable if the talent or skill becomes obsolete or outmoded because the practitioners are unable to evolve and adapt:

The [US] railroad professions and protoprofessions ... are one such example. Had they developed knowledge that abstracted beyond the world of the railroad, they might have survived its fall. But despatching did not become what we now think of as operational research, even though its central task was essentially under the jurisdiction now held by that profession. Because they lacked abstraction, dispatchers died with their technology. Another such group are the itinerant entertainers - musicians, dancing masters,

singing teachers - whose numbers have been decimated by the centralisation of entertainment. (Abbott 1988:29)³

They had skills that continued to give them market power compared to other workers, but also skills that faced the threat of erosion by new technology... (Cook 1996:30)

The second threat to the power of talent is supply. The possessor of outstanding talent has a value, provided there is demand, because there is no alternative supplier who can match the quality of their service; the outstanding performer may possess genius which is inimitable. However, talent, as the definition states, is natural ability (“cleverness, capacity or mental power” (OED 1979)), so there is no restriction on the numbers that may possess some lesser measure of that ability – albeit that the definition implies that the talented should certainly be “special”. Furthermore, possession of a skill relies on both possession of individual ability and the social environment in which the activity takes place:

Skill is not easy to define or describe in a useful way because it is a contextual entity. Skill is as much the outcome of competing knowledge and power in industry, as something which exists in its own right. (Cook 1996:2)

Most writers concur on the necessity of distinguishing the skills that people bring to jobs (i.e. talents, abilities, capabilities and so on) from the skills that jobs require (i.e. task demands, role requirements, and what the positions demand, permit, and encourage). The former are often viewed as individual possessions, the latter as characteristic features of social roles. (Spenner 1990:400).

The social aspects of the skilled will be discussed below, but here it should be noted that while there are some limitations imposed by the requirement for individual “talents, abilities, capabilities and so on” – for example the co-ordination required by pilots or the need for perfect colour vision in film graders – these impose no finite or predictable limit on those who might aspire to the skilled employment. Thus, there may be many possessing sufficient dexterity or intellectual ability to acquire and develop skills which are sufficiently complex that they also confer some degree of autonomy (Spenner 1990). Therefore, to avoid the dilution of that power of autonomy through the oversupply of those capable of

³ Chapter 1 cited other examples.

meeting the requirements, practitioners must seek to regulate the labour market by institutional means.

The nineteenth century craftsmen recognised that control of access to their specific skill was a key influence upon wages, because it had been one cause of divergence in the interests of masters and journeymen in the mid eighteenth century (Phelps-Brown 1959:114) when masters were seeking to break, not uphold, apprenticeship, for example by permitting the recruitment of ‘foreigners’ who had not served a recognised apprenticeship or to increase the number of apprentices trained (Webb & Webb 1920:53).

Both these courses of action “...tended to depress the wages, expectations and status of the journeyman” (Chase 2000:15) and if all applicants were admitted then the expectation of a reasonable livelihood through possession of a time-served skill could be dashed. Around 1800, the Corporation of Pinmakers had been obliged to petition Parliament because the daily sales of their journeymen, on which they were dependent, were devalued:

by reason of the unlimited number of apprentices that some few covetous minded members of the company do constantly employ... have by degrees so beaten down the price of pins that the workman is not able to live of his work. (cited by Webb 1920:42).

The authority to recruit, the power of wealth, was with the employers. However, these early skilled workers were the sole possessors of the mystery - the knowledge of their craft - and they could use this power to restrict access to the means to acquire the talent or skill; the power of closure.

3.2 The power of closure

“The core prediction of closure theory is straightforward: the greater the extent of closure characterising the occupation, the higher the occupation’s rewards” (Weeden 2002:60)

Weber recognised the restriction of access as a means of acquiring power, when participants’ “expectations are of improving their position by monopolistic tactics...”, and he used the terminology *open*, if the system “does not deny participation to anyone who wishes to join...”, or *closed*, should “participation of

certain persons [be] excluded, limited, or subjected to conditions” (Weber 1968:43).

Thus, in an employment setting, the existing practitioners seek to impose closure and so:

generate[s] an artificial scarcity of individuals who have the legal, technical or socially recognised ability to perform the bundle of tasks provided by that occupation. (Weeden 2002:61).

This practice was recognised by the professions (“it is apparent that where a profession is closed... a valuable monopoly has been secured by the registered” (Carr-Saunders & Wilson 1933:357)) and craft workers alike, the latter by coordinating the practices of those “who through servitude and the ritual of apprenticeship had been inducted into the same mystery” (Phelps-Brown 1959:118) because it was the control of the training of the next cohort through apprenticeship that provided the craft unions’ source of power:

Craft unions ... obtained their power by controlling entry into the particular skill category; they were able to manipulate the supply of skilled labour to maintain their welfare. (Booth 1995:15).

Indeed, this control of entry and the perpetuation of apprentice ratios was one of the tests of a craft union: “craft unions in pure form are confined to apprentice-served, skilled workers and are intended to protect and promote a marketable skill...” (Bean 1994:29). Thus, in 1889, the ‘Liverpool Rules’ of the Typographical Association stated that:

Type Composing Machines must be worked exclusively by Journeymen and duly recognised Apprentices, such Apprentices to be reckoned in the total number allowed to each office... (Musson 1954:191).

Thirty years later, in 1919, the Association again reviewed the rules relating to apprentices, wished to “regulate not only their selection, training and technical education, but also their wages” because the Association was still “dominated by fear of ‘over flooding’ the labour market and causing unemployment” (Musson 1954:337). A further twenty years later, in 1933 and 1936, the Delegate Meetings of the typographers passed resolutions to urge further limits on apprenticeship ratios to reduce unemployment, insisting that the “seven years’ apprenticeship rule

remained a cardinal feature of T.A. policy...” (Musson 1954:384). By these means of regulating entry “the craftsman felt he strengthened his union by not bringing men in, but by keeping them out”. (Phelps-Brown, 1959:119)

However, control of the supply of talent, or skilled labour, was only one mechanism by which closure could be used to create a position of strength. Weeden identified four mechanisms which could enhance reward, of which the latter three related to demand:

restricting the supply of labor in an occupation, enhancing overall demand for a product or service, solidifying an occupation’s claim to be the sole provider of that service, or signalling to customers that the occupation provides a service of particular quality. (Weeden 2002:57)

Weeden identified five strategies utilised to secure occupational closure: “licensing, credentialing through the formal education system, certification through voluntary programs, representation through occupational associations and unionisation”⁴ (Weeden 2002:60). This list was not exhaustive (and he specifically noted the omission of social networks which will be considered in section 3.4) but the objective was always to create closure, although, as Weeden indicated, some strategies were more effective than others and not every strategy was available to all occupational groups.

For example, professional associations in areas such as medicine and education could encourage demand for their members’ services by lobbying government for increased regulation (Weeden 2002:65) citing public interest. However, unions have a less powerful voice, unless able to invoke issues such as health and safety, because they are perceived to be acting exclusively in their members’ interest. Similarly, the professions have been more successful in channelling demand specifically to their members (i.e. “solidifying an occupation’s claim to be the sole provider of that service”) by the claim that they alone are capable of adjudicating in their sector because:

⁴ Weeden was considering the situation in the United States, but the strategies would seem universal.

they have a particular knowledge base on which their professional judgement is based, they, and not employers or government officials, should be the arbiters of the practice of fellow professionals. (Coady & Bloch 1996:7)

Lastly, the very reason for the existence of the professions had been their need to signal to the world at large that their members should be set apart as uniquely capable:

the skilled practitioners came to desire that the competent should somehow be distinguished and protected. It was hoped to achieve this end by limiting admission to the clubs to those who could show evidence of competence, which in those days meant evidence of experience and accomplishment. In this way prestige would be attached to the members of those clubs or associations. They, and they alone, would be the true civil engineers or architects... (Carr-Saunders & Wilson 1933:301).

While the craft worker could make similar claims, these were rarely protected and so, for example, the changes in work practices and technology that challenged inter union demarcation in the late nineteenth century shipbuilding industry of the North-east had to be settled by the unions themselves (with the occasional intervention by the employers) rather than independent or legal arbitration (Clegg et al. 1964:128-132).

Weeden had noted that successful closure depended on “legal, technical or socially recognised ability” (2002:61) and the craft unions were vulnerable on all three counts.

The effect of technical change on skilled workers operating craft qualification, pre-entry closed shops was already highlighted in Chapter 1, and the effect of technology on some occupational groups in the film production industry will be considered in section 6.2 (page 164). The potential challenge of new technology is that alternative methods will lessen the demand for skilled workers by introducing less demanding processes. The first potential challenge is that technology will completely replace the process of which the skilled workers have been a critical part, thereby rendering them completely redundant; the introduction of the Sinclair Pocket Calculator (1972) destroyed the skill-intensive mechanical calculator industry. Alternatively, technology may simplify the complexity of the crucial process, or reduce the critical judgement necessary, so that the same results can be

achieved by less skilled workers. Lastly, technology may change or replace the essential skill process so fundamentally that even if the new technology requires skilled workers, it will have broken the monopoly of the established practitioners (the assumption being that the negotiation of a new agreement, even if arranged with another skilled workforce, will be more satisfactory to the employer because the newcomers will be more compliant.⁵)

Regarding society's recognition of skills, although the objectives of closure among professionals and craftsmen have often been similar,⁶ society has always viewed the professional very differently to the craft worker. The Preface to the rules of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, 1851 made the point well:

The youth who has the good fortune and inclination for preparing himself as a useful member of society by the study of physic, and who studies that profession with success so as to obtain his diploma from the Surgeons' Hall of College of Surgeons, naturally expects, in some measure, that he is entitled to the privileges to which the pretending quack can lay no claim; and if in the practice of that useful profession he finds himself injured by such a pretender, he has the power of instituting a course of law against him. Such are the benefits of the learned professions. But the mechanic, though he may expend nearly an equal fortune and sacrifice an equal proportion of his life in becoming acquainted with the different branches of useful mechanism, has no law to protect his privileges. (cited by Webb & Webb 1920:218)

In practice, professional closure has always been treated more kindly by statutory legislation than other supposedly restrictive practices. In the mid 1960s, it was observed that the trend for professions to resist competition by limiting the availability of substitutes through legal measures, contrasted sharply with other contemporary legislation which sought to enforce competition through the Restrictive Practices Act 1955 and the Resale Prices Act 1964. While those Acts were designed to outlaw price fixing, the professions were allowed to "engage in price-fixing and other restrictions and enforce them collectively, sometimes with

⁵ In 1984, The Times Group newspapers were willing to enter into new agreements with the EETPU regarding offset litho printing because these enabled them to abandon the traditional agreements with linotype printers of Fleet Street (Greenslade 2003:474)

⁶ "there are examples among certain professional groups such as lawyers and doctors of compulsory membership of the relevant organisation and/or job security practices similar to those operated by skilled and craft unions" (Hanson et al. 1982:8)

statutory authority”. Similarly, the Monopolies Act of 1949 and the Monopolies & Mergers Act of 1965 projected one aim, while at the same time some professions, specifically the opticians, had been granted near monopoly powers (Lees 1966:3&4).

In 1971, great care had to be taken in the drafting of the Industrial Relations Act to include trade unions, the perceived operators of restrictive and coercive practices, whilst excluding from its provisions the professional bodies. Registration of professional bodies would “threaten the interests of powerful pressure groups such as the British Medical Association” (Moran 1977:19) - an organisation which still unashamedly describes itself as “an independent trade union dedicated to protecting individual members and the collective interests of doctors” (BMA website February 2006).

This legislative pressure against skilled worker closure was not new. During WW1, the wartime legislation effected through the Ministry of Munitions encouraged the dilution of craft practices through the admission of women and unskilled men into work previously reserved for time-served craftsmen. On Clydeside, dilution resulted in unofficial strikes, and eventually it was the Ministry that compromised, agreeing that women were only allowed to work when a man left, or a new machine was installed, and then only on the simplest tasks (McLean 1983; Morris 1991), but this was a rare success.

Post-war, new forms of trade unionism exercising a different power, based on numerical strength (to be examined in the next section) began to dominate and closure became a less effective source of power. Thus the Engineers, in 1926, “resolved...to open their ranks to all classes of male engineering workers... One by one, other unions of apprenticed craftsmen followed the same path....” (Clegg 1978:54) and so, while closure should have become “an ever recurring process” (Weber 1968:342), in many industries the numbers of semi- and unskilled workers now far exceeded the skilled. Even though the piecers had not been particularly inclined to unionise themselves (Webb 1920:7; Turner 1962:141), when they were accepted by the spinners into a limited form of union membership they outnumbered the craft spinners three to one and so the size and numerical ratios within the previously craft-based union inevitably changed. Similarly, before the

WW1, the unskilled, day-wage Steel Smelters' Union had grown until it overwhelmed and absorbed the Associated Iron and Steel Workers craft union (Turner 1962:149).

As these "lapses from strict organisational purity" took effect, even the "supremely aristocratic London Society of Compositors has recently accepted a body of workers ... not recruited by its own strait path of apprenticeship" (Turner 1962:239) and in the Amalgamated Engineering Union, an established craft union and the successor since 1920 of the original "New Model" Amalgamated Society of Engineers, only one third of members (250,000) were deemed to be skilled workers by the early 1960s. (McCarthy 1964:48).

By the late 1960s, the Donovan Report could observe that "it has not in fact been possible to maintain the craft system in all its exclusiveness everywhere" (Donovan 1968:88) but that did not mean that the bargaining power of craftsmen was entirely spent because it was still "buttressed by scarcity due, not only to the skill, but also to the social institutions of the craft" (Clegg 1978:31).

Clegg's introduction of 'social institutions' gives notice of the power that will be considered in the fourth section, but his quotation also reconfirmed the consistent principle that skill was a bargaining tool. However, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century less skilled workers had begun to discover that they too had a bargaining power based, not on closure, but on the inclusion and mobilisation of all workers available to the employer.

3.3 The power of formal organisation

"One of the main tasks of trade unions is to limit and control those persons and institutions who wield direct authority over industry"
(Clegg 1960:20)

"No miner can work without a union card" (Sampson 1901:635)

Writing in 1898, the Webbs had believed that "effective use of the Device of Restriction of Numbers is no longer practical." While they believed that such a device had the

...economic advantage of fencing-off particular families, grades or classes from the general degradation and thus preserving the

community, in these privileged groups, a store of industrial traditions, a high level of specialised skill, and a degree of physical health and general intelligence unobtainable at a bare subsistence wage.

they acknowledged that only a minority of unions still relied up such methods. (Webb & Webb 1898:712-713)

The 19th century craft unions had only ever represented a minority of workers, the “aristocrats of labour, a mere tenth of the whole labour class” (Webb 1888 cited by Phelps Brown 1959:148) but, following the success of the London docks strike (1889), many semi- and unskilled workers were drawn to new general and industrial unions such as the Gas-workers, the National Union of Agricultural Labourers, the Eastern Counties Labour Federation and the General Railway Workers (Webb 1920:405). Unlike the short-lived general unions of 1833-34 (Cole 1953:104-106) and 1872, these unions survived.

However, the power of the numerical strength of these new general unions could only be properly utilised if it encompassed all potential workers, the futility of partial strikes having been recognised in earlier industrial disputes:

By a general union they [the working classes] might provide themselves with every species of power; and by a general strike they might bring their superiors to any terms of accommodation. Have these partial strikers provided themselves with either of these two powers? Have they more wealth than their masters? More talents or more numerical power than the unstruck labourers? ... consequence must be that for want of power, they must yield the victory... (*The Crisis* 3rd May 1834)

The means to avoid this fragmentation of effort, enforce unity and so “provide themselves with every species of power” would be through the institution of the closed shop which is now examined in detail.

In 1806, a Parliamentary Committee report described circumstances where:

every workman on his becoming a member of the society, receives a certain card or ticket.... and there is the utmost reason to believe that no cloth worker would be suffered to carry on his trade, otherwise than in solitude, who should refuse to submit to the obligations and rules of the society.” (Report of Committee on the Woollen Manufacture 1806:16 cited by Webb 1920:41)

By 1889, the Webbs indicated that unionists in some sectors were refusing to work alongside non-unionists and that their employers were complicit to the arrangements:

An employer habitually refuses to engage any workman who does not agree to his workshop rules, or to those adopted by the employers' association, In the same way, the Trade Unionist will, if he can, refuse to accept work in an establishment where he is obliged to associate with non-unionists; "working beside a non-unionist," say the Flint Glass Makers, "is bad enough ... without having to assist him in his labor ... This being so we do not hesitate to say that before an employer engages a unionist, he ought to clear all non-unionists off the premises. Where we have demanded this, it has been done." (Webb & Webb 1898:213-214)

Both of these examples would appear to have been describing the attributes of a closed shop: "in which employees come to realise that a particular job is only to be obtained and retained if they become and remain members of one of a specified number of trade unions." (McCarthy 1964:3).

A question, which fortunately this thesis does not have to answer with precision, is when and how the term 'closed shop' came to be conjoined in Britain with the practices now associated with it. It seems almost certain that the term originated in America. The American Iron Moulders' International Journal of June 1864 noted that certain shops had been 'closed' pending the settlement of strikes (cited by Stockton 1911:14) and the expression 'closed shop' does appear in an early 20th century British published pamphlet (Post c1905:3) - but examination reveals it to be a reprint of an earlier American article. In 1891 there is a British reference to the London Dockers' Union trying to "close a trade" (Howell 1891:150), but Drage, writing in 1905 about how some unionists "assert their own right to refuse to work with non-unionists" (1905:70), never used the term "closed shop" and nor did the Webbs in the 1920 edition of their *History of Trade Unionism*. Goodrich, writing in 1920, did use the term 'closed shop' twice when listing those unions who had achieved almost complete unionisation (1920:65). However, he was an American, perhaps using an American term, and he never indicated how this might be different to his other examples. The Webbs' example of the late 17th century woollen industry, already cited, would suggest that resisting the employment of non-unionists had existed from the outset of the British union movement. But it is

also clear from their descriptions of working life of 1892 that it was not a universal requirement to be a member of the appropriate union in order to pursue a craft trade. It was sufficient that the individual had qualified through appropriate apprenticeship: “tailors and cabinetmakers ... though often highly-skilled craftsmen, had only a small minority of their trades in Union” (Webb 1920:441).

These seeming contradictions arose because the term ‘closed shop’ incorporated two different practices; the pre- and post-entry closed shop. McCarthy believed that the Americans avoided this confusion by using two different terms; only the pre-entry practice was described as closed shop, the post-entry being described as a “union shop” (1964:16n). However, this must have been a mid 20th century development because the distinction had not been obvious earlier in the century:

The workmen in a closed shop elect a representative of the union, who is known as Shop Steward. ... When a man is employed, it is the duty of the Shop Steward to ascertain if he is or is not a member of the union by asking to be shown his union card. If the card is not produced he is given a certain time in which to join the union. (National Association of Manufacturers of the USA 1913:23).

A later American (Toner 1942:16) still used a broad definition of closed shop, “a certain type of relationship or mode of operation existing between and among employers and organised workers”, and argued that union shop and the closed shop were often interchangeable, the former being the term preferred by trade unionists.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary confirms that view:

.... in 1942, the American Council on Public Affairs noted that “the origin of the term ‘closed shop’ never has been satisfactorily ascertained.” It is clear that ‘closed shop’ has been used in English since the early 1900s, but it is not certain whether trade union members coined the term themselves or had it foisted upon them by opponents of the labour movement. Regardless of its origins, the term proved problematic for union leaders in the 1940s, when anti-union sentiments prompted many politicians (and a good portion of the public) to disparage and seek to open ‘closed shops’. To avoid the negative connotations of being ‘closed’, union members instead embraced ‘union shop’, a term still used for establishments that support membership in labour unions.....

In 1968, the Conservative document, *A Fair Deal at Work*, attempted to use McCarthy’s interpretation of the then contemporary American terminology of ‘closed shop’ and ‘union shop’ to differentiate between the pre- and post-entry

closed shop (CPC 1968:24) but the distinction never seems to have gained acceptance in Britain perhaps because, in the subsequent 1971 Industrial Relations Act, the 'union shop' became the 'agency shop' when it incorporated several attenuating features. Ultimately, McCarthy's assessment was that "the closed shop is an extremely varied phenomenon, which affects different groups in differing degrees and different ways" (McCarthy 1964:78) so it is first necessary to examine the post-entry closed shop because although the pre-entry practice may have been seen as a natural continuation of the craft unions' exclusivity, the post-entry closed shop was an extension of the principle of comprehensiveness which had created the general and industrial unions.

Because "union power derives from the ability of the union to inflict damage on the firm through labour withdrawal" (Booth 1995:72), the common objective of both the pre- and post-entry closed shop was to ensure that the bargaining power of the existing workforce was not threatened by the availability of any alternative workforce. The difference was in the means of rendering any potentially alternative labour unavailable to the employer. The skilled worker had erected a barrier through exclusivity because only time-served apprentices possessed the necessary skills: "the skilled man not only benefited from the scarcity of his skill, but in a strike he had its protection against substitution by blacklegs..." The ordinary labourer had no such defence: "...the unskilled man's place could be taken by any hungry fellow from anywhere" and so the unskilled had to utilise the unity of the general and industrial unions as an alternative source of power. By incorporating every pool of alternative labour into the union movement it became inaccessible to their employers as substitute, blackleg labour - much as the spinners had, albeit in a more selective way, ensured that their semi-skilled assistants, the piecers, were integrated and unavailable (Turner 1962:142). Thus, "denied strength though exclusion, the general union sought it through comprehensiveness" and so "the only safeguard was to get all sorts of unskilled men everywhere into one union" (Phelps-Brown 1959:150).

The post-entry closed shop took the concept of 'comprehensiveness' to the next stage: if the 'open' unions (using Turner's distinction) could accommodate all workers without question or qualification, then nothing could inhibit the

membership of anyone who wished to work in a particular workplace, and thus an entire labour force “recruited, retained, and subjected to the discipline of the union” would enhance the union’s internal strength, enabling it “to wield more effective sanctions against employers” (McCarthy 1964:111) by raising the potential cost of any dispute to the employer. The creation of such unity from unskilled, mobile workers was not always a simple process (McCarthy 1964:126-131), but eventually all post-entry closed shops required that every member of a workforce should also be a member of a specific union, all recruits should be members of that union and, should an employer select a non-unionist for employment, this could only be tolerated “so long as he agrees to join the union immediately or shortly after engagement” (McCarthy 1964:16).

An employer’s willingness to participate in the enforcement of such practices varied between workplaces. McCarthy cites examples where the employer’s active involvement extended to confirming a potential employee’s willingness to join the union during the selection process (McCarthy 1964:23-24). Alternatively, an employer might take a more neutral position; not actively participating, but accepting that the closed shop was a principle of importance to the union and that tolerance caused the company no great inconvenience or cost. Lastly, the union may have had to ‘unilaterally’ impose the closed shop with no formal acknowledgement or acceptance by the employer but through shop floor pressures - social contact, persuasion, social ostracism, refusing to work alongside non-union workers (Clegg 1978:38) or even short, selective strikes against the employment of non-unionists such as occurred in the motor industry in the 1950s (McCarthy 1964:119&120).⁷

Whatever the means by which it was established, the closed shop did not automatically imply power. Although McCarthy quoted the Secretary of one employers’ association regarding the closed shop, “this is an issue about power” (1964:90), in his more detailed examination he suggested that the unilateral imposition of a post-entry closed shop might be “a sign of weakness, or insecurity”

⁷ In the previous century, there had been a practice of “rattening”, a Sheffield term for the “the temporary abstraction of the wheelbands and tools” belonging to non unionists (Drage 1905:11; Webb 1920:260), but the practice and term appears to have lapsed.

on the part of the union (1964:113). Certainly some unions were willing to deny that such a condition existed:

To describe the agreement reached as providing a 'closed shop' is a gross distortion of the facts. Our members in London simply say they are not prepared to work with people who will not conform to those agreements which have been properly negotiated and approved by the vast majority of the people concerned with the agreements. (Arthur Deakin (as General Secretary of the TGWU) quoted by Goldstein 1952:36)

Turner had believed that "most open unions will, in fact, when they feel strong enough, attempt to impose [the closed shop] by one means or another" (1962:282) but it should be noted some unions achieved close to 100% membership without the imposition of a formal closed shop. This situation was not new because in the late 19th century the Webbs had observed:

In the best organised industries ... such as the Boilermakers, Flint Glass Makers, Tape-sizers, or Stuff pressers – the very aristocracy of 'Old Unionists' – the compulsion is so complete that it ceases to be apparent. No man not belonging to the union ever thinks of applying for a situation, or would have any chance of obtaining one. (Webb 1898:215).

A strong union could impose its requirements through negotiation, collective bargaining or the "silent and unseen, but absolute compulsion" (Webb 1898:215), whereas a union weakened by an inability to organise industries with high mobility (such as building and engineering) or which had intermittent contact with those members (road haulage) would have problems in maintaining the strike solidarity. Therefore it was these weaker, insecure unions that needed a closed shop to impose their will on employers, and workers. (McCarthy 1964:152).

The objective of the pre-entry closed shop was still to effect closure - to regulate admission to specific employments and so avoid any dilution of the valued employment - but by the 1960s the serving of an apprenticeship was no longer the sole barrier to ensure exclusivity. McCarthy identified four principal variations in forms of the pre-entry shop and it is necessary to summarise them because at least three of the four variations were at some stage operated within the film production industry.

The natural successor to the craft union tradition was the *craft qualification shop*. In its purest form, the craft requirement would have been the serving of an apprenticeship and, as shown above, the unions took pains to ensure that employers maintained strictly agreed apprentice ratios. There could exist a slightly diluted form of the craft qualification union where no formal apprenticeship system existed, but the principle remained that, once accepted as a union member, the worker was free to transfer elsewhere. Similarly, the employer could freely select new employees, without seeking union approval, provided that the worker's 'ticket' remained current (McCarthy 1964:17 & 18).

The employer did not have that freedom in a *promotion veto shop*. This usually existed because the workers' freedom to transfer was curtailed because some element of the skill was acquired through service and promotion – and that skill was not readily recognised or transferred elsewhere. Thus the union would regulate the access to the promotion gateways and insist that the employers select the next most senior person as each vacancy for advancement appeared (McCarthy 1964:20).

While those first two forms may still have retained some links to the exclusivity of the craft union, the remaining two forms of pre-entry closed shop related mainly to unskilled workers where some barrier to an otherwise potential flood of newcomers was necessary. In the *labour supply closed shop* the union become the sole source of labour for a particular employer because he or she was obliged to apply to the union for a nominated candidate as each vacancy occurred. The employer retained some rights to object to a union's first nomination, but was still obliged to seek another candidate from the union (McCarthy 1964:17). A variation, where the union had less control, was *the labour pool* where the union did not attempt to nominate individuals, but agreed with the employer that only recognised union members should be selected for employment (McCarthy 1964:17). It should be noted that some features of these latter categories were also present in the craft related closed shops and some print shops found it necessary to operate using elements from the craft qualification and the labour supply closed shops

Thus it can be seen that the term "closed shop" embraced many variations, however, the importance of them all was the ability of the union to control, as near

as practical, one hundred percent of the workforce in the all-important procedures of collective bargaining which, in the British system of industrial relations, was perceived as the most important power available to workers in the workplace: “A priority is accorded to collective bargaining over other methods of external job regulation” (Flanders 1975:94).

The term ‘collective bargaining’ appears to have been first used by Beatrice Potter (later Mrs Sidney Webb) in 1891 (Webb & Webb 1898:173n) but the full significance is explained in a series of examples in *Industrial Democracy* (Webb & Webb 1898) as a means of preventing the employer exploiting the differences in worker’s individual circumstances when setting remuneration:

The starving man gets his job at the same piecework rate as the workman who could afford to stand out for his usual earnings. The superior craftsman retains all his advantages over his fellows, but without allowing his superiority to be made the means of reducing the weekly wage to the ordinary worker. (Webb & Webb 1898:174)

In addition, collective bargaining created the “working rules” that would be “binding on all the employers and workmen of the town or district”: setting the hours for the beginning and ending of work, the ratio of apprentices, the provision of holidays and the notice required to terminate work (Webb & Webb 1898:175). This concept, that collective bargaining, “binding on all”, should regulate industrial relations had been re-affirmed by many official reports. In 1917, the Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest reporting for Wales and Monmouthshire stated:

1. That it should be a statutory obligation on all workmen to belong to a recognised union of their particular industry... Without compulsory unionism there can be no stability in industry.
2. That at least in certain industries, especially large scale industries, all the employers ... should belong to an employers’ association, or if not, they must accept the terms and conditions agreed upon by such an association. (Report of the Commissioners, ¶o 7 Division 1917:29)

Fifty years later, the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers’ Associations would make the similar conclusions (Donovan 1968) and many employers agreed: Weekes (1975:41) believed that employers found that “one hundred percent trade unionism provides one side of a more complete system of

collective bargaining”; Hart (1979) showed evidence that “bosses loved the closed shop”; and The Economist, contemplating Conservative proposals to remove the closed shop in 1977, stated that “many industrialists will also shudder, so used have they become to the convenience of plant bargaining” (Economist 8 Oct 77).

Flanders had made the point that besides being a rule-making process, it was also “a power relationship between organisations” (Harbison 1966 cited by Flanders 1975:219) and that, despite being described as collective bargaining, all resulting agreements were not bargains, in the sense of a market activity, but the negotiated settlements of power conflicts between pressure groups (Flanders 1975:218). Therefore, a collective agreement was:

....not truly a collective bargain. Trade unions do not sell the labour of their members; nor do employers’ associations, unlike individual employers, buy it. (Flanders 1975:220)

Those agreements were the attempt by the two parties to establish, or retain, control over those matters that they perceived as critical in the work place and they effected those agreements through rules, procedural and substantive, to establish rights and obligations.

The substantive rules (setting wages, working hours and job terms) were theoretically binding on a national basis (Donovan’s “formal system” (1968:12)) and, being standard rates, needed little clarification. However, the procedural rules (the methods of exchange, grievance procedures and the settlement of disputes) required interpretation and thus involved other parties besides trade unions and employers’ associations (Flanders 1975:87) – and these different parties created new, and more complex relationships because workers’ behaviour in the workplace:

... is not only controlled by management. This formal organisation of a business enterprise is supplemented and complemented by an informal organisation created by the employees to meet their own social needs at work. (Flanders 1975:88)

Therefore, despite the rhetoric regarding the supremacy of collective bargaining, there were other means of effecting external job regulation.⁸ We shall return to the importance of administrative rules and procedures as they relate to the control of an internal labour market in section 3.5, but first we should consider the other means of effecting job regulation. Flanders recognised five additional methods, and it is the fifth of those, “custom and convention” (1975:94) which next needs examination because it will demonstrate the power of informal institutions

3.4 The power of informal institutions

“It isn’t what you know but who you know” (Traditional saying cited by Field 2003:□□)

The worker power discussed in the previous two sections was exercised through formal organisations, either craft or trade unions, which controlled predominantly through formal rules and regulations. These rules were evident in formal apprenticeship schemes and ratios, governances regulating membership and in all the procedural and substantive rules associated with collective bargaining. However, this thesis will argue in later chapters that these formal organisations have often been replaced by more informal methods which regulate and coordinate the activities of individuals through networks and social capital using unwritten conventions and codes of behaviour. Therefore, it is necessary to establish that the power exercised through informal institutions, while less overt than that of the formal predecessors, is nevertheless still effective.

“Institutions replace uncertainty by providing a structure in everyday life” (□orth 1990:3) and so institutions do perform very similar functions to organisations. However, while organisations may be constructed by individuals bound by some institutional commonality, institutions and organisations are not the same. Organisations have structures, hierarchies, leaders, personalities and internal rules whereas institutions are more abstract: “the underlying rules of the game” that effect the constraints that “human beings define to shape human interaction.”

⁸ The Webbs had also noted that “Collective Bargaining is neither co-extensive with, nor limited to, Trade Union organisation” (Webb & Webb 1898:177)

However, institutions can be either formal or informal. Formal, by the application of rules and regulations, or informal because of conventions and codes of behaviour thus providing a context for any human activity being:

... perfectly analogous to the rules of a game in a competitive team sport. That is, they consist of formal written rules as well as typically unwritten codes of conduct that underlie and supplement formal rules, such as not deliberately injuring a key player on the opposing team. And, as this analogy would imply, the rules and informal codes are sometimes violated and punishment is enacted. (□orth 1990:4-5).

This section is interested in the informal institution operating though those “conventions and codes of behaviour” and without formal organisational support.

The concept that unwritten pacts have often governed the conduct of those in the work place has long been accepted and is often discernible in the divergence between how management envisaged and set out the work tasks in regulations and rules, and the ways in which workers themselves completed those tasks. In some instances workers colluded to control the output to levels that were agreed as acceptable to the work group (Mathewson 1931; Mayo 1933), in others they had to circumvent the management’s rules and directives in order to complete their prescribed tasks, as in Burawoy & Lukacs’s description of work practices in a communist steel foundry (1992).

Three particular research studies provide the detail of how such informal arrangements operated: Roy’s study of quota restriction (1952), Burawoy’s explanations of the ‘games that workers play’ (1979) and Brown’s study of workplace “custom and practice” (1973).

Brown’s study considered collective bargaining as it related to piecework, but was most interested in how the bargaining and rules that were practised on the shop floor had evolved from the rules that had often originated as unilateral edicts from management. The name given to those evolved rules was “custom and practice” and they were significant in that they were non-negotiated; they did not arise from any process of formal negotiation (Brown 1973:85-86). Instead, there was process, marked by the absence of formal calculation or negotiation, similar to that which assessed compensation for “the drift”, the differences between new and “vintage” piecework tasks:

collection of rules of thumb whereby the work study engineers could use the formal language of their profession to cobble together piecework values acceptable to the workers. (Brown 1973:20).

Thus, even in a formal collective bargaining setting, the conventions of custom and practice meant that rates were fixed that would be “acceptable to the workers.”

There is even less obvious presence of formal organisation in Roy’s and Burawoy’s experiences as machine operators, indeed often the lower management cooperated. Roy describes a conversation with his superintendent, Steve, when he had already made \$10 on his shift:

“That’s all I’m allowed to make isn’t it?” I asked. Steve hesitated at that one. “You can make more,” he said, lowering his eyes. “But I’d better not,” I insisted. “Well, you don’t want to spoil it for yourself,” he answered. (Roy 1952:102)

Steve’s endorsement of the informal rules of the shop floor, despite his status as the management’s representative, demonstrates the power of informal rules and of the conventions of the workforce: “each worker sooner or later is sucked into this distinctive set of activities and language [i.e. making out]” (Burawoy 1979:64). Elsewhere, Burawoy describes how workers could regularly turn out more than the required 140% (100% being the figure required for the basic earnings while the additional 40% would earn an incentive bonus) but would only put 140% on any official returns, keeping the additional parts as a ‘kitty’ for future use. Therefore:

There was always a discrepancy between what was registered on the books as completed and what was actually completed on the shop floor. Shop management was more concerned with the latter and let the books take care of themselves. Both the 140% ceiling and the practice of banking (keeping a kitty) were recognised and accepted by everyone on the shop floor, even if they didn’t meet with the approval of higher management. (Burawoy 1979:58)

Thus, the evidence was that:

On the shop floor informal arrangements and practices often take precedence over the formal agreements made by employers and employees. (Finlay 1988:27)

If Finlay believed that informal arrangements “*often* take precedence over the formal arrangements” (my italics), then Flanders appears to have given the

informal rules greater power than the collective bargaining which was prevalent in the times and settings that he was describing:

These informal rules, which management has no say in making but tacitly has to accept, range over many subjects. In earlier times they were mainly the trade practices of the craftsmen who protected their job territory from invasion by limiting entry and upholding demarcation. Today they are the means by which workers who are not craftsmen protect their earnings and their bargaining power, but equally their security, their status and their values. The effect of full employment on workplace relations is not confined to the upsurge in intra-plant *collective bargaining*; it has also resulted in a growth in *unilateral regulation* by workers on the shop floor which is expressed in employment or working practices acquiring the force of institutions. (Flanders 1975:203) (italics in original)

It is possible that Flanders was referring to what Donovan called the “informal system” (1968:12), negotiated through the offices of the shop steward – whose authority was part democratic, elected locally as the workers’ representative, but also the authority derived from the organisation of the trade union. However, as Brown shows, workers, or “gangs of them”, negotiated around the local agreements without any of the structures of formal organisation.

... the entire piecework system tends to be taken over by extremely fragmented bargaining between individual workers (or gangs of them) and ratefixers (or work study engineers or foremen). Joint negotiation over piecework base rates ceases. *Even the role of the shop steward is subsidiary...* (Brown 1973:21) (my italics)

But these “informal arrangements and practices” require some co-ordination and collusion. The “social pressure of a convention [that] makes it best to act that way” (Brown 1973:84) could lead to enforced organisation; Hansen had noted that in some communities refusal to join the union would result in social ostracism (Hanson et al. 1982:8). However, in this context, social pressure probably means the more subtle pressure that Burawoy had identified: the necessity for an individual to conform to the norm by regulating personal actions. But this still remains in a formal framework, the workplace; so was custom and practice only an effective power because it was operated within the framework of the more formal collective bargaining? The findings of Mathewson (1931), Mayo (1933) and the theories of social capital and networks, would suggest not and that the informal convention may be a deliberate measure to circumvent the formal organisation:

Modern organisations are governed by rules. These are accepted procedures ... usually defined clearly in terms of a position rather than a person. But when they want to make something happen, many people will ignore these formal procedures and responsibilities and set off to talk to someone they know. (Field 2003:2)

Therefore, for a greater understanding of how these informal arrangements were communicated and coordinated, and the resources that can be applied without formal organisation, we must turn to the literature relating to networks and social capital. Social capital implies that there is a value in those that an individual knows – and, in turn, who and what they know:

Social capital is embedded in the network of contacts among individuals that can be mobilised to serve achieve certain ends Contacts may be based on friendship, work relations, or participation in civic and leisure activities. (Jarley 2005:3)

That networks of colleagues and contacts are of value is probably common sense (Field 2003:44), however, the connection of networks to the term social capital would seem to indicate that the network is a resource, pointing to “ideas of investment, accumulation and exploitation” (Field 2003:3). While there has been a debate about whether the term “capital” is the best idiom, because this is not a capital that can be traded and it confers none of the social and political advantages attached to financial capital (Smith & Kulynch 2002:177), Field believes that to try to read too much into the terminology is pointless:

Social Capital can be termed capital in so far as it gives rise to resources that can be deployed in order to enable actors – both individuals and groups – to pursue their goals more effectively than they could do without it. (Field 2003:138)

So this is a resource, a power, that can be used in the work place by both individuals and groups to “pursue goals” which do not need formal organisation, although it might just as easily supplement as supplant them. The evidence is that social capital returns tangible benefits, as Field’s analysis indicates:

To summarise the findings in a wide variety of research, it seems that in general, social capital broadly does what the theorists have claimed: to put it crudely, people who are able to draw on others for support are healthier than those who cannot; they are also happier and wealthier; their children do better at school; and their communities suffer less from antisocial behaviour. (Field 2003:45)

Furthermore, the benefits of social capital are well documented in the employment field, workers are more likely to locate work (Field 2003:51) and employees introduced through social networks are less likely to be rejected at the application stage, less likely to fail the interview and fewer will turn down an offer (Fernandez et al 2000 cited by Field 2003:52). Once in the work group, where workers are well known to each other and where each has some awareness of the others capabilities and characteristics, there is even more probability of collaborative behaviour:

We usually observe cooperative behaviour when individuals repeatedly interact, when they have a great deal of information about each other, and when small numbers characterise the group. (North 1990:12)

However, the effects of social capital are not all beneficial to employers. The network may, as shown above, be used to suppress effort or to fix prices. Also, while networks may facilitate the recruitment of suitable candidates, those same networks may exclude those who do not, or cannot through ignorance, participate.

Yet while recruitment through connections can be a highly reliable way of attracting employees, it can also exclude not only the unreliable, but those who are simply outsiders with no existing connections on the inside. (Field 2003:122)

It will be shown that this feature is particularly apposite to the closed shop and in the contemporary film production and audio-visual sectors because social capital does not automatically take any account of an individual's capabilities or their ability to influence their own success:

Or should we allow the interest in social capital to distract us from other structural factors which determine people's life chances. (Field 2003:139)

Although social capital is often seen to have parallels with human capital, the acquisition of the latter is the time and investment of the individual and is associated with the economic value to the individual and the firm. The acquisition of social capital may also require the investment of time and commitment to establish and then maintain the necessary connections, but it may never be of value to the individual nor the employer. Also, there is an element of chance in choosing the right network at the appropriate moment. While human capital is possessed by

the individual and has some transferability, the value of social capital is the value of the network and the other participants – and thus it may be worthless in changing circumstances.

Nevertheless, networks will be shown to be of importance in the sectors under examination, and the fifth section will examine the theory which brings together much of what has preceded.

3.5 Internal labour markets

“The allocation of work assignments [and] the determination of wages...all governed by administrative rules that are not wholly responsive to market forces” (Doeringer & Piore 1971:13)

A theory very relevant to this research was that relating to internal labour markets, identified in the American workforces by Doeringer & Piore (1971). They defined the internal labour market as being: “an administrative unit ... within which the pricing and allocation of labour is governed by a set of administrative rules and procedures.” Jobs within the internal labour market would be filled only by those who have already been admitted to the organisation and therefore those jobs would be “shielded” from the direct influences of competitive forces in the external market. This contrasted with the “external labour market” which would be governed by more conventional economic theory i.e. where pricing, training and allocating decisions would be controlled by economic variables (Doeringer & Piore 1971:2)

It will be recognised immediately that descriptions of labour markets where jobs are “filled by the promotion or transfer of workers who have already gained entry” (Doeringer & Piore 1971:2) mirror the vocabulary used by McCarthy in connection with the promotion veto and the labour supply varieties of the pre-entry closed shop, (McCarthy 1964:17&20) - and there are many other parallels between the internal labour market and the pre-entry closed shop. Furthermore, many of those characteristics, the control of entry points, on-the-job training, and the ability to shield workers from external economic influences, would appear to be present in the contemporary film production industry. Therefore, because Doeringer & Piore set out the criteria which they believed characterised the internal labour market, an

examination of their work may supply appropriate tests by which the existence and continuity of an internal labour market can be assessed.

Because it is intended to test the specific conditions set out by Doeringer & Piore against the evidence assembled for the film production sector, it is not proposed that this section will be a detailed analysis of their work. Instead, what is proposed is a broad summary to establish their general framework, conditions and vocabulary because these will largely dictate the structure of what follows in subsequent chapters.

Doeringer & Piore identified three differing market structures, the Enterprise Markets, the Craft Markets and the Competitive Markets, but their empirical work concentrated on the *Enterprise Markets* which they saw as being “manufacturing establishments” in which the internal labour market was “generally synonymous with the establishment”. In such establishments:

the predominant pattern appears to be one in which production jobs are arranged in seniority districts or lines of progression. Entry job classifications tend to lie at the bottom of these lines and vacancies in other jobs are usually filled by the promotion of workers from the next lowest job classification in the line of progression.

These rules applied as much to management as blue-collar workers, each following their respective lines of progression, except that managers’ career structures could be operating within a larger corporation and thus bridge several establishments or firms (Doeringer & Piore 1971:2-3).

This geographical flexibility, while remaining within the same progression, was even more apparent in the *Craft Market* which tended to be centred on the appropriate union and thus operate within its “geographical and occupational jurisdiction”. In these markets, confirming the principles of craft exclusivity already discussed, it was probable that entry to the craft or occupational internal market would be more rigidly controlled than in the manufacturing enterprise market. Because of the mobility implicit in skills that could be used in many situations (e.g. building trades), it might be thought that this work might be more vulnerable to market forces than the enclosed world of the enterprise market. However, Doeringer & Piore (1971:4) believed that the evidence they presented

showed that the administrative rules still predominated, thus confirming that these craft workers were indeed operating in an internal labour market.

Lastly, Doeringer & Piore hypothesised that there might exist the truly *Competitive Market* where the process of allocating labour and the pricing of jobs would be conducted in a purely competitive fashion. This market might not exist, but the concept was necessary to illustrate the contrast with the internal labour market (Doeringer & Piore 1971:4-5).⁹

Having established the different markets that might exist, it was then necessary to prescribe the precise conditions necessary to show that an internal labour market was truly effective. It was not enough to merely show that administrative rules existed but that they created distinct boundaries within which pricing and job allocation differed from the external market. The microeconomic data necessary to provide rigorous proof was rarely, if ever, available and so the suggested factors that indicated rigidity in the rules were, first, longevity - that the rules had operated for an extended period and preferably through changing economic and technical circumstances. The second factor was the commentary regarding the rules. Did management cite the rules as creating inefficiency? Did unions concede that the rules were non-negotiable? If such comments were prevalent then it seemed likely that rigid boundaries did indeed exist. Thirdly, it seems probable that labour would be a major element of the process and that there would be associated on-the-job training and, lastly, there should be distinct inter-dependencies and practices amongst work groups which would be manifest as fixed customs and traditions relating to wages, promotions and other work arrangements (Doeringer & Piore 1971 5-7).

If those were the tests that an internal labour market existed, then the three factors that created such markets were more easily identifiable being skill specificity, on-the-job training and customary law.

The definition of *skill specificity* drew on Becker's work regarding trainees (1964) and was taken to mean the extent to which an acquired skill might have no

⁹ It will be shown that in the case of audio-visual production, such a competitive market does exist and this will be discussed in Chapter 8.

application within another firm or sector (Doeringer & Piore 1971:14). It was argued that the more specific a skill became, the more expensive the training would become for the employer, because trainees would be unwilling to invest themselves in a skill with such limited application, and the specificity would mean that there would be no economies of scale. However, once the skills were acquired, the reduction in labour turnover probably justified those additional costs. The concept of skill specificity was coupled closely to job specificity, where a particular task might require only specific skills, and technical specificity where familiarity with specific machinery could deliver greater speed and accuracy (Doeringer & Piore 1971:15-17).

Doeringer & Piore's second factor critical to the development of an internal labour market was *on-the-job training*, a process which was key to understanding internal labour markets because it was the informal process by which the newcomer, through "osmosis", "exposure", "experience" or "working one's way up through promotion" was absorbed :

Very often on-the-job training is not recognised as a distinct process at all; it is simply assumed that a worker who has 'been around' for a while will know how to do certain things. (Doeringer & Piore 1971:18)

However, the implications of such training were far greater than the technical improvement of the newcomer. Training occurs during normal business activities and therefore success or failure is soon apparent. This disciplines the learning process because the rewards or penalties are effected on the trainee in both monetary and psychological terms. Furthermore, because the training requires that all those involved, trainer and trainee, are involved in dual roles: in both the learning and the production process. This can blur the distinction between jobs, even though the formal responsibilities remain, because both trainer and trainee are responsible for the end result. (Doeringer & Piore 1971:19).

So why is on-the-job training so prevalent in the internal labour market? Probably the over-riding reason is that there is no alternative. The nature of the work cannot be replicated in formal instruction because the practitioners cannot demonstrate it except in the production setting, either because it is impossible to replicate the

same challenges or because they do not want to reveal their tacit skills to management. Therefore, it seems “natural” to management and workers to place the trainee into the real setting because learning will be automatic and a natural progression will take place as the trainee, motivated by curiosity, moves from one task to another as each is mastered (Doeringer & Piore 1971:20-21).

On-the-job training may also seem costless to management – although it will inevitably involve some waste, because of the trainee’s errors, and some loss of productivity on the part of the trainer who is diverted from his normal task. However, there is a saving because the trainee only learns the precise requirements of the job; there is no teaching or acquisition of skills in excess of the job content because the trainee is never exposed to them as they might be in more detached, formal classroom instruction. Thus on-the-job training is narrow, but effective in teaching the highly specific skills necessary for a particular job (Doeringer & Piore 1971:21-22).

The third factor necessary for the internal labour market was *custom*. As already shown, entrenched custom and tradition was one of the elements necessary to show the existence of an internal labour market but Doeringer & Piore now defined the characteristics and implications of custom:

Custom at the workplace is an unwritten set of rules based largely upon past practice or precedent. These rules can govern any aspect of the work relationship from discipline to compensation. (1971:23)

These rules, they surmised, were the result of stability in the internal labour markets and had value to the employer and the workers because the workers, having “regular and repeated contact with each other”, “generated a set of unwritten rules governing the actions of their members and the relationship between members and outsiders”. The resulting rules eventually acquired an “ethical or quasi-ethical aura” and thus they defined what was right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable (Doeringer & Piore 1971:23). These rules eventually extended to the allocation and pricing of labour and, as they became more “constrained and less responsive to market forces”, so rigidity was established in those areas (Doeringer & Piore 1971:24)

Assuming that employers must always seek to minimise their labour costs it might seem that customs could create an unacceptable cost to the employer, making the process uneconomic. The implicit rigidity would hamper any organisation operating in a competitive economic environment for two reasons: first, the rigidity created by custom would isolate labour costs from economic reality; second, because the workforce's sanction against management who violated custom was also economic: strike; working to rule; and sabotage. Doeringer & Piore (1971:24) believed that managerial adherence to work custom could not be seen in purely economic terms because their own junior management also belonged to the work group, thus custom influenced all management decisions. Furthermore, change was not impossible because custom was based on past practice and therefore, if new procedures were gradually introduced they would, as they gained acceptance, become the accepted custom thus "custom [is] an essentially passive phenomenon which tends to grow up around whatever exists." (Doeringer & Piore 1971:25).

This passive characteristic meant that in a new, non-union enterprise, management was free to set whatever rules they pleased, but around these rules, custom begins to form and, if there is no economic or technical change, custom will become indistinguishable as a separate force. Only as change occurs, does the gap between custom and economic efficiency potentially widen and management then has a choice - to try to shift custom to a more efficient practice by introducing new procedures - so establishing a new custom - or to accept the cost of inefficiency as being less than the cost of change (Doeringer & Piore 1971:25).

How the groups formed to support these customs drew upon some of the processes discussed in the last section but added the concept of habits - patterns of behaviour which the individuals associated with reward. Primary habits are associated with basic physical needs, but it is "secondary reinforcers" which develop customs: individuals imitate those around them and thus reinforce and perpetuate group behaviour. At this stage, it becomes apparent why and how the internal labour market becomes a self-perpetuating institution. Because of its stability, newcomers are relatively few and thus exercise little diluting effect. Furthermore, because those newcomers are trained on-the-job, so the means by which they learn the skill incorporates them into the group norms (Doeringer & Piore 1971:26-17).

Moreover, there are several positive factors that enable the internal labour market to remain viable: the value of the internal labour market to the worker, the reduced turnover costs for the employer, and the efficiency in recruitment, screening and training.

The value of the internal labour market to the worker was its stability. The worker knew that the investment in the acquisition of a skill in such a market would be a long term property with value: “wage sacrifices necessary to attain access to the internal labour market thus represent a trade-off between present and future income” (Doeringer & Piore 1971:28).

The employers’ gain from the internal labour market was also its stability. Because the workers valued the employment, there was low workforce turnover, especially amongst the senior workers (i.e. those most expensive to replace). Doeringer & Piore highlighted that in:

traditional economic theory turnover has no cost. Labor is treated as a variable factor of production, and employers are assumed to hire their workforce by the hour or by the day at an hourly or daily rate.
(1971:29)

Turnover when labour became a significant and fixed element of production did carry a cost because, firstly, the recruitment, screening and, if necessary, the training of replacements would be expensive because the specific skills required were not readily available on the external market and, secondly, the customs of the workforce imposed constraints on the employer’s ability to terminate workers.

However, those same elements made recruitment, screening and training of internal candidates relatively efficient because the stability of the existing employees meant there was already awareness among the workers and management of the candidates’ characteristics, reliability and skill. External candidates would have to be located, tested and have their references checked - and even then there might be unpredictable variables which might render the new hire to be poor value (Doeringer & Piore 1971:30-31) such as learning curve effects.

It will be seen that these factors in many ways made the internal labour market self-perpetuating. The stability of the workforce was a benefit to the employer because it reduced his selection and training costs but it also reinforced the stability by

ensuring that the few newcomers that were necessary were also inducted into the same customs and practices that created too formidable a cost for the employer to challenge them. Those customs, or rules, were both a threat and a benefit; they were necessary if on-the-job training was to operate successfully; they prevented rapid change in the terms and conditions of employment and they insulated the workforce from external economic conditions (Doeringer & Piore 1971:33).

The desire to perpetuate that isolation had different effects in the craft and enterprise markets. In the craft market, more loosely organised than the enterprise market, possibly spread over many organisations and probably dependent on union control, the means to ensure stability was a “highly rigid set of entry rules”. However, once the newcomer had met those criteria, the rules which governed the internal allocation of labour were relatively flexible. However, the enterprise market, as was shown, depended on strict allocation rules so thus once, on the progression, the worker was “guaranteed precedence in employment and promotion over those with less seniority” thus workers could be “indifferent to those entering the market after them” (Doeringer & Piore 1971:34) and entry rules were relatively flexible.

Doeringer & Piore had, to this stage, deliberately omitted mentioning the effect of the organisational behaviour of trade unions and management on these processes. Trade unions, when present, invariably gave structure to the processes of custom and, because local officials identified with the workforce, their effect was to strengthen and consolidate what, in the absence of a union, was possibly only “unorganised and some unconscious expressions of discontent”. Thus the union became “the vehicle for the expression and enforcement of customary law” and this was especially marked when the customs were incorporated into the collective agreement. Such incorporation potentially removed the flexibility that could be effected by the gradual changes to procedures and practice through the frailty of memory – changes could now only be made through collective bargaining (Doeringer & Piore 1971:35-36).

Similarly, in large hierarchies of management, senior managers would attempt to control the actions of shop floor managers through formalised rules and regulations so limiting the flexibility that unwritten rules provide. However, flexibility was

usually restored because those formal rules usually left some management discretion and would probably have to include some procedural rules allowing for their amendment. Doeringer & Piore also noted that it was junior management, “susceptible to social pressure from the work group”, who would give greater weight to custom than was consistent with economic efficiency (1971:36-37) – a feature consistent with the “custom and practice” of Brown’s piecework bargaining (1973).

Summary

This chapter has examined how workers have obtained and exercised power in the workplace, the power necessary to balance that of the employer in the employment relationship because “ultimately, an employer will always have the best cards in their hands because they control the purse strings” (Gerry Morrison. General Secretary BECTU, SSR March 2007)

It was shown that possession of an innate talent or acquired skill may be useful, but provided no continuing assurance of power because the practitioner had no control over demand or supply. Control over the latter could be achieved by closure and the craft workers’ power came through the possession of ‘mystery’: the skills and talents necessary for the completion of specialised and demanding work which only the craftsman could complete. The restriction of access to that mystery meant that no alternative workforce could be trained and thus the potential employer was obliged to deal with the craftsmen on their terms. Even when those craftsmen were not bound into formal organisations, they would invariably still observe the conventions of their trade – although those conventions and rate cards were almost always formalised into collective bargaining.

The professions similarly used closure to restrict supply and so create a monopoly over specific activities, but their respectability also enabled them to cite the public interest and so create demand by extending their areas of activity while restricting less qualified competition. Such activities were often regarded as restrictive practices when pursued by trade unions.

For less skilled work, closure was not an option.¹⁰ Without the formality of organisation or the abilities to perform a specialist task, any available worker could replace an unskilled worker and thus their bargaining power was minimal. Therefore, the strategy of the unskilled was inclusivity – every potentially available worker was incorporated into the union, or an associated union, and thus rendered unavailable to the employer at the time of any official labour dispute.

The ultimate stage of inclusivity was the closed shop where the worker could not be employed unless a member of the union. Although there were many classifications within the closed shop, the universal aim was closure:

At one end of the spectrum, the craft union depends largely on unilateral control of the labour supply by strict rules of entry and demarcation of work, reliance on industrial strength to preserve that control, and striving to maintain differentials over the less skilled; and at the other the general union relies on inclusive membership, the establishment of across-the-board increases, the narrowing of differentials, and often the use of political means to underpin minimum wages and conditions. (Undy et al.1981:76).

Thus the workers could speak with a single voice in their negotiations with employers and, through the substantive and procedural rules of collective bargaining, utilise the collective power which was backed by the ability, ultimately, to ensure the total withdrawal of labour.

But even at the height of collective bargaining which, in its “formal system” (Donovan 1968:12) was negotiated at a national level between trade unions and employers’ associations, there existed at the shop floor custom and practice, negotiated by often informal groups and demonstrating that, even without the formal structures of trade unions, workers can still retain the power to influence their working terms and conditions. These informal institutions acquire the social capital which is “embedded in the network of contacts among individuals that can be mobilised to achieve certain ends” (Jarley 2005:3). Social capital is not always benign, nor is it universally useful – it works negatively against those who do not

¹⁰ Except in those non-skilled occupations able to establish pre-entry closed shops in areas such as print and docks, often because of their proximity to craft qualification closed shops.

possess it. Nevertheless, it gives power to the unwritten rules and conventions that operate in the workplace.

Finally, the preceding sections having demonstrated the historical origins of the institutions potentially empowering workforces and their practical manifestation, the fifth section explained how many of these features been distilled into the internal labour market theory where the “pricing and allocation of labour is governed by a set of administrative rules and procedures”, thus distinguishing them from those labour markets where price, allocation and training were controlled solely by economic variables (Doeringer & Piore 1971:2). That theory set out some of the criteria associated with an internal labour market, the first test being that there must be distinct, visible boundaries so demonstrating rigidity in the rules to a specific internal labour market (Doeringer & Piore 1971:5-6). The other criteria responsible for the existence of internal labour markets were deemed to be skill specificity, on-the-job training and customary law. It is these criteria which will be used to test the continuity of employment practices from the closed shop era to the contemporary film production industry.

Chapter 4 THE EVOLUTION OF FORMAL CLOSURE TO THE FILM TRADES

An earlier chapter traced the origins of the craft unions and their evolution into the pre-entry closed shop, constantly striving to maintain the principle of exclusivity through the control of apprenticeship. However, the purity of the craft unions was then lost. The pursuit of numerical strength meant that many craft unions became diluted either through expansion or by losing their exclusivity, being subsumed into the larger unions or merging with others to form new combinations (Undy et al. 1981:167-219).

Those early processes of association and craft purity were described in national terms, illustrated with examples from many different sectors. The next two chapters will focus very specifically on the film production sector to better illustrate how small numbers of craftsmen could associate to create a craft qualification, pre-entry closed shop, which in turn represented an internal labour market protected by rigid boundaries, but they will also show that the process was neither simple nor automatic.

This chapter will explore the emergence of the craft skills and identities in the British film industry and the very specific circumstances which established the closed shop in that industry.

The film industry may not appear the most obvious sector when commencing a study of the pre-entry closed shop. It was never a very numerically significant example of the practice when compared to the traditional industrial sectors such as cotton, shipbuilding or coal, nor was it made particularly visible in its militancy in a way that, for example, was associated with the print unions (although there were significant disputes such as the ten-week lock-out of the union's ITV division in

the autumn of 1979). In McCarthy's consideration of the closed shop, the 7,000 film production workers (and he included television workers in the same category) represented less than 5% of his list of "Comprehensively Closed Trades" - defined as being where "the great majority would find it impossible to remain outside a union" (1964:31). Therefore, the objective of this chapter is twofold: first to demonstrate that the film trades met accepted criteria as a craft qualification, pre-entry closed shop by the 1970s and secondly to show how the production industry evolved to meet the criteria of an internal labour market, and specifically the craft market:

These tend to centre around the local union, and the geographical and occupational jurisdiction of the local union generally defines the boundaries of the market. (Doeringer & Piore 1971:3-4)

Doeringer & Piore stated that the factors that generated an internal labour market were threefold: skill specificity; on-the-job training; and customary law (1971:13) and the chapter will show how these factors eventually come together.

Therefore, the first section will show that, although the organisation of labour only happened in the second quarter of the twentieth century, the processes that led to the formation of a film union were remarkably similar to those processes identified by the Webbs and others as typical of all early craft unions. As a young industry, entry was still relatively open but the second section will show that by the 1930s, the film technicians' union was a craft-based association with the same priorities of restricting access and protecting craft that were operated by other craft unions. The third section will show how closed shop exclusivity was accomplished by an extraordinary combination of events, thereby accelerating what might otherwise have taken several more decades to achieve. Section 4.4 will explain the post-war patterns of film production and the union's attempts to adapt to them.

4.1 The early development of the film technicians' union

"... the association hopes to be able to play an important part in enhancing and improving the prestige and quality of British productions through keeping its members in touch with the latest technical progress"
(TC 29 Jun 36)

The history of the film industry in the United Kingdom is inevitably short when compared to more traditional craft sectors such as printing, textiles, iron & steel or woodworking. While it could be argued that the lack of heritage is irrelevant because it is only necessary to prove that a pre-entry closed shop existed prior to the 1970s, thereby creating an internal labour market, in practice the short history of the film unions makes them rather more viable examples of the craft principles of exclusivity, because they defy the trends which evolved in other sectors in the post WW2 period. As was shown in Chapter 2, many historic crafts evolved into craft unions and then suffered inevitable dilution throughout the twentieth century as they attempted to absorb potentially competitive labour from other expanding industries or merge to achieve numerical influence. The film unions, and in particular the then Association of Cinematographic Technicians (ACT), defied that process by starting in a relatively new industry as a loose federation of technicians with a common interest, and then refining itself to become more 'craft qualified'. It then increased its hold on an expanding industry because, as the demand for skilled workers increased (helped by the introduction of commercial television in the 1950s), such was the coherence of association and the effectiveness of its barriers that there was no alternative labour force. However, this was not a situation that was easily achieved and the early history of the union is worth examination to show how it can take time, persistence and some elements of chance to establish an internal labour market.

British film production only commenced as a commercial business in about 1898 with the establishment of an offshoot of the French company, Gaumont-British (Klingender & Legg 1937:23; Low & Manvell 1948:21)¹, but the British appetite for cinema was soon apparent and the first purpose-built theatres for film were built

¹ The principle of protecting the skills of film-making were established very early. A pioneer, James Williamson, wrote of the 1890s "Anyone who had succeeded in making films guarded the process and the apparatus with the greatest secrecy" (cited by Low & Manvell 1948:114).

in 1907/8. By 1915, there were 3,500 such cinemas. However, this was more a success for British distribution and exhibition than for British production because in 1910 only 15% of films being screened in Britain were of British origin. The vast majority originated in America which concentrated its output towards on London because it realised London's significance as a centre for international distribution. Meanwhile, British films had little success in the American market and Hollywood continued to extend its influence during the First World War and was thus able to establish an "unchallenged supremacy" (Street 1997:5).

By 1924, the embryonic British industry was almost moribund with no feature films in production because British cinemas still preferred to screen the more popular, and profitable, American productions. By 1923, only 10% of films screened were British and in 1926, those screenings had halved to 5% (Wood 1952:49). The industry was eventually rescued by government intervention through the Cinematograph Films Act 1927 which stipulated that cinemas must show a quota of British films - initially 5% for the six months following the Act, rising to 20%, in successive stages over the next eight years. The effect of guaranteed funding on production was immediate because, while in 1926 only twenty-six British films had been made, 128 were completed in the following year and 200 in 1933 (Oakley 1964:110). The British studio system was established; although it should be noted that the quotas, while "virtually creating the British production industry", did not "put an end to the predominance of the major American producers in the English market" (Klingender & Legg 1937:13).

The desire among film production workers to form some sort of association emerged in 1933 and the resultant informal discussions eventually led to the formation of the Association of Cine-Technicians (ACT). (There already existed a National Association of Theatrical Employees (NATE), founded in 1890, but this only serviced workers in theatres and cinemas - the latter denoted by the additional 'K' added in 1936 to form NATKE). It is apparent that there must have been an earlier attempt at association in the industry because the ACT official union history noted that Alf Turnwell was one of the few newsreel cameramen to join the ACT - "many of his highly individualistic colleagues refused, having been 'bitten' once before in an abortive attempt to organise in which they had lost their subscription

money” (ACTT 1983:170). This may have been a reference to the Kinecameraman’s Society of 1918 which had deposited its funds in a bank which almost immediately went into liquidation (Chanan 1976:23). The motivations for association appear to have been diverse and not all entirely compatible. One early faction’s objective had been to take creative control of the film production process. One film director, Maurice Elvey, was frustrated by the lack of creative control “because the people who owned the films and financed them... used to take them and hack them about.”² He described how his colleagues first formed an association to claim the right to edit the first cut of any film and that “out of this ACT derived and I supported it for all I was worth.”

This laudable statement of creative intent may have reflected his rather assured status within the film hierarchy. Those more technical, but lower in status and possessing less autonomy, felt the need for association for more practical, protective reasons as indicated by this quote from a cameraman of the period, Ted Lloyd: “working very hard, without proper breaks, night and day, very irregular, if any meal breaks, often to the point of illness” (ACTT 1983:170). This debate about the nature of the association continued for some time and, in a description not dissimilar to 18th century journeymen bookbinders who would meet “to take a social pint of porter together” (Webb & Webb 1920:23), the official ACT history described how “concerned individuals were gathering in the pubs and restaurants (or rather cafés) of Soho.” There remained some pressure for the association to be a professional body or a guild, but eventually the organisation was registered as a trade union because that “satisfied the majority of the founding activists” (ACTT 1983:10). The Association of Cine-Technicians (ACT) was registered (number 1995) under the Trade Union Acts of 1871-1927 on 21st June 1933. It affiliated to the TUC in 1936.

This encompassing within one union of many different skills and levels of seniority remained a peculiarity, perhaps uniquely, of the film industry until the end of the closed shop era in that the ‘managers and supervisors’ (directors and producers),

² In the early days of film, editing was seen as a mechanical process and only emerged as a creative skill during WW1. However, distributors and exhibitors still felt entitled to cut or adjust films to improve the rental income. (Low 1950:238)

who were often also ‘the employers’, were members of the same union as the rank and file workers whom they employed. Only ‘the money men’ (i.e. capital) could be correctly described as outsiders³ and in 1956 a legal ruling confirmed that any producer who was not in an entrepreneurial capacity had to be a union member (ACTT 1983:33). The Monopolies & Mergers Commission Report in 1989 noted that “Many of the directors of these [production] companies are understood still to be members of one or other of the main industry trade unions” (MMC 1989:6) and in this the ACT was very similar to the Webbs’ description of the early days of craft unions: “divided vertically trade by trade, instead of horizontally between employers and wage-earners” (Webb & Webb 1920:46)). This all-embracing structure was not followed elsewhere in the film industry. For example, in Hollywood the film crafts were all organised independently of each other as guilds (the Sound Guild, Camera Guild, Directors’ Guild etc) that each protected their own areas of interest. However, the antecedents of the internal labour market are significant because, even at this early stage, management was being drawn into the work group and so:

abides by custom for the same reason that other members do: because it cannot conceive of alternatives, because alternatives that are conceivable are discomfiting and wrong, or because it fears the sullen hostility of the workforce and the implied social ostracism. (Doeringer & Piore 1971:24)

The newly formed ACT, like the early craft unions, was based around a “house of call” (Webb & Webb 1920:23): the first secretary was a Captain Cope who ran a “health and strength café in Shepherds Bush market” from where “unlike other ACT founder members, he was in a position to venture forth from studio to studio collecting subs from new members.” Few members could also join at the café “you entered this café, jerked your head towards the [union] placard while at the same time putting half-a-crown on the table, whereupon the proprietor would ... lead you round to the back of the café where your name would be entered in a book” (ACTT 1983:11) Captain Cope must have been plausible and persuasive because by the end of 1933 it was estimated that he had 1,200 members recorded in

³ David Puttnam remained a member of the ACTT even as executive producer on *Chariots of Fire* (FTT May 1982)

his books. However, his book-keeping skills did not match his recruiting skills and this became apparent at a meeting where the annual report was read:

...Captain Cope, who was quite an agreeable person, I don't think he was in the strict sense dishonest, somehow had got his personal accounts and the association's account a little bit mixed up... Matthew Cope said 'in that case all I can do is offer my resignation' and immediately someone .. said 'move accepted' and someone else said 'seconded' and whoever was in the chair 'we better to put it to the vote – those in favour ? Motion accepted'. (Sidney Cole)

The resignation of Cope clarified the function of the association because: "it hadn't worked terribly well up to that point because it was trying to be respectable and just a sort of chartered association, not strictly a union". The immediate appointment of George Elvin (whose father was HH Elvin, then Chairman of the TUC) as the new General Secretary ensured that any ambiguity was eliminated.

After that initial flurry, early membership of the ACT remained small and it grew slowly. In December 1933, only 98 members were recorded and by December 1934, membership had fallen to 88. However, by December 1935 it was reported that "Over one hundred new members have been admitted during the month and the association now has members at every British studio. In several cases it is stated that membership is about 100% strong" (TC 16 Dec 35). It is now impossible to get any indication of the distribution of members in this era, but if the total membership was then about two hundred and that small number still represented "about 100% strong" in some studios then the figures would indicate just how small some British studios must have been. By April 1936, the third Annual Report was able to state that membership of the Association had now increased to 845, noting "an increase of 240 in the last three and a half months", thus having been 605 at the previous year end. The union membership was patently active enough for the continuing signs of social exchange: "The first ACT Ball & Cabaret has been arranged for Shrove Tuesday at Chiltern Court, Baker Street. Tickets are now available at 5s each" (TC 16 Apr 36). This assurance and interest in social exchange, amongst what must have been a very small and select group, would appear to have been in the "trade club" tradition: "they found their trade clubs of use mainly for the provision of friendly benefits..." (Webb 1920:45)

The reports that still exist of the union's early activities certainly indicate more an interest in craft and educational matters than employment-related issues. On 14 December 1935 it was announced in *Today's Cinema* that "Mr W. Vinten will deliver a lecture to the Association of Cine-technicians on Monday on the Manufacture of the Cine-Camera and Apparatus." In this there are early indications of two causal factors of the internal labour market: skill specificity and on-the-job training. The skills emerging as essential for film production had few applications outside the production industry but, because there were competing firms, it is probably too much to claim that they were "firm specific" as required by Becker's 1964 definition. However, these were skills in which workers were prepared to invest their time and collective effort in acquiring.

By contrast, there is very little reference during this period in the trade journals, or the ACTT official history, to collective bargaining on behalf of members. This may be explained by the resistance of studios and the ever transitory production companies to negotiate with the union⁴; this was still a new industry "in which the difference between showmanship and racketeering is often slight..." (Klingender & Legg 1937:7). Writing in 1980, Ralph Bond recalled how

working conditions in the thirties were deplorable. Unlimited hours, no overtime payments, no sick benefits, no holiday pay. Twelve hour shifts were the rule... One of the first successes of the union was an agreement with Alex Korda that overtime should be paid after sixty hours work.⁵ (FTT February 1980:10).

Another notable exception was the Gaumont-British Studios which, after an half-hearted gesture to set up an alternative staff association in 1936, entered into a voluntary agreement that represented a "substantial improvement" on pay and conditions. It was not until 1939, and then only through a strike threat by the ever-powerful laboratory workers (whose controlling influence will be examined later), that it was possible to sign "the first collective all industry agreement" with the Film Employers' Federation. But the success was short lived when the federation

⁴ At British International Pictures in 1937, the company forbade the union representative entry to the studio and issued a warning of instant dismissal for any continuing members of the union. (Letter from Jack Mills, FTT April 1979)

⁵ Ralph Bond was later to be a signatory to the milestone 1943 agreement between the ACT and the BFPA

disintegrated to be replaced by four separate employer organisations, each representing their respective sections of the industry: the Short Film Producers; the Association of Film Laboratory Employers; the Newsreel Association and the Film Producers Association (the latter representing feature film producers) (ACTT 1983:14).

The ACT's more long term success was probably established through their parliamentary lobbying on behalf of the British film industry and in particular, their efforts relating to the "ill applied" 1927 Cinematograph Films Act. As mentioned above, the Act had briefly stimulated British film production, but over time the quotas became debased and many home-based productions were "quota quickies" - scratch productions, made very quickly, at minimum cost by unrehearsed actors and crew, to meet the requirement that 20% of all cinema screenings should be "British". It was even claimed that these British quota productions were often never shown to paying audiences but projected "when cinema cleaners were preparing the premises for the real audiences for real films – ambitious and prestigious 'supers' from the USA" (ACTT 1983:17)⁶. However, these quickies did meet some of the original objectives by providing work for British technicians and allowing directors the opportunity to gain experience (Street 1997:9; Sweet 2005:111-112). Thus in 1938, when the new Quota Bill went to Committee, the ACT succeeding in mobilising sufficient members and parliamentary support to ensure that the quota provisions, which had previously only applied to features, were extended to short films and that a "minimum cost clause was introduced to kill the shabby tokenism⁷ of the old quota quickies." More significantly for the film industry workers, and the first indication that work within the industry was potentially valued and attractive employment, was the insertion of a fair wages clause into the 1938 Cinematographic Act:

⁶ Sweet (2005:106) suggests that while there were known instances of this (the 1938 *Kinematograph Year Book* reported a test case against two West End cinemas for scheduling British Quota pictures before noon that was brought before Magistrates who then closed the loophole) the practice was not widespread.

⁷ Although produced in Britain, these "worthless type of minimum cost films" were often financed by American interests to ensure that the quotas were met thus allowing the American films easier access (Spencer & Waley 1939:176)

It meant that to qualify as a British film under the new Act, productions had to honour trade union (i.e. ACT) standards on conditions and pay. The fair wages clause persuaded many hitherto reluctant employers to recognise ACT and to negotiate agreements. (ACTT 1983:17)

Thus by 1938 the ACT had become established and recognised, and represented 1,289 members - and as an organisation was probably more stable than many of the film production companies with whom it was negotiating.⁸ The industry was still financially precarious and dependent on sometimes speculative capital that often left studios idle - "It is not unusual for producers and directors to be kicking their heels because the financiers are too busy manipulating their shares" (Klingender & Legg 1937:7). The role of capital in film production will be examined later, but it is worth noting that the directors and producers, who are the 'project managers' and employers in film production, were just as vulnerable as the production crew when the supply of capital was withdrawn.

The interest of speculative capital in film production was the potential for profit and one cause of speculative interest in the period 1935-37 was the success of an Alexander Korda film, *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, which made a profit of over £500,000 on its first release (on a production cost estimated to be between £50-80,000) (Low 1985:167-168). But Korda's success was in part because of his affiliation to United Artists, and other British companies did not have the same access to American markets: "by 1937 the boom was over and the industry was in dire financial straits" (Street 1997:10). An ACT pamphlet of the period deplored the fickle nature of the financial institutions and the mismanagement of the producers - "in the boom period [1936], £4,000,000 was invested in one period of ten months. Most of it disappeared, and the great City geniuses are still wondering where it all went." The film crews suffered too: "at the time of writing [1938] more than half the skilled film technicians are out of work" because the financiers had lost confidence (Spencer & Waley 1939:176) and *Kinematograph Weekly* (4 Feb 1938) reported that "voluntary organisations in Borehamwood opened a soup kitchen to feed the children of those who had lost their positions at Elstree Studios"

⁸ Studio employers had no organisation to represent them collectively: "The union had to approach individual studios" (FTT Feb 1980)

(cited by Sweet 2005:111). As already noted, 643 film companies had been registered between 1925 and 1936, but by 1937 only twenty remained in production (Wood 1952:91) and few companies had ever paid a dividend (Oakley 1964:134). In such a highly unstable and speculative industry where productions were often abandoned and companies dissolved into bankruptcy, crew members needed all the protection that could be mustered.

By contrast, studios in Hollywood, assured of a world market, could afford every excess, and pay “actors and actresses salaries which make those of Cabinet ministers sound like tips.” Some English producers imported American technicians (and stars) in the hope that the methods which had worked so well in Hollywood could be replicated (Spencer & Waley 1939:176). Creating barriers to resist these foreign entrants who would displace the existing British technicians from valued employment would prove an early test of the ACT as a craft union.

4.2 The evolution of film trades into a craft union

“The creative worker lives in such uncertainty from day to day and from picture to picture that, in final cynicism, he as often as not joins the throng and, with his financial masters, maintains the principle of getting his [share] while the getting’s good” (Klingender □ Legg 193□□)

The importation of so-called “ace” technicians from the United States to replace their British counterparts demonstrates that no internal labour market was yet operating in the UK film industry in the mid 1930s – although it should be noted that the economic reason was not to lower wage costs but to improve the quality of production (Spencer & Waley 1939:176). However, if the real tests of craft unionism are the control of admission through apprenticeship and the exclusion of ‘foreigners’ then the ACT of the 1930s can be shown to be energetic in both areas.

‘Foreigners’ for the Coventry Wheelwrights of the seventeenth century had been those “unskilled persons pretending themselves to be workmen without having been Apprentices” (Chase 2000:14), but the more immediate challenge for the early ACT was to control the influx of ‘real’ foreigners (invariably Americans, but later German and Austrian refugees fleeing the Hitler regime (Oakley 1964:136)) taking

valued work in British studios. In March 1935, it was reported that "the Ministry of Labour has promised to receive a deputation from the ACT on the question of the employment of foreign technicians" and the meeting was reported under the headline:

Technicians' Deputation to Ministry of Labour Move Against Foreign Technicians: ACT alarmed at "Influx" (TC 20 Mar 1936).

The report explained that approximately one hundred foreign technicians "exclusive of a large number of resident aliens" (presumably these were somehow acceptable, perhaps because they were ACT members ?) were engaged in the production of British films. The ACT felt that:

in our opinion ... not more than 20% of this number can be graded as ace technicians. At no time, stated the deputation, has the demand for technicians exceeded the supply. Greatest unemployment prevails among camera operators and probably not more than 40% received regular employment throughout the year.

The ACT delegation noted that there was virtually a "closed shop" [their quotation marks] in America, and stated that it would welcome some form of exchange between technicians of different countries, but that a large number of foreign technicians in key positions retarded the promotion of promising "Britishers". The *Today's Cinema* report concluded, in bold type:

The ACT stated that they were not opposed to foreign technicians working in British films provided they were ace men⁹; that their crews were British; that their employment did not deprive equally expert British technicians of employment; that they were not engaged to work under less favourable conditions and salaries than those of British technicians and that the Association was given an opportunity to be consulted when renewals of such permits were applied for. If the influx of foreign technicians continued at its present rate...there would not be a single British technician in a key position within a period of about six years.

The deputation obviously had some effect because one of the resolutions at the ACT Annual Conference in May 1936 noted that "Conference is pleased to learn that there has been a stricter supervision with reference to the granting of Labour permits since the Ministry of Labour received a deputation from the Association on

⁹ No definition of what constituted an "ace man" appears to have survived.

March 19, 1936.” However, another resolution (useful because it gives us some indication of the scale of the problem) still regretted:

that out of 122 applications for labour permits on behalf of foreign technicians during 1935, the Ministry of Labour only refused, or unfavourably recommended, the granting of 12 such permits, as 1. in the opinion of this Conference a large proportion of the technicians to whom permits were granted were not ace technicians, and 2. at no period during the year was there a shortage of competent British technicians. (TC 6 May 36)

The ACT's effort to regulate a formal apprenticeship system for entrants was less successful. In 1936, it was reported that the General Council had appointed an Apprenticeship Committee and that an Interim Report had listed nine points essential to any scheme that “might commend itself to the ACT”. The nine points were summarised as follows (TC 16 April 36):

1. Full cooperation of the major studios was essential.
2. Relationship to be established with schools and kindred bodies conducting courses in cinematography. Where necessary, alterations and amendments should be suggested to enable courses to be approved by both ACT and studios.
3. Scholarship schemes in conjunction with their courses should be instituted by ACT studios, schools and other educational bodies in order to minimise economic disadvantage.
4. No premiums should be payable.
5. Any apprentice who has been an apprentice prior to the scheme and applies to the ACT employment bureau shall be interviewed ... with a view to deciding whether or not he can be recommended for suitable employment.
6. Any apprentice who has passed through a recognised course should serve a shorter qualifying period in the studio than one who has not.
7. ACT should draw up minimum rates of pay for all grades of technicians and no apprentice should be permitted to do a job in a studio for which he receives less than the recognised salary for that particular job.
8. Every apprentice should hold an ACT apprentice ticket which shall entitle him to attend lectures and film shows and purchase the Association's journal at member's rates.

9. The number of apprentices admitted to any one studio during any year should be limited by agreement between the studio and bodies concerned.

These proposals would have established a proper apprenticeship system and Point 9 would have allowed the ACT to carefully regulate all admissions to the industry. However, the emphasis on formal training would have reduced the emphasis on on-the-job training (Points 2 & 6).

The interim report obviously met with general approval across the industry because the following day *Today's Cinema* (essentially a film distribution and exhibition, rather than a production, publication) praised the ACT for showing tact and foresight:

We particularly like your new apprenticeship scheme.Every industry can do with new blood, with the best youth can offer. The difficultyis to shape it ... that industry gets the best and is not saddled with the irresponsible and ill equipped. Probably in no industry is there a greater need for youth, for the best which lies undiscovered and undeveloped, than in the film industry. Something valuable towards giving us that store has been contributed by the Polytechnic¹⁰, whose film students have proven almost without exception valuable additions to our production personnel. (TC 17 April 36).

However, industry endorsement was insufficient to ensure success because a few days later, under the headline "ACT Apprentice Plans Postponed" it was reported that:

Plans formulated by the Association of Cine-Technicians for the inauguration of an apprenticeship system in the industry whereby definite training and examinations in cinematography should be instituted, have been shelved owing to the inability of the Education Committee of the LCC [London County Council] to give cooperation until the expiry of their present triennial educational programme in two year's time. In the meantime, however, plans are being formulated for a series of evening courses to carry examinations and

¹⁰ Sadly, there is no other reference to identify 'The Polytechnic' or what courses it was offering. It was almost certainly the Regent Street Polytechnic (now Westminster University) which had been offering evening courses in cinematography since 1912 and day classes from 1914 (Low 1948:73fn). However, there were approximately a dozen Polytechnics in London at that period. The Regent Street Polytechnic had particular significance for the early film industry having been the venue for the first showing (1898) of moving pictures to a paying British audience by the Lumiere brothers.

some form of diplomas. Ultimate scheme contemplated is a thorough apprenticeship organisation, carrying with it degrees that will be recognised throughout the industry.... (London Reporter 22 April 36)

However, it was quite clear that the ACT's aim was that entry to studio work should be dependent on proper training and, while the ninth point in the above list from the interim committee was not yet as binding as, for example, the apprentice ratio agreements of an established craft union such as the Typographical Association (Musson 1954:384), doubtless had the apprenticeship scheme been implemented, an attempt at enforcement would have soon followed.

In any event, did the absence of formal apprenticeships automatically negate the ACT's claim to craft union status? While Dunn & Gennard had defined craft unions as those which "restrict membership to those who have completed an apprenticeship or similar training and limit the number trained in this way through, for example an apprenticeship ratio" (1984:15), and Turner had initially used the definition "distinguished by the apprenticeship system, the restricted entry of boys solely as learners into an occupation to which the union confines itself" (Turner 1962:233), film production in this period was still a young industry. Many film production workers at this period must have joined studios as adults, perhaps having trained as apprentices in other skills, and must have acquired their specific film skills through on-the-job training. Therefore, it would seem draconian to negate the claim on that single count given that the film unions always confined themselves to their own occupations so there was no question of dispersion. In any event, Turner had conceded that the term 'craft union' could be "used in a looser way, to describe an association of workers marked off by some superior skill" (Turner 1962:234). As will be demonstrated in Chapter 8, employment in film production is dependent on many "superior skills".

Moreover, the small size of the British film industry meant it did not fall into the category that Dunn & Gennard described where the "sheer size of the workforce" allowed a "leakage of dilutees into skilled grades" and thus "vulgarised" the status of the ACT from being a "pure craft qualification shop" into a more lowly "union qualification shop" (Dunn & Gennard 1984:35). As will be shown in the following chapters, this was certainly not true in the specific categories and grades

of the film industry examined in the 1970s; if anything their skills became more pure as the technical demands became ever greater (a fuller explanation appears at page 202). There is the additional factor that, until the whole closed shop system began to erode in the 1980s, the film unions never needed to absorb the peripheral workers in the way that (as was shown in Chapter 3) many other craft unions had. It will be shown in the next chapter, and again in Chapter 7, that a significant feature of the film industry was, and continues to be, that skills necessary to reach senior appointments can only be acquired through time served and experience gained in lower grades. This ensured that key craft workers with specific skills could never be replaced by interlopers or “alternative classes of workers brought in to execute some portion of the operation” (Webb & Webb 1898:479) unless they had received a similar training overseas - and it will be shown that the boundaries and customary law were well able to resist these, and thus maintain an internal labour market.

4.3 The progression of the ACT from craft union to closed shop

“[In 1930,] Technicians now queued up to join the ACT” (ACTT 1983:21)

By 1939, the ACT had become the established craft union of the British film industry technicians and was close to achieving that fundamental objective of all unions that “their regulations should be binding on all workers whether they are in the union or not” (McCarthy 1964:8). It is probable, although difficult to confirm conclusively, that a post-entry closed shop was effective in those last pre-war years.

However, the outbreak of war was to bring rapid changes and the most immediate of these was the cessation of studio production following the suspension of the Cinematograph Act on the outbreak of war; the government assuming that there “would be little time or place for anyone to make British films”¹¹. (Cinemas were also closed briefly, in the expectation of aerial bombardment but “when no raids came... they were gingerly re-opened.” (Wood 1952:103)). This had an immediate

¹¹ Some British film makers promptly moved to Hollywood. Wardour Street’s popular description of this exodus was “Gone With the Wind Up.” (Wood 1952:104)

effect on employment and by December 1939 ACT membership had fallen from over 1,200 to 915, accelerated by early, voluntary enlistment. This rush to enlist, and the subsequent moves to conscript film crews, triggered a lengthy debate about the most useful contribution that trained film crew could make to the war effort, summarised by this extract from a letter to *Today's Cinema*:

These things [conscription] must be set against the contribution to the fighting services and the munitions factories of approximately 1,400 men, for the most part untrained for such work but expert in their own branch of modern warfare. (TC 1 Apr 41)

After the initial flurry of measures at the outbreak of war, the government had begun to take the view that mass communication would be a constructive contribution to the pursuit of the war and in November 1940 they invited "Producers & labour to form panel to advise Ministry on reservation" ('Reserved Occupations' was the term used to denote those to be exempted from military service). The *Daily Film Renter* went on to report that a "committee of the trade has now been formed to advise the Ministry of Labour on questions arising from reservation of studio employees...". The committee was to consist of producers, ACT, NATKE, the Musicians' Union and a representative of the Newsreel Association, and it was reported that, as a result of the discussion between trade spokesmen and Mr Ernest Bevin:

... the Ministry announced a suspension of calling up as far as studio personnel was concerned and it will now be a function of the committee to advise what adjustments should be made to the Schedule of Reserved Occupations to safeguard all men permanently. (11 Nov 1940).

This process, and the subsequent combined representations of the ACT, NATKE, ETU (Electrical Trades Union) and the studio proprietors in meetings held with Lord Beaverbrook, persuaded the government that the film industry could make a useful contribution to the war effort. From then on, the "ACT found itself in the surprising position of having a boom on its hands due to its new status" (ACTT 1983:21). Over the next five years the ACT membership would rise nearly seven fold and be confirmed as having 100% membership within the sector. The reasons were unusual and perhaps unique.

As early as 1935, the ACT had been operating as an employment bureau, recording that:

....licensed through the LCC, [it] has had a good month. Fourteen different companies have engaged staff through the bureau. Vacancies were filled in the following departments:- art, camera, stills, sound, projection, continuity, cutting & newsreel. Thirty-six persons in all were put in contact with employers. (TC 16 Dec 35).

Nevertheless, this was, it must be assumed, still a voluntary process for most employers even though the same edition reported that “The Associated Realist Film Producers (ARFP), the organisation of documentary directors, has affiliated to the association [and] will engage staff through the ACT employment bureau.” This should not be interpreted as signifying too much because the so-called ‘documentary movement’, which the ARFP represented, was not regarded as very commercial and was noted for being distinctively left-wing, anti-government, anti-Chamberlain or pacifist¹² (Thorpe & Pronay 1980:27).

However, the recognition that the film industry now was to be considered part of the official war effort and the decision that the work undertaken by film technicians was to be considered as a ‘reserved occupation’ needed some rules and adjudication. Initially this appears to have been done by the committee mentioned above. The *Daily Film Renter* of the 18th November 1940, reported that the Films Locations Service Sub-committee had considered 70 names who had applied to be reserved “under the scheme discussed recently by the trade with Mr Ernest Bevin.” But this appears to have been regarded as too laborious and, needing some quicker method to assess who were legitimate film technicians, the Ministry of Labour appointed the ACT’s employment bureau as the official vetting body to assess those worthy of reserved occupation status. As the official history records “technicians now queued to join the ACT, the only body with the authority to categorise them as a reserved occupation” (ACTT 1983:21).

¹² In 1935, an ACT deputation of documentary makers, led by Ralph Bond, had gone with some trepidation to seek union recognition from the Director (John Grierson) of the government-owned, documentary making GPO Film Unit. Starting to explain the benefits of trade unionism, the Director cut them short “You don’t have to tell me all that; I am a member of the TGWU” (Ralph Bond FTT Feb 1980 p10)

Despite a reduction in the number of British feature films produced in the war years (from more than one hundred in 1941 to forty-six in 1942¹³(ACTT 1983:21)) the war period was to prove very significant for the status of the industry, its workers and the ACT. During the war, 1,887 official films, some 3,200 newsreels and 380 feature films, all of which had to be approved by the Ministry of Information¹⁴ (Thorpe & Pronay 1980:ix), delivered a home-produced film propaganda effort that was deemed to have served Britain well: “British institutions, and the admirable aspects of her traditions of government and culture, had never before been so well known and so much admired” (Thorpe & Pronay 1980:13).

The surge in standards from the lacklustre, pre-war efforts had been partly achieved by the utilisation of the already mentioned British documentary makers who had been greatly admired in intellectual circles and at pre-war international film festivals (Spencer & Waley 1939:170). Their absorption into mainstream feature film production meant that the film industry’s many talents were now centralised and the fusion of narrative and documentary style resulted in films such as *One of Our Aircraft is Missing*, *The First of the Few*, *In Which we Serve*, *San Demetrio*, *London* and *Millions Like Us*.

The outcome of this issue [the absorption of the documentary movement] fundamentally affected the organisation and character of British Film propaganda in the Second World War and has coloured the views of everyone who has written since about the history of the British cinema. (Thorpe & Pronay 1980:25).¹⁵

However, the placing into influential positions within the mainstream film industry of the more socially aware and left-leaning documentary movement personnel would also colour the long-term nature of industrial relations in the film industry and strengthen the sense of “customary law” among workers and management.¹⁶

¹³ Conversely, weekly cinema audiences rose spectacularly from 19m in 1939, to 30m in 1945 (Oakley 1964:153)

¹⁴ The MoI occupied the UL Senate House, having requisitioned the newly completed building in 1939.

¹⁵ Rotha (1967:36) wrote: “During the war years a new honesty and integrity and freshness broke into British feature production...”

¹⁶ For an example, the socialist credentials of the “thick streak of red” amongst the management and staff at Ealing Studios is detailed in Sweet 2005:166-168.

In the short term, “British cinema was at its peak” in the early 1940s (Oakley 1964:161) and the outcome was that the film industry, and more specifically its technicians and those responsible for production, acquired a new status of respectability, not least because George Elvin, the ACT’s General Secretary who also sat on the appointments board for Service Film Units, negotiated a military rank structure for ACT members serving in service film units whereby clapper loaders would be privates, cameraman would be treated as captains and directors would have field rank status as majors. This was an exceptional position - for a trade union to be able maintain its own structures within the armed services throughout the war years (ACTT 1983:21).¹⁷

During this same period, the industry became a pre-entry closed shop, hastened by the reality that any technician who was not a member of the union, and thus regulated by the ACT’s employment bureau, did not have Reserved Occupation status and was therefore liable to be conscripted. Thus all of McCarthy’s criteria for a recognised skill gap were met because:

if members’ jobs need a special skill, requiring a period of training, then, if craft unions can secure the requirement of all the men with that skill, they have a labour monopoly and immediately, at any rate, there is no alternative labour force. (McCarthy 1964:135).

Furthermore, with all males in the film industry registered as ACT members, the union was in a strong position to establish the practices that would prevail long after the end of hostilities:

with three-quarters of the men in the film industry fighting in the Armed Forces, those who stayed behind were in a strong bargaining position to demand what they wanted. It is dubious whether, in fact, the ACT raised wages any more than could have been done by individual bargaining; but it standardised restrictive practices. (Wood 1952:212)..

□o records or agreements from this period have been located to confirm exactly when the closed shop was acknowledged as effective but Muriel Box, who had

¹⁷ One of the pleasures of watching unedited newsreel and service film unit material from WW2 is watching the chalked names on clapper boards and identifying names later to be famous, such as “Sgt R Boulting” (later the producer/director responsible for *Brighton Rock*, *Heavens Above*, *I’m all right Jack* etc).

worked at Gaumont-British in the 1930s, and returned to work in continuity at Elstree in 1941 confirmed its reality:

Several years had elapsed since I had set foot in a studio ... and on walking on to the set on the first day, I was greeted by a member of the unit demanding to see my union card ! Alarmed and a little shaken, I had to admit to not possessing such a thing. Apparently during my absence from the feature film business, the ACT had been formed and, as a trade union, was growing rapidly. The shop steward explained that I could not work there until I produced my card. His adamant attitude put me in an acute dilemma and I was sure I had lost my job before I had even started it. Fortunately, some of my old colleagues arrived on the set, recognised me, and not only made me a member forthwith, but warmly welcomed me back into the fold. (Box 1974:158-159)¹⁸

John Mitchell, who had been an ACT member in the 1930s, did not find the shop stewards so accommodating when he returned to production after his war service in 1946:

on that first Monday back after 6 years, I was approached by Frank Sloggett, ACT shop steward, for my paid up card. Not having one, he told me I could not start work and that I must go to Head Office there and then, pay my subscription and have a card on my return for his examination. (FTT Oct 88).

Therefore, it can be seen that the film industry, and in particular, the ACT, had had what was popularly described as a ‘good war’ and made a significant contribution:

Technicians employed in the feature studios were just as much working under terms of temporary deferment from military service as were the documentary people ... and some of them felt, I believe, that their films, although coming under the category of entertainment, should none the less be a direct contribution to the war effort. (Rotha 1967:53).

Furthermore, a craft market, as defined by Doeringer & Piore (1971:3-4), was clearly operating. The ACT, through extraordinary circumstances, had established a closed shop and developed “its full power as a union” (PEP 1952:89) with rigid entry rules in place and operating “geographical and occupational jurisdiction” within the defined boundaries of the film production industry. It was now to be

¹⁸ Muriel Box (later Lady Gardiner) went on to become a leading British producer and film director and won an Oscar as a screenwriter.

seen whether that advantageous status and position could be maintained in the post-war years.

4.4 The consolidation of the closed shop

“Throughout this period the union grappled with the shrinking indigenous base of British feature production” (ACTT 1983:161)

In practice, the fortunes of the film industry in the post-war period were mixed. The ACT's and the technicians' collective war record¹⁹ was used to great effect in the immediate post-war period. For five years, the industry had delivered an effective, much admired, world-class output without foreign technicians, and it used this new status to negotiate advantageous agreements, notably with the Association of Specialised Film Producers, the British Film Producers Association (BFPA) and the post-war Labour government. This new status was not without unexpected advantages. When an arbitration was required between the ACT and the BFPA regarding location allowances, the arbitrator settled in the union's favour and ruled that “as your members are professional gentlemen, I shall make it [the settlement] in guineas” (ACTT 1983:23).

Whatever the status of the technicians collectively, it did little good for the employment of individuals because in the immediate post-war years, cinema audiences (and thus film revenue) were in steep decline, falling by 15% from 1,635 million admissions in 1946 to 1,396 million in 1950 (it was to fall to 515 million by 1960) (Spraos 1962:14). Soon, half of Britain's studio space was unoccupied and many of the ACT's membership (now over 9,000, of whom over 1,500 were women) was jobless, despite the efforts of the new, Labour government promoted, National Film Finance Corporation (NFFC) and the Eady Levy.²⁰ As in the pre-

¹⁹ Besides feature and documentary films, film technicians had also made other significant contributions to the war effort. The memorial at Pinewood Studios to the Army & Air Force Film Units lists 38 combat cameramen killed in action.

²⁰ Another government measure, considered by Harold Wilson, then President of the Board of Trade, was a nationalised distribution circuit, but the ACT was the only supporter of such a cinema chain (some sources suggest ACT were the instigators of the idea) and it was never pursued as policy (Spraos 1962:154; Oakley 1964:166; Kelly 1966:131; PEP 1952:154-156).

war period, distribution and markets were again the major challenge because cinemas quickly reverted to screening the more popular American films:

Their acceptance was widespread because there were no other films available and because their shallow nature appealed to the post war state of mind of the public. British companies found it more profitable and less of a responsibility, to rent American films than to make their own. (Rotha 1967:73)

The government's attempt in 1947 to regulate the imports through taxation, created, first, an American embargo, and then the near collapse of Rank, the major British producer, as it over-extended its finances to fill the vacuum (Wood 1952:227-236). During 1949 alone, the number of people employed on feature films in British studios (not all of whom were in ACT grades) fell from 7,700 to 4,400 (Oakley 1964:198).²¹ A Board of Trade Working Party "to examine ways and means of reducing production costs" identified several reasons for this "considerable contraction of production [which] has led to heavy dismissals of personnel". However, it concluded that the prime cause for contraction was not exclusively production costs. Although there were elements that could be addressed (the recommendations did not mention the closed shop, although demarcation was to be "examined") the prime cause was attributable to the wide gap between expenditure and income when British films (facing intense American competition) could take only a small proportion of the gross box office receipts (Gater 1949:7).

Despite, or perhaps because of, this slump in the industry, the ACT successfully pursued three objectives. Firstly, after a short dispute in 1946, it agreed a demarcation of roles with \square ATKE, with ACT taking responsibility for organising all technical roles.²² Second, it agreed on the minimum crewing levels for all productions in Clause 17 of the 1947 Agreement with the British Film Producers Association. Thirdly, the ACT succeeded in formalising in their agreements with

²¹ In addition, during this same period the number of newsreel companies reduced from five, to three (losing Gaumont-British \square ews and British Paramount \square ews).

²² The 1946 dispute had related to film repair technicians and despatch workers employed at Kinematographs Renters. The 1947 Agreement was that projectionists in labs and newsreels should be with ACT and those employed in cinemas would be \square ATKE. All grades in sound and recording would be ACT. Regarding film repair, \square ATKE would have rights in film distribution but ACT in film studios (Ralph Bond in FTT Jul/Aug 88)

the major studios the de facto closed shop situation which had existed since the early years of the war (Seglow 1978:51). Together, these activities ensured the post-war consolidation of the conditions necessary to maintain the closed shop and further formalised the administrative rules and procedures necessary to enforce an internal labour market by controlling the demarcation, crewing and pricing decisions.

However, in reality the prospects for employment within the British film industry could not be completely detached from external influences, being influenced more by such unpredictable factors as government intervention, Hollywood's interests, currency rates and social trends, than by the state of the industry agreements. Thus the experience of the post-war period was varied. The Anglo-American Film Agreement of 1948, which restricted the amount of earnings from American films that could be remitted back to Hollywood, meant that the major Hollywood companies spent nearly £6m on production in the UK between 1948 and 1950 (Street 1997:15) but thereafter, American spending was reduced until a renewed interest in the 1960s. By 1967, 90% of UK film production was financed by Hollywood and in 1968, American companies spent over £31 million on UK production encouraged by the success of the "New Wave, the Beatles, James Bond and the prospect of making big-budget films in Britain...". However, as before the war, the fluctuations within the industry were sharp and unpredictable and by the early 1970s the boom was over:

The latest crop of British films had failed in the States. Hollywood's love affair with swinging London was over. American producers were packing their bags and looking for stories set in Denver and Philadelphia. (Boorman 1985:21)

So American finance had disappeared again: "by 1974 the sum imported by US companies had fallen to £2.9m" (Street 1997:20).

Thereafter, American investment in British production provided the occasional boost to the industry, but little security - films such as *Alien* (1979), *Superman* (1978), *Star Wars* (1977) and successive Bond movies provided employment for many British technicians, but did little for long term stability when the dollar exchange rate changed adversely.

Domestic demand provided some periods of improved employment; there was some success for the new realism of the early 1960s (*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and *This Sporting Life*) and later innumerable *Carry Ons*. In the early 1980s, there was another British revival, helped by a government policy of “100% first year capital allowances, combined with a strong dollar and the growing worldwide demand for movies”. The result was a series of films which initially generated more investment: *Chariots of Fire* (1981), *Gandhi* (1982), *Local Hero* (1983) and *A Passage to India* (1985); but the government’s decision to phase out capital allowances after 1986 meant that the moment passed and by 1988-91 the industry was again relatively idle (Street 1997:21).

McCarthy’s analysis of the film industry (1964:151) correctly suggested that this “succession of booms and slumps made the union concerned with job security” and that this in turn led them to a “labour supply shop” solution because it seemed the most obvious method of limiting access, given that they were “lacking any recognised training scheme or apprenticeship system.” He cites the wartime experience “when experienced technicians were short, producers discovered that their only chance of obtaining them was through the union.” (He adds, in a footnote, that “subsequently a recognised training scheme was accepted for the more skilled technicians.”)²³ In practice, his descriptions may be a little too general for what will be shown to be a complicated pattern of enforcement, and it is difficult to reconcile his description with other chronologies. The pre-war employment agency appears to have exercised little hold over any employer and could never be seriously considered as a true labour supply shop - employers only became willing to consider negotiating agreements with the ACT after 1938, and then only because of the obligations created by the fair wage clauses in the Cinematograph Act, so it seems very unlikely that they would have been willing to submit to any single source for recruitment. Not until the war years, when the authority of the union’s employment bureau was derived from the Ministry of Works, was the union actively able to regulate access to film employment and thus,

²³ It is probable that McCarthy, writing in 1964, was referring to the Film Industry Training and Apprenticeship Council which was described later as having “never functioned effectively” (DES 1967:6)

presumably, the availability of crew to producers to which McCarthy refers above. In the post-war period, as shown above, even that control did not protect ACT members from being laid off, particularly in the labs where the use of imported prints and the switching of work between countries in the 1950s gave a hint of the coming power of the multi-national companies (ACTT 1983:33).

The impracticality of hiring non-union crew will be considered in more detail in the next chapter but, certainly to those outside the industry, the union does appear to have presented an efficient hold over employment: “So effective were the closed shop agreements that most film companies found it convenient to fill vacancies directly through the union’s own employment office or, more accurately, employment agency” (Maksymiw 1990:26) and until the collapse of the studio system (explained in the next chapter), it appears that film companies with vacancies had agreed to “*give consideration* to suitable applicants which the bureau put forward.” (my italics) (Seglow 1978:51). This may have been true when adding to an existing crew, but the initial selection of heads of department remained the director’s (or producer’s) prerogative and it will be shown that they invariably nominated their own team. However, there is evidence (see John Keen in Chapter 7) that all new entrants had to obtain their first appointment through the ACTT bureau.

But the confusion may arise because outsiders did not wholly understand the differences that existed between the different divisions within the union; e.g. between film freelancers, lab technicians and salaried television workers. McCarthy is on more certain ground in the assertion that the “rise in television” had made a difference (1964:151) because there a labour supply shop was operated to maintain the closed shop (1964:41). In the early 1950s, despite many reservations about the proposed commercial television station, the ACT had lobbied hard using their parliamentary connections to ensure that the legislation relating to ITV (as it became known) would specify that the content be at least 80% British productions. When established, the ACT then pressed hard, including the use of a brief strike in April 1955, to ensure union recognition, eventually signing a first agreement with the Programme Contractors’ Association in 1957. The official union history states that the commercial television companies, being entrepreneurs,

saw nothing threatening in a closed shop. On the contrary, the orderliness of recruitment and the stability of employment that a closed shop implied, had an attraction for them. And despite the power that it gave the unions, they have never made serious efforts to rewrite those agreements. (ACTT 1983:103).

Seglow (1978:91) suggests it was the inexperience of the new contractors which enabled the more robust ACTT to establish themselves so efficiently and certainly the closed shop remained effective until the late 1980s when the financial crisis at TVam in 1987 led to a radical review of crewing arrangements (Maksymiw 1990:27).

Conclusions

From its establishment in the 1930s, the evolution of the film technicians' union has many similarities to the much earlier development of the craft unions in the traditional sectors as described by the Webbs (1920) and others (Phelps-Brown 1959; Clegg et al. 1964 etc) with their emphasis on casual and social association of members and the possible mismanagement of funds. It might be argued that the element of formal apprenticeship was missing but, as will be shown in the next chapter, an analogous period of on-the-job training was necessary to acquire the necessary skills to become a film practitioner and gain admission to the union and, as cited (page 110), Turner believed that "some superior skill" was sufficient for a union to be described as craft (1962:234).

Despite the uncertainties of a precarious industry and employer instability, the union emerged as the primary representative of craftsmen within the sector, it established a post-entry closed shop and it took steps to secure the methods of entry to the profession, whether by the regulation of trainees or the approval of imported, ace technicians.

However, where the pressure of exceptional demand during WW2 led to the renewed dilution of many other craft-related closed shops (for example among carpenters (Connelly 1960)), government intervention in the film industry effectively created a pre-entry closed shop which the union was able to maintain in the post-war period. Thus, throughout the 1950s, the majority of union members

were full-time employees with major studios, laboratories or the new commercial television companies - the latter was certainly maintained through a union-managed, labour supply shop. This was a strong position and Seglow (1978:54) observed that

whatever one's view of the union, there is no doubt that by the early 1950s it had become a force to be reckoned with in its relations with the employers with whom it dealt. Its power and influence were out of all proportion to its size.

This emergence as a successful and proactive craft union meant that an internal labour market was also created because the film production sector was a craft market (Doeringer & Piore 1971:3) Within the boundaries of that industry (and latterly independent television) the union was able to effect administrative rules and procedures that governed entry, labour allocation, demarcation and pricing. Despite radically changing external factors, such as periodic slumps in production, the rules never varied and, when employment returned, the same rules for demarcation and crewing levels were applied.

However, the operation of a craft qualification, pre-entry closed shop when all the practitioners are full-time employees is an unremarkable phenomenon. As shown in McCarthy's work, many other examples existed of such circumstances and, until some change destabilised the relationships (as shown in Chapter 1), there was little threat to the operation of the associated rules and procedures. However, what makes the ACT's closed shop of particular interest is that it survived a far-reaching change when the relative stability of the studio system collapsed in the late 1950s. Despite that collapse, its successor the ACTT retained cohesion and power until the late 1970s, even as the studio practice of full-time employment declined and there was an increasing requirement for film technicians to work as freelancers - a category notoriously difficult for unions to organise.

The next chapter will examine how the union continued to enforce the admission rules necessary to maintain the closed shop and to ensure members continued to adhere to the rules once admitted.

Chapter 5 ENFORCING THE RULES AND PROCEDURES

The previous chapter described how the film production sector became a pre-entry closed shop and how this status was formalised in the immediate post-war period. However, the maintenance of a closed shop did not just happen. The assumption must be that employers would have preferred to set the crewing levels, the range of salaries and the terms and conditions without the restrictions enforced by the union. The production technicians, while theoretically the beneficiaries of the closed shop, were not all (as will be shown in Chapter 6) natural supporters of the trade union movement and often resented the subscriptions and the political agendas imposed by the Association of Cinematographic and Television Technicians (ACTT)¹ leadership. Furthermore, it might have been expected that some members, having themselves been frustrated for so long by the union's rules for admission, might have been inclined to resent its influence thereafter. Yet the practice of the closed shop held firm for some forty years from around 1940 until the early 1980s and so this chapter will consider the influences and institutions which maintained its rules and procedures

The first section will consider the nature of the film production industry and in particular the challenges of union organisation within what might appear to be a very loosely controlled community of workers where many individuals negotiated their own contracts - two factors which McCarthy (1964) had identified as likely to diminish the discipline and practicality of any closed shop. Section 5.2 will consider exactly how the union regulated the point of entry for new entrants - those wishing to train for the industry through a quasi-apprenticeship route and on-the-job

¹ The Association of Cine Technicians changed its name in 1956 to Association of Cinematograph Television and allied Technicians.

training, while the third section will consider the alternative methods for those who had some relevant experience and the effects of the admission processes for women and minorities. Lastly, the fourth section will show how the ACTT used the power of the laboratories to ensure that employers would maintain the enforcement of the rules and procedures and thus the coherence of these seemingly disparate work groups.

5.1 The characteristics of the film production community

“the union [ACTT] has developed a series of working practices which have curtailed employers’ freedom of action...” (Seglow 1988:53)

By the late 1970s the ACTT represented workers in three very different sectors - commercial television, the laboratories and film production. However, in two of those primary sectors, commercial television and the laboratories, the workforce was in full-time employment, at regular places of work and with corporate employers with recognisable personnel departments collectively bargaining with the ACTT.

The closed shop for commercial television had been established in 1957 when the ACTT had made agreements with the Programme Contractors Association and there were few areas for ambiguity in its enforcement because the majority of technicians in that sector were full-time employees of the then broadcasting companies: Granada, ABC, Associated Rediffusion and ATV etc.. The rules stated that a “person who is not a member of the ACTT, or other appropriate union, may not be employed in jobs the scope of which is covered by agreements between the unions involved and the employers” (ACTT 1983:101). This closed shop was maintained, certainly through the 1960s, by a labour supply shop arrangement: “in their agreement with the commercial television contractors the Cinematograph Technicians have obtained the formal recognition of their right to supply labour” (McCarthy 1964:41) and so the union nominated workers to match vacancies up to the grade of assistant director, although the companies did retain some ability to veto the nominee.

Similarly, the laboratory technicians, whose role within the union will be examined in more detail later, had been incorporated into the union in 1935 when there were fifteen labs, “all paying just what they liked to their staff, with working conditions fluctuating wildly and no employers’ organisation through which a common policy could be discussed.”² The lab workers made early progress when they signed a “landmark” agreement in 1939 with the employers’ federation “guaranteeing two weeks’ holiday with pay, sickness pay as well as improved wages and working conditions.” Nevertheless, although the relationship between the lab workers and their employers’ federation was often fraught (the employers’ organisation then disbanded to avoid having to engage in collective bargaining until forced, by the arbitration process, to reconvene (ACTT 1983:41)) the lab workers were in full-time, continuous employment. It is not intended to examine the specific processes of the laboratory closed shops in any detail.

So the most interesting closed shop was that operated within film production: feature films and (after 1957) TV commercials. As shown earlier, although McCarthy used the term “film and television industry”, it is more likely that he was describing only the broadcasting television company arrangements and the confirmation is found in his work-force statistics. He cited only 7,000 employees as being in the Labour Supply Shop (1964:37) which tallied with the 7,000 ACTT television division members, then “the largest branch” (ACTT 1983:29). However, in 1964, the total membership of the ACTT was nearly 13,000 members (ACTT 1983:174) and McCarthy makes only one passing reference to these other 6,000 closed shop workers (1964:158). As will be shown, these 6,000 film technicians were not easy to categorise and it may be that McCarthy felt either that the group was too small to be of significance, or that their organisational arrangements were so diverse that they were best ignored. They are, however, the focus of this thesis.

In the immediate post-war period, the studios “manufactured a stream of films” (Blair 2001:151) through six big production companies: Associated Films, London

² In the early days of British cinema there were no centralised laboratories. Each studio developed its own film (Low 1950:244)

Films, British Lion, Ealing Studios, Gainsborough and the Rank Organisation. These production companies owned the studios and thus controlled every aspect of feature film “manufacture”. In this role, they were perceived to be stable employers, although never achieving the same vertical integration as the Hollywood studios (Street 1997:29), because they retained all the necessary staff, from script developers though to marketing, as full-time employees.³ In the immediate post-war period, the closure effected by the union in the war years held firm and the ACT’s success in obtaining concessions from the Labour government meant that maintaining union membership levels proved little problem (ACTT 1983:174). However, the government levies were insufficient to support the home industry (ACT 1983:161) and when the studio production system faltered (the last companies closed in 1958 and 1959) the studio buildings became “four wallers”: empty space to be rented by independent production companies, often registered for the production of just one feature film, who would hire crew and cast on fixed or short term contracts. Thus, the great majority of film crew became freelance technicians to be engaged by production companies that, having drawn up their production schedules, would assemble a crew with the necessary skills to film specific sequences each day (Blair 2001:151). The resulting employment engagements were made for specific individuals to perform unambiguous tasks for a period that might be as short as a day - or as long as six months.

This transition of full-time employment to freelance work was not immediate and nor did it create an instantaneous, mobile, pool of labour. Throughout the 1960s, Pinewood Studios retained its own full-time construction staff that production companies using the Pinewood stages were obliged to employ, and it appears that other studios did the same; there were similar examples of other departments such as camera and drapes. In addition, extant camera crews from the studio era often held together as a team, albeit as freelancers. John Keen (a respondent) who was then working as a loader, reckons that there were probably thirty or thirty five established camera crews in the 1970s who would always try to work as a unit. The differentiation between the teams was the creative ability or style of its senior

³ The workers’ nominees on the Working Party on Film Production Costs in 1949, were referred to as “Representatives of Film Studio Employees” (Gater 1949)

member - the director of photography (DoP), but once appointed he (and in that era the DoP was invariably male) would then expect to nominate his regular operator, focus puller, clapper loader, grip and gaffer. However, they would each be employed as individuals.

These very loose arrangements in employment (and maybe prolonged unemployment) could theoretically have been a problem for the union retention necessary to maintain a closed shop. As McCarthy (1964:107) had stated “when unions set out to affect the terms of employment covering a particular job they must organise and control a high proportion of the workers who are doing the job” and he cited in particular the challenges presented by “turnover and contact”, the latter meaning, to be more specific, the *lack* of contact with union representatives (1964:108). Moreover, McCarthy never considered the situation where the *employer*, being a company operating for perhaps only a few months before winding up, was potentially unstable too.⁴

In reality, the constant turnover of film crew and production companies did not create the challenges that might have been predicted given the instability of the work patterns. Goldstein defined turnover as “membership turnover ... expressed in the size and rate of the annual lapsed membership” and the challenge that he identified in the TGWU was that workers in a series of short-term employments slid in and out of union membership, thus never becoming “trade unionists who identify themselves with and feel any allegiance to their Trade Union in particular, and to the Trade Union movement in general” (Goldstein 1952:70).

However, the freelance film technicians, although engaged in similar short-term employment contracts, were not inclined to slide in and out of union membership for several reasons. The first was the hurdle of obtaining union membership.

The detail of those processes will be illustrated below, but suffice to state that no automatic right to re-admission existed and the union had been known to impose a rule of “no more union cards as long as a union member was unemployed” (Wood

⁴ The shipping industry had some similarities, in that seamen were only loosely organised and signed on for specific voyages, but the employers were more stable and represented by the Shipping Federation (McCarthy 1964:126)

1952:213). Thus membership was something to be retained through prolonged periods of unemployment (albeit at a lowered subscription). This caution regarding membership was confirmed by in a 1983 study which identified a union density in the Entertainment industries of 112%. This seemingly abnormal result was explained in a footnote: “The pre-entry closed shop is widespread in this industry and a large number of persons who are primarily employed elsewhere belong to entertainment unions so that they can seek employment within the industry” (Bain & Price 1983:15).

Bain & Price’s note that some might be “primarily employed elsewhere” may have been true of some crafts, because set builders (i.e. carpenters, painters & riggers) and electricians could probably find alternative work. However, for most film technicians, their skill specificity, which will be considered in Chapter 7, meant there was no alternative employment for focus pullers, loaders, boom operators or grips. A 1952 assessment of the British film industry confirmed this skill specificity: while a “carpenter in \square ATKE who loses his job can at the present time be reasonably certain of finding work in the building industry”, the “experience and training of a member of the ACT equips him for few occupations outside the film industry” (PEP 1952:279). Although described as “technicians”, many had been drawn to the film industry because of the opportunities for creativity and thus they were often uninterested in more mundane work and their skills as film technicians “fits them for few other things. Thus it strengthens their ties and commitment to an industry which, even in good times, is characterised by insecurity and unemployment” (Seglow 1978:40). Although Doeringer & Piore had cited the stability of employment in the internal labour market as creating groups, here it can be seen that it is the common experience that makes:

the same workers come into regular and repeated contact with each other. The result is the formation of social groups or communities within the internal labour market. (Doeringer & Piore 1971 23)

Another factor militating against the fragmentation that such insecure employment might have encouraged was the geographical boundaries of the film industry. While technicians could be employed anywhere in the world (“the sun never sets on British film crew” (Boorman 1985:197)) the hiring of film crew took place

within small, specific areas; namely Soho (besides being the base of many production companies, it was also the location of the ACTT's employment agency) or the immediate catchments of the major studios - Elstree, Pinewood, Shepperton, Denham and others. (Significantly, this coincided with the "geographical and occupational jurisdiction" (Doeringer & Piore 1971:3) of the ACTT's film organisers.) For production technicians, bound as they were to an "industry where employment was on a casual basis and prolonged periods of unemployment were normal" (Seglow 1978:40) there was no shame attached to being out of work and so when not working it was essential to be 'seen around', knowing that every casual encounter would remind one's peer group, production companies and the various booking services that one was alive and available. The technician never knew when he or she might be considered for a production, or who might be called upon for a reference, so it was essential to be remembered. John Boorman gave some insight assembling a film crew in 1983: "when you are considering a technician you do not know, the accepted procedure is to call up people with whom he has worked" (1985:67).

So was this enough of a community that it became self policing, abiding by the conventions of "community-based labour" where union membership was "linked to social identity within the local community. [i.e.] Refusal to join may mean ostracism for the individual employee" (Hanson et al. 1982:8)? As indicated, this was a loose community of skilled, freelance workers of whom many were primarily motivated by creativity, with reward often a secondary consideration, and so not the most easily controlled constituency for union organisers. Furthermore, the nature of the short-term, freelance employment contracts meant that theoretically employers could have negotiated individual deals as they wished – and occasionally they did. In reality, it is impossible to assess whether the community of workers would have held firm because there were other factors that ensured union control which will be considered in the fourth section. However, first it is necessary to consider the rules and procedures that regulated admission to that community.

5.2 The screening of entrants and on-the-job training

“[For craftsmen] the main consideration was the control of entry to the trade” (Phelps-Brown 1959:119)

In his example of how the closed shop was maintained among the skilled craftsmen in print, McCarthy demonstrated that two processes were necessary - the craft qualification shop (to maintain the skill gap and restrict entrants) and the labour supply shop (to deal with the special problems of casual labour) (1964:152). He also suggested that the film industry relied solely on a labour supply shop but, as has been shown, if this had ever been true after the war years, it had certainly lapsed by the mid '70s when the situation was more akin to McCarthy's labour pool: “so long as he confines his choice to members of the pool, the employer does not need to apply to the union for labour” (1964:18). In practice, the skill gap was assured because no-one except those gaining access to “the pool” could get the necessary training and skills, and so the next two sections will examine how admission to that film technicians' pool was regulated in the closed shop era.

Doeringer & Piore state that in the craft market “the rules governing entry to the craft or occupational type of internal market are more rigid than those found in manufacturing industries” (1971:4) and certainly the barriers to ACTT membership and thus to the established film industry were considerable. In 1966, Kelly stated “One of the most serious criticisms of the ACTT concerns its awkward attitude to new entrants to the industry.” However, he went on to explain the union's legitimate concerns:

... the union naturally feels obliged to protect the jobs of its members in an industry which has the aura of glamour that attracts more entrants than there are vacancies and which has had more than its share of ruthless or financially inept employers... (1966:174)

It will be shown in Chapter 8 that fears about the combination of oversupply of would-be film recruits and less than conscientious employers willing to exploit their potential, were well founded. Even in the closed shop era, the natural fluctuations of the industry inevitably created an occasional oversupply of labour but, provided the union could ensure that agreements were enforced, then “insecurity of employment ... should be offset by high wages during employment ...” (Kelly 1966:175).

The maintenance of a pool balanced to meet employers' requirements and to ensure reasonable employment for all members was a delicate matter and therefore anything that disguised the true employment situation, such as permanent television employees moonlighting as film workers (i.e. taking freelance jobs in their spare time), had to be eliminated. The FTT reminded members frequently that moonlighting threatened everyone's employment: not only did it displace legitimate freelancers, it also disadvantaged those production companies who complied with the union's agreements. Those who moonlighted were warned that they would be "expelled from the union - sacked - and that's the end of a career, because you won't be able to join the ranks of the freelancers without a ticket." (FTT April 1979; March 1980) thereby emphasising both the value of membership and the rigidity of the boundaries to the industry.

Discouraging unscrupulous moonlighters was also critical because they reduced the available employment seen to be available - which in turn influenced the admissions policy. As indicated, there were periods when no new tickets would be issued if there was any recorded unemployment (Wood 1952:213) and members of the camera, stills and script supervisors section were reminded of the need to register when they were not working because their lack of employment would be noted "when membership applications were considered" (FTT May 87). Therefore, a freeze on all membership applications should be considered as the first entry control.

Assuming that members *were* being accepted into membership, then a number of admission methods or routes existed and, because often some overlap existed between them, it was not always easy to clearly differentiate between them. It seems probable that a diversity of standards always existed. As illustrated before, in 1941 Muriel Box had been instantly accepted into the union (Box 1974:158-159) whereas Karel Reisz (who went on to direct *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*) waited seven years to become a member of the ACTT (Kelly 1966:174). As noted earlier, social capital is useful to those that possess it (Muriel Box was assisted in her union membership by "old colleagues" (1974:13)) but it can "also exclude not only the unreliable, but those who are simply outsiders with no existing connections on the inside" (Field 2003:122). Reisz was Jewish, a Czech and a

graduate (Natural Sciences, Cambridge). Kelly, who had identified Reisz as typical of the industry's problem in identifying new talent, wrote "the picture the outsider gets is of an apparently rigid system, peppered with loopholes and inconsistencies..." (1966:174) and it is probable that the situation never changed. Commenting on admission to the ACTT closed shop in its latter years, a BECTU official who had had first-hand experience described it as "all informal, so luck played a part, ... [the rules] were rough and ready – and not very even..."

Therefore, perhaps the second barrier can be defined as uncertainty. With contacts (i.e. social capital) and the correct timing, entry to film production could be relatively easy:

In the early '60s I worked at Shepperton Studios as a prop man. Eddie [an old school friend] asked if I could get him a job there and within a couple of weeks he started work. (SSC May 2006:21)

Without contacts it was more difficult to establish the methods of becoming a union member. With no published rules⁵ it was not always easy to know the criteria even if one was already working. Belinda Harris joined a newly formed film research company in the mid 1980s. Film research, the location of existing film material and clearing any associated copyright, had traditionally been done by editors and production assistants and so doing the work as corporate activity was a new concept which did not fit directly into any ACTT category:

ACTT didn't recognise film research as a specific job which was one of the problems. They did give people tickets as film librarians but I seem to remember that we wanted to distance ourselves from that and anyway you had to be employed full-time by a library.... It was very similar to trying to get an Equity card once you had declared your hand as not having membership you could theoretically be in a worse position than just keeping your head down..⁶

Thus, it was difficult for an individual to know when and how to apply to the ACTT unless they had inside contacts or an informal sponsor. This is perhaps why

⁵ The rules, such as they were, were published in the ACTT rulebook and therefore not accessible to 'outsiders'.

⁶ Belinda Harris also revealed yet another enforcement of association method used by the unions: "it was quite difficult to advertise the company without ACTT membership. The first couple of years we were in *The Knowledge* and *Kemps* [the two key industry directories] we had to say that we were applying for membership. The editorial people would say to me 'but you are applying aren't you?' to which the required answer was, of course, 'yes'".

many would-be film technicians took the traditional method of entry - the aspiring candidate had first to prove that they had the perseverance to find a vacancy in one of the junior, non-unionised grades and then start building the necessary social capital.

Although film production was closed in that it was impossible to progress without union membership, the industry was not a “comprehensively closed trade” as defined by McCarthy (1964:30), “it is impossible for a single non-unionist to remain in it”, because there was a strata of junior positions which could be filled by non-union people. The collective agreements stipulated the number of ACTT members that the production company was obliged to employ. However, once that level was achieved, production companies could then employ non-union members in a number of minor roles: runners; location fixers; traffic marshals; 3rd assistant directors; drivers and production assistants. For many, employment in these minor roles was the quasi-apprenticeship route to union membership and legitimate employment because it provided the opportunity to gain the necessary experience, to meet working crew members and thus join networks. This 2005 obituary illustrates a process followed by thousands of entrants in the period from the 1930s until the late 1980s:

Towards the end of 1940, Peter [Lambert] entered the industry as an unpaid tea boy in the engineering department of Welwyn Studios, but it wasn't long before he was offered the job of trainee runner (third assistant) in the camera department... Peter was soon employed as a clapper loader.. It was then that Peter joined the ACT. (SSR Mar 2005:18)

Four things are notable in this obituary. The first is that the initial appointment was unpaid and it will be shown that this practice became widespread again as the century closed. The second is the necessary shift to on-the-job training - learning about the business in a non technical, production role as an assistant director but also being absorbed into the community and being acquainted with the customs and procedures. The third is that it was only when Peter became a loader, a junior technician working on the camera, that he became a member of the ACT. Of course, there is no indication that he could not have joined earlier, but it would seem that in 1940 the idea of the ACT as a craft union was established and that

continuous on-the-job training was deemed necessary before membership was offered. The final factor was that Peter Lambert was able to gain a place as an unpaid tea boy as a first appointment - as will be shown in the next section, by the 1950s the ACTT held waiting lists for such lowly appointments because they were a route to union admission.

The next entry control happened when the newcomer got that first minor position, because they would have to demonstrate that they were capable of meeting the demands of the industry. The practical and physical demands of working on a film set should not be underestimated. The work as a camera driver or camera assistant often meant reporting for work at 5:30 or 6am to load the camera equipment. The equipment would then be driven to the studio or location to arrive by 7:30 or 8am so that the grip could check the equipment before the camera crew arrived at 8:30 to set up for the first scenes. If the shoot involved a large number of actors, or any special make-up, prosthetics or wigs then the makeup department might be required to be at the studio or location from 7am. For fully qualified unit members, these timings would necessitate an early start from home and, depending on their seniority, they would either drive themselves or be collected by a car. For trainees and assistants without private transport, getting to Shepperton or Pinewood studio or, even worse, a location shoot, would involve a very early start and travel by tube or night bus to a pre-arranged rendezvous with someone who did own a car, perhaps staying overnight with friends or, if desperate, sleeping in the camera van overnight.

At the end of the shooting day (the “wrap”) when the key crew members departed, the trainees, assistants and junior members of every department would continue work to tidy up and re-box the camera equipment, to complete the camera sheets or prepare for the next day’s shooting. The producers took great care to avoid “time off the clock” payments to union members working to time sheets, but junior, non-union members of the crew or full-time employees of the production company were invariably on straight days and so their working hours were immaterial. One production runner remembers a shoot at Elstree Studios where he had:

become quite frazzled, permanently thinking about whether you’d booked the dog for the right day?... Had you got the extras there on

the right day ? Cars booked to get everybody home ? And you did that quite intensively if it was for, like, for a five day shoot – and I know it doesn't sound like a lot but by the end ... by the time you got to the weekend you have been leaving the house at 6, and coming back at 11 by the time you'd been to drop off rushes....and literally hitting the sack to wake up the next day – it was quite stressful.

Undoubtedly, part of this probationary process for a trainee was to assess whether the candidate had the stamina and personal skills to survive, what Doeringer & Piore describe as “screening” (1971:30-31). A producer who had employed a number of runners tried to summarise the process:

...not just the stamina, [it was] whether they had the aptitude ... you can sit and interview somebody until the cows come home but it is actual practice that is the proof of the pudding ... and you have to actually work with somebody to see if they can coordinate and whether they can prioritise and whether they are able to ‘juggle’.... You had to be married to the job ... and we certainly sifted through quite a few characters because of that [failing]. (ex-Producer)

Some did just serve their time and gain their ACTT membership, but the process could be very prolonged as this production manager who had worked as a runner in the mid to late 1980s remembered:

you had to do 365 days in production, i.e. working on something that was being shot you could then approach the union and register with them throughout this period and then say that “here, I've done all these days and here's the evidence of contacts” and then apply [for full membership] once you got offered a graded job, like as a third assistant. Then you could say you have got to let me in because a. I am sponsored by two people, and b. I've done all my days.... It took me four years to work my 365 days. (Producer)

For others who showed the necessary stamina, enthusiasm and potential in some menial employment as a runner or driver, the expectation was that they would be identified by a potential sponsor: either an experienced technician with reasonable standing within the union and industry, or a production or facilities company willing to employ them as full-time trainees for formal on-the-job training. Both routes would invariably lead to union membership, and thus advancement in the industry, but there might be a significant difference in the style of employment and level of reward.

If adopted by a sympathetic production company or equipment supplier, the trainee would effectively serve an on-the-job apprenticeship of several years, progressing in stages as they became more experienced in the basic skills:

I was taken on as a salaried trainee camera assistant by a film production company who owned their own equipment. The agreement with the ACTT was that for the first year I could work as a supernumerary on all shoots where the equipment was being used i.e. I was additional to the four union members working on camera. However, in my second year, I could work as the loader (the fourth member), but only for my employer. In my third year I could work on any production as a loader and I then got my full ticket. The production company did well out of it because although they carried me for the first year, I was much cheaper than a freelance loader in the second and third year. The benefit for me was that I emerged with a full [union] ticket and lots of contacts after three years' paid employment. (Focus Puller)

This three-year evolution to full status comes closest to the pure form of the craft union tradition where a time-served apprenticeship was the natural means to progress to acceptance to full union membership. The economic rationale was similar to that demonstrated by Becker's model of cost saving: trainees will pay for the costs of their own training, and they will be willing to do so because of the higher pay they will get later as skilled workers (Becker 1975:25). In reality, whether the company or the trainee was the net beneficiary from such an arrangement depended on how busy the production company was during the three years. The cost of the additional salary of a supernumerary in the first year was probably easily offset by the savings made by not employing a freelance loader, who would invoice against their timesheets, in the second and third year. The benefit to the individual was that they emerged trained, with union membership and an embryonic network of contacts – the social capital necessary to secure future employment.

By the late 1980s, companies adopting an individual had become an accepted route under the title of JOBFIT; a more formal, college-based admission system sponsored by the ACTT, IPPA, BFTPA and AFVPA and assisted by a grant from the GLC. The scheme was reported in the FTT (Mar 87) and gives a useful indicator, first of the demand for placements in the film industry - over 5,000 enquiries were received, and second of the stringency of the admission controls to

the industry. Two hundred were interviewed and only forty-two JOBFIT places were offered.

A less pure form of the apprenticeship, usually taken by those continuing a family tradition and therefore less concerned acquiring contacts, was to be 'adopted' by a relative or established technician who would arrange union membership through informal channels and then facilitate the newcomer's employment whenever the filming required several technicians. This arrangement was rarely used for camera crew because the necessary skills were too critical, but it was practical for trades such as grips, prop men, make-up and wardrobe where the senior technician could take responsibility and the less experienced and unskilled assistant would work under their direction. The disadvantage for the entrant was that although the financial reward when working was much greater (as union members, they were invariably paid at the full union rate), work could be very intermittent because production companies could be reluctant to employ such trainees knowing that they were paying the full rate for a less than fully-skilled craftsman. If the trainee and trainer were working alongside each other then the situation might be as Doeringer & Piore had described:

The experienced workman begins by assigning novices to the simpler parts of the jobs which he originally performed. He then gradually assigns more complicated tasks... As the workman shifts more complex tasks to the trainee, he also reduces his supervisory and teaching efforts, and reabsorbs some of the simpler tasks... (Doeringer & Piore 1971:19)

However, film work often meant that the trainee could be separated from their mentor - and that could be a challenge. A production manager recalls encountering one such family member on the set of a night shoot in the late 1980s:

.... to find that [the prop man's] son, who's just out of school has no clue about being a prop man whatsoever. But he's on a top rate, the same rate as his father who has worked on fifty films over thirty years, [even though he] doesn't even know how to hang up a blind and there I am ... thinking to myself, "I am getting paid dick all for this and this guy is on £220 a day and he thinks it's great. It's just not fair." ... I don't know what happened to those guys ... whether they managed to survive the experience and whether he today is a fantastic prop man, but there was no training for these people, they just walked in after school and the nepotism was factor

number one: if you don't know anyone in the business you won't get into the business. In those days the business was strong enough and the network, the nepotism factor, was strong enough in the film 'game', as it was called, to give these guys sufficient work – and you don't need a lot of work at sixteen if you are earning £220 a day plus all the overtime.

5.3 Variations and minorities

“.. even closed occupations are rarely demarcated by absolute boundaries” (Turner 1962:205)

It was a generally held assumption that the union application process was easier if individuals applied for membership from sectors where the union was keen to increase its presence. Kelly believed that people were “pestered to join the union because they already have a foot in the door, e.g. in the BBC or an industrial [i.e. corporate or training film] unit.” (1966:174) and some did join via that route. In July 1980, the FTT reported that amongst the 157 members elected, seventy eight were BBC members “restricted to the BBC for two years.” The only motivation for accepting membership with such a condition must have been the longer term benefit of unrestricted access to ACTT graded jobs because the BBC did not recognise the ACTT, having its own union - the Association of Broadcasting Staff (ABS). However, these routes were an uncertain, lengthy and possibly unrewarding process if the aim was solely to achieve ACTT membership. The BBC's own selection and entry processes were themselves demanding and the non-broadcasting (e.g. corporate and training film) production units were small backwaters in career terms, comprised mainly already qualified technicians. Experience gained was useful, but neither was a natural route into mainstream production because such applicants, being outsiders, had no access to the film networks necessary to obtain work.

However, these were alternative routes to membership if individuals were prepared to wait, serve their time and then pursue a wider career. In the same FTT item (July 1980) it was reported that ten researchers had been elected but "restricted to grade," presumably for some specified time. And some alternative routes were well recognised and utilised:

Loads of people got their union membership from working at what was then Visnews.⁷ Once they had the ticket they left and as far as I could see they could call themselves anything - I remember a lot of the promo directors that we worked with had done a 6 month stint at Visnews just to get membership. (Producer)

Another interviewee worked in one of the first motion control studios in the early 1980s. This was a then revolutionary technique linking robotic arms to very early computers so that the same camera moves could be replicated every time, an essential facility in special effects and animation. However, as a new technique, it was as yet not recognised by the union and so anyone could be employed:

Another guy there who was working for them ... had been a projectionist at the Chiltern Cinema in Beaconsfield ... and I know subsequently he then ended up working in special effects... (DoP)

Any direct approach to the ACTT could be frustrating, even when applicants had experience obtained elsewhere. In 1957, Edward Joffe, a South African with experience as a producer, director and writer came to London with a letter of introduction to Sir Michael Balcon⁸ who, after an interview, offered Joffe a minor position in the press department so he could learn about the UK industry. However, there was one snag:

‘You will have to get a union ticket; these are not rules of my making but I daren’t go against the ACTT’..... and off I toddled to the ACTT and I got in there and they kept me waiting for half an hour and then an hour and then eventually a woman said that so and so will see you..... I said ‘I have been to see Sir Michael Balcon, I can get a job there as a tea boy and I would like to apply for a union ticket...’ So they said ‘what qualifications have you got?’ So I said ‘What qualifications do you need to be a tea boy?’ and they said ‘Oh well, there are a lot of other people who are in line for those jobs’

Joffe was rejected (even though he offered, tongue in cheek, to take a tea making test to demonstrate his proficiency) and so he returned to Sir Michael (at that time one of the most senior producers in Britain) who admitted that there was nothing

⁷ Visnews was an independent film and video news agency, subsequently absorbed into Reuters (1993).

⁸ Producer of *Thirty-nine Steps*, *A Yank at Oxford*, *the Cruel Sea*, *Scott of the Antarctic* and many of the Ealing comedies

that he could do. Fortunately, Joffe then met someone involved in Admags⁹ and was offered employment as a producer/writer. Although Admags were transmitted by the commercial television companies (which had union agreements), the production of Admags was not union-regulated. Only when Joffe later joined Granada did the technical supervisor eventually break down his reservations about the ACTT and persuade him to join. Joffe went on to become a successful television director.

Lastly, although difficult to quantify, there were routes into production via the laboratory division and occasional transfers between unions, demonstrated by this letter to *Stage, Screen & Radio*: “I worked as a lowly third assistant director on the Edgar Wallace series at Merton Park in 1961-2. It was my very first job in film production having obtained my ACTT membership as a trainee printer.” (Deh-Ta Hsiung SSR March 2005).

Some transferred from theoretically lower grades having been trained and promoted:

I got a □ATTKE ticket as a production secretary in television, then I got a training as a gallery PA and, once I had completed my training I could transfer to the ACTT.

- Interviewer: was it a problem to transfer?

□o, because I was then within a company and it went with the grade, but that was one of the few areas where they were actually training and converting. (Sharon Goode)

Transfers from □ATTKE were not impossible, but could take time. John Keen joined Pinewood Studios in 1966 as a carpenter and was immediately enrolled into □ATTKE, but in 1972 he wanted to transfer to the camera department. While he had friends in the camera department who were willing to train him, John could only work if there was no ACTT member available and so he was obliged to telephone the union daily to ask if there was a vacancy – and would invariably be rebuffed. However, knowing the crews at Pinewood enabled him to co-ordinate his calls with their requests for a loader and by that means he was able to get some

⁹ Admags, 1955-1963, were short programmes where presenters demonstrated advertisers' products. (Gable 1980:74-82)

intermittent work. Otherwise, being employed in the studios, he was able to watch, but not touch the camera on the set, and to practise loading and stripping cameras in Pinewood's own camera store. John made three applications for membership of the ACTT over a two year period but he was rejected twice, and eventually admitted only on a rules technicality.

There do not appear to have been any additional obstacles for those women or minority representatives who tried to get into the industry. Women had first joined the union before the war and always on equal pay (George Elvin having a strong personal commitment to eliminating sex-based differentials (ACTT 1983:23)) but women remained a minority on camera while being predominant in continuity/script supervision and make-up, wardrobe, set dressing etc. The obstacles to women joining the camera department were sometimes more to do with job design than any inherent prejudice:

We tried using a female trainee to become a loader but the trainee's main task role was to check equipment, load the camera van and then make sure that the correct equipment was to hand when the camera crew wanted it. She pointed out.... quite rightly.... that the camera cases had all been designed by a man and were too large for a woman. On several occasions she had to be helped reload the van by the rest of the crew – who were all charging overtime at their appropriate rates.... It was just too expensive to keep her on and anyway she gave up after a few weeks. We then employed a male trainee. (Female Producer)

If women did face challenges in joining the more male-orientated departments such as camera and sound, the obstacles could be overcome by the dedicated and persistent. Sue Gibson had qualified and worked as a photographer before realising that her real interest was in film. She went to the National Film and Television School (NFTS) because:

...at that time it was still a closed shop with the union and they had a deal whereby you were guaranteed a ticket if somebody offered you a job which wasn't necessarily the case in the outside world. You could be offered a job and they would try every trick in the book not to let you have it 'cos there was some member or other that was out of work...

After graduating from the NFTS, she worked in a motion control studio but did not immediately apply for her ticket, not wanting to be restricted to special effects

work. However, after nine months she received a telephone call from a cameraman who had heard of her work and he invited her to be the clapper loader on *Privates on Parade*, which was the appointment that she needed to get a full camera department ticket. She quickly rose¹⁰ to become the first woman director of photography working in commercials and features (at the BFTS she had trained as a cinematographer) encountering little opposition from established male crew, even when she was so new as to be uncertain of the correct etiquette and might have encountered resistance:

I remember the first time on the set [as the DoP], I think I had got four brutes in a row and I'd said where to put them on the pre-light. Kevin Day, [the gaffer] who was working with me ...said "what's the matter Sue? You don't look very happy." And I went 'Yeah, they're not quite where I want them and that's not quite what I want and I know you can't move them.' And he went 'Yes we can.' Because I'd read in books ... that you don't get the sparks to move your lights; once you've set them they're there, they're not going to move big lights like brutes. So all that was a bit of a revelation.¹¹

Or did there appear to have been much additional obstacle for entrants from ethnic minorities, although the numbers entering the sector were so low that the assessment can be nothing other than anecdotal. No appropriate statistics exist for the 1970s, but in an 1989 survey, under 2% of film and broadcast employees reported ethnic origins from outside UK, Europe, America or Australasia (Varlaam et al. 1990:17). Alrick Riley (now a successful BAFTA-winning television director) remembers the few black role models that inspired him to pursue a media career when he made a political film on 8mm as a teenager. Alrick's description of that meeting recalls no reservation in their encouragement to indicate that a black person could not make the grade:

Basically it was the success of that film, got me into taking seriously the whole thing of having a career in the media. The film was shown at a conference and I met all of the black people in the film industry

¹⁰ So speedy was her rise that between her first jobs as a DoP, Sue was still having to work as a clapper loader to fulfil commitments she had made before her breakthrough.

¹¹ Sue Gibson was the first woman to be elected to membership of the British Guild of Cinematographers and is now their Vice-President.

at the time, - that probably amounted to about eight, and they were all there – and they encouraged us to take this business seriously.¹²

So with so many routes to union membership, was anyone with sufficient motivation ever excluded? Thirty or forty years on, it has proved impossible to locate an interviewee who had made a legitimate effort to join the union and been rejected, but certainly some contemporary commentators believed that potential talent was discouraged though this “attracted no attention when unknown lads whom nobody had heard of were not allowed to become clapper boys; but among them might have been the David Leans of twenty years hence” (Wood 1952:213). Certainly as may be judged from the related experiences of those above, admission to the union did require a mixture of luck, and certainly persistence (verging on obstinacy) and nepotism invariably helped. However, it was always possible to work on the periphery of the business, and admission was almost always possible, eventually. A National Organiser of the ACTT, Linda Loakes, rebutting the supposed restrictive nature of admissions said:

“you can hardly call ACTT a private club when it admits 1,500 new members each year” (FTT Feb 87)

5.4 The enforcement of the boundaries

“ACTT is a craft union which, in the past, derived much of its strength from its ability to control the supply of labour” (Maksymiw 1990:26)

“And it is muscle they [the laboratories] have often used to protect their own – and other members’ –working conditions” (ACTT 1983:39)

Although there were routes into the industry besides on-the-job training, they all required that ultimately a worker had to have a union ticket, and in that the ACTT did appear to have established the firm “geographical and occupational” boundaries required by Doeringer & Piore for the internal labour market, and the controls required by McCarthy for the pre-entry closed shop. However, the film workers were freelance, skilled and creative, thus well able to negotiate their own contracts,

¹² In 2006, Alrick’s two collaborators on his 8mm film are also still active in the industry.

so lastly it is necessary to establish how the ACTT was able to maintain control and ensure that the rules and procedures were respected.

Given the itinerant nature of film production, the union had little regular contact with its freelance members so it utilised the organisations most in contact with the workforce - the production companies which employed them. The concept that the employer is part of the union's disciplinary process was not new. Allen (1954:57) said of the closed shop environment "...the employer becomes an ally in the maintenance of discipline" and that view seems justified in the film industry. The majority of employers were members of either the IFA (Independent Film-makers' Association which became after 1991, PACT - the Producers' Alliance for Cinema & Television) and the AFPA (Advertising Film Producers' Association, later the AFVPA when Videotape was added). The ACTT had collective agreements with both organisations that agreed, along with all the conditions of employment, the minimum crewing levels for all productions. The precise arrangements varied, but the norm was colloquially known as "four, four & four": four union members should be employed on camera, four on sound and four in the production team (the latter being the director, producer, continuity, first assistant).

The union still faced the challenge of enforcing those crewing levels but their first control was the checking of the daily 'call-sheets', or crew lists, used by every production company:

In theory, companies were always supposed to inform the ACTT of a shoot (wherever it was) although I don't remember exactly when it became obligatory to deposit a call-sheet at HQ. We were certainly doing it at Picture Palace in '73.... (Producer).

These call-sheets (an example is at Appendix 2) specified the exact composition of the crew. However, the submission process was not perfect because the call sheet might relate to only one day's shoot, was rarely available until late the evening before and its delivery was slow (posting the form to the ACTT was considered acceptable and facsimile was not common until the mid 1980s) so the shoot was often completed before the membership office could check the crewing levels. Similarly, a production company could 'forget' to submit a call sheet altogether if they were in breach of the agreement - although it was rumoured that the ACTT

telephoned the studios each day to check which companies were using each stage. Lastly, a production company was unlikely to risk its standing with the ACTT by showing that they were not employing the required number of members (i.e. “short-crewing”) so there would certainly be sufficient crew listed on the call sheet, even if not actually present at the shoot (companies could arrange this by paying an appropriate crew member to stay at home for a ‘straight day’s pay’).

The union’s more proactive enforcement measure was the physical spot-checking of technicians’ union cards at the studios (location shoots were never visited because they were usually too far away from Soho):

Regular checks were made at studios, mainly to keep subscriptions up to date - the Union administration was hopelessly inefficient. The idea wasn't principally to catch out non-members or short crewing because the ticket system was self-policing in the sense that no head of department would want to be embarrassed by a non-member in his crew. For example, no serious sound recordist would be caught dead without the other three unless a waiver had been agreed because he would get it in the neck... (Producer)

Obtaining a waiver, i.e. being allowed to reduce the crew below the appropriate agreement’s crewing levels, was not quickly arranged but might be agreed if, for example, there was no requirement for a focus puller because the subject was inanimate and static (perhaps a pack shot for a commercial). The negotiation was rarely simple, and often contentious, particularly in TV commercials where companies were bidding competitively and where losing one or two crew members might make a considerable difference in the price to the client:

...it became increasingly obvious that four on sound on location was ludicrous and there were also occasions when the new generation of hands-on cameramen (who operated themselves) meant three on camera was enough too. The ACTT refused to recognise this shift and insisted that 4/4/4 remained although, in certain circumstances it was prepared to negotiate. In the beginning, technicians were paid the full rate to stay at home (so the savings lay in overtime - remember, we weren't allowed to do pay deals - travel, hotels and per diems). This then evolved into paying the union off after a negotiation with the organiser (Joe Telford in my day). The money was supposed to go into the ACTT comfort fund or suchlike but it wasn't always a cheque (I don't recall any receipts) and many of us were suspicious that other cash changed hands because all production companies were not treated alike. I remember quoting a location and negotiating one

less on sound to then lose the job to Illustra [another production company] who got two on sound and one on camera. All the AFPA Council (and other top producers) had, earlier, all sworn on their mother's graves that they would stick together on a level playing field so that was an early lesson for me in group loyalty in a competitive business. (Producer)

Joe Telford's reputation as a union enforcer was legendary throughout the industry. His obituary in 1987 recorded the regime he had imposed: "[Joe] was feared by most of our commercial production companies. They were particularly nervous about his unexpected visits, and particularly about his almost second sight which let him know when an agreement was being breached..." (FTT Nov 87).¹³

The ACTT had no capability to inspect what was happening on foreign location shoots so an administrative measure was imposed. Crew lists had to be submitted to the union so that Overseas Location Clearance certificates (known as "White Cards" - example at Appendix 3) could be issued to each union member authorising that "The under mentioned member is cleared for the location shown overleaf in compliance with Rule 19" which stated:

No member will be allowed to proceed on a film (quota or non-quota) or television foreign location or reconnaissance abroad (with the exception of urgent newsreel assignments) without informing Head Office of the fact. Any member failing to comply with this requirement may be subject to disciplinary action. Clearance certificates will not be issued to any members whose Trade Union subscriptions are in arrears.

Theoretically, the issuing of these cards assured the crew member that the ACTT confirmed that the member was correctly insured under the appropriate agreement. In practice, as indicated in the last line of Rule 19, it enabled the union to apply pressure on those members whose subscriptions were in arrears. The penalty for not obtaining prior clearance from the ACTT was that technicians had no recourse to the union should things go wrong. In 1980, the Film Production Branch considered an appeal for assistance from a crew who had been abroad without obtaining Location Clearance when the film company went bankrupt. It was

¹³ One interviewee believed that the retirement of Joe Telford in 1980 marked the end of the union's ability to enforce the closed shop. His obituary also has the unfortunate phrase: "the ACTT's progress will be your epitaph."

agreed that those members should not be helped from union funds (FTT March 1980).

The need to pressure members to pay their full subscriptions was important because their payment was a loosely controlled process. ACTT members were supposed to pay a subscription of 1% of their income, but this was self-assessed for freelance members so there was considerable latitude in how much was submitted and when - many were inclined to pay just above the annual minimum once each year. Production companies were under no obligation to inform the union of the actual fees paid to individual members, and rarely had the structure to do so. Companies were small organisations when not in production, often based around two or three producers or directors, a few full-time assistants and some limited provision for bookkeeping. Business practices were not that sophisticated, and the bond of film making invariably meant that the division between employers and crew, especially on small productions, was not great. Invariably, "the employers" - producers and directors - were themselves members of the ACTT, and this meant that there was no clear line between employers and employees, the possession of a ticket being the critical, and common, factor necessary to work:

I started with Michael Law as the assistant around 1966 and the ACTT regime was draconian. Although you didn't need a ticket to be a producer (four on production wasn't usually a problem) I thought it would be better to have one rather than not and got one quite easily when I joined Gerry Poulson to produce in 1969 (which, of course, proved a Godsend when I decided to direct because tickets were "transferable"). (Peter Levelle)

Production companies were often transitory and there was no obligation for a company to be a member of the IFA or the AFVPA and thus be bound to the various union agreements. However, regardless of whether or not they were members of the employer associations, all companies invariably worked closely to the union agreements because the advantage for both production company and crew was that there was a recognised template for rates, hours to be worked, arrangements for overtime, travel time etc. Thus, the only information necessary to employ a crew member for the day was confirmation of the time and place where they were needed. Everything else would be assumed to accord to the union's standard agreement unless it had been specifically negotiated.

As described, these enforcement measures available to the ACTT may seem rudimentary, and to a large extent, they probably were.¹⁴ No one had any real knowledge of how efficiently the ACTT checked the call-sheets; spot checks could be easily evaded and, if necessary, every production company knew of some friendly freelance crew who could be hired retrospectively to make-up the numbers should the union conduct a crewing audit. Some crew were certainly ambivalent to the union, regarding it as too expensive and too politically active.

However, the ACTT had two more effective weapons that combined to ensure compliance: the laboratories and fear.

Booth had observed that the exercise of union power could be exercised through a minority of unionised labour if their work was complementary in production with non-unionised labour. In film production all technical workers were union members but, as already shown, the ACTT's hold over individual freelance workers was relatively weak. However, by controlling the essential workers, in this instance those in the labs on whom all others depended, the union had the means to exercise control over the whole industry:

[Although] these workers represent only a small fraction of the sector, the union does not control the labour force of the sector. But it can nevertheless paralyse the industry if its membership goes on strike (Booth 1995:74).

The exercise of union control in the laboratories was relatively simple because the work was more akin to light industrial employment and thus very different to the that of the dispersed creative departments on the studio floor. Therefore they were “less glamorous, perhaps, but ... the backbone of the union” (ACTT 1983:71). Whereas Sayles might have perceived the freelance film workforce as an Apathetic Group (“the least likely to develop grievances or engage in concerted action” and “less prone to engage in union activities” (1963:8)), the laboratory workers were undoubtedly a Strategic Group with the appropriate behaviour characteristics: pressured, continuous work; “the core of the union regulars”; and “highly cohesive” (1963:19&34).

¹⁴ The union did have some ‘successes.’ My own name was taken off the screen credits for *Chariots of Fire* (1981) because I was not yet a member of the ACTT.

Kelly in his analysis of the state of employment relations of the film industry noted that “negotiations are generally concluded satisfactorily for the two sides must live with each other.” But whereas most film production workers were in daily contact with their employers, the producers, the laboratory employers were big multi-national companies, such as Technicolor, Rank and Kodak, and thus negotiations were more confrontational. The ACTT had only had two major strikes in the thirty years 1934 to 1964, and significantly both had related to the laboratories (Kelly 1966:171). The laboratories were 100% ACTT closed shops and the 1954 strike and subsequent lock-out had been particularly bitter, only finally resolved by the intervention of the Ministry of Labour, and enforced arbitration. The laboratories therefore were:

... the industrial powerhouse of the union. Time and again, while always ready to defend their own interests, the lab workers – with the largest battalion at Rank Denham – have come to the aid of the union’s membership when the call has been made. (ACTT 1983:33)

Sayles had selected the term *strategic* because of behavioural characteristics, not to indicate a position in the production chain (1963:19). However, until the advent of video (in the early 1980s) all production was totally dependent on the laboratories. All 35mm or 16mm film negative was processed overnight and the first print (“rushes”) delivered back to the studio the next morning for a first viewing by the director, editor and lighting cameraman. From then on, the progress of editing was dependent on the daily orders delivered from the labs until the final, married (i.e. film with sound track), graded (i.e. colour corrected) print was delivered ready for transmission or screening. Even when that print had been delivered, there were two last points where pressure could be applied. The negative, on which the whole production depended, remained the property of the laboratory until the processing charges had been paid in full. Without the “lab certificate” confirming those payments, the producers could not collect their final fee. Finally, if the production was for transmission from a UK commercial TV station, ACTT members would not handle it without the lab’s clearance, so the material would not be aired.

Therefore, the ACTT had the ability to hinder any production at the laboratory or before transmission - thereby severing the production company’s source of revenue - if there was any hint of a variation from the production agreement, a dispute over

crewing levels, a disagreement about overtime or crew being unpaid. Joe Marks recalled that the release of a feature film, *Gorgo*, had to be twice delayed in 1961 when the union refused to allow the release of the prints until the American producers had settled their bills with the special effects company. Another producer commented:

It wasn't a good idea for a production company to get caught breaking the rules because the downside of a dispute with the ACTT was grim. The lab technicians (prints were used in those days) and the men handling the reels of commercials at the TV stations were all union members happy to oblige if the Union "blackened" a commercial..... So they had you by the balls on a swift route to financial meltdown! Some commercials were certainly blacked but how you find out which they were and how the situation was resolved, I have no idea...

The uncertainty reflected in the last line of the previous quote exemplifies the doubts that maintained the mystery of the union's power. No one quite knew how well the closed shop was enforced, but nor was anyone willing to explore just how far tolerance would be extended, because the ACTT was known to be "unreasonable and unyielding in negotiations, even at the cost of wholesale unemployment of its members" (Wood 1952:213). No one knew who might be the activists on the crew who would report back to the ACTT if there were any attempt to negotiate an illicit deal or short crewing. In October 1979, the FTT reported under Feature Production Branch activities that the "camera section [had] reported this production [*Mouse and the Woman*] to the Branch" and that "a number of crew members were not in the union." There was some deliberation whether to allow the production to continue but, eventually, "accepting the producer's protestations of ignorance", the producer and production manager were reprimanded and production allowed to continue "in strict accordance with ACTT regulations" (FTT Oct 1979). Every producer or production manager knew that discovery of such an illicit arrangement could jeopardise a production, mean missed deadlines, lost business, potential bankruptcy, a tarnished reputation in a small industry and thus potential loss of livelihood - and it was only bold or rash producers who attempted or tolerated any deviation from the accepted rules and procedures.

With a limited shooting schedule, perhaps because a star has only a certain time free between other film commitments, producers are vulnerable to local union arm twisting. (Kelly 1966:171)

And by the 1960s and 1970s this power had been long established. Commenting just after the war, Wood had observed of the industry:

Those who learnt enough about films to criticise the ACT were understandably hesitant to voice their criticism, for fear that it might ban them from films for ever. (Wood 1952:213)

This sense of closed community, in which total interdependence meant that no divergence could be tolerated, is not that far removed from that of the eighteenth century “trade clubs of handicraftsmen” which, the Webbs had observed, “would have scouted the idea of allowing any man to work at their trade who was not a member of the club”; they had further commented that “this silent and unseen, but absolute compulsion, is the ideal of every trade union” (1898:214&215). However, while the objective of the ACTT in the twentieth century may have been similar, the “absolute compulsion” was perhaps not quite so idealistic, being enforced more by fear and uncertainty:

[the] Commercials Organiser ...would have been the principal policeman on the ticket front - it was sickening, the way we all had to toady up to him. (Producer)

Conclusions

That the ACTT had imposed and maintained a pre-entry closed shop in the film production industry from 1945 until the late 1970s seems without question. To progress in the industry, every worker had to meet the admission requirements of the union, the exact specifications of which were imprecise but which appear to have been the persistence necessary to locate an entry position, then demonstrating stamina and enthusiasm in that role, and finally acquiring the essential patronage. Although the weighting of those elements could vary, they meant that every member had served a quasi-apprenticeship through on-the-job training – and many managers had followed the same route.

The reward for that investment of time and effort was to gain access to an industry where employment conditions were largely prescribed by the union. The power to enforce this regime in a fragmented and often unstable industry appears to have come from a combination of craft and numerical strength applied in two very different divisions of the industry. The element of craft exclusivity meant that there was theoretically no means to acquire the necessary film production skills except through one of the union approved gateways, and these were carefully regulated to prevent any excess of labour in the market. Should an individual manage to acquire the skills elsewhere, for example by working abroad, the union possessed the power to prevent the production companies substituting union members, or deviating in any other way, through their cohesive, numerical control of the critical laboratory workforce. Without access to the laboratories, no production company could survive, and this ensured compliance with all aspects of the collective agreements relating to film production: crewing, terms and conditions; pay and overtime rates; meals and travel.

It might be assumed that these powers were necessary to counter the power of concerted capital in the hands of the employers but in reality, the converse was true. The union was, and had to, be powerful if it was to protect the interests of its members because the film employers were, for the most part, weak, uncoordinated and transitory and the work was intermittent. Therefore, the union needed to be able to impose its will and prevent unscrupulous, ineffective or short-lived companies attempting deals which would erode the living standards of its members.

So if this was a closed shop, was it also an internal labour market? Certainly there appears to have been a labour market where “the pricing and allocation is governed by a set of administrative rules and procedures” and a craft market where “geographical and occupational jurisdiction of the local union generally defines the boundaries of the market” (Doeringer & Piore 1971:2-4). The boundaries of the market were clearly defined and within them the union’s control over the pricing and crewing was complete. All workers were invariably inducted into the industry through on-the-job training (1971:17-22) and the skills they acquired were job and technology specific (1971:13-17) being unsuitable for any other industry. Lastly, the process of admission and training meant that all within the industry had been

screened and conditioned to recognise and accept the customs and practices of the industry's workforce: "the unwritten set of rules based largely upon past practice or precedent" (1971:23).

However, Doeringer & Piore believed the objective of workers and employers was stability and achievement of this was qualified because of the insecure environment within which the industry, workers and management, existed. The post-war British film industry was not an assured environment in which to work, so while it was true that a stable community of workers existed, and that within that community there were universally accepted customs and rules, the nature of the industry meant that they were not entirely protected from the vagaries of taste, style and international exchange rates.

The stability that the internal labour market did achieve through the rules, procedures and customs imposed by the union, was that workers were assured that there was no competitive market that could undercut their rates and that, when working, there would be prescribed employment conditions and practices (rates were never adjusted down to reflect market conditions). Producers were assured that there would always be a pool of appropriately qualified, skilled workers and a predictable tariff card. In this way the workers were "shielded from the *direct* influences of competitive forces" (Doeringer 1971:2), albeit only in the *domestic* external market.

However, this was the situation in the late 1970s, the 1980s would see a transformation and it is next necessary to consider the processes that would erode the conditions that had maintained union supremacy over relatively weak employers.

Chapter 6 1980s: THE EROSION OF FORMAL CLOSURE

“..due to new technological changes and a more hostile industrial environment, the [ACTT] union has run into a number of serious problems which cast doubt on the union’s ability to remain an effective bargaining force” (Maksymiw 1990:26)

In the late 1970s, there were few indications of any impending change that would affect the status quo of the closed shop within the film industry. Industrial relations within the sector remained well entrenched along preordained lines that had changed little since the 1950s because the union was expected to fight hard for its members who, as film technicians, had few alternative employments and little security (PEP 1952:279). By the late 1970s, feature film production had reverted to a pattern not dissimilar to the 1930s when the employers - the producers - were almost as vulnerable as the technicians, being dependent themselves on often unpredictable financial backers. Thus “the distant and not so distant history of the industry provide the film unions with reasons for being tough in bargaining, sceptical of management intentions and fiercely loyal to their members” (Kelly 1966:171).

Despite this apparent hard stance, both sides continued to work in reasonable harmony, the employers deviating little from the collective agreements and mindful that every stage of the film production process was dependent on the unionised laboratories. In 1980, the notes for the Feature Production Branch in the *Film & Television Technician* (FTT), in a section describing a “personal dispute” with a production company, recorded that the writer was “relieved to know that the negative is lodged at Rank Laboratories so, if the worst comes to the worst, I am

sure we can rely on our labs colleagues¹” (FTT March 1980). The threat was more than implicit.

However, in the 1980s the closure of the film industry workforce was presented with several new challenges and this chapter considers the effect of these processes on the ACTT and its membership. Section 6.1 considers the effect of the 1980s Employment Acts on the behaviour of the union, as the accepted conventions protecting the operation of the closed shop were removed. Section 6.2 considers the impact which changing technology had upon the stranglehold previously operated by the film laboratories to support the union’s policies. Although the first changes in technology came primarily from the increasing use in television news of Electronic News Gathering (ENG), the advances in video technology began to affect all aspects of the production process in television and commercials. Section 6.3 is an assessment of the investigation done by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC) into the operation of the closed shop within the film industry and the impact of the TV-am dispute of 1987 - the television industry’s Wapping - when an employer contested the prescribed working practices and crewing agreements. Section 6.4 will assess some of the ill-defined, but undoubtedly eroding, forces of social change that initiated a shift in attitudes, perhaps of little significance alone but, combined with the other changes, sufficient to challenge the authority of the union’s control over access to the labour market.

6.1 The 1980s Employment Acts and the ACTT

“Unions like the ACTT already have extremely democratic structures developed by their own members and reflecting their needs” (FTT Aug/Sep 83)

It is not intended to review here all the implications of the five Employment Acts passed between 1980 and 1990 which have been well recorded elsewhere (Auerbach 1990; Barlow 1996; Honeyball 1988; McIlroy 1991), justified by those who participated in their formulation (Howe 1994; Prior 1986; Tebbit 1988;

¹ Had “our labs colleagues” taken official industrial action, it would have been secondary action which was about to be made illegal under the 1980 Employment Act.

Thatcher 1993) and whose objectives are stated in a number of Green and White papers (including DE1980; DE1987; DE1988). However, one of their effects was to slowly strip away, “step by step” (DE1987:1) the protections which had enabled the closed shop to operate.

□o official ACTT records survive for this period so the reaction to this legislation has to be gauged from the union journal, the *Film □ Television Technician* (FTT), and the recollections of individuals. However, an initial observation must be that throughout the 1980s there is little in the FTT to indicate concern about any of the measures being enacted. Whether this was because the legislation was considered to be of little significance to a system as institutionalised as film employment, whether because it was assumed that a future Labour government would repeal the legislation or whether because there was a policy that the union’s official journal was not the vehicle to alert members to their new rights, will be assessed later.²

The FTT’s first comment on new Government plans came soon after the 1979 General Election and set the tone of the debate about employment law as reflected in the pages of the FTT throughout the 1980s. Describing activity as a “phoney war”, more emphasis was placed on the proposed abortion law amendments and the ending of the Retail Price Index (sixteen lines of copy devoted to each) than to the changes to dismissal laws and right to picket (ten lines) (FTT Aug/Sep 1979). The FTT made no further reference to employment legislation for six months when it returned to the first Employment Bill, but that commentary appears to have been taken from a TUC briefing because there is no specific mention of the film industry and it refers very broadly to “Trade Union Movement” opposition (FTT February 1980).³

A month later, the challenges that the 1980s Employment Bill posed for the film industry were addressed more specifically in a valedictory article by Joe Telford,

² Although working in the industry through the 1980s and early 1990s, I recall no awareness of the changes that were being effected on the closed shop and I don’t believe many of my co-workers did either. It has been significant during the interviews that almost no one can pinpoint the moment they realised that the closed shop had gone.

³ Although the copy does not appear to have been lifted from either document, the TUC had published two documents, *Bargain to Beat the Act* (TUC 1980) and *Beat the Act* (TUC 1981) to assist union members in opposing the 1980 Employment Act.

who was retiring as the national organiser for commercials, shorts and documentaries. He correctly recognised the threat that the proposed laws relating to secondary picketing would present:

...particular dangers to ACTT... If someone darted off to Spain to make a commercial and instead of taking the proper crew and getting clearance, just two men had gone, and they weren't insured, there's a commercial our members in the labs are expected to process, our members in post-production are expected to edit, and our members in television are expected to transmit. Are we going to be prevented from taking secondary action to catch up with someone who's dug a hole through our agreements ? (FTT March 1980)

These were valid points for the film industry where the various processes were undertaken by different commercial entities (and thus different employers). However, there was no further comment in the FTT which did not return to the government's employment legislation for another two years when, in a full page article under the headline "Tebbit⁴ is danger!", the ACTT's research officer, Andy Egan, explained the new legislation incorporated in the 1982 Employment Relations Act. Having listed three of the provisions (the removal of immunities, the attack on union funds and the definition of a dispute), Egan moved to a section entitled "Closed Shop: freedom for whom?":

From the ACTT's point of view, it has to be remembered that this package is applicable even where the closed shop takes the form of *custom and practice* rather than a formal union management agreement The outlawing of union-only labour contracts and the restrictions on industrial action to ensure that only union labour is used would, of course, have a number of implications for the ACTT, since strong union organisation is essential in a fragmented labour market. (FTT Jan 1982:6) (my italics)

Egan's observation concerning the need for a strong union organisation was significant because, as was shown in Chapter 5, the union's own ability to organise its freelance members was not strong and was dependent on the employers whose position was now being strengthened.

Egan followed this with another article "ACTT & the Tebbit Bill" (FTT Aug/Sep 1982) indicating the implications of the Bill "if allowed to operate." The phrase is

⁴ Norman Tebbit had been appointed Employment Secretary in September 1981.

interesting because in the summer of 1982 a general election was probably two years away so there can have been little hope of an immediate Labour victory to reverse the proposals. Was Egan assuming that the proposals would be met by the same collective resistance that had neutralised the 1971 Industrial Relations Act? Whatever the unstated expectations, Egan predicted that the Bill would undermine collective union organisation, would benefit 'free riders' who want "the advantages without the obligations of union membership and who disrupt industrial relations to the cost of employers and members alike". He emphasised that closed shop ballots were not a legal requirement, but recognised that without them there was the threat that "dismissals of free riders will be automatically unfair". Egan closed with a warning to employers that the ACTT, in line with TUC policy, would refuse to cooperate with any ballots, and warned employers that attempts to include non-union labour or to undercut agreements would be "as disruptive to their interests as to members." It is not clear exactly how such disruption would have been effected, but the laboratory staff had considerable scope to disrupt the smooth flow of a production without any hint of recognisable secondary industrial action.

Determined as that sounds, there is little evidence that the Employment Bills were foremost in the Executive's priorities at this time (FTT Dec 1982). Film production was going through a cyclical boom and it may have been that demand for labour was such that employment legislation seemed an unimportant threat. At the ACTT 1982 conference, the government's proposed employment legislation had appeared to be a low priority. Of the thirty five proposed motions only one motion put to conference related to Trade Union legislation and that stated, in very general terms, a support for TUC policy.

Considering the battles that were being fought at Wapping, Orgreave and Warrington it is an insight into the priorities of the ACTT, as a craft union, that so little relating to employment issues was debated at Annual Conference through the 1980s. In 1980, of the twenty five resolutions considered at Conference, only four concerned political issues such as the opposition to public spending cuts, the support of the TUC in defence of union rights, picketing, discrimination and equal opportunity. By 1983, the percentage of "political" resolutions had risen to nearly a third, but the subject matter was not particularly focussed on Employment Act

issues: nuclear disarmament, the British Nationality Act and equal opportunities. Only one resolution of the thirty five related to trade union rights and again the motion was to support the TUC - although two resolutions relating to union administration were patently influenced by political events: a motion to set up a strike fund and a motion that the union should decide which party should receive the political levy. The 1984 Conference had three resolutions regarding trade union legislation. However, the motions are virtually identical, but proposed by three different divisions, and again merely supported the TUC urging them to take “no further part”, “to desist from collaboration [with the government]” and assuring them of the ACTT’s support.

An insider explained that this lack of resolutions and calls for action was because the considered view was that the debate about the Employment Acts had to be conducted at the national level by the TUC. The ACTT, a small craft union, could achieve little by lobbying alone and, in the climate of the time, there was little to motivate the interest of anyone but the most committed in the small, “step by step” (DE1987:1) processes that were eroding the union’s powers:

People moved away from employment law, it was just too boring for them. They would focus on some other outrage that was more personalised, and easier to get a grip on, and get worked up about, than the niceties of this latest bit of legislation.

Thus the Closed Shop is not specifically mentioned in any Conference debates about the Employment Acts until 1990 when there were two motions. Conference resolution (No 15) stated :

Conference is further concerned that the attack on the Closed Shop will have a detrimental effect on the relationship between the management and shop floor where the Closed Shop agreement exists.

The second motion was from the Technicolor Laboratory Shop:

Conference instructs the secretariat to inform managements operating under ACTT agreements that the withdrawal of the Closed Shop procedure will have an adverse effect on the collective relationship between shop floor and company administration. (FTT Feb 1990).

These motions are only significant because, as will be shown in the third section, it is debatable whether a closed shop still existed in 1990.

The disinclination of the Annual Conference to debate anything outside the film industry other than the broadest issues (nuclear disarmament and equal opportunities were unlikely to divide delegates) probably reflected the divisions that existed between the political activities of union activists and leadership and the constituent branches of the membership, in particular film production and the laboratories. This difference is seen in the monthly union journal, the FTT, which attempted to balance the priorities between being a trade journal (reviewing new equipment and techniques), a union information sheet (details of new rates, regulations and union business) and a political pamphlet, devoting significant space to issues well removed from the industry. In the FTT May 1987 there was a double page editorial devoted to the perils of nuclear power stations and there were frequent features about Nicaragua, abortion and Chile. There was some dissent from this preoccupation with events far removed from the union's interests and an FTT letter writer (January 1984) lambasted the Executive's condemning the US invasion of Grenada: "what is the point of these pious resolutions?" Some of the membership held strong feelings about the FTT's priorities and while it can probably be assumed that the laboratories and the more socially aware remnants of the documentary movement remained staunchly to the left, much of the production membership was more middle-of-the-road, being resident in home county suburbs, relatively well off – and probably always had been. In the 1950s:

most of the people working at Pinewood were also Conservatives. Only four members of the Pinewood ACT shop - the largest in the union after the labs - paid the levy to the Labour Party. 'It wasn't just inertia' recalled Anthony Perry elected treasurer and later chairman of the Pinewood shop 'most really were Conservatives' (Harper & Porter 2003:40)

However, while that might have remained true of film production workers, it did not reflect the overall composition of the union. In December 1978, 89.7% of ACTT members paid the political levy knowing that it would be passed to the Labour Party and significantly that was the highest registered percentage for any union, the next being SOGAT at 75.2% (FTT Mar 80). Therefore, reading through the back copies of the FTT, it is only the letters, rather than any editorial material, that reveal any right-leaning under-swell within the ACTT:

As Conservative supporters, we feel we have, for far too long, quietly suffered and seemingly supported these outbursts [by Alan Sapper, the union's General Secretary]. There are a great many Conservatives in the ACTT and we rarely hear of moves to stimulate our industry, but often of hate and envy from our left wing Executive. (FTT Aug/Sep 1982)

And in support of the Employment Acts:

... the closed shop is an ugly, sometimes brutal, attack on an individual's right to earn his living without harassment; that secondary picketing is sometimes grossly unjust to an employer who is not involved in the dispute; that compulsory secret ballots before all major union decisions would do more to sweeten the industrial climate of this country more than any other single act. (FTT June 1982).

But these were a minority. The Aug/Sep 1982 edition carried many more letters expressing solidarity with an ongoing ASLEF dispute, and the second letter quoted was countered by an editorial which stated that "what FTT has said... has been in accord with the policies of the Union adopted at Annual Conference and General Council Meetings." Sadly, what might have been an indicator of political leanings within the ACTT, the Political Fund ballot of 1985, was ambiguous. The ballot approved the political fund by 7,140 to 5,043 votes but on a very low turnout of 49% (some unions, such as the Fire Brigade Union and the Carpet Weavers, registered turnouts close to 90%). Furthermore, the 59% in favour of a political fund was the lowest percentage recorded in the thirty six political fund ballots conducted between 1985 – 1986 (unions such as ASLEF, the Tailors & Garment Workers and the IUM recorded votes over 90% in favour of a fund) (FTT Dec 1985; Webb 1992:29).

If the union's official rhetoric remained fairly strident⁵ throughout the 1980s, there were signs that adherence to previously rigid boundaries regarding admissions, crewing levels and demarcation had begun to waver. In 1982, there was a first attempt to move from the draconian rule of "four, four & four" crewing levels: "in consultation with Heads of Departments, crews may be reduced for pack shots,

⁵ An informed commentator on this period (who did not wish to be cited) has observed that the union had to take a stand, and it meant what was said. It was obvious, given the climate of the time, that the union movement would be diminished – but that could not be publicly admitted.

second unit, test shooting and filming in restricted areas" (FTT Aug/Sept 1982). As will be shown in the next section, this proposal was never ratified, but the possibility of deviation had been recognised.

Also, although it is not easy to attach them to specific external factors, there were moves in 1987 to soften admissions policies. In early 1987, FTT reported a proposal to actively seek new members:

... ACTT membership policy should be 'to seek out and to encourage membership (possibly with certain initial restrictions) of those who can establish that they earn their principal livelihood in a grade organised by the ACTT...' (FTT April 1987).

Moreover, whereas the post-war custom had always been "that a job should be advertised and that, if a firm cannot find adequately qualified ACTT members, it can employ a non-member" (Kelly 1966:174), by the late 1980s production companies who were in favour with the ACTT could usually get tickets for junior production staff without bothering to seek out existing ACTT members. The assumption seems to have been that if a legitimate company was prepared to employ an individual, then the union was prepared to accept them as a member, thus effectively creating a post-entry closed shop arrangement. Patsi Bucknall, who joined a production company as a production assistant in 1987, recalled that she was granted an immediate ticket when her company wrote to the union.

Furthermore, it would appear that demarcation control was also to be eased: "Those in workshops franchised by ACTT are allowed to become members and, if there is a restriction to a job or a section of the industry, this will lapse after two years" (FTT Feb 87).

Perhaps because of this easing of the barriers to membership, ACTT membership reached a new peak in 1987 at 27,157, thereby defying the national trend of falling union members during the 1980s (Kelly & Willman 2004:1). The two largest divisions being ITV at 6,745 and the London Film Division at 6,662 (FTT May 87). From this continuing growth in membership, and the seeming lack of interest that the Executive had paid to the employment legislation, it might be assumed that all remained well with the cohesion of the union and its environment despite the

Employment Acts. However, there was a greater threat that would prove more challenging.

6.2 The impact of new technology

“Video tape will curtail the employment of lab members and put a strong weapon in the hands of the employers” (FTT June 1958)

As the quote above shows, someone within the ACTT had recognised very early that video would shift the balance of power within the film production sector and this section will argue that its impact, and that of digital technology, was more corrosive to closure than the Employment Acts. The introduction through the 1980s of these new technologies had two major consequences. First, it reduced the dependency of the production process on the laboratories, and thus weakened the union’s traditional choke point, and second, it introduced a new class of post-production technicians who had not come through the traditional entry conditioning, whose new skills were not readily absorbed into the accepted union categories and who therefore owed no allegiance to the established film practices or union.

The ACTT was consistently slow to recognise changes in technology and the evolution of sound crewing was a typical example. As early as 1966, Kelly had commented that

in the early days of talkies four men were necessary to manhandle bulky accumulators and wax recording gear. But in this age of the tape recorder the [sound] crew ought to be smaller (1966:171).

In the early 1980s technology had moved on further and an English director shooting in Paris recalled that sound was recorded by one man who carried the equipment on a neck strap and operated the boom with his freed hands (PL). However, in Britain, sound crewing was slow to follow. In the autumn of 1982 there was a draft commercial agreement reducing four, four and four to a total crew of ten (FTT Aug/Sept 1982:15) but next month Jacki McCarten (the ACTT’s official responsible for commercials) reported that “they [the Film Branch] want to tighten it up” (FTT October 1982). However, some producers must have assumed that the draft agreement would be ratified and reduced their crews because six

months later, under the headline "warning on crewing", Jacki McCarten issued the following caution:

I would remind members that under the current [1970 FPA/ACTT] agreement, the minimum crew for a synch sound commercial is four on production, four on camera and four on sound.

Apparently, still further clarification was needed because a month later McCarten felt it necessary to issue a further notice: "Reference to a sound crew of three in a recent circular relates only to films under the provisions of Clause 19 of the current BFTPA/ACTT Agreement which does NOT specify crewing levels by Department" (FTT May 1983).

Nine months later (i.e. seventeen months after the draft agreement and eighteen years after Kelly's comment) a new commercials agreement was announced (FTT Jan 84). This showed a reduction in sound crew was permitted - "a minimum of four on production, four on camera and three on sound", and furthermore that there could be diminishing crew, ranging through options such as vox pops, no artistes etc to "pack shot (silent) in studio" which now required only two on production and three on camera (FTT Feb 84).

If it had taken many years to accommodate the improvements to sound technology, then the ACTT's reaction to the arrival of video technology was no quicker or more charitable. Even in 1983, when video was beginning to make some impact, the ACTT wrote disparagingly of video's primitive origins in CCTV where it "kept an eye on smart motor cars in shabby showrooms, where many of its exponents come from." The writer went on:

..it was not until 1977 that a renegade mix of broadcast production people and those who had been through their CCTV apprenticeship in partnership with engineers who had left the BBC, started a plethora of small TV facilities companies... A programme contractor who makes money out of programme making and is only reliant upon equipment as a cost efficient tool will arrive at a better equation in favour of the programme possibilities than a company which looks to the number of hours clocked up on a machine for its sole income.

And what of those that operated these electronic behemoths ?

Editors become categorised in ‘divisions’ according to ‘their speed’ and the industry will not produce better programmes in such an environment.

The writer went on that the “Achilles heel” of the new systems was that the automated functions of the camera

continually deal in averages and compromises to the exclusion of anything special. It provides a limited set of options rather than a means of pure expression; it needs ingenuity to extend its qualities for the feature [film].

Accepting that “all of this places stresses on the movie making industry generally” the writer conceded that video would attract investment, but also noted that while many “businesses run very well by the efficient production of high volume, low cost products” would this new industry carry on the tradition of making better movies: “Will it make a *Chariots of Fire?*”⁶ Only at the end of the piece does the writer become more conciliatory:

....it is a great opportunity. But only with the help of those pillars of the industry.... the union and its membership [who] are best placed to nurture the potential of this bright, clever teenager. (ACTT 1983:160).

Video therefore was a clumsy tool, operated by renegades for whom speed and clocked hours were the only measure of success.

The first impact of video on employment within the industry (excluding the addition of a video assist operator⁷ - not a mandated ACTT grade - to commercial and feature film crews in the late 1970s) came not in the programme or features sectors, but in news gathering and the laboratories. In December 1982, the FTT announced that the UPIT lab was closing because “E□G [Electronic □ews Gathering] has meant that far fewer pictures are being put on film” but pressure was mounting on all laboratories: in □ovember 1981, Reed's Colour Film Laboratory had closed with the loss of 17 jobs; in 1985, the Humphries Film

⁶ *Chariots of Fire* had won an Oscar in 1982.

⁷ The video assist camera built into a 35mm film camera recorded the image through the lens each time the shutter closed to allow the film to move on one frame. Although a primitive, flickering image, it allowed the director to view the framing and action that the camera had recorded immediately after each take. The first experimental use of a video camera in this function had been in 1968 on *Oliver!* (Morris 2006:139).

Laboratory closed with the loss of 130 jobs (FTT April 85); and the following year a further 29 jobs were lost when the Brent laboratories closed (FTT Jun 86).

In this era, video technology still had minimal impact on the production process of quality programmes or cinema because the quality of lenses and the automated systems, delivering only “averages and compromises”, meant that only low grade productions were shot directly onto video. However, video did have a big impact on home entertainment (VHS had been introduced into the UK in 1978) and in 1983 the ACTT showed a brief interest in recruiting in the duplication industry, recognising that: “Video tape duplication is now a major and growing part of the entertainment industry in this country, but it is on the whole neither as well organised or effective as it might be.” Therefore: “it is now the established policy of ACTT to organise in this area of video tape duplicating and the Union openly states its full intent to take a more active part in this expanding field of the entertainment industry.... [It] looks forward to increasing communication with tape duplicating workers, especially those who are not at present members of the union.” (FTT Oct 83). Sadly, it is not clear whether this initiative had much effect, but it is reasonable to speculate that it did not because there is no subsequent report of recruitment successes or negotiated agreements with duplication houses.

This growth in home entertainment had been significant for the production industry, but more significant for its workforce were the developments, first in video and then in digital technology, which were to effect sweeping changes in post-production procedures through the late 1980s.

Historically, the laboratories had been critical to post-production because all editing of film was done using positive prints (the negative remaining in the laboratory). At the early morning showing of rushes (the overnight print of those takes selected at the shoot) to the director and cameraman the editor would note their preferred takes. The film was then broken down into the various slates and takes and logged, separating out the preferred material. Writing in 1985, John Boorman described the film editing process: :

The slow mechanical editing processes give time for reflection: cutting and joining, adjusting the soundtracks, looking at the off cuts, hanging up the strips of film in bins, rearranging them. All around us,

on shelves, cans of films cover the walls. Every shot numbered, each can labelled. (Boorman 1985:210).

Working slowly, and usually sequentially, the editor would assemble the first cut for viewing: each preferred take had to be viewed, marked with chronograph, trimmed to length and spliced with Sellotape to create a rough cut. To subsequently change any shot meant removing the Sellotape and splicing in an alternative piece of film while an assistant would reconnect the discarded material with its header and footer and then re-file the rejected take in a film bin or can.

Only when this rough cut was approved by all involved parties, would the negative be withdrawn from the labs and passed to a neg cutter (another ACTT grade) who would, by matching the edge numbers, duplicate the film as a negative for printing. (This is a simplified description that ignores the soundtrack requirement⁸.) Thereafter, the whole post-production process and vocabulary were laboratory processes: negatives, internegs, inter positives, dup negs, bulks, graded prints and married prints. The final stages of any film involved the daily screening of a print so that the colour grading could be checked. Any necessary changes would be sent to the lab who would supply a corrected print the following day. Three weeks was allowed in the schedule for grading (Peter Levelle) and only when the final graded version was approved would the bulk prints be run off and despatched to the cinema distributor or broadcasting stations. The bulk print order itself was no small undertaking and again a lab function: a normal order for a commercial would be 500-600 prints for cinema distribution and a dozen for each commercial television station.

The process of bulk distribution for TV broadcasting, historically very profitable for the labs, was the first process to be replaced by electronic distribution in the very late 1970s. Improvements in telecine (the transferring of film to video) and the “condescending” cooperation of the TV stations meant that “play outs” (the electronic distribution of commercials to the television stations) became possible every Saturday morning during the TV stations downtime (David Jeffers).

⁸ If the picture involved dialogue or sound, then much of this process was duplicated because the sound track was printed onto a separate strip of film to create a ‘double head’ which had to be married, cut and filed with the appropriate picture frames.

More changes followed which eliminated all the physical editing with film described above. All quality production continued to be shot on film, but thereafter the process was transformed. No positive print of selected takes was required because the entire developed negative was transferred onto digital tape. Once the tape had been viewed by the director and cameraman, the material would be loaded into a digital editing machine (AVID) where the material could be 'cut', moved or duplicated with none of the generation losses experienced with film. Copies of a specific cut could be "dumped" onto video at any intermediate point and discarded if another version was preferred. Only when the final version was approved would the negative be required for the final telecine grading – a process which again required no laboratory involvement.

This transformation of the post-production world, and the reduction of the laboratories' involvement, was not an immediate process. Many feature films continued to be cut in the traditional way⁹ and their distribution to cinemas still required the production of bulk prints. However, the process had started and the strength of the labs as the "industrial powerhouse of the union" was slowly eroded. In addition to the lab closures noted above, the number of employees at Technicolor was reduced from 1,200 to 300 (ACTT 1983:33)¹⁰ and the ultimate sanction for the enforcement of union agreements, the control of the critical negative, had gone. After the 1980 Employment Relations Act, secondary action had become illegal but it had rarely been necessary to apply pressure by using formal industrial action. The mere withdrawal of co-operation, the temporary misplacing of a negative or failure to get a shipment 'onto the afternoon van' was sufficiently disruptive for everyone to understand the message. However, with the laboratories no longer involved on a day to day basis the union had lost the ability to threaten the flow of the production process.

Post-production technology had thus neutralised the laboratories as the ACTT's ultimate bulwark, but the concurrent growth of the video facility industry meant that there was a second influence upon the traditional union structure. The

⁹ The storage and memory of the early computers could not cope with the volume of a feature film.

¹⁰ In the summer of 2006, Technicolor announced 49 redundancies which reduced their total headcount to "less than 70 workers" (SSR July/August 2006).

traditional post-production processes had been orchestrated and co-ordinated by the film editors who had invariably worked up from the cutting room floor to become ACTT members, and they jealously guarded their status which was based upon their specific skills of editorial judgement and manual dexterity with the time-honoured tools of film cutting. The new technology required none of their manual skills but, more critically, nor did it require their co-ordination skills with the laboratories. This change was gradual and many editors transformed themselves into post-production coordinators, but the editor as a pivotal link with the laboratories (and, by implication, with the union) was no longer critical. With this seemingly small change, which barely affected the traditional work of the studio floor, the balance of power within the industry had changed.

6.3 State of the closed shop 1988

“the introduction of new technology is having an effect” (MMC 1989:10)

It is fortuitous that an official record exists of the *declared* employment practices that were operating within the industry in the late 1980s. In March 1988, the Secretary of State for Employment (Norman Fowler) announced that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC) was to question whether two specific restrictive practices existed within the making of programmes, films or advertisements for broadcasting on television or exhibition in cinemas.

The reference practices specified were:

- A restricting the extent to which work is performed by workers who are not members of a particular trade union
- B. requiring that minimum numbers of workers (whether or not of specified descriptions) be engaged on particular productions or tasks (MMC 1989:42).

The first of these practices might have been implicit in the operation of a pre-entry closed shop, which it should be noted, was not yet an unlawful arrangement in 1988. However, the reference was made under Section 79 of the Fair Trading Act 1973 which allowed the Commission to investigate whether a practice was a restrictive labour practice and, if so, whether it operated against the public interest.

The Commission therefore investigated the whole range of activities which might have been considered part of the film or television sector including musicians, actors and journalists. However, this commentary will focus on the representations relating to the ACTT.

The Commission noted that there were “three indications of the existence of Practice A“ involving the ACTT: the first was the possibility of a closed shop which restricted the work available to those who were not ACTT members; second the requirement that subcontractors had to conform to ACTT agreements and the restrictions placed on broadcasting programmes not produced under ACTT rules; third, demarcation between the ACTT and other unions. The indications were located in three national agreements – one between the ACTT and the television stations (requiring the latter to notify vacancies to the union) and the two agreements with BFTPA and AFVPA (which included a model letter of engagement requiring confirmation that the prospective employee was a “union member in good standing”). However, the situation was confused because the agreement between ACTT and the ITV companies had lapsed in July 1988 and the Independent Television Association said that the national agreement would not be renewed. The BFTPA reported that they had proposed the removal of the clause, but that negotiations had not yet started. The AFVPA had “no proposals in hand to amend the model letter of engagement, but said its members were not inhibited thereby from recruiting whom they wished for the making of TV commercials” (MMC 1989:13&14).

Regarding practice B (the minimum numbers of crew required) the Commission decided that it had been normal that:

either by custom or practice or by terms of a specific agreement minimum numbers of ACTT members had to be employed on particular productions or tasks. (MMC1989:15)

However, again the situation was confused because although the ITV companies agreed that might have been true, the situation had changed “during the course of the enquiry” and crewing was now “to need”. The Commission accepted this, stating “we therefore did not enquire further into this practice...”. BFTPA and AFVPA admitted having agreements with the ACTT specifying minimum crew,

however “many of the terms of these agreements are under review”. The AFVPA gave evidence that they had “made proposals to change the interpretation of the minimum crewing clauses in agreement with the ACTT...” (MMC1989:15). The Commission was probably generous to accept this because although they were satisfied “that a large number of dispensations¹¹ were granted in 1988”, it also noted that meant a reduction of crewing levels in only 1.5% of all commercials (MMC 1989:55).

Officially, the Commission concluded that the ACTT was not responsible for restrictive practices and that view was certainly the interpretation made by external commentators:

In 1989 the ACTT was cleared by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission enquiring into restrictive practices. The commission acted upon the submission prepared by ACTT, *Responding to Change*, and concluded that whilst many restrictive practices had existed in the past, the situation had changed radically over the two years prior to the enquiry and indications were that this would continue. (Maksymiw 1990:27)

However, the Commission’s decision that the ACTT was not responsible for restrictive practices was not confirmation that restrictive practices did not exist, merely that the union was able to present them as reasonable:

The inquiry accepted that the *de facto* closed shops for technicians at some companies arose naturally because trade union membership was treated as a badge of competence, and did not stop companies recruiting whom they liked. (FTT May 1989)

The Commission’s task did not appear to extend to considering where an alternative labour force might acquire the “competence” if they were not union members.

Overall, the challenge for the Commission was that the evidence presented was ambiguous and perhaps, on occasions, disingenuous. The Commission may not have been oblivious to this, but do seem to have accepted the assurances given. Thus in their conclusions regarding the ACTT the Commission stated

¹¹ These “dispensations” were the waiver arrangements, referred to in Chapter 5, whereby companies could negotiate a short crew with the union..

...we found either that reference practices did not exist at 31 December 1988, or in a few cases that reference practices *might still* have existed but could be *realistically expected* to disappear as a result of current *or intended* negotiations.... (MMC 1989:1) (my italics)

Other observations indicate they may have recognised that the evidence presented was not conclusive. For example:

“The Commission received conflicting evidence about the practical effect of the minimum manning clauses in the AFVPA [commercials] agreement, particularly about the ease with which dispensations from the minima could be obtained. We examined data on a number of productions, but found that no firm conclusions could be drawn.” (MMC 1989:15)

The Commission also appears not to have understood the relationships that existed between the AFPVA, the commercial production companies, and the advertisers: represented by the ISBA (Incorporated Society of British Advertisers) and the IPA (Institute of Practitioners in Advertising). During the 1980s, the advertisers had become alarmed at the rising costs of producing TV commercials and there had been a joint initiative in 1987 by the IPA, the ISBA and the AFPA which had invited Sir Leo Pliatsky to conduct an independent investigation into TV commercial production. Sir Leo had little specific criticism of the production process but found that the soaring costs were the result of the lax controls operated by the advertising agencies, the absence of few formal contracts and the lack of training for those controlling large agency budgets – none of which reflected well on the advertising agencies who were responsible for the advertisers’ interests. Sir Leo recommended a number of new procedures and schedules (Pliatsky 1987) but few of these had taken effect by the time of the Commission’s enquiry.

In their submission to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, the ISBA stated that their members believed that “film-making procedures are over-rigid and too costly” because of craft union practices, specifically the restriction that:

“films for TV must be made using union approved methods and labour. It is impossible for advertisers to show [i.e. broadcast] non-approved material... Minimum crewing levels are insisted upon throughout the filmmaking process, however simple the sequence. Finally, union agreements permit excessive overtime, unjustified meal breaks and unwarranted allowances. The film production

companies, usually small and under financed, cannot afford to risk union alienation by insisting upon better control and management.”

The latter assertion was correct. As shown in Chapter 5, production companies were unwilling to jeopardise their livelihood by confronting the unions, but another clue to the behaviour of the production companies, and the advertising agencies, was contained elsewhere in the ISBA submission:

“unnecessary costs incurred at the production stage are multiplied by the fixed mark-ups from the film production company and the advertising agency....” (MMC 1989:111).

The production companies and advertising agencies made their money by marking up the costs of the production. As long as all production companies observed the crewing arrangements the cartel of producers and agencies could share the resulting generous profits. This Commission either did not understand or were unwilling to acknowledge this, and so accepted the assurances they received from the AFVPA without apparently appreciating that the consistency and stability of the union practices were essential for the survival of many production companies. Therefore, the AFVPA took pains to convince the Commission that no restrictive practices existed and in their submitted evidence rejected any suggestion of over crewing, emphasising that “there is every sign that the production sector is as lean and efficient as it ever has been...” (MMC 1989:109. These assurances appeared to have worked because the final Report stated that “of the comments made by the AFVPA one of the most important was” that:

“It is simply not true to suggest that production companies ... are in any way inhibited from recruiting the people they wish to use in the production... It is also untrue to say that there is any significant over manning....” (MMC 1989:31)

Again, the Commission never appears to have questioned whether any qualified non-union members were available and overall, it was patently difficult for the Commission members to understand exactly what did happen in a sector which they acknowledged was:

“...highly informal with some of the characteristics of a cottage industry. Reputation, knowledge and word of mouth prevail in recruitment alongside more formal, but less well used recruiting systems” (MMC 1989:6).

Thus, even when the Commission was presented with *prima facie* evidence, the unions (ACTT, BETA and the EETPU) were able to create doubts:

“whether some agreements had been implemented in practice, or whether some of the agreements had the effect which might have been expected from the phrases used, and whether indeed the words used to describe an arrangement indicated the existence of a reference practice” (MMC 1989:31).

In short, the Commission, who admittedly were examining the sector at a time of rapid change, do appear to have accepted much of the evidence at face value and not investigated much further. The report is littered with statements which, for those who were working in the industry at the time, are questionable:

“ACTT said that foreign made commercials appeared regularly on British TV” (1989:14);

“we were told that ... all demarcations involving the ACTT had been discontinued [and] we did not therefore consider them further” (1989:14);

“I should make it absolutely clear that Equity is entirely opposed to the practice which you describe as ghosting” (1989:19).¹²

When the final Report was published in 1989 the ACTT made much of their vindication. Roy Lockett of the ACTT wrote that the “recently published - and suspiciously delayed - report from the Commission totally exonerates the unions. If it has done nothing else, it has finally destroyed the myth of restrictive practices in our industry” (FTT May 89). However, the ACTT’s evidence to the Commission had reflected a considerable shift in position from that being taken only eighteen months earlier when Brian Shemmings, National Organiser of the ACTT, had stated

“I would make it absolutely clear that all material whether it is for broadcast or non broadcast must be made under the appropriate ACTT agreements using ACTT members. This situation has prevailed for many years and there is no reason for any alteration” (FTT Sep 86).

¹² This is a carefully qualified statement by Equity because it goes on to state they would never accept payment to a member in respect of work not done. In practice, the deal was usually that the member would duplicate the work of the non-member, but it would then be discarded in the cutting room. I had been involved in the negotiation of such an arrangement in Summer of 1987.

Patently something had shifted within the sector in that short period and the cause of that that shift may have been the TVam dispute.

TVam, the first commercial franchise for breakfast television, had started broadcasting in February 1983 but ratings had been poor. By early 1987, a recovery plan to ensure the survival of the company included a proposal for reduced crewing levels and increased labour flexibility (David Chipp).

As a commercial TV company, TVam was signatory to the national agreement with the ACTT and so any change in crewing levels would have to be agreed with the union. Negotiations did not proceed well and in November 1987 there was a strike by technical workers, followed by a management lock out on 24th November of all 229 ACTT staff. Historically, it might have been expected that TVam would have ceased transmission through their inability to locate suitably trained alternative staff, but the structure of broadcasting had changed and TVam were able to recruit non-union staff from the “growing freelance cable and satellite sector” (Maksymiwiw 1990:27). The negotiations between ACTT and management made little progress but despite extensive picketing, and the publication of photographs of the strike breakers in the FTT (Jan 88; Feb 88), TVam was able to continue broadcasting, albeit on a much reduced scale. Eventually, on 17th February, TVam dismissed all 229 ACTT technicians.

Within weeks a new deal, incorporating the changed working patterns, was agreed with the ACTT and the FTT reported, somewhat disingenuously, that the union had “lifted the threat last month to close down the company's operation” (FTT Mar 84). The reality was that the ACTT had been able to threaten, but not able to implement a close down because an alternative labour force was available. Although the TVam dispute relates to television production, whereas this thesis aims to track film workers, the significance of the 1987-1988 dispute is that the established demarcation of jobs across the whole industry was breaking down and thus all collective agreements would become open to interpretation.

6.4 Social change

"The union's policies on new membership make it seem like the apotheosis of the Tory party - i.e. a tool for the rich and elite to maintain their privileged position by excluding all outsiders and their right to work" (Letter to FTT Oct 85)

As the letter quoted above indicates, besides the technical, legal and political challenges to the ACTT, there was some dissent to union policies within the membership. It is impossible to quantify this dissent but it does represent one of a number of processes occurring in this period which can be described as social change and, although it is not easy to attribute distinctive results to what are essentially anecdotal and isolated incidents, they are worth noting because of their cumulative effect. Throughout the 1980's there was an influx of workers into the industry who, for various reasons, bypassed the traditional on-the-job training and thus had none of the conditioning and induction into the customary rules that had shaped the industry for so long. Thus automatic recognition of the union's primacy and an unquestioning acceptance of the rules and procedures could no longer be presumed.

Nowhere was this more marked than in the innovative post-production companies described above, which were dependent on a new generation of software and digital technicians who knew nothing of the traditional routes of entry to the union and the old loyalties. Despite the scorn for video in the ACTT article already cited at page 165 (ACTT 1983:160), the new technical possibilities and the demand for capital expenditure spawned independent post-production facility houses which owed nothing to their film cutting antecedents. As the technology was new it required inventive and technically capable recruits because no-one was yet qualified to teach or train:

Recruits had engineering qualifications straight from university; engineering in its broadest sense, electrical engineering, chemical engineering - effectively most at that stage science-orientated because you did have to have, in those days, a pretty good understanding of computing technology. The 'must have' wasn't your creative talent, it was your ability to actually understand computing technology.

In this new environment the ACTT was tolerated, some union members were recruited and management was willing to observe the conventions of the established industry:

.....if I cast my mind back to 1980, yes, there was a union membership and I was aware that you had to have a ticket. In fact I think a ticket was bought for me for the first year or two [by the company], but bit by bit by the mid '80s the whole idea of it disappeared. [Respondent was a departmental manager at the time]

But:

People resented it anyway, the idea of paying 1% of your income was pretty abhorrent in the late '80s, plus within the context of our industry [post-production facilities] there didn't seem to be a relevance of what they [the ACTT] were doing. (David Jeffers)

In the new post-production grades, where new technology required the invention of new crafts and skills, there were no appropriate union agreements. Even the more general agreement about terms and conditions, working hours, meal breaks and mileage, which had been drafted to suit production crew working the studio floor, were slowly discarded by a new generation of management who, having invested heavily in post-production technology, wanted to work different shift patterns:

Throughout the late '80s, and early '90s, bit by bit, I just got rid of [the ACTT practices] and we just bought people out of those rather bizarre practices because the industry couldn't afford to operate on that sort of business model whereby people who got no ten hour break [overnight or] if they worked past midnight, got paid for four days. It just wouldn't work like that. The reality is that we had a young, highly skilled workforce who were well remunerated for what they did. (David Jeffers)

Post-production workers were not the only ones beginning to question how relevant the union was for them. Unit photographers were technically an ACTT grade but they were highly-regarded specialists who could negotiate their own deals regardless of the specified union rate. In 1986, Stephen Spielberg asked a stills photographer, Murray Close, to work on *Empire of the Sun*. Murray had been working in America and he had no intention of rejoining the ACTT because "the union was doing nothing for me whatsoever; there was no negotiating going on". The producers felt confident enough to employ him anyway:

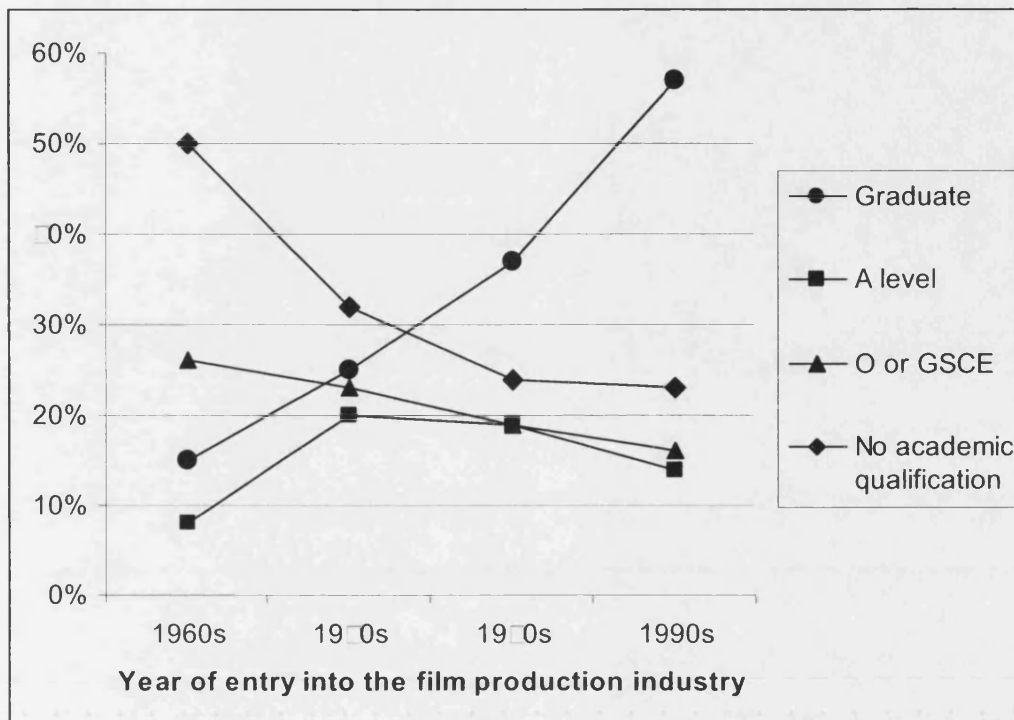
the production manager, Roy Button, had to go to the pre-production meeting with the union [when crewing would be discussed and approved] and he came back and told me 'the union told us we can't hire you' and I said 'why's that ?' and he said 'because you haven't paid your union dues for two years'..... Someone's got to tell Stephen [Spielberg] we can't hire you.' So we had a laugh - and it didn't happen and I didn't pay my union dues

Murray worked on the film unchallenged and when eventually the union contacted him two years later, he met the ACTT representative, Brian Shemmings,

I was, at that time, probably one of the busiest photographers in England and clearly not a member of the union and they didn't like the way that looked.... So, Brian came down and he was very nice and we sat and chatted for half hour, 45 minutes and I said 'I don't want to cause any problems here, Brian, if you're willing to cross out all my bad debt, as you see it, I'll start paying my dues from now on and rejoin if you like, if that will make everyone happy, ... but you've got to tell me what the union can do for me, you can't negotiate for me anymore because you have no jurisdiction any more And he basically came up with 'I can get you car insurance' so I said 'OK Brian, that's great' we shook hands and that was a deal - and that was the last I ever heard from him. (Murray Close).

The growing number of graduates in the film industry from the 1970s and 1980s created another new constituency of members who, being more self-confident and assured in their own status, were more questioning of the union. No contemporary analysis exists for the 1970s and 1980s, but the *Feature Film Workforce Survey 2005* asked the educational qualifications of film employees and their year of entry into the industry. While there may be some inaccuracy because the 2005 survey cannot represent the complete cohort of those earlier years, the overall trend is clear, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Highest Academic Qualification Obtained (by year of entry to film industry)



(Skillset 2005:98).

These graduate film entrants, like their counterparts in post-production, found little in the ACTT's activities of immediate interest. Michael Apted joined Granada, and the ACTT, from Cambridge in 1963.

I was, I suppose, barely aware of [the union]. I was aware of Alan Sapper but it seemed even to me at that time largely irrelevant to what I was doing and seemed much more about organising labour than dealing with the issues that I might have as a director. The ACTT seemed very left wing, very radical, very associated with the more revolutionary part of the industry rather than the realities of middle class people. I didn't really get involved with it [the trade union movement] until I went to America.¹³

In the early 1980s, Tim Sullivan also joined Granada from Cambridge as a researcher and he was immediately signed up to the ACTT. He only became aware of the union's ability to control his career when he made an early application for a place on the prestigious training course run by Granada for directors:

¹³ Michael Apted, director of *Gorky Park*, *Coal Miner's Daughter*, *Amazing Grace* etc, is now President of the Directors Guild of America.

.....and that's when I was told "No, no, no you need to have ACTT membership" so I said "Well I obviously have" and they said "No, but yours is restricted for two years". Well, no one had told me that and what that meant was that you had to stay in that grade, as a researcher, for two years and that was that.

Among the graduates trying to enter the industry were those from the newly formed National Film School. Officially the union had no reservations about admitting the trained graduates from such a school:

The industry blames the trade unions for restricting entry into the studios. But Mr George Elvin, secretary of the technicians' union, went on record last summer to state that thirty trained beginners would be welcome annually in the film and television industries. (Dickinson 1963:9)

In 1967, the Lloyd Committee, set up to consider the establishment of a national film school had reported:

So far as the ACTT is concerned, we are satisfied that there would be no objection whatever to granting a union card to any students who qualified through a national film school, and indeed, the ACTT has expressed itself firmly in favour of improving methods of recruitment in this way. (DES 1967:6)¹⁴

In practice, the Lloyd Committee's hopes were frustrated because the ACTT remained reluctant to accept graduating students and even National Film School (NFS) productions were scrutinised if they displaced ACTT members' productions. At the 1980 ACTT Annual Conference, the screening of student productions on Channel 4 was debated because they contravened the agreement that all broadcast material must be produced by ACTT members. Conference eventually agreed, "against some opposition", that NFS films could be shown because students' work should be seen as proxy productions of the many ACTT members employed as instructors at the National Film School (FTT May 1980).

Moreover, Film School graduates applying to the union were not to be treated any differently to other entrants from established training schemes such as Jobfit (already referred to on page 137). At the ACTT Annual Conference in 1983, there was a call for the General Council to "expedite the implementation of suitable

¹⁴ George Elvin, Secretary of the ACTT, was also a member of the Lloyd Committee.

training schemes and to ensure that those who successfully complete those courses shall have priority in their application for membership" (FTT May 83) but the policy remained that they should not get an automatic ticket on graduation, but only when they had secured their first appointment (as Sue Gibson had found). This policy meant that "the ACTT has not pulled up the drawbridge on new entrants. It helped to set up the National Film School, and students from there - and five other educational establishments - automatically get Union tickets *if they can get jobs*" (FTT Feb 87). (my italics) The official explanation was that the ACTT did not want to be seen to be treating the NFTS¹⁵ graduates preferentially to the graduates of their own schemes (FTT Mar 87).

The reluctance of the established practitioners to automatically accept graduates from the National Film School or the union sponsored training schemes into union membership demonstrates it was not sufficient to have acquired proficiency in the specific skills alone to gain admission. More important appears to have been the vital reassurances first, that there was no member unemployed in the job market and second, that the applicant had found a suitable employment in an approved grade and thus been screened as a suitable candidate acceptable to the community. Otherwise, having not been on-the-job trained, there was a fear that candidates trained away from the studio floor were unlikely to be aware of or bound by the conventions and the customary laws.

Equally distrusted were the emerging executive women in the industry. As shown in Chapter 5, women had always been accepted into the industry's unions and some had taken significant roles in departments such as art, make-up and continuity. However, they had been invariably barred from the most senior, executive roles where they would be required to take control of the whole production, either creatively or financially. Kay Mander joined the ACT in 1935 in continuity and later directed several films, one a winner at the Venice Film Festival in 1956. However, she directed nothing thereafter: "Michael Balcon told me quite flatly that women couldn't handle film crews and, anyway, there weren't any suitable films

¹⁵ The National Film School was renamed the National Film and Television School in 1982.

for women to direct” (ACTT 1983:67). Muriel Box had had a similar experience in the 1940s:

...the script which I had prepared and written myself, was taken out of my hands at the last minute by Arthur Elton, head of the Films Division at the MOI when he heard I was to be its director. The reason, he informed Sydney (then executive producer) was that he did not feel it was the type of film for a woman to direct ! (Box 1974:163)

By the 1980s, it seemed generally accepted that women could lead in all creative roles. However, there was still some reluctance to accept women in senior production appointments. In 1986, Gale Ann Hurd produced *Aliens* at Shepperton Studios and described the opposition she met from some crew members:

It was very up-front, their discomfort with women... People would come in and sit down and would say ‘Who is really producing this film?’ and I would say ‘I am really producing this film’ and they would laugh and say, ‘No no no, you’re the director’s wife, lovely to meet you, but who will I really be reporting to?’ and I would say, ‘Actually me’. ‘Well if that’s the truth, I want to be completely up front with you. I won’t take orders from a woman” said one... ‘Well you clearly won’t be working on this film.’ I thought it might be an isolated occurrence, but it happened quite a few times. (Shone 2004:164)

The ACTT recognised that equal pay for women was not sufficient to ensure their status and so in 1981 the Annual Conference voted for the appointment of a full-time Equality Officer, appointed in January 1982 (ACTT 1983:77). As shown with the example of Sue Gibson (page 142), women were beginning to appear in senior, technical positions. One respondent specifically identified the transition in the status of women with the demise of the closed shop because both occurred between 1989, when she had been declined union membership as a location manager on the grounds that “this was not a job for a woman”, and 1991, when she had again applied and been granted a ticket (Martell).¹⁶

Overall, the doubt appears to have been that all these ‘newcomers’, women, software engineers, university and film school graduates, often had little or no first hand experience of the established conventions of the industry and this was

¹⁶ In the contemporary feature film industry, 66% of production staff are women (Skillset 2005:25).

possibly justified. Many were interested only in the creative aspects of film – or the challenges of new digital technology – and not with the cohesion of a workforce with which they had little association. Therefore, although it is impossible to quantify, this new generation, coupled with the changing attitudes of some existing members, did assist the speed of change in the production community.

Conclusions

This research has found little to suggest that the 1980s legislation did much to accelerate the demise of the closed shop, which appears to have been under some pressure anyway. The absence of contemporary ACTT records may mean that there was a spirited debate within the organisation, but little has survived other than the occasional condemnation of government policies in the union journal. However, it should be noted that certainly by 1988, two years before the 1990 Employment Act and four years before it became effective, the union seemed willing to deny the existence of any effective closed shop practices before the MMC enquiry.

The reasons for the easing of the closed shop's hold are relatively easy to identify - weighing which was the most influential is more of a challenge. It seems probable that technology, in the form of video and digital storage, was the major factor, principally because it broke the influence of the laboratories over the entire production process and thus removed the union's ability to bring pressure on the production company employers. Without that control, the union would have had to deal with individual members who were, as shown in earlier chapters, disparate freelance workers, often artistically motivated, all arranging their own contracts and thus not easily subjected to any disciplinary controls. Secondly, the new technologies introduced a new generation of workers who, coming straight from computing, mathematical or engineering degrees, had little time for or

identification with the traditional studio floor practices and with the union that enforced them. This new generation were “geeks” - people for whom the task itself was much more engrossing than the terms and conditions that they were working to: “the whole workforce is vocational, people don’t join to do nine to five... There is a passion, [you] come here because you are prepared to live and breath the work...” (David Jeffers). This was, as already shown (page 195), also true of many film workers. However, in the new digital industry there was no tradition of a union presence, and nor was there any equivalent of the exceptional circumstances of 1939/1940 to encourage union membership. Furthermore, these digital workers invariably worked alone in Soho editing rooms, with none of the bonding experiences which existed on the studio floor or on a location shoot, where terms and conditions of employment might be discussed during idle moments.

Besides this structural change being effected in the industry, there were a number of other, simultaneous changes. It is evident from the proceedings of the MMC enquiry (set up not to question employment practices, but to ensure fair trading) that no one was willing to actively defend the operation of restricted labour practices - all parties were at pains to explain that, even if such practices had existed, they were no longer operational. As shown above and in previous chapters, this was a major shift in attitude that predates the relevant Employment Act.

Furthermore, there were changes in the composition of film production workers beyond those happening in post-production. There were more women employed outside the art departments, more graduates coming direct into the business and more individualism. In this environment, the union should have made new alliances and shown itself to be of value, but the evidence shows that the union leadership remained relatively detached from these new workers, more pre-occupied with Nicaragua, nuclear power, abortion and Chile which were far removed from the shop floor issues.

Would the union have been capable of incorporating the new post-production workers and using their cohesiveness and critical position to replace the leverage that the laboratories had supplied? It seems unlikely. First, everyone in these new sectors was new: there was no existing shop floor hierarchy to mobilise

interest; little awareness among the graduate entrants of what a union could do; and there was no union tradition. Secondly, the formation of these companies was different. Whereas film post-production had been based around the craftsman editor in a cutting room with an assistant, video and digital post-production was big business requiring a huge capital investment in electronic equipment and extensive premises (invariably in Soho) to house it. This change in the position of capital in the production process will be examined in the next two chapters but the ACTT's commentator on video had recognised the trend: "the value of human effort is reduced when their electronic counterparts grow out of proportion in a company" (ACTT 1983:160) Suffice here to state that these new employers were probably not as inclined to accept union primacy as the frail and transitory production companies had been.

Thus, by failing to encompass the new technologies into new branches, with legislation removing the protection of the closed shop and with better educated newcomers more likely to question the administrative rules and procedures, the union lost influence and with it the power to enforce the closed shop to the extent that it had operated before the MMC enquiry. As with all evolving changes it is difficult to fix specific dates but an incident in 1986, coupled with the evidence cited above, indicates that by the mid 1980s a very different atmosphere existed in film production to that of the mid 1970s described in Chapter 5:

"things finally came to a head over the endless breaks that the crew insisted on taking – for tea, to go to the pub for lunch, for lottery raffles. "It was union regulated, whether you wanted it or not" said Giler [the executive producer]" Matters were finally settled when the director [an American] destroyed the tea trolley "mashed it into a cube" and issued ultimatums to the crew. (Shone 2004:165)

Thus the control of employment practices in film production had changed, but many of the practices were so well engrained, and the existing labour pool had been so tightly regulated for so long, that it was almost impossible to deviate from the unofficial rules and procedures that had been so well established. As stated earlier, many respondents for this research cannot remember exactly when or how they realised that the closed shop was no longer effective. Furthermore, within the film production sector closure had been so complete that there had been few

opportunities for anyone other than union members to gain the specific skills and experience and thus there was no immediate available alternative labour force challenging for positions. How the situation evolved in two very different divisions of the industry will be examined in the next two chapters.

Chapter 7 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTEMPORARY FILM EMPLOYMENT

“[An internal labour market] depends upon the rigidity of the rules which define the boundaries of internal markets and which govern pricing and allocation within them” (Doeringer & Piore 1971:5)

Chapter 5 demonstrated that film production employment in the closed shop era conformed with the internal labour market theory of Doeringer and Piore (1971). However, that internal labour market was a craft market, i.e. one that was organised:

around the local union, and the geographical and occupational jurisdiction of the local union generally defines the boundaries of the market. (Doeringer & Piore 1971:3-4)

Chapter 5 also showed that the union was able to maintain those boundaries not through the direct control of their membership, but through the pressure that they could impose on the relatively weak production companies because of the latter’s dependence on the laboratories.

This chapter aims to use the criteria of internal labour market to provide a template against which to test if there is continuity of employment practices into contemporary film production. Should an internal labour market still exist, a second objective of this chapter will be to establish how this labour market has persisted without the union control implicit in Doeringer & Piore’s definition of a craft market.

The first indications that there continues to be a bounded, distinctive film production workforce came in the 2004 statistics of Skillset, the Sector Skills

Council set up 1993, licensed by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. (Skillset 2001:4). As noted in Chapter 1, Skillset recognised that there was a separate and distinctive workforce for the feature film industry in their survey of the other audio-visual industries (those industries will be examined in Chapter 8):

Previous experience has established that the *modus operandi* of the film industry is sufficiently different from the rest of the audio-visual industries to merit a completely different methodology. (Skillset 2003c:15)

That different methodology was undertaken in 2004 and identified 9,700 named British crew members from the call sheets of 109 eligible productions (Skillset 2005:19). These were feature films made in 2002, with a British crew, lasting eighty minutes or longer and with a budget in excess of £½m i.e. those films made utilising the crewing structures, invariably 35mm equipment and the production methods that were largely unchanged since the 1930s or 1940s

This clear identification of a select group means that some of the necessary microeconomic data that Doeringer & Piore thought necessary for a rigorous proof of the rigidity of an internal labour market (1971:5) is available because the survey identified that in 2003 the feature film workforce was better paid, with a mean annual salary of £37,276, than the wider audio-visual sector, £29,840. (The 2003 New Earnings Survey showed that average gross annual pay of all fulltime employees in Britain was £25,170.) (Skillset 2005:65).

The feature film workforce also had distinctive demographic characteristics. There were few young people employed in the feature film workforce (only 3% in the age bracket 16-24 compared to the overall UK workforce of 16%) and the majority of the workforce in established, occupational groups were over thirty-five years old: camera department 73%; construction 91%; sound 75%; and costume 71%. Only in two areas were the majority under thirty-five, assistant directors (60%) and location workers (58%) (Skillset 2005:25&26), these being the occupational groups that included a number of entry grades - runners, traffic marshals and production assistants.

The feature film workforce was not only older than those working in the other audio-visual industries, it was significantly older than the overall UK workforce:

66% of feature film workers were over thirty-five whereas in the wider audio-visual sector 62% were *below* that age; only 3% of feature film workers were younger than twenty-four in contrast to the 16% of the UK labour force in that age group; the mean age of feature film workers was just over forty years (Skillset 2005:25&26).

There were also marked differences in the gender distribution of feature film workers because only 33% of women worked in film compared to 46% in the UK workforce. However, this is not uniquely abnormal and the overall film workforce figure disguised that in some sectors women were the majority: production 66%; costume 70%; and hair/make-up 88% (Skillset 2005:24&25). However, the ethnic analysis of crews provided more positive indications that boundaries must exist because although most of film production is based on the London region, where 24% of the population is considered to have minority ethnic origins, those characteristics only applied to 5% of the London based feature film workforce (Skillset 2005:27).

However, while these statistics showed that a distinctive work force might exist, they provided no evidence that the film labour market was shielded from economic forces and so this chapter will seek that evidence through Doeringer & Piore's four "heuristic" factors which might indicate an internal labour market (1971:5).

Section 7.1 will show that there is longevity to the rules covering wage determination and the allocation of film production labour and that many principles remain unchanged from the closed shop era when the union nominated to the employers those workers available for employment. The second section tests Doeringer & Piore's requirement that the effective rules and practices are inconsistent with the operation of a competitive market. The challenge here is that union and management are no longer appropriate sources of commentary – but the evidence is nevertheless available. Section 7.3 will show that labour remains a key element in the production of film and that on-the-job training provides both a route to the industry specific skills and the essential entry route to the informal networks that maintain the customary laws discussed in Section 7.4.

Section 7.5 will demonstrate that the producers are still active participants in the internal labour market's operation because they utilise the stability and efficiency that Doeringer & Piore predicted that it would provide (1971:29-31) in order to reduce their own exposure to financial risk.

7.1 The longevity of the rules

“The main problem always was, and, in fact remains, getting in”
(Langham 1996:□)

“the production model used today has not changed significantly in decades” (Davenport 2006:25□)

Doeringer & Piore's first “heuristic” factor required that “many of the rules governing internal wage determination and allocation have survived over a considerable period of time”, preferably through changing economic and technical circumstances (1971:6). The changing environments have been reviewed in Chapters 1, 5 and 6 so the requirement here is to demonstrate that the wage determination and labour allocation procedures have persisted too.

The easiest of these to demonstrate is labour allocation because that remains firmly within the control of the workforce. The convention persists within feature film production that the director selects the Heads of Department (HoD) for their creative abilities and each HoD then recruits their preferred team, each of whom will negotiate their own contract with the producers (Blair 2001:160; Davenport 2006:254). This is a long-established principle. The director of photography, Ossie Morris could only recall one occasion, in a career that had started in 1932, when a director had attempted to impose an operator. Ossie had regarded the intervention as such a serious affront that he considered resigning from the picture, it being “always accepted that cinematographers pick their own crews” (Morris 2006:242).

Demonstrating continuity, in 2004, Richard E Grant (the director) identified Charlie Watson as his ideal first assistant director when he was selecting crew for *Wah-Wah*. However the producers had not budgeted for Charlie's nominated second assistant, Alex Oakley, and so both declined the film: “Alex and Charlie will not play victim to [the producer's] divide-and-rule tactics and both refuse to do

the job without the other.” Grant only secured both assistants by agreeing to pay the financial shortfall out of his own pocket (Grant 2006:83-85), demonstrating both the importance that crew place on working with their own team, and the importance that directors place upon securing the right individuals for specific roles.

Another continuous factor in the placement of labour is the nepotism and family contacts necessary to enter the industry as these three references relating to 1932, 1967 and 2003 demonstrate:

His entrance into British film [in 1932] was procured through the purest nepotism: his mother took C.M.Woolf to tea, who, thrilled to have a great grandson of Alfred Lord Tennyson dangled before him, found the boy a place as camera assistant under Michael Balcon. (Sweet 2005:169)

It is clear that as conditions are at present it is a very haphazard matter indeed whether those who wish to make a career in film making, however suitable or talented they may be, can in practice find a way into the industry. Frequently this may depend on whether they have access to some person of position who is able to facilitate their entry. (DES 1967:5)

... one of the very startling findings from the *Developing United Kingdom Film Talent* report is that nepotism still plays a huge role in terms of how people fare in developing their careers within the industry, indeed in entering the industry in the first place. (DCMS 2003:II:Q610)

Little has changed here since the closed shop era described in Chapter 5. When crew need to recruit they fall back on those they know and trust and so look to their own family members or friends who can be relied upon to understand the requirements and accept the conventions: Blair et al. (2001) established that 56% of crew identified family or friends as their means of initial entry into the film workforce.

If no such candidates are available, crew will look for those with some proven commitment and that usually means those that work in the periphery of a film unit - the drivers, production company runners, even catering assistants - all of whom have some understanding of the industry and its demands. The Director of a

respected training scheme, noted that these methods have not changed in twenty five years:

It is the same now for young people wanting to get a foot in the door. If they haven't got family in the industry that they can tag along with, then they do need to look for any means they can, whether it's running in a facilities company, whether it's driving, camera truck driver, whatever it is they will still need to find those routes to get the contacts, to get the experience necessary to start to progress...

Although heads of department nominally select all their team, the task of selecting trainees is often delegated to those who will work most closely with the newcomers:

The obvious gatekeepers¹ are the cameramen and the operators but generally the operator will say to me, you're in charge of the rest of the crew. Not necessarily the grip, the grip will be his [the operator's] choice, but certainly the loader and the trainees would be me. (Focus puller)

Therefore, should a department need supplementary crew members then the extant crew will source these from the recommendations of other crew that they know and trust, or they will induct those that they have observed on 'dailies', the days when members of the extant crew have worked on another production:

... when I am looking for a trainee, I will go through other contacts... For instance, the loader I have got at the moment, I rang up another focus puller and said 'Who did you use on that? What was he like 'cos I'd heard he was very good?' so only through recommendation. Or if they come in on a film as a B camera, or dailies or something like that. You tend to sort of pick people up like that. But generally, if I've never worked with someone, I won't use them, unless they come with an enormous reputation.

[Trainees?] I have a selection of about five or six that I would use. They are people I have met along the way, if I go in on dailies. My latest acquisition I went in a day on a *Miss Marples* and he was acting as central loader and doing all the paper work and running the back of the truck and getting us tea and coffee ... being an upper end trainee. And he said 'Look, I desperately need to do some feature films, all I've done is tele and it's becoming tedious' and so I got him on a couple of things recently, normally it's about £350pw.

¹ I had prompted the term 'gatekeeper'

So although the closed shop formality of admission to the union has gone, there is continuity in that management - the producers - still have little jurisdiction over the composition of the crew and the selection of new entrants. The producers' only ability to veto is through their financial control, but should they exercise that right they risk alienating the key creative talents on which they are dependent because this is an area where crew know that they have the upper hand:

Sometimes you do get directors, producers saying "I'd love you to use my useless nephew" – at which point you say "I will use your useless nephew but if he is late, useless or has any facial piercing then he's out..."

The continuity in the determination of wages is less easily proven because undoubtedly there has been an erosion of the official union agreements which governed the industry in the 1970s and 1980s. An example of the complicated matrix of overtime, meals, travel and weekend working used in a now defunct BECTU / AFVPA agreement is shown at Appendix 5 and that reflects the old 'industry standard' day of eight hours. Most interviewees confirmed that the detail of these agreements had been ignored since the mid 1990s when crew were invariably asked to work a ten, eleven or twelve hour day. However, as will be shown, many crew in this sector are compensated by a higher rate than the extant, but largely ignored, agreement specifies, and even if the old agreements are no longer observed, the conventions are not forgotten:

"You don't step out of the principles of the agreements, otherwise you'd have a riot on your hands If you worked long hours without recognising the overtime or whatever it would be hopeless"
(Producer)

The challenge in being definitive in this area is that film production remains a sector where 89% of workers are employed on a freelance basis (Skillset 2005:37) and thus, while the ACTT negotiated collective agreements in the closed shop era (and BECTU continues to do so) these only specified the minimum rates for each grade (examples appear in FTT June 1978). Those working on feature films have invariably been paid more than the basic and those with especially valued skills

were always able to name their price. In 1951, Ossie Morris described negotiating his fee as Director of Photography on *Moulin Rouge*:

When I saw John [Woolfe, the producer], he said ‘John Huston wants you to photograph *Moulin Rouge* for him. What salary do you want?’

I said ‘I’d like £100 a week, sir.’

He nearly fell off his chair. ‘But you were only getting £40 a week on your last film.’

“Yes, I said, “but I think I’m worth more now.” (Morris 2006:68)

When Morris received his contract it averaged nearly £120pw and these inexplicable inconsistencies persist through to the present. This contemporary focus puller was very open about the unpredictability of his daily rate which the extant agreement specified should be £165 per ten hour day:

Generally TV is between £220 and £270 a day. Feature films one hopes is between £300 and £400 a day. No rhyme or reason why the money is why it is. *Stormbreaker* last year was a £40m budget and I was paid about £300 a day, so that’s relatively low for a feature film.

Therefore, it can be argued that wage determination remains consistent, if only in its unpredictably, as in the days of the closed shop era. Patently the proffered rate can vary, but the challenge is that there are so many non-economic factors involved in wage determination that it is difficult to weigh their relative importance. As Seglow had observed (1978:39) for many technicians film making is a creative activity that is not undertaken out of strict economic necessity and, as will be shown below, employment for some crew is secondary to status or convenience. In mid 2006, *The Hogfather* was shot in an east London television studio and many potential crew declined the shoot because of the onerous commuting from west London (where many freelance crew live to be close the main film studios). Film crew are sensitive to many subjective factors which will affect their expectations and thus their requirements: the status of the production; the kudos of working with specific crew; the compatibility of the schedule with other commitments; and personal factors because there are “those who don’t want to leave their wives and those who are desperate to get away from them.” (Boorman 1985:104). These many subjective considerations may have little to do with economic factors such as

the availability of alternative labour or the proffered rate being probably more closely linked to some personal preferences - or what others in their network is doing:

there's always a reason for doing something, or a reason for not doing it, you take into account who the cameraman is, who the actors are ... but generally it's am I doing anything else ?

...it was, you know, fairly dodgy TV but it filled a gap in between one film and the next and it was 25 minutes from home, it was a five day week and we finished exactly on time every day and that was guaranteed from the beginning, there was never any overtime, no messing about...

Overall, it seems that the rules relating to wage determination and allocation of labour have changed very little in the fifteen years since the closed shop era ended. Wage determination remains a matter of individual negotiation and the proffered rates remain as unpredictable as ever in an industry where there are many factors qualifying any offer of employment other than financial reward: during the closed shop era, Tony Richardson had directed *Look back in Anger* for no fee (Walker 1974:58).

There is less uncertainty about the allocation of labour which remains firmly in the workforce's control. Even without the controls of the union, the workforce remains self selecting in terms of appointments and entrants – and there are still four, and often five, on camera (Relph 2002:25).

7.2 The inconsistencies with a competitive market

“The way we do things here’ has made it very difficult for producers to control budgets...” (Relph 2002:10)

The second factor identified by Doeringer & Piore as being important to show the existence of an internal labour market was the commentary regarding the rules of the workplace. If management was particularly critical of the rules because they created inefficiency, or the union and management conceded that some undesirable practices were so ingrained that they were non-negotiable, then it was probable that there were rules that would not survive in a competitive market. If such comments

were prevalent then rigid boundaries did indeed exist and the workforce was shielded from external economic pressures (1971:6).

Of the four Doeringer & Piore requirements for an internal labour market, this is the condition that requires some concessions. As will be shown in the next chapter, when feature film production is compared to the wider audio-visual industry it is clear that the rules in feature film production have proved more resilient than those in sectors more exposed to the demands of capital. However, Doeringer & Piore's nomination of the union as the rulemaking body of the craft market's boundaries is no longer applicable. While the Skillset survey found that 33% of the feature film workforce were BECTU members (2005:77), many remain members solely for the services to the individual:

I get the £3m indemnity in case I smash something or break something..." (Grip).

using Hyman's (1994) typology of union identities, BECTU's current approach could be predominantly defined as that of the 'friendly society', providing mutual insurance, representation and consumer services to individual employees. (Blair at al. 2002:3).

BECTU's total membership of 25,000 (SSR Jun 2005) now represents a much wider range of entertainment interests (e.g. 5,000 members are in the theatre division) so its density is inevitably low amongst the total audio-visual workforce of 144,000 (Skillset 2003 & 2005) and the anecdotal evidence is that BECTU is no longer significant or influential in collective bargaining. One former union member went to the bar at Shepperton studios:

"So there was a bunch of electricians and scene hands and all sorts of people standing around in the bar, so Peter and I joined them and we said 'do you know the guy who used to be in charge of BECTU', and they said to me 'What's BECTU?'"

When Sue Gibson asked for a show of hands of union members from crew discussing their grievances on a dining bus, "only a couple of hands went up." Two feature film producers discussing terms and conditions among production units confirmed the lack of influence that the union had on real negotiations and the lack of awareness amongst the workforce:

The lower grades don't have any sense of negotiations going on regarding their employment. ... [They] can find that the film is, or is not, applying the BECTU / PACT agreement. And, if doesn't need to, then why should it ?

Health and safety [legislation] and the European working time directive have had much more impact on us than the unions.

However, even if the union is no longer a viable force in the enforcement of the rules, there is ample evidence that rules still exist and that they confound the pricing and distribution of labour that would exist in a competitive market. The evidence is contained in the Film Council's Relph Report (2002).²

The Relph Report was an extensive survey of low budget films (those costing between £2m – 4m made in 1999 and 2000) to identify why UK production costs were so high. The report covered many aspects of production including producers' and directors' fees, equipment costs, the availability of cheap finance from tax breaks and Lottery funding and the crew expectation for catering and hotels. However, a primary reason for high costs was that:

Both producers and crew have expectations about terms of employment, working practices and conditions ... (Relph 2002:1)

The specific reasons were not hard to identify because there was an "ingrained attitude of crew of how things are 'supposed to be done'..." (Relph 2002:87) and the examples cited conform to the rules and principles already identified in this paper:

Heads of departments ... expected to be provided with staff according to a fairly rigid set of parameters otherwise they maintain they cannot do their job properly. (Relph 2002:9);

Cinematographers [DoPs] invariably insist on their regular crews and those crews do sometimes take advantage of that because they know they are not really competing for the job. Many producers like to keep parity between grades at similar levels in different departments So a focus puller or camera assistant who knows he is preferred can cause havoc in the rest of the budget. (Relph 2002:25)

² Simon Relph was Chairman of the British Academy of Film & Television Arts. .

Demarcation is a major factor in the organisation of art departments. People on the floor spend most of the day standing about because their skills are only needed for a few minutes. That is not to say most people don't help their mates – standbys certainly muck in with one another - but a painter is needed to paint and a rigger to rig... (Relph 2002:30)

However, these observations only confirm that working practices remained extant, they do not show that the rules are contrary to those operating an open competitive market – except that Relph then went on to make comparisons with six analogous films made in the United States and five European countries: UK, France, Germany, Denmark and Spain. This revealed striking contrasts because mainland European production was cheaper and the crews were smaller: although every country employed four on camera, all other departments were smaller. Thus there were nine employed in the UK art department, there were six in the French, five in Denmark, USA and Germany and only four employed in Spain (Relph 2002 49). The overall result was that:

There were 56 crew on the British film, 38 on the US film and 36 on the French film. The Spanish had a crew of 31. The German and the Danish crews' total, at 27, were both less than half the British total. (Relph 2002:42)

All the European countries scheduled more shooting weeks, but limited them to five days – only America matched the long hours culture and the six day week of the UK but then the Americans had lower pay rates.

The long hours culture of UK film making is an example of an accepted procedure that can be regarded as “not only undesirable but ... beyond the control of the parties to renegotiate ... ” (Doeringer & Piore 1971:6). As shown above, the rules involving overtime in the closed shop era were complicated and often open to interpretation so the rationalisation has been that producers negotiate a ten, or twelve hour deal. The Skillset survey showed that 77% of camera crew reported that they worked eleven hours or more (2005:43) and that evidence was confirmed by most interviewees:

Call to wrap is eleven hours, generally, and a lot of productions do twelve hour days, call to wrap. And then if you do a continuous working day then you knock two hours off; an hour for the lunch and

an hour for them getting continuity of work throughout the day...
(Focus puller)

Twelve hours a day including lunch. Anything after that is an hourly payment, everyone gets the same actually so it's not a personal question. It's £30 an hour after the twelve hours. We have no choice, that's one of the reasons they [American productions] come to England. (Stills photographer)

These long hours and six day weeks result in enhanced weekly payments (Skillset found that over 50% were earning over £1,200 per week (2005:70)) and Relph believed that crews now regarded this as their basic pay and so were unwilling to discount their rates if offered a five day week and shorter days (2002:8).

Thus the evidence indicates that the UK feature film production community operates "rules which are not consistent with the pricing and distribution of labour which would prevail in a competitive market..." (Doeringer & Piore 1971:6). However, the British film production industry does survive despite these rules and the reason would seem to be in part related to the highly skilled and specialised work force whose role will now be discussed.

7.3 The critical role of labour

"We have technicians and people second to none in the world ... our cameramen, our sound recorders, our designers are the best in the world. There is nobody better" (DCMS 2003:II:Ev85)

Doeringer & Piore's third factor which could indicate the rigidity of the internal labour market was related to the role of labour. "Investment in enterprise specific human capital, on-the-job training and the role of labor as a fixed or quasi-fixed factor of production" were conditions that appear consistent with the internal labour market (1971:6). All are conditions met by the contemporary production industry.

The workforce is a critical element of film production. The freelance workforce statistics indicate a ratio of approximately eighty to ninety freelance workers per UK production (Skillset 2005:UK Film Council 2003:68; BFI 2004:32)³ and Relph

³ Relph estimated 55 crew on a low budget film (2002:9)

found that crew represented 20-25% of the total budget (2002:10). Longitudinal comparisons are almost meaningless given the differences in the scope and complexity of different productions, but a random, unscientific selection of *Chariots of Fire* (1981) and the *Hogfather* (2006) showed that the 1981 Unit List production recorded seventy-two production crew (i.e. excluding post-production, publicity, legal and cast) whereas the 2006 production named ninety-two production crew members for the same categories, plus a further twenty-eight available for dailies. Many departments and grades were identical in the two unit lists (e.g. wardrobe, electrical, gaffer, grip and standbys) and the notable additions were in the camera department (the *Hogfather* used two cameras and the associated crew increased from five (in 1981) to twelve) plus the additional staff required for special effects.

Some of this increase can be explained by changing technology because although in many other industries technical advances have been used to reduce the manpower requirement, within feature films the technology has been used to improve the end result - and that improvement has created more employment:

We have cameras that are lighter, easier to load; film stock is faster, needing much less light; the huge lamps have been superseded by miniaturised versions – yet schedules get longer and crews larger. Of course, the answer is that instead of trying to save time, these devices allow us to attempt more difficult shots and effects. Film has been described as the ‘art of the possible’, and every year more things become possible. (Boorman 1985:126).

That ‘art of the possible’ has continued to advance in the last two decades, particularly because of special effects using computer graphics. Although digital technology is a predominately post-production process, it has imposed new requirements on the studio floor - and thus impacts on the production crewing considered in this paper - because although technology has eased some material and organisational demands, it has placed more demands on the skills of the crew. In *Gladiator* (2000) the actions of a handful of men were replicated using digital computer graphics to create battle scenes seemingly enacted by thousands. For the producers, this scaling down of the cast and the associated wardrobe, accommodation, catering and transport, represented a huge cost saving, but that same process greatly increased the demands placed upon the skills of the crew and

cinematographer who had to capture various images so consistently that they could be successfully merged in the post-production process. Every special effect requires new skills to be developed, and those that master them possess unique, highly-valued qualities, being able to juggle the various elements of film, light and subject:

Effective special effects nearly always involve a mixture of techniques. The trigonometry of the brain is ruthlessly clever. If there is something wrong it will detect it. The beholder will not know what is wrong, just that something is wrong. So we must trick the eye and brain by shifting from one device to another and creating a perfect illusion. (Boorman 1985:55)

Thus, while the function of a camera operator or a focus puller may appear obvious and simple (the responsibilities of the operator are listed at Appendix 4), dexterity, experience and proficiency are required to perform these crafts at the highest level - and these can only be achieved through aptitude and practice because the complexity of the tasks cannot be replicated in the classroom (Doeringer & Piore 1971:20):

A good [operator] will always enhance and improve the shot, adjusting the position of the extras and props and being acutely aware of anything that goes wrong. He also organises the equipment required for each shot and plans ahead with his chief grip so that he can begin laying tracks for a subsequent set up or prepare the crane. He will constantly strive to enrich the frame and be concerned, together with the continuity girl, in matching one shot to the next. While I rehearse the actors, he will direct the prop men and special effects people to make sure that everything is working. Finally he has the dextrous task of operating the camera movements. (Boorman 1985:117)

Not many can possess all these skills, and thus those that have them will be a significant contribution to the successful completion of a film in both creative and material terms.

Similarly, one of the many skills of the focus puller is to guarantee that the relationship between aperture and focus will ensure that the projected image constantly mimics the depth of field of the human eye so that the attention of the cinema audience will, with no conscious thought on their part, be drawn to the area of the screen that the director wants them to see. This may not seem difficult when

even the cheapest camera has auto-focus, but in cinema the camera and subject may both be moving, the light across the scene may vary and actors' actions may vary. – and maintaining focus is just one objective. Knowing what will be happening in the cinema audience's peripheral vision will also be critical because the director may want the audience to appreciate the wider view before being drawn to a particular character or event within that mass of visual information. Thus as a shot evolves, the focus puller may be simultaneously adjusting both focus and aperture and while technology has assisted with some of the demands upon focus pullers (remote controlled operation of the focus and aperture has eased some of the physical contortions required when cameras are in inaccessible places), the technology does not yet exist that can match the innate skills of a trained focus puller and camera operator team.⁴

In performing these tasks to ensure that the recorded image is consistently perfect - whether a take is repeated many times or just once because of the prohibitive cost of a special stunt – they fulfil the criteria of job specificity (their skills have no application in any other job) and technical specificity (their familiarity with specific machinery delivers greater speed and accuracy) that Doeringer & Piore required (1971:15-17).

These skill characteristics of a camera crew are replicated in all the departments of a film unit: the grip's ability to adjust the speed of a moving dolly to match the operator's and director's requirements; the make-up artist's ability to create a life threatening wound; the stunt artist's ability to fall from a building to a specific mark; the polystyrene sculptor to create a cliff face. It is these "highly specialised, narrow based skills, enabling them to work efficiently together at short notice" (Davenport 2006:254) that make them so invaluable to producers.

However, the acquisition of those very specialised skills still requires an investment in terms of time and effort that has changed little since the 1970s because the skills are so specific:

⁴ Even when using motion control cameras (where a computer is programmed to repeat the same camera move every time) an operator and focus puller must set up the camera at the outset.

... if you want to work in the sound department, you will be a boom operator for five, ten years and then you might progress to be a sound recordist for ten, twenty years. But if you suddenly wanted to work in the art department, that would be really hard because you wouldn't have the skills or the experience to do that... (Davenport 2006:254)

And although it will be shown in the next chapter that there is a growing education industry for the audio-visual industries, it will also be shown that, to date, that those coming from formal education have less access to the internal labour market because the skills acquired through on-the-job training conform to a recognised pattern:

... the people that are getting trained up by those fifty-years-olds are still working exactly the same way as those fifty-year-olds when they were twenty. So while the technology moves on.... the actual working standards and practice haven't changed.. (Davenport 2006:254)

Therefore, as Doeringer & Piore assert, it seems "natural" for the trainee to be working in the real setting, amongst those with whom their career will be linked, where learning will be automatic and progress, motivated by curiosity, will move the trainee from one task to another as each is mastered (Doeringer & Piore 1971:20-21).

On-the-job training is characterised by its informality. In many ways it appears to occur automatically by "osmosis" as the worker observes others or repeatedly performs his job. (Doeringer & Piore 1971:39)

Lastly, as already noted, the intensity of the work cannot be replicated elsewhere - it can only be experienced in the production setting because of the urgency and degree of perfection required. However, as Doeringer & Piore predicted (1971:19&20) such training is not without cost: "the process frequently involves waste of material" and it also carries immediate indications of success and failure. In one respondent's evidence, the penalty of failure for a trainee was effected in both monetary and psychological terms.

We were doing a very complicated shot with Sean Connery. He was in a car doing a stunt ... it's not launched into the air but the old guy is bashed into a seat and there's dust and it's not a pleasant shot to do for him. And we had three or four cameras bolted onto the front of the fake car and one of the cameras I was convinced at the end had run out, and the loader kept guaranteeing me that 'no, it was fine' and

we had got the shot in that roll - and the next day the last two takes were not on the roll, so he'd run out two takes... He was asked to leave the production. On his way out he was asked to go and explain to Mr Connery why he had to do the shot again – he just disappeared, took his bags and ran. (Focus puller)

Thus labour is a key component of film production as Doeringer & Piore required. The critical position of labour has not been supplanted by technology, indeed the specific skills required have become more refined and more specialist as technology has extended the possibilities available to directors. Furthermore, given the nature and stability of film crew, the natural route for entry continues to be on-the-job training alongside those to whom the trainee's career will inevitably be linked. This training and the subsequent progression is not without possible without the investment of time and effort of the individual:

“wage sacrifices necessary to attain access to the internal labour market thus represent a trade-off between present and future income” (Doeringer & Piore 1971:28).

Within film production these wage sacrifices are not only necessary for initial entry, they may also be necessary to progress and advance through the grade hierarchy. One respondent described how he had earned £45,000 in his last year as a clapper loader, but only £6,000 in the following year as he established himself as a focus puller.

But if the role of labour and its associated, specific skills remains consistent within film making, does that stability create continuity in all the associated rules and customs of the workplace ?

7.4 The persistence of customs and traditions

“It's who you know, again it always has been, it's scary. It's who you play golf with, up at the top. The Bonds have a golf day at the end, their wrap party is a golf day: they're at Foxhills” (Focus puller 2006)

Doeringer & Piore's last criteria to indicate the existence of an internal labour market was the least formal and related to the re-enforcing of boundaries that social capital and networks could create in a stable workforce :

... a series of phenomena connected with the psychological behaviour of workgroups and the process by which customs are formed at the workplace which create certain rigidities within the internal labour market. (Doeringer & Piore 1971:6)

This process could be considered cyclical. Because workers strive for stability they contrive, as already shown, to work with a consistent group so building a network on which they depend for work, recommendation and advancement: i.e. social capital. This constant interaction with a small group generates “a set of unwritten rules governing the actions of their members and the relationship between members and outsiders”. Furthermore, on-the-job training conditions those that meet the induction requirements to emerge into the community abiding by the rules and obligations which dictate acceptable conduct within the group. For example, there is no technical reason why pay parity should exist between focus pullers, boom swingers or sound assistants - but it is a convention respected by management and the workforce:

Everyone always goes into parity: you can't earn more than the boom swinger or whoever. (Focus Puller)⁵

As the cycle continues these rules become so established that they acquire an “ethical or quasi-ethical aura” – setting out what is and what is not acceptable behaviour until these rules govern many aspects of the work relationship (Doeringer & Piore 1971:23&24).

Other research has established that the composition of the British feature film workforce is remarkably consistent (Blair 2001:154;Davenport 2006:255) and, because crew select those they will work with, if a particular combination has worked once, then everyone will always attempt to book the same team again, even on commercials:

“It was for *PC World* – and I have done about 15 of them now... they never get tedious, they are good fun actually ‘cos its all – you know when you get a certain director, they’re quite specific towards their crew....” [Interviewer: *so it's always same crew ?*] “Yea, with some slight alterations here and there but 99% of it...” (Assistant Director)

⁵ The same respondent added that individuals could sometimes personalise their deal by adding “some bogus bit of equipment just to make that rate a bit more palatable because they appreciate your skill....”

Crews assemble “their sort of people”, people they know that they can work with and who will respect the rules and conventions, conscious that their unit fits into a framework of interdependent units, all relying upon personal relationships for their survival. Doeringer & Piore had referred to the similarity between custom in the internal labour market and the customary law in medieval Europe, invoking the feudal manor (1971:23) and that same reference was invoked relating to the prevalent hierarchy which existed among film workgroups:

In some respects the industry is still quite feudal: productions are often little principalities with a rigid pecking order. Since most personnel are freelance and dependent on the patronage of the hierarchy for their next job this often fosters an unhealthy environment where diversity of opinion is stifled and sycophancy rewarded. Talent and ability *are* recognised but jobs are equally often awarded on the basis of who one knows or whether one's face fits: ‘are they one of us ?’ (DCMS 2003:III:Ev95)

Within such a “feudal” hiring system relationships are important and conformity to the rules, the maintenance of “a good reputation” and recognition of the hierarchy are critical to employment:

As projects are typically short, those who work in the film industry have to re-secure work on a very regular basis and so that interdependence among group members and pressure to maintain a good reputation (on a group and individual level) is felt on an ongoing basis. (Blair 2001:16)

“loyalty to the DoP is paramount when putting a [camera] crew together” (Morris 2006:242)

Furthermore, any introduction of a new individual into a group will create ‘a dependent’ that will be forever associated with their ‘sponsor’:

What you don’t want to do is find yourself in a situation whereby the art director’s cocked it up and you’ve been the one that’s suggested the art director .. and he [the director] says ... ‘Look .. that chap’s useless, he’s your fault’ (A senior manager cited by Blair 2001:159)

Within Doeringer & Piore’s requirements of the internal labour market, “workers who violate the code are subject to discipline” by management or the remainder of the group (Doeringer & Piore 1971:23-24) and in this example, an interviewee had transgressed the accepted code having publicly “taken the piss” out of an influential

production manager. He had thus severed his link to that patronage and described a subsequent encounter:

I saw him at Panavision, I was at the end of one corridor and my mate, who runs Panavision, was talking to him and [when my name was mentioned] he said 'he's not one of our team'.

If there is a sense of loyalty to one's extended "family" (an individual may possess social capital in a number of teams) then that sense of collective identity also extends to being part of the feature film workforce too. Crews want to work within their own 'strata', with those they know share the same values and skill base. The most clearly defined boundary is that between film and television, the latter being almost universally regarded with disdain:

"The biggest problem in the film industry is the fact that film industry is incredibly snobbish about television. A lot of people who work in film industry do not want to have anything to do with television."
(DCMS 2003:Q15)

The Relph Report (2002) had noted that there were many practices within television that could be advantageously applied to feature film production, but noted that while a cinematographer may agree to "television" conditions, "his or her regular crew usually won't..." (2002:59). The rigidity of the barrier, however illogical, was recognised from both sides

"... when I went [to the BFTS], you know, I didn't talk about television, I only talked about film. And I have only ever studied film in my life, I have never studied television.... Now I have been lucky that ... I haven't had to do things like *The Bill*, or *London's Burning* or stuff like that. I have been able to do stuff that's quite high profile so it's been quite engaging but, nevertheless at the end of the day, I want to make a movie, to make a film. But that's a tough thing because the film world is very different to the television world. Film are very sort of, look down on us people in television" (Television Director)

Thus the effects of social capital are not all beneficial to employers because while established workgroups ensure that the team work well together, relying on those networks may exclude many who are just as capable, and may offer better value, but who are unwilling or unable to participate being "those who are simply outsiders with no existing connections on the inside" (Field 2003:22).

The divisions within the feature film workforce are more subtle and not so readily recognised by the outsider, but the rules are very real nevertheless. This respondent likened them to soccer divisions and emphasised the conventions of family connections:

I suppose I'm in the First Division, probably number 5 or 6, they [in the Premier Division] are not necessarily the best focus pullers, I've watched them, but they talk the right talk, and with the right people - and usually they come from the Hume family or the Mathew family or the Coop family..

These “unwritten rules based largely upon past practice or precedent” (Doeringer & Piore 1971:23) were usually too great to surmount, again because of the difficulty in acquiring social capital in another network. Without the critical connections outside one's normal hierarchy, the conventions would invariably work against the individual because another group's network would intervene:

I will never work in ... 'A' band movies, that sort of niche like *Batman*, all those really big American pictures, the Warner Brothers movies that come over here. ...I was so close to doing *Batman*. That was the annoying thing, I nearly broke that barrier and I just got stomped on by, you know.... [Interviewer: *can you explain ?*] The cameraman phoned the cameraman on [*Captain Correlli's*] *Mandolin* and the two focus pullers who did that, they were mates ... and they recommended those focus pullers and they did it.

At the pinnacle of those “A band movies” or the “Premier Division” is the crew that work on the *Bond* movies. The status, closeness and exclusivity of the *Bond* crews are legendary throughout the feature film sector. One interviewee repeated an anecdote which, sadly, is unsubstantiated, (she heard it from an accountant who also looked after a number of *Bond* crew members) that when there had been an extended gap in the 00□ series many of the ‘Bond Boys’ had sold their second homes in Spain and taken their children out of private schooling rather than accept bookings for what they perceived as inferior work on mainstream films. One DoP described these elite workers as “Mafia” and another crew member, who had not worked in this group, described how the system perpetuated itself:

The second unit crew on the *Bond* movies is always the same, and it very much works that the tea boy becomes the trainee becomes the clapper loader becomes the .. and ends up then the cameraman. I am sure whoever is cameraman on the second unit now was the clapper

loader 15 or 20 years ago and that is very obvious and it is incredibly closed shop and if you're not friends, and you don't play golf with the right people then you're not going to get in there. ... You're never going to work on the *Tomb Raider*, the *Bond*, the *Harry Potter*. *Harry Potter* is as incestuous. I've worked with the operator that works second unit on *Harry Potter* and he's done all of them and we didn't really see eye to eye and that just guarantees that I'll never work on *Harry Potter* even for an additional camera on a final day even if someone put my name forward.. Not in a malicious way So that sort of cliquy side of it is very prevalent ...

In these informal ways, relying on custom and precedent, the system is perpetuated through a number of internal labour markets, each technically limited by its collective social capital. The evidence would indicate that either there is just sufficient interchange of individuals, or that there is an institutional persistence from the closed shop era, to ensure that those separate markets are similar in their customs and procedures despite their different composition. However, the value of the internal labour market to all workgroups is stability because these rules regulate the allocation and pricing of labour (so ensuring that the groups do not compete on economic grounds) and, as they became more "constrained and less responsive to market forces", so rigidity has been established in those areas as Doeringer & Piore predicted (1971:28).

However, this still does not explain why the employers have not been able to break up this seeming anomaly of worker control. While there is some strength through the informal coordination of numbers and the possession of specific skills, these seem relatively insignificant in a multi-million pound industry where it might be assumed that capital would seek out the most economically competitive. The next section will demonstrate that it is still the producers who perpetuate the system.

7.5 The complicity of employers

“At the end of the day, producing is simply having the will to get something done, and figuring out a way to make sure that thousands of people will help you.” (Producer cited by de Winter 2006:xii)

Chapter 5 showed that an internal labour market existed in the closed shop era and that it was maintained through the power held by the unions over the production companies who were vulnerable to pressure from the laboratories. The evidence shown in this chapter indicates that an internal labour market still exists and therefore it has to be explained how this is maintained when the union's remit has been eroded and the laboratories, for the reasons discussed in Chapter 6, no longer hold a critical position.

It might be assumed that the employers would now hold the stronger position and, to make themselves more competitive, be striving to break up what Relph (2002) had identified as entrenched working practices that encouraged greater costs than in the European and American markets. However, the characteristics of UK production companies have changed little in the last twenty five years and the majority remain small and uninterested in labour matters. In 2003, UK film production was described as “an under capitalised ‘cottage’ industry based around entrepreneurial individuals...” (DCMS 2003:3) and in the latest statistics available (2004), 89% of the 6,210 production companies turned over less than £1m (many are dormant but remain registered for tax purposes). Only 186 turned over more than £5m (UK Film Council 2007:155).

So if the production companies remain weak and if the unions can no longer command any authority, does the internal labour market persist solely through institutional inertia? Doeringer & Piore (1971:25) showed that union involvement meant that changes could be effected through collective bargaining, but when unions are not involved change was only effected through the slow evolution of precedent and past practice. However, the next chapter will show that other groups, equally well established as internal labour markets in the closed shop era, have not survived, and so other reasons must be sought for its persistence in the feature film industry.

This section will argue that there are two, related reasons why the producers have not challenged the internal labour market.

First, there is the position of capital. The production companies are not the possessors of capital. They are middlemen who raise the funds for unique projects from the distributors, exhibitors and other investors who will be the profit takers if a film sells well. Therefore, the producers have no interest in reforming the workforce's organisation if it delivers the necessary results at no cost for which they are liable.

The second reason is that the producers recognise the various efficiencies that the stability of the internal labour market provides in an otherwise unstable environment because, within reason, they can assemble a viable and well practiced workforce "whose skill and behavioural characteristics are well known to management" (Doeringer & Piore 1971:31) with minimal recruitment and screening costs. Those two reasons will now be explored in greater detail.

"UK producers are not entrepreneurs in the sense that is generally understood" (Davenport 2006:253) because they rarely expose themselves to personal financial risk beyond establishing the fabric of a production company which, when not in production, requires little more than a few administrative staff. The producers' interest is in making films and making a reasonable income and they do this by acting as the intermediaries, bringing together capital (from the distributors, exhibitors, television companies and other parties willing to speculate) and the creative team (the director, cast and crew) that will actually realise the film by turning a script or concept into visual entertainment. This is not to belittle the producers' contribution. Many feel passionate about film - and their skills in bringing the necessary constituents together are critical if projects are to happen - but their commercial commitment and ambition are tempered because, given the limitations on how many projects can be managed simultaneously, they are rarely interested in expanding their companies' turnover or size.⁶ Furthermore, they need

⁶ In 2006, only two production companies were involved in more than 4 projects. 332 companies were associated with just one feature (UK Film Council 2007:148)

to make no capital investment themselves when all the production assets required for filmmaking are readily available for hire; studios, camera equipment, transport – and ultimately crew (Davenport 2006:253).

Producers raise capital for each unique film project and they do this on the strength of the creative product that they can offer - and thus the standing and reputation of those who will make the artistic contribution, the director, cast and crew, are not merely creative preference, but a business requirement. When even a middle ranking film will cost over £20m (UK Film Council 2007:144) and fewer than one in ten films is successful at the box-office (Davenport 2006:253), the financial backers will want to assure themselves that they have the best possible production talent available – the director of photography, the art director, the costume designer, the production designer, make-up and the editor. And with those names, as already indicated, come their preferred teams and the associated customs and practices.

This concentration by producers “on production with insufficient emphasis on distribution” (DCMS 2003:3) has two effects. First, that it is the distributors and exhibitors who will take their profit through the marketing of the film to the public.⁷ Thus, even when British films are successful, the producer has no material interest in the commercial success of the production because the profits, or losses, are already assigned to remote backers. Secondly, the producer’s reputation – and thus their ability to raise finance for the next production – will be based on their ability to deliver a film on time and on budget. Thus producers are the coordinators and the servants of all the interested parties:

“People ask me ‘Oh so do you just raise the money?’ And, cynically, I say ‘Yeah, if someone asks me if they can make a movie I just get out my chequebook.’ I can’t explain to them – nor do I want to – the whole process of finding a property, bringing in a writer and a director, looking for actors, working out deals, sorting out the money, talking to the studio or the sales agents, seeing a film into production, keeping the director and the actors happy on set, watching dailies, commenting on the edit....” (Stephen Evans (producer, *The Madness of King George*) cited by de Winter 2006:x)

⁷ In 2004, the top twelve UK based film companies made their profits not from production but from distribution, video and exhibition (UK Film Council 2007:155).

It is significant that Evans never mentions the production crew perhaps because, for a fraught producer, it is the most dependable element. However, the crew's role is critical because, lacking the skills necessary to make a film themselves, producers are dependent on those who do possess them and it is the characteristics of the internal labour market that provides them with immediate access to the labour resources they need. Therefore producers, or at least their subordinates, align with crew practices to reduce financial risk and to take the advantages that the internal labour market offers in terms of stability and efficiency.

To avoid risk they build slack into their schedule by paying overtime regardless of whether it is needed (Relph 2002) and hire whatever crew is necessary to ensure that there is the facility to do creative work quickly and precisely. For the feature film *Amazing Grace*, the shooting of the House of Commons slavery debates of 1806 required over twenty specialist hair and make-up technicians to start work at 6am each day to prepare the cast of several hundred in the appropriate powdered wigs of the period.⁸ In circumstances such as these, the more crew that are hired, the greater the daily cost and the greater the requirement to cover for every possible contingency and so avoid the wasteful downtime that might occur if a button falls from a costume, a wig needs resetting or a loaded magazine is not immediately available. Thus, the producer has little interest in economising on crew numbers because their goodwill and creative contribution are critical to a successful project unless, as will be shown later, it starts to encroach into other essential creative elements. Furthermore, because a producer's fee is often based on a percentage of the total production cost (Relph 2002), the producer has no incentive to reduce crew costs.

Therefore, to retain the crew's goodwill and so utilise the advantages that the internal labour market offers, producers invariably cooperate with the established customs and rules of the workforce:

Management, especially lower management, belongs to the workgroup and abides by custom for the same reason that other group

⁸ Also indicative of how feature film crews can 'grow', the same shoot also utilised three cameras simultaneously, serviced by fifteen camera technicians, to avoid the cast having to repeat speeches and thus retain some spontaneity and passion in their lengthy parliamentary debates.

members do: because it cannot conceive of alternatives, because alternatives that are conceivable are discomfoting and seem wrong, or because it fears the sullen hostility of the workforce and the implied social ostracism.” (Doeringer & Piore 1971:24)

And by doing so, producers achieve the savings and efficiencies that Doeringer & Piore predicted because crews will select themselves with no requirement for advertising, screening or training. Thus there is no requirement for HR managers, job specifications or imposed hierarchies because each worker will arrive with the specific skills and know their allotted place and tasks.

The costs to the producers are those relating to on-the-job training and accommodating the established precedents and rules of the workgroup. Regarding training, there may be, as already shown, trainee errors and some loss of productivity on the part of the trainer (Doeringer & Piore 1971:21-22). However, these are probably minor costs compared to the trial and error that might otherwise be expected in the assembly of a large and complex single-project team.

The accommodation of the precedents and rules is more challenging, but eased by the reality that there are few practical alternatives. When raising capital, producers are not in a conventional competitive environment because they are raising finance for a unique project for which they probably own the creative rights. However, the producer’s challenge is to raise as much finance as is realistic for the production and so provide the director (and in turn the HoDs) with all the facilities and resources that they require to bring the script to fulfilment. The producer, as shown, probably has no financial interest in the final commercial success of the film, but without a reasonable budget it will be impossible to attract appropriate creative participation:

So you have ‘A’ list casts working with ‘A’ list directors and an ‘A’ list production team which gives you an ‘A’ list budget of anywhere between \$100 – 200 million. Then there are ‘B’ list casts with ‘B’ list directors and ‘B’ list crews... (Stephen Woolley, UK producer, cited by de Winter 2006:83)

Woolley went on to state that to raise finance you have to have a few ‘A’s in your package “to get the budget and deals you want.” However, the process is not without pressure because there must be some restrictions on budgets and directors

can rarely be given all the scope that they crave.⁹ Thus, this producer explained why the union's formal rules were discarded:

... if creatively you've pushed out the boundary you then have to have a much tighter rein on the costs. So how do you judge that from the [union] rule book? You need flexibility [The] producers' association [PACT] has embraced what we have developed over the last ten years, more flexibility and trying, at the very least, to prove to the Americans that it is cheaper to make films here... Unfortunately, the more American films we do, the higher standard that we achieve, the greater expectation comes from everyone.

However, there is a recognition that claims made by the informal social groups within the workforce, here referred to as "the gang", had to be taken more seriously - and accommodated. The same producer observed:

The power of the gang is very much in evidence the people that knew they would be doing the longest hours came in and laid down a big warning that 'So much would they take' ... and we had to decide that either we were going to battle it and say 'fuck off' (which we could have done) ... and if we had not been supported by an American studio system [which did make additional funds available] then we may have had to have done that. Which would have made it a tougher ride.

When budgets do come under pressure, and backers are not willing to make additional funds available, then producers must make economies somewhere. However, while there is some effect on crew, it is noticeable in these next three quotes that there is no suggestion that the crew should make direct concessions: the schedule would be shortened; the distributors, not the producers, had imposed a rate freeze; and visual effects would be sacrificed before crew rates were reviewed:

They [producers] are always tightening up their schedules and their budgets, especially in TV, and they've knocked two days off the schedule ... (DoP)

The new *Harry Potter*, they said 'Warner's company policy: we're not paying any more than we did on *Goblet of Fire* which was a year ago - and for me that was their policy from *Prisoner of Azkaban*, as well, so I said 'Hang on, that's two and a half years since I've had a

⁹ In the film *Atonement* (2007), the director was refused the additional £4m he wanted for a Stuka attack on the Dunkirk beaches sequence. The producers said £40m was enough for an "art film".

pay rise' and they just said 'Well I'm sorry, but this is Warner's company policy. (Photographer)

Suddenly, from one day to the next, we were \$1.8 million short. The only way to get the film going was to go to Mike [the director] and say "We are short by this much. Any suggestions?" We decided to cut all of the exteriors except those we could afford to do, but we would only shoot them at the end of the film when we knew how much money we had left. (Producer cited by de Winter 2006:59)

In summary, it would appear that the rules and procedures of the internal labour market are respected by the producers: in part because they need the active cooperation of the crew and their associated skills; in part because of the efficiencies they gain in recruitment, screening and a ready to function workforce; and in part because the costs can be passed on directly to those backing the project financially. The internal labour market thus remains unchallenged because the management in direct contact has, as Doeringer & Piore predicted, become drawn into the work group themselves and thus they "abide[s] by custom for the same reasons that other group members do" (1971:24).

Conclusions

The objective of this chapter was to establish that an internal labour market remains extant in feature film production and how it is maintained even though the organisational support provided by the union though the closed shop has gone.

The preliminary evidence of a clearly distinctive labour market is in the statistical data provided by Skillset (2005) which shows that film production workers are older and better paid than those working in the wider audio-visual industry. However, that merely shows that a separate group exists and it was necessary to use the factors suggested by Doeringer & Piore (1971:6) to show that there are rigid boundaries surrounding this workforce and that it is shielded from the direct competitive influences of the external market.

Examination of the four factors showed that there was strong evidence that the rules relating to the deployment of labour are long-standing and remain as firm as

they were in the closed shop era. Many of the principles relating to wage determination also remain firm, although there have been some changes in how the rules are interpreted. Thus the conventions regarding parity are still observed, but the overtime rules have been simplified so that more is paid for a longer basic day.

Doeringer & Piore's second test was that there should be some evidence of irrational practices that would not be acceptable in a truly competitive market. The challenge was they expected such evidence to come from management and the unions, but in the contemporary film production industry neither party are likely sources. Management, it will be shown, now aligns with the internal labour market while the unions are effectively defunct in collective bargaining. The evidence of uncompetitive practices was found in the Relph Report (2002) which showed that not only were film practices more expensive than those utilised television, but also that prevalent UK film production was significantly more expensive than analogous European and American practice.

The next condition thought indicative of the internal labour market was that labour should be critical to the overall production process and that there should be specific skills, probably acquired through on-the-job training. Film production still meets all these requirements because specific skills are still critical to film making and the increasing use of technology creates new demands on the workforce. Although it will be shown that some of those skills can now be gained through formal education, successful entry invariably requires the acquisition of social capital, and the accepted way to acquire that continues to be through on-the-job training. Being part of a network is critical for the crew member to survive. Crew not only depend upon team membership for employment - 81% were recruited for their most recent production by word of mouth (Skillset 2005:85) - but team membership exerts power on the studio floor where that of the union has foundered.

The last of the factors, was that there should be evidence of community custom and practice which decreed what behaviour was acceptable and what violated the codes. The film production industry again meets this requirement because there is clearly a sense of community which is evident in the stability and continuity of work groups who respect conventions and divisions which have no formal, organisational backing.

The evidence seems clear that the internal labour market, where “the pricing and allocation of labour is governed by a set of administrative rules and procedures” (Doeringer & Piore 1971:3), remains viable in the feature film production industry.

However, if there is no formal organisation and if the rules create economically uncompetitive situations, why should the employers not ignore these worker regulated rules and so reduce costs? The answer is that producers are not risking their own capital. Producers are the brokers for capital and therefore in partnership with the workforce because their own livelihood depends on the skills that a cooperative workforce can apply to each new project. Therefore, the producers utilise the advantages that Doeringer & Piore predicted through efficiencies in recruitment, screening and training and respect the rules and precedents that the workforce have established.

Overall, it seems acceptable to say that the internal labour market is still extant in the film production industry which retains distinct boundaries, even though there is no longer “the geographical and occupational jurisdiction of the local union generally defines the boundaries of the market” (Doeringer & Piore 1971:3-4). The workforce itself defines the boundaries and maintains them with the assistance of the producers. However, all evidence suggests that the importance of social networks remains as critical as it ever has been for a successful career in film production, because the system, with the producers acting as the buffer between labour and capital, is largely self-perpetuating. Few entrants are inducted through on-the-job training which perpetuates in each generation a certain style of production, the specific skills and the customary laws and practices: past precedent remains largely unchallenged by employer or technology and change evolves very slowly in a small, closed community.

In 1996, *A Career in Broadcast, Film and Video* emphasised the importance of cultivating existing practitioners as being critical to gaining an entry to the those sectors:

“start making contacts by attending short courses, conferences, anything that is relevant to your field of interest... many of the jobs will not be advertised at all.... (Skillset 1996:23)

Ten years on, and nearly twenty years since the demise of the closed shop, it would appear that little has changed in film production employment. The next chapter will examine a very different post-closed shop outcome.

Chapter 8 A COMPARISON: OTHER AUDIO-VISUAL SECTORS

‘thousands of people each year consider entering a career in the media – far more than there are jobs available’ (Skillset 1996:1)

Doeringer & Piore hypothesised that, as a contrast to the internal labour market, there might exist a truly competitive market where the process of allocating and pricing of jobs would be dictated by economic forces. This market might not exist, but the concept was necessary to illustrate the contrast with the internal labour market (1971:4).

In the case of film production there may be such an alternative because from the late 1980s the previously cohesive labour force regulated through ACTT membership split into various sectors. One of these was the feature film production sector which, as shown in Chapter 7, has preserved its employment practices. However, other sectors of the industry have been less resilient and an examination of some of these sectors provides an illuminating contrast because for many the entry requirements to the internal labour market of the film production sector prove too onerous and thus they are obliged to work in the open competitive labour market if they wish to persist in the audio-visual industry.

The term ‘audio-visual industry’ has been adopted by various government agencies to describe contemporary production of the moving image in a range of formats, some of which are far removed from traditional film or television. It should be noted that technically film production is a small element of that enlarged industry but as the features of contemporary film production have already been described, the commentary in this chapter relates mainly to the other sectors. Therefore, the term “wider audio-visual industry” should be taken to include film production

along with all the other sectors, the term “other audio-visual sectors” will be used to describe those sectors but to exclude film production.

The other audio-visual sectors are very fragmented and many are still evolving. The Skillset audio-visual census of 2002 estimated that there were approximately 134,100 workers – but there were perhaps a further 50,000 freelancers who were not working on the census date. These workers were working in twelve broad sectors the largest of which was terrestrial television (24,900) and the smallest computer games (8,000), commercials (7,200) and corporate productions (3,200) (Skillset 2003a:19). As already discussed, the additional 9,700 working in feature film production were covered in a separate survey (Skillset 2005).

With such disparate groups generalisations are not easy and the range of occupational groups make a complete review impractical because the nature of some work is not dissimilar to feature film production (e.g. television drama) whereas other sectors, such as digital re-mastering, are closer to electrical engineering. It is therefore intended to describe the conditions within a few specific sectors and to focus especially on the “ports of entry” which Doeringer & Piore identified as being a useful indicator of the degree of openness (1971:43). However, it should be noted that some sectors, although distinct from feature film production, do retain some characteristics of the internal labour market: the workforce engaged in ‘high-end’ television drama, although generally ignored by feature film workers, retains some of the characteristics of the internal labour market (Blair et al. 2002) although, as will be shown later, their negotiating position is not as strong as their film counterparts.

The point of entry is particularly critical because it is there that the practitioners of the craft internal labour market exercise most control – entry is a workforce controlled process (Doeringer & Piore 1971:34). It will become apparent in this chapter that there is a considerable oversupply of potential labour in what has always been perceived as an attractive occupational sector. However, whereas successful entry into the craft internal labour market provides the entrant with the appropriate skills and acceptance into an occupational peer group, those who do not secure such positions must probe the other less structured sectors in the hope that they will secure some foothold which they can develop into a career. This chapter

will show that those footholds are controlled by management and the wages and conditions of employment are management prerogatives.

Section 8.1 will show how the rapid expansion of the wider audio visual industry and the simultaneous decline in union membership made it impossible for the emergent union, BECTU, to retain any real influence over evolving employment practices. The second section will consider how the place of capital is very different in the other audio-visual sectors to its role in feature film production because it is less speculative and makes rational calculations about the potential returns for specific investments. As a result, labour costs and conditions are squeezed as producers seek every possibly economy to competitively tender for funding at levels much lower than those of film production.

However, producers are aided in this search for cheap qualified labour because of the growth of formal media training. Section 8.3 examines why formal training has received governmental support but also that many graduating students emerge without the socialisation implicit in on-the-job training and so, in their desperation to take any foothold, take whatever low or unpaid work is made available.

Section 8.4 shows that despite government attempts to make formal skills training more relevant to the audio-visual industry's requirements, many students emerge with little skill specificity and so have to rely on trial and error in their initial placements in the hope of gaining more marketable skills.

8.1 The erosion of union boundaries

“The television, film and video industry has experienced a decade of unprecedented change brought about by technological, organisational and economic developments. Such change is set to continue for the foreseeable future.” (Varlaam et al. 1990:9)

As shown in Chapter 6, the growth of video and digital post production, and the associated decline of the laboratories, was the technical change that most affected feature film production in the 1980s. However, while these changes had affected some aspects of television production, e.g. through electronic news gathering, there had been the first signs of far reaching changes in television with the introduction of longer broadcasting hours, Channel 4 (1982) and breakfast television (1983). Thus, as the quote above accurately predicted, the 1990s were also to be a period of

further changes and principally these would be the technical, organisational and educational evolution in the other audio-visual sectors. Film production, as already shown, would henceforth be relatively unaffected.

It is doubtful whether the formal rules operated by the ACTT could ever have accommodated these changes, even had the controls not already been in decline by the late 1980s. The ACTT, as highlighted in Chapter 6, was failing to recruit in the new video and digital sectors, but there was also a prolonged erosion of its established membership because, even as the industry expanded, the number of existing members paying their subscriptions was in decline. Some, such as those laid off from the laboratories, were natural wastage but others, perhaps moving to the new unregulated sectors of cable, satellite and digital post-production, simply allowed their membership to lapse. As was shown in earlier chapters, the activities and benefits of the union did not appeal to all members and in the early 1980s the *FTT* had listed nearly 1,800 members whose subscriptions were “in serious arrears” (Feb 1980). However, at that time the strictures of the closed shop still held firm so that “the moment their names were published they promptly paid up, generally speaking.” As union influence declined, members became less compliant especially because the union rules had never considered the possibility that members might drift away:

□obody was ever deemed to have left ACTT; it’s as easy as that. You were merely in arrears or limbo or whatever - but you were never actually written off... Once people began to believe there would be no sanctions of any kind against them ... then there was a gradual fall off from actually paying the subscription – although they still technically belonged to the ACTT because we simply didn’t allow anybody to resign, we could throw them out, but that was all.
(Tudor Gates - former ACTT president)

Thus, while ACTT membership reached a peak of 27,157 in May 1987 (*FTT*), the reality was that the numbers and associated union authority were already in decline and by the early 1990s the concept that union membership was a precondition to take specific appointments within the industry had gone; Louise Decouteau, who started in production in 1991, does not recall union membership ever being mentioned. By January 1991, the industry’s three unions had been obliged to merge, in part reflecting the declining numbers and in part the changing

demarcations within the other audio-visual sectors, to form BECTU, the Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union.

It was unfortunate for the unions that this period of internal re-organisation and uncertainty occurred just as the industry was embarking on its rapid expansion because the new sectors would rapidly outgrow numerically the established employees of the film and terrestrial television industries – and many would be young entrants keen to get a foothold:

The television, film and video industry is one of the very few sectors unlikely to suffer problems with recruitment in the current demographic downturn. There will be no shortage of applicants keen to enter the industry to meet increased demand. (Varlaam et al. 1990:6)

This forecast of employment growth was well founded, even if the statistics are inevitably imprecise in an industry where freelancers, or those on short-term contracts, drift in and out of an industry which is itself ill-defined.¹ In the closed shop era of the late 1980s there had been approximately 60,000 members of the three main craft unions; ACTT, APS and BATTKE (BECTU website 5 Dec 2005) and if one surmises that there were another 10,000 working in the then, unregulated sectors (the emerging digital post-production sectors, cable, satellite and the established corporate and non-broadcast sectors), that suggests that there were about 70,000 workers in the whole industry. As already shown (page 222), the Skillset 2002 survey indicated a total audio-visual workforce of approximately 194,000 workers – thus nearly tripling of the workforce in twelve years.

The union's challenge was that alongside this growth in potential members, there were so many other simultaneous changes: organisational; technical; educational; and social. The social changes were described in Chapter 6, and the educational changes will be dealt with in a later section – but the technical changes were just as demanding for the union because new formats and means of distribution meant the creation of many new companies, either to produce transmission material or to

¹ This is an industry where labour force statistics are difficult to isolate and confused in their definition: “there is no single tracking system for UK based or UK related film production, and those that exist vary in their definition of UK production as well as the information they collect” (Skillset 2005:18).

effect the distribution and transmission. Initially this was just cable and satellite² but as the 1990s progressed there was a continuing growth of music promos, interactive video and training videos, besides an increasing fragmentation of the established broadcasting sectors plus the continual advances in technology and formats: DVDs, MPEGs; MP3; ipods; G3 phones; alternative high definition formats etc.

Thus there was now a spectrum of formats and production establishments encompassed within the much looser boundaries of the wider audio-visual industry and these created so many divisions, layers and pockets of employment that the union had little opportunity to organise members or to establish any collective bargaining structure with the employers who, it will be shown, had less reason to be as compliant as the film producers. By 2003, there were 25,000 people working in interactive media alone (Skillset 2003c:20) - an occupational group that had not existed fifteen years earlier and which alone more than doubled the numbers working in feature film production.

Also, while the job titles within mainstream film have remained consistent, the adaptation of those same titles by the new sectors meant that there has been no consistency for drafting collective agreements. Tim Sullivan (who it may be remembered was made to wait for three years before starting his training as a director (Chapter 5)) believes that there is now too little control over the term 'director': the twenty-seven year old director of corporate videos, earning £375pw with one assistant, has nothing except the title in common with a director of a modest feature film controlling a crew of fifty or more - or the director of a commercial who may be earning in excess of £5,000 per day.

With such changes in the composition of the industry it has been difficult for BECTU to establish relationships with the employers (whose own associations are weak) or with the workforce who are distributed in many small companies that have never had any union presence on which to build:

Every decade they [the union] do try and have a recruiting drive. I think for the first time in however long we have one member of the

² One of the most significant of these, MTV Europe, had been launched on 1st August 1987.

union here, I don't know what possessed them to become a member of the union but there is one person out of 450 who is a member of BECTU. (Managing Director, post production company)

As a result, there has been little interest in the negotiation of collective agreements whose effectiveness has already been shown to be questionable. The agreement between BECTU and the Advertising Producers' Association lapsed in July 2002 and has not been renegotiated: "There are currently no agreed freelance rates for work on commercials, but BECTU publishes a rate card with recommended rates" (BECTU website 15 January 2007).

The BECTU agreement with PACT is extant, but opinion varies about its effectiveness. As shown, in film production it is acknowledged, if not always observed to the letter, but most film workers are paid well in excess of its basic provisions anyway. Within mainstream, terrestrial television production Sara Langton, an industry lawyer involved in contract negotiations, believed that the minimum rates were recognised as a base line. However elsewhere, where financial economy becomes more than critical than quality, the agreement is less rigorously observed:

... most BECTU freelancers working on high- and medium- budget features, network TV drama and other high value productions have consistently earned well above PACT rates. But in other areas, where the advent of multi-channel TV has put pressure on costs, low pay is rife, with members regularly paid below the PACT / BECTU minimums. In other words, we have learned that agreeing a minimum rate does not automatically prevent low pay (SSR May 2003).

Furthermore, because employers did not want to issue a contract, which could be produced as evidence that they were paying below the agreement minimum, they ignored the whole agreement and refused to provide any formal contract. Thus, the low paid workers were:

doubly disadvantaged... they also miss out on all the other conditions covering hours of work, travel arrangements, rest breaks, sickness and so on.

BECTU therefore resolved that it was better for the individuals to have the protection of a contract and so all rates became the "recommended" minimums in the hope that employers would honour the rest of the agreement even where they

did not match the preferred union rate (SSR May 2003:18). However, this does not protect workers working in the areas not covered by the PACT agreement such as training films, corporate videos, pop promos or the rapidly growing internet sector but there are few signs of any maintainable move to unionisation.

Mobilisation theory states that a shift to unionisation will arise when there is not only dissatisfaction at work but also “a set of individuals with a sense of injustice” who recognise the source of their problems, identify with each other and accept appropriate leadership (Kelly 1998:29). The challenge for the contemporary union is that many workers blame no-one for their situation because their entry into the industry has conditioned them to expect erratic employment and meagre pay - indeed, their over-riding sentiment regarding their employer may be gratitude for the opportunity. BECTU’s experience is that individuals only approach the union when they eventually realise that there is no career path or advancement. Their employers are generally unwilling to negotiate and those individuals drift away from the industry and are replaced by the next, eager generation of entrants (Egan interview).

With the limited effectiveness of the union’s agreements, and a fragmented workforce with few binding instincts, BECTU’s membership has remained at about 25,000 and that total now includes sectors unrelated to audio-visual employment e.g. theatre (5,000 members), leisure activities, bingo, the arts and exhibition. If union density in the film production industry is thirty three percent (Skillset 2005:77) that accounts for approximately 3,200 of the 6,800 London Film production division members, while the BBC division has 8,000 members among the BBC’s 27,000 employees (BECTU source). With those two sectors removed, it would appear that there are approximately 8,000 union members in the other audio-visual workforce of 147,000; suggesting a density of 6%.

Thus, it is clear that there is no longer any semblance of a union controlled “geographical and occupational jurisdiction” (Doeringer & Piore (1971:4) within the other audio-visual sectors. However, the loss of the union’s jurisdiction for employment and working practices will be shown to have been very different in some sectors to that of film production industry. The remainder of the chapter will explain how the erosion of the established practices has been effected.

8.2 The different position of capital

“Between 1999 and 1999 Tory television policy did maintain one, and only one, consistent thrust – to make television more a matter of the marketplace, and less a matter of public service.” (Goodwin 1998:166)

*“It is easy to get trapped in the low budget / no budget end of things”
(Skillset website)*

The changes described in the structure of the industry inevitably also affected the nature of some employers and the role of capital in the audio-visual industry. As was shown in Chapter 7, film producers remained a “cottage” industry, entrepreneurs often working from home (de Winter 2006:61), whose objective was to effect the link between a creative idea and the necessary capital and then to utilise that capital to realise the production by hiring equipment, facilities and crew. However, producers in the other audio-visual sectors operate in a much more structured market where capital is far less speculative and more cautious, seeking a very specific return on a predetermined investment.

The demands of capital are most clear in those areas which service the wider audio-visual industry where huge capital investment in property, equipment and software is required. This is nowhere more clear than amongst the independent facility companies who provide post-production services for films and television establishment. Chapter 5 showed that here management control of the working practices was re-established from the outset because twenty-four hour working was essential to obtain satisfactory returns on the capital investment. Thus the union’s *time off the clock* rules had to be eliminated: “because the industry couldn’t afford to operate on that sort of business model whereby people who got no ten hour break, [or] if they worked past midnight, got paid for four days” (MD facilities house).

In this area, management and capital remain synonymous and the balance between investment, labour, demand and costings is critical for commercial success. A contemporary facility company has to invest £1million - £4 million in new technology each year to remain competitive and that investment must be made before the new service can be offered and income received. Against that investment, and the associated West End property necessary to house the equipment, labour costs are a small proportion of the total service and, except for a

few, exceptionally creative “stars” (in areas such as telecine) who may be able to dictate their terms, the majority of these operators have readily available, universal skills with software such as Flame or Inferno. Therefore, management sets the wages and makes the rules regarding labour deployment to meet the commercial trading requirements with little regard for custom and practice. (MD facility company interview).

However, although post production was part of the 1970s closed shop, it had always been a little detached from the studio floor and it was probably television production that had most parallels with film production – and that now provides a bleak contrast of post-closed shop employment practices. Here employees have been full exposed by declining union influence to management’s priorities of “productivity improvements, labour intensification and cost reductions” (Kelly 1996:83) by the shift in the balance of power to the employers and the restructuring of the industry.

The 1990 Broadcasting Act was a deregulation measure to break up the monopoly of the established fifteen independent broadcasting companies and it led to an auction of the television franchises which were reassigned in 1992: Thames Television was replaced by Carlton; TVam by GMTV etc (Goodwin 1998). In the resulting takeovers, amalgamations and subsequent layoffs many executives and workers set up small independent production companies, encouraged by the implementation of a new quota system that required that 25% of terrestrial broadcasting would come from independent producers, theoretically breaking up the domination of the BBC (Goodwin 1998:123&124) and the big television companies which now became ‘publisher-broadcasters’; companies that would buy programmes from external sources. The result was a major revision of the organisation of the workforce:

In 1979 practically all British television employees were directly employed by the two poles of the duopoly [i.e. the BBC & ITV]; in 1995 perhaps half of them were employed by cable or satellite broadcasters, independent producers, independent facility companies or were freelance. (Goodwin1998:160)

However, the position of capital had not moved. The BBC (through the licence fee) and the independent companies (through advertising revenue) still controlled

the available capital which rose about five fold (double the rate of inflation) between 1980 and 1997 (Wedell & Luckham 2001:108). Furthermore, the tacit knowledge about broadcasting, audiences and programme requirements remained with the business operators of the publisher-broadcasters who now held all the key positions: the Royal Television Society believed that the new controllers “are certainly accountants” (Wedell & Luckham 2001:46). The BBC responded to the same pressures:

The BBC governors came to feel a lot less secure about the future of the licence fee and tried to pre-empt any government criticism by making the Corporation more efficient. (Wedell & Luckham 2001:40)³

Commercial efficiency was necessary, because as part of the industry’s transformation, an increasing number of channels became available and audiences were thus dissipated. For the independent companies this meant a decreasing audience share – and the associated advertising revenue (Table 5).

Table 5: Television audiences 1980 - 1997

	1980 ^a	1991 ^a	2001 ^b
BBC 1	39%	32%	20%
BBC 2	12%	12%	11%
ITV	19%	31%	11%
CHANNEL 4	-	11%	9%
five	-	2%	5%
Alternative viewing	-	11%	39%

a. Goodwin (1998:155&156)

b. BARB Broadcasters' Audience Research Board
<http://www.barb.co.uk/index1.cfm> 17 Jul 07

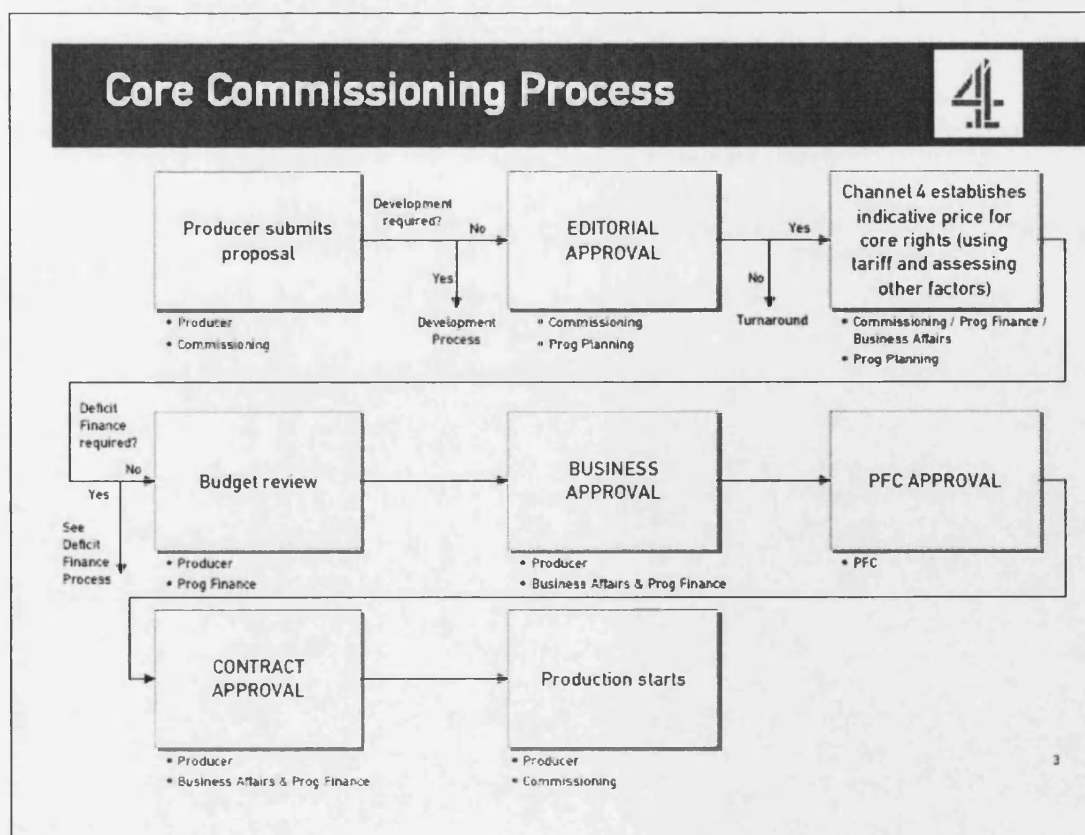
³ The debate about further limits to BBC funding continues (2006) although its future seems more assured.

However, satellite, cable and the internet make only a small contribution to the production process (many concentrating their funding on sporting events, feature films and music promos) so the terrestrial channels remain the main financiers of original material. These terrestrial ‘publisher-broadcasters’ ensure that they obtain the necessary programming by creating a competitive market where independent television producers bid for specific time slots for which specific funding is available. Thus, although the Channel 4 process promotes the process as a partnership:

Channel 4 has always put the principle of creative and commercial partnership at the heart of its Terms of Trade, in recognition of the collaborative nature of its commissioning process and the value that the Producer and Channel 4 bring to a programme through their joint involvement. (Channel 4 2003:14)

the reality is that all producers are working within very specific parameters regarding programme content, audience segment and costs, all controlled by Channel 4 (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: A typical television programme commissioning process



(Channel 4 2003:13)

It is thus apparent that Channel 4 retains tight creative and monetary control of the production process and of particular significance is the “indicative price for core rights” because all commissioning television stations publish tariff tables indicating what they will pay for particular programmes (examples at Appendix 6).

An examination of these tables reveals how much lower television budgets are than those normal within feature films. The maximum allowed for an hour of television drama is £800,000 or £13,300 per minute (ITV Peak time drama 2004). By contrast, in Relph’s (2002:6) sample of “low budget” feature films, twenty-one cost between £1m and £7m, or between £10,000 and £67,000 per minute⁴, the majority already four or five times the budget available to the television producer. If one starts to consider major feature films of that same period then the difference rises to twelve fold (*Bridget Jones: The edge of reason* (£18m)) or even fifty fold (*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (£100m)).

Table 6: Sample television and feature film costs 2003/2004

		£'000		i.e. per minute	
		Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Television Drama	ITV (Indicative tariffs 200□)	□15,000	□00,000	6,900	13,300
	Five (Prescribed tariffs 200□)	150,000	600,000	2,500	10,000
	Channel □(Core Rights 2003)	350,000	600,000	5,□30	10,000
Feature Films	Low budget feature (Relph 2002)	1,000,000	6,□00,000	10,000	6□,000
	<i>Ladies in Lavender</i> (200□)	3,600,000		35,000	
	<i>Bridget Jones: Edge of Reason</i> (200□)	1□,000,000		166,□00	
	<i>Harry Potter / Azkaban</i> (200□)	100,000,000		□09,200	

Further examination of the tariff tables shows that these television drama budgets are comparatively generous. Producers working in entertainment, documentaries or factual programmes must work within much lower budgets: £25,000 for thirty

⁴ Relph had identified three feature films costing below £1m but these were “micro budget” films which the statistics (2002:11) indicate were shot by unpaid crew, probably as a leisure pursuit

minutes of night time entertainment programme on ITV, £50,000 for a 'soap' on Five or even as low as £12,500 for half an hour of children's programming.

Thus television producers have become the purveyors of production services for specific tasks and are constrained by tightening financial parameters because the broadcasters retain far more control over the production than do the backers of a feature film project, being aware of both production costs and the potential revenue to them as broadcasters. Furthermore, budgets are becoming tighter as the commissioning broadcasters lose their audience share. Relph noted that Channel 4's tariff of £600,000 per hour had not increased since the 1980s (2002:54) demonstrating the increasing pressure on television budgets.

Competitive costing has thus become more critical to the television producer but there are two factors not available to the feature film producer that help to offset that pressure. First, when a television commission is approved then the project is effectively guaranteed. The feature film producer by contrast is offering bespoke packages to speculative investors and may have many backers, all of whom need constant attention and who may withdraw if the schedule falters. Second, the television is commissioned with a predictable lead time to the transmission date. These two factors mean that producers have more time to devote to the production and can assemble their own crews, making their own deals. One respondent who has been involved in both television and film said:

... but equally with television there is less risk because the work is commissioned. The backer of a film can always walk away and the whole production collapses. That's why I always double my fee for a feature.

These two predictable factors enable television producers to reduce their budgets, and there are also other measures available to them. The lower salaries in the television sector have already been encountered in Chapter 7 (film crew described how they were expected to work for lower daily rates on television productions than they earned on film), and Relph (2002:54) showed that there were other ways in which television production reduced costs on drama productions. However, these all referred to the better quality, high-end of television production where

there is evidence that some internal labour market and network practices are perpetuated (Starkey et al. 2000; Saundry et al. 2005).

However, at the lower end of the scale, employment conditions can become eroded where producers are under pressure to deliver half an hour of television for £20,000 and the labour market operates unregulated by formal agreements or accepted custom. As summarised in the BECTU quote above, “where the advent of multi-channel TV has put pressure on costs, low pay is rife” (SSR My 2003). However, production would not be viable without cheap labour because many other costs, equipment hire, travel, post production etc, are not negotiable. These low budget productions are developed for late night viewing, with a short shelf-life, or that are being developed for the new forms of distribution, to be viewed on a mobile telephone, ipod or website. They are productions where creative standards are less important or where the instigators’ creative vision or need to make the programme has run ahead of their budgetary resources. These productions, often developed with much enthusiasm and verve, have to make economies, and the most obvious area where money can be saved when a labour surplus exists is by using eager, but inexperienced, crew. A letter from a runner to *Broadcast* (3 March 2006) stated that he was earning £11,000, but that “the new runner is on only £10,000. We both work a 45 hour week.” Holgate (2006:10) found that the average central London salary for those starting out in the sector, assuming that they were paid, was £12,000.

However, full-time work is difficult to obtain and the majority of employment is project based. Short term engagements pay better, but the work is less predictable. An interviewee, a graduate linguist, had been paid £250pw working on the *UK Chart Show* but had increased this to £400pw when he was working on *The Property Show* as a translator, but doubling up as a producer and researcher. But,

when you add up all the holiday you haven’t taken, you’re actually getting something like £375 [pw].... □o [paid] Bank Holidays or anything like that.⁵

⁵ Twenty years earlier, the union would have required that three people fulfil these three roles as interpreter, researcher and producer, each of whom would have been earning approximately £300 per week (rates from FTT Jun 86).

The respondent was eventually employed as a director/editor in corporate video but was still earning £375pw i.e. less than £20,000pa assuming that the work lasted for as long as twelve months. In reality the respondent, James, had already been unemployed for four months in that calendar year and was dependent on parental support.

To put these figures in perspective, a 2005 survey by the Association of Graduate Employers indicated that the median starting salary for graduates was £22,000 with 60% of employers saying that they would offer salaries between £17,500 and £22,500 (The Times 10 Feb 2005). By comparison, starting salaries in the audio-visual industries are much lower. To be a runner on a television production is probably the height of every aspiring entrants' ambition, but even if the full BECTU/PACT rate is paid, the probable salary will be £13,104pa (rate card for contracts starting on or after 1 Jul 2006). In a commercials company, one respondent estimated that additional shoot fees, in a good year with a successful company, might increase that to £18,000 but emphasised that nothing was ever guaranteed.

So if employers are dictating salaries, who is responsible for the deployment of labour? Again, commercial pressures mean that management takes a much closer interest in crewing levels. As Relph (2002:54) showed, television drama production employs fewer people than the feature film equivalent and the working practices mean that they shoot more screen time each day. In the newer sectors there may be even less demarcation: the interviewee, James, was currently employed as a "Director, operator and editor" on twenty minute corporate videos and he had one assistant – essentially a two person production team – just as on *The Property Show* where he had also covered three "traditional" grades.

However, the real challenge of all these practices is that there is no natural progression from these entry appointments to the next grade. As long as these entrants remain willing, producers will find roles were they can utilise the entrants' natural enthusiasm and skill but provide little training or progression to the next level of income and experience. One BECTU official observed:

So often, young entrants will do several jobs – but suddenly they're twenty- eight or thirty and still haven't got a proper job, contract, pension or income. So then they quit the industry (Egan interview).

The employers in the expanded industry, driven by commercial necessity, have no need to invest in these workers because another generation will soon be available, and thus there is no obligation to invest in training or the development of a human resource strategy, just as the Webbs had observed in the late nineteenth century

When the employer finds himself freed from all obligation to teach his boys he naturally prefers to keep them continuously employed on such routine work as they can best perform. (Webb & Webb 1898:482).

However, if the demands of competitive capital have required management to take control of the workplace, why in these other audio-visual sectors has informal social organisation not emerged to protect the workers' interests? The next section will consider how the trend to formal education has eliminated the social network.

8.3 The loss of socialisation

"it's very hard to know where to start because the entry points are illogical and irrational" (Stewart Till, UK Film Council Chairman cited by BFI 200□19)

"nepotism is still rife" (DCMS 2003: III:Ev95)

As Doeringer & Piore indicated, and as was demonstrated in Chapter 7, on-the-job training by established practitioners perpetuated the internal labour market in two ways: the specificity of the training ensured that working practices were unquestioned because neither management nor workforce could conceive of alternatives (Doeringer & Piore 1971:24); but also the successful trainee was conditioned to accept the customs and practices of the workplace by those with whom their career would be linked (1971:13-22). In film production, that system has continued to operate, but in the other audio-visual industries on-the-job training, as an extended apprenticeship where the trainee is adopted by an experienced practitioner, has become superfluous because of the increasing availability of those who have acquired some understanding of the tasks through formal training. In 2002, 25% of the audio-visual workforce had a media related

degree; 66% of the workforce were graduates; and 24% had a post graduate degree (Skillset 2003c:9).⁶ It will be recalled that only 46% of the film production workforce were graduates (Skillset 2005:97) and that the main route of entry was through personal contact, 81% had been recruited for their most recent production by word of mouth (Skillset 2005:85).

This section will examine the reasons for the growth of formal audio-visual education and demonstrate that the lack of socialisation leaves the entrant vulnerable to economic forces. The next section will examine the skills value of current formal training.

The growth of formal media training arose in part because of an increasing official interest in all the audio-visual industries. Some post-war interest had been apparent in the Gater Report (1949), the Eady Levy or the ill-fated intervention to restrict American imports, but these had been directed to the protection of the British film industry. The debates about television in the 1950s and 1960s had been more to do with the quality of transmitted material and perceived profiteering, rather than the workforce (Goodwin 1998:12-14). However, since the 1990s there has been a growing governmental interest in the associated employment, perhaps because of a realisation of the importance to the British economy of a global industry which in 2003 was worth £42.3bn worldwide and growing at 6.3% per annum (Skillset 2003a:5). (In 2006, the UK film industry contributed £4.3 billion to UK GDP (Oxford Economics 2007:5)).

In 2003, a report by the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee identified that the film industry's main success was servicing the major Hollywood studios which were attracted by UK talent, facilities and tax regime. However, there were issues relating to training and development if the UK's high standing was to be maintained:

The UK is second to the US in terms of the level of craft skills we have. We need to maintain that. If we do not invest in that through training but through production, we will lose those craft sets. Once

⁶ These figures are for the wider audio-visual sector and include older workers. A 1995 tracking survey of the then 21-30 age group of television workers showed that 88% were graduates (BFI Television Tracking Study 1995:8).

we have lost them, they are very hard to put back into the system.
(DCMS 2003:Q43)

Furthermore, some submitted evidence suggested that on-the-job training was too informal, precisely the quality which Doeringer & Piore had valued because it taught only the skills required and was tailored to the trainee (1971:21&22)

The training in the British film industry since the end of the traditional studio system, when television started to come on and film became essentially a freelance production activity, has been *ad hoc* and relatively disorganised. (DCMS 2003:Q608)

However, the Committee's final report did note that there were different opinions:

We received mixed evidence from the industry with regard to whether training is best received through apprenticeships and on the job experience or through college courses which give a more theoretical education before entering the job. (DCMS 2003:47)

The debate about formal, theoretical training was long running. It will be recalled that in the 1930s the ACT had failed to initiate a formal apprenticeship scheme which was to have included academic instruction and although there were references to "schools and kindred bodies conducting courses in cinematography" (TC 16 April 36), no further detail was supplied. In the 1950s, Wood (1952:213) had believed that the career path implicit in the closed shop, that is to gain entry at the bottom and then work through the various grades, was the reason the post-war industry was ill-equipped to recognise and accept new talent, and that the resulting slow progress through the various grades inhibited natural aptitude and genius.⁷

Fifteen years later, Kelly questioned again the lack of formal training and recognised the conditioning that established practitioners perpetuated through their control of on-the-job training:

Why then has Britain no such [national] school? there is the theory that organised training is unnecessary because talent will always out. But the journey from tea-boy to director may take many years and the man who makes it may have had any spark of brilliance dulled by the time he arrives. Both of these arguments are near to being the cult of amateurism in disguise. Hiding behind them too are

⁷ In 1948, Paul Rotha had concurred: "British studios are filled with persons of third rate intelligence who are inclined to condemn anything that is beyond their range" (1967:314)

the vested interest of those already in the industry who do not relish competition from men who are younger, better trained and more flexible in their attitude to new techniques.” (Kelly 1966:162 & 163)

The following year, Professor Lord Lloyd of Hampstead QC led an enquiry into what form a national film school should take and this identified again the challenge that the traditional, nepotistic route through on-the-job training presented to would-be entrants:

the absence of any acknowledged mode of entry results, in practice, in an effective bar being raised to the recruitment of many persons of talent. (DES 1967:6).

Thus, for over fifty years the challenge was perceived as being that access to ill-defined, informal, on-the-job training was a potential bar to talented young people. That there was no shortage of potential entrants was unquestioned. The 2003, the DCMS report noted

there are certainly enough keen young people anxious to work in film... however, they may not be able to do so because of the lack of adequate training as well as the obvious limited size of the industry.

Strangely, the Committee did not appear to consider the “limited size of the industry” to be a significant factor, but decided that the solution was that the “Government [should] ensure an integrated approach to education and skills training” (DCMS 2003:47) and that: “The training and development strategy set out by Skillset and the UK Film Council is an impressive wish list of welcome developments. We believe it strikes the right notes” (DCMS 2003:51).

The Skillset proposal had set out a strategy for the key areas: careers information, education, new entrants and professional development, and lastly, the collection and analysis of information relating to the business. However, what is of interest here is career information and entrants because *The Bigger Future* acknowledged that this was an industry where “nepotism and contacts, rather than open selection and aptitude” remained the key recruitment criteria (Skillset 2003a:5).

However, the challenge presented by “nepotism and contacts” is not easily overcome. As already shown in the last chapter, the characteristics of the internal labour market suit the feature film production industry well and the existing practitioners have little inclination to change it.

...it is true to say that, particularly in the production parts of the industry where freelancing is so high ... that the little black book and who you know is very important. (DCMS 2003:Q423)

Few crew concern themselves about the long-term regeneration of the workforce and those taking on trainees did it as required, with no particular view as to whether they were a long-term necessity. This attitude is confirmed by the Skillset survey which asked what the feature film workforce thought about the number of people employed in their specialisation “given the current volume of work available in the film industry”. Overall, 50% thought that the number of people working was about right, 42% thought that there were too many specialising in their particular field and only 8% thought that there were too few people. In such an environment, it can be assumed that the 92% majority are not openly encouraging new entrants and this is not auspicious for the would-be applicant to the film production industry where there is such an oversupply of candidates:

I currently have ten clapper loaders who I'd choose from, in a specific order. (Focus puller)

[It's] always hard in a freelance field. People will, without even thinking about it, employ to assist them people that they identify with. (Director of FT2)

Thirty years ago the Lloyd Committee had recognised that a gap would always exist between those educated through on-the-job training and those taking courses at a “cultural institution, perhaps constituting a department of the humanities in a university” (DES 1967:3) because there was:

a considerable danger of becoming a rather academic or highbrow institution remote from the realities and needs of the film world, out of touch with the life of the cinema, and therefore unable to make a serious or practical contribution to its development. (DES 1967:12).

Contemporary practice would certainly appear to support this. An established director who has spoken at a number of film schools and on media courses indicated the problem:

The people who are teaching, for the most part, don't have any experience in the business, or the experiences that they've had have been very bad.

The students too realise this deficiency. This student had attended a university film course:

...we've been in a lot of discussion with my course leader about contacts, whether or not they provide any [contacts] – and they don't. And the reason they don't is it's not a film school and unfortunately it has taken me 2½ years to think about it and realise that it's 80% theory, not a film school at all. A film school is film making. This is only 20% film making so that means that 80% of the staff that we work with have backgrounds in film theory - and even the people that teach us film making, they're both freelance so they don't really sustain any proper contacts...

Skillset believed that this problem could be overcome if students were able to identify those courses specifically designed to teach the practical skills that the industry would welcome, and so “resolve any mismatch between industry skill needs and education provision” (2003a:28). However, skill proficiency would appear to be secondary to personal skills for many feature film production gatekeepers as shown in these quotes from practitioners:

The idea of being stuck into a twelve or sixteen week film with somebody, with somebody who... you can't gel with...

.... people genuinely hate you being late and won't stand for it. If they are there so should you be. I know a trainee who worked for one of my friends, and he likes said trainee, but will never use them for work as they were unreliable and turned up late on numerous occasions

so when productions say get another loader in for tomorrow, we'll have three cameras, there's a specific order that they'll come in, taking into account skill – and how funny they are...

... we had a trainee there and he was just so not what you needed... He didn't get on with any of us and he just was wrong. It was bizarre.

One grip I worked for didn't want me there. In the first week, in fact on the first day, he would say, 'It's gonna be a slow one today, go home if you like' and this carried on for the first week: 'There's nothing for you to do blah blah blah.' So I just cleaned all the gear, put everything away tidily when they'd gone etc. This carried on for three weeks and I thought he hated me. After that time he said he'd been testing how genuine I was and how much I wanted to be a grip, and from then on taught me more than anyone else did in the two years. I now work for him regularly and we're good friends.

FT2 (an acronym for Film and Television Freelance Training, and the restyled successor to Jobfit which was examined in Chapter 5) has provides apprenticeship style training for the junior technical, production and craft trades of feature film production and is highly regarded. However, even FT2 had to acknowledge the inherent preferences, or prejudices, of existing industry workers when they tracked their former students:

.... we can work really hard at bringing in good talented people from diverse backgrounds, but when it actually comes to getting freelance employment, women in technical areas, people with disabilities and people from ethnic minority backgrounds seem to get less work than their white male colleagues. All the people that came back to us in that original tracking and said 'I'm no longer in the industry' were all from one of those under represented groups, which really choked us. (Director FT2)

As a government funded agency, FT2 has an obligation to recruit and encourage minority trainees and therefore may be particularly aware of the challenges that these groups face, but the challenge for minorities does appear to be very specific:

for black people it's tough because they don't know the people to tell them about the business and how it works ...and if you don't know about the business, it's very hard. (Black director)

However, minorities are easily identified and, because of the current interest in diversity, they are categorised and tracked as separate groups. In practice, it can probably be assumed that discrimination of some sort will operate against all entrants in some way. This white, male grip remembers the challenges of his early placements as a trainee:

.... quite frankly half the people you work for don't want you there 'cause they'd rather have their own trainee, so you have to work extra hard to stick in their memory. I was always, always the first person at work and the last to leave from my department. This counts for a lot as a trainee, it means you're at work about thirty minutes more than everyone else - but hey, it's your choice, impress or go home. (Ex FT2 trainee)

Thus practical formal training can provide appropriate opportunities but it is still only those possessing "the individual's curiosity about what goes on around him, as well as his desire to master a job for its extrinsic and intrinsic rewards" (Doeringer & Piore 1971:21) who will be able to capitalise on them and start to make the

contacts necessary for a career which will be dependent on contacts. Others will have to utilise another resource, parental support, to seek contacts through unpaid ‘work experience.’

In the legitimate, high-end film business, unpaid work appears to be the exception.

As a rule, you wouldn’t [ask trainees to work unpaid]. I don’t think it is quite fair to normally expect people to work for nothing. (Feature film production manager)

I can understand that they [the trainee] are obviously getting something out of it in that they’re going to be on set with a proper film crew... but morally there is part of me saying ‘that is a proper job’ (DoP)

But in almost every other sector there are many employers willing to take advantage of the potential labour surplus trying to gain a foothold in the industry:

...many young potential film makers will testify to the sweatshop mentality of working on some films. The pay-off is not financial – many trying to get onto the bottom rung of the ladder work for nothing on these films – but it is to gain a few lines of experience on their CVs. (BFI 2004:20)

How do you get a foot in the door? One way is you say ‘I will work for nothing’, and people at quite a high level are prepared to [accept them] except that they do it under the guise of work experience; take people who in effect are working for nothing. It’s a form of cheap labour. (Tudor Gates)

One film student interviewed had had three unpaid work experience placements, but none had lasted for more than a few days, while another student had done two months unpaid work for FilmFour:

...he wasn’t being paid and he was actually being subsidised by his father to get out there every day ... [You] can’t really afford to do it really, if you’re a student and it takes out two months of your summer holidays and they’re not even paying your travel. □ot a lot of people can afford to do that.

And the value for that individual?

It’s just a bit cruel really because ... I think the only person that he’s still able to call up is the guy who was his original contact because everybody else just forgot him.

While this might reflect a failing on the part of the individual to make himself memorable, the underlying concern must be the legality and morality of asking students to fulfil real and legitimate tasks without the protection of statutory employment:

[There] has been a lot of talk within the industry of companies abusing free work experience. PACT has taken a very strong line on legal advice that they are breaking the law if they are using people. And that's certainly the advice we got from our lawyers way back, that if someone, even if it's supernumerary, if someone is told to turn up at a certain time and do things under instruction they are a worker under the legislation... (Director FT2)

However, even the most structured organisations could fail to prevent the enthusiastic and persistent student inadvertently exceeding the guidelines:

The BBC have a very clear policy with timelines [limits] on work experience, it's four weeks or something. But you know what happens in big corporations like that, someone goes on *Watchdog* or whatever for four week's work experience in their college holidays... and that production thinks they're brilliant, mentions it to someone else who then offers them four weeks, then thinks they're brilliant and mentions it to someone else.... We've seen CVs of people who have been practically a year and a half on work experience gaining a lot of skills and whatever, but not paid. □ow that again has a diversity impact because the kids that can afford to do that tend to be the middle class ones where mummy and daddy can support them.

This view, that only the middle classes can spend months in unpaid work, hoping for a suitable paid appointment and so "skew the industry towards those from wealthy backgrounds..." (*Broadcast* 3 March 2006) is supported by other evidence (Holgate 2006:10; *Campion* 2005). On-the-job training may have been informal in its structure, but it was invariably legitimate paid work that inducted the trainee into the working community of which he or she was now part. The new challenge for policy makers is two fold. The first is that the widespread practice of 'work experience' has created a barrier just as divisive as the old nepotistic admission to the closed shop except that now it is only those with parental support who can purchase, through their unpaid time, the necessary exposure to the industry which might lead to legitimate employment. This barrier to entry works as well as it did seventy years ago for the professions: "the rule works so as to exclude those who cannot afford to wait" (Carr-Saunders and Wilson 1933:383).

The second challenge has been the failure to recognise the strength of the internal labour market and to assume that training alone will be sufficient to qualify for entry. As will be shown in the next section, the lack of skill specificity in the training is one obstacle to entry, but the other is that the potential entrant has no understanding of how the workforce operates in the feature film industry where there are few formal entry routes. Therefore, in an attempt to make contacts and locate the necessary sponsors, the potential entrant reverts to the other audio-visual sectors where they take any employment at any salary – or perhaps no salary at all. This would-be entrant to the wider audio-visual industry reflects the situation of many thousands:

[I shall] send my CV off to every contact that I have ... to say that I've graduated and do you know anyone who's looking for a graduate. And then try and do what I've done before, which is get onto *The Knowledge* and send my CV out to the hundreds of companies in London and small film companies and just see if I can get anything back from that. And then try to go to as many seminars, open days and anything else and be constantly on the lookout. I really have no strategy, which is a terrible thing... I'm clueless really. (Graduating film course student)

Thus, in ten years the real entry requirement has changed little:

start making contacts by attending short courses, conferences, anything that is relevant to your field of interest... many of the jobs will not be advertised at all.... (Skillset 1996:23)

8.4 The challenges of skill specificity

“Over the last twenty years there has been a massive expansion in courses which provide opportunities to study the media, film and communications. Yet there is a clear perception right across the film industry that only a few of those courses deliver the right mix of vocational skills which equip students to enter the industry” (Skillset 2003:1□)

If formal training fails to prepare entrants socially for a fragmented industry where few companies advertise vacancies (Skillset 2005;85) then there are also some doubts whether routes other than on-the-job training adequately prepare entrants with the specific skills required in feature film employment. Thus many potential entrants, having completed formal training, opt for more general employment within the other audio-visual sectors where there are less structured career paths.

In 2006, the most superficial search of UCAS for first degree level courses (ignoring the more general “media” courses (2,462 options) and those including ‘film studies’ in the title (1540 options)), revealed 51 courses under the general heading of ‘film production.’ Those courses ranged from an H□D in film making (University of Worcester), through a BA in Film Production (Arts Institute at Bournemouth) to the more specific ‘set design for stage and screen’ (Wimbledon College of Art). If the general media courses are included then it is estimated that there are approximately 25,000 students graduating each year with some sort of film or television-related degree (Holgate 2006:9) but, as the Lloyd Committee had suggested some forty years earlier, the value and purpose of some courses are not always easy to define. In June 2003, giving evidence to the Culture Media and Sport Enquiry into the British Film Industry, the Director of Policy and Development at Skillset answered cautiously the questions “Are there other good courses as well as your own in the UK ? How many people are going through in total each year?”

We do not know the last part of that question in terms of exactly how many students are studying film courses. We know only part of the answer to the first question, ‘are there good courses’, because there are just under 1,000 undergraduate courses aimed at film and just over 200 postgraduate courses aimed at film. Of those the majority will absolutely not be aimed at training or producing people to work in the industry. They are academic, theoretical studies of the media. It is not always tremendously clear what course is doing what. It is

often not clear for the students, for the employers and for the funders... (DCMS 2003:Q433)

Thus the challenge for many graduating students is that they have been on courses that have developed their critical skills, but given them few of the practical skills necessary to gain entry to the industry. For some students this realisation had dawned as the course progressed:

[Initially] I found it [the course] wonderful because finally I was doing something that I enjoyed, focussing on something that I really enjoyed. However as the years have gone on, I felt that I was being slightly conned in the sense that when I arrived, I believed that it was going to be a practical course... (Graduating film course student)

You don't need a degree in media work to be in the media industry. They don't take your course very seriously... (Student cited in Holgate 2006:19)

It doesn't help, I think, that my tutor has constantly instilled in me that if you want to have a career in the media, don't do a media degree. That was one of the first things I was told. (BME student, Holgate 2006:19)⁸

Sharon Goode, Director of FT2, confirmed that many students do fail to understand the realities of a media-related course:

[I] say to people 'look it's great what you've done', particularly media studies, 'it means you are a really informed audience and the industry likes a really informed audience, but if you have done a degree as a philosopher, a degree in philosophy, would you expect a company to employ you as a philosopher?' Your degree is great, but ...we would rather take on people that have done a City & Guilds sound engineering or a bit of technical drawing....

And when the media studies graduates apply to the craft training providers, such as FT2, they are regarded with suspicion:

Some of them do still apply because they want the contacts or they want a couple more years where someone else is worrying about them getting a job, not them. It is very rare we take someone on; there would have to be a really good reason why we took someone like that on.... (Director FT2)

⁸ Many more quotes expressing similar views can be found in Holgate 2006:16-19)

The highly regarded FT2 scheme was created to replace the traditional apprenticeships lost when the film studios went "four walled" and the permanent staff crews were replaced by freelance crews assembled ad hoc by production companies (DCMS 2003:Ev.65).⁹ In 2006, FT2 was providing a number of practical courses for film and television:

Currently [we've] got 42 [trainees] on the New Entrant Technical Training Programme and that ranges from assistant editors, camera assistants, sound assistants, make-up, hair, wardrobe, art, props.... Six on an eighteen month scheme called the Independent Companies' Research Training Scheme. Five set craft apprentices (Plasterers, painters, fibrous plasterers) and we've got four on a grips' apprenticeship scheme ... (Director FT2)

The competition for places is stiff. Each year between 400 and 500 applications are received of whom fewer than 3% will be successful although approximately 67% of the applications come from graduates who, as cited above, are unlikely to be accepted unless they have particular aptitude. Many applicants have illusions about the glamour of the industry and these are carefully screened out by those aware that "when you're seven weeks into an eight week shoot of six day weeks, ten hour days it all seems very different...." Great care has to be taken because the training is comprehensive and costly:

It costs a lot of money to put someone through that sort of apprenticeship style training. It is something like £30,000 a year now with their salary, our overheads, the short course training which at the end gives them work on AVID, with traditional film, [and] a range of technical courses¹⁰ and there're not cheap.... It costs. [We] constantly have to make the case that we believe that it is better that you have a small number of highly qualified and highly skilled people than diluting it by giving too much general industry information to a vast number of people who then actually haven't got the skills to operate in a freelance sector. (Director FT2)

However, as shown above even having demonstrated the necessary commitment and with the benefit of highly specialised and informed training these entrants still have to demonstrate the right personal qualities and make the appropriate contacts to secure employment.

⁹ Most technicians interviewed for this report rated FT2 trained apprentices very highly.

¹⁰ These include Health & Safety, first aid etc.

The majority of university graduating students have little skill specificity and this was noted in the 2002 Skillset report which recognised a need for further and higher education to “resolve any mismatch between industry skill needs and education provision” (2003a:28). Skillset believed that the first problem was that students were unable to identify those courses specifically designed to teach the practical skills that the industry would welcome, rather than the theoretical, media skills, and their solution was presented in July 2005 through the nomination of a network of seven academic institutions that would be known as Screen Academies.¹¹ These institutions would work together “to provide new courses, summer schools, work placements, master classes, bursaries, online learning resources and a talent scout programme to help develop the brightest and the best.” The objective was to create a network of:

single institutions and consortia, and acceptance ... based on the quality of existing courses and their ability to complement each other. ... A Skillset spokeswoman said the academies would be a "beacon" to anyone wanting to enter the film industry as they would highlight the best courses and entry routes. (The Guardian 6 July 2005)

The approved courses included the first ever film MBA at the Cass Business School (created to address specifically the challenges of distribution and financing which had been identified by the 2003 DCMS Report) but also a number of courses which required more modest entry standards; for example, the BTEC First Diploma in Media had a minimum entry requirement of two GCSEs at grade D. The concept of the network was that those with talent, but with relatively modest qualifications, would be able to rise seamlessly through the various courses and thus develop the skills necessary to qualify them for admission to the wider audio-visual industry.

Given that there are as yet few graduates from the Screen Academies it is too soon to assess whether the new network will achieve its objective of ensuring that “UK film gets the skilled talent it needs for a strong and healthy business” (Skillset press

¹¹ The seven Screen Academies were Arts Institute Bournemouth & Bournemouth Media School; London College of Communication, UAL and Ealing Institute of Media; Capier University & Edinburgh College of Art; The Film Academy (University of Glamorgan) & International Film School Wales (University of Wales Newport); London Film School; National Film & Television School; The Film Business Academy at Cass Business School.

release 5 July 2005). However, the Academies may not be the complete solution to the ‘talent’ challenge. First, there is no indication that they provide the essential contacts within the industry and secondly because the courses are not comprehensive of all the skills required by the audio-visual industries. While there are many opportunities to study post-production, script development and animation, only two academies, the London Film School and the National Film and Television School, offer experience in working with film (as opposed to video).¹² Furthermore, none of the academies appears to offer specific courses in the craft skills such as set construction, special effects, make-up or grips.

Past experience has been that even when practical courses are available they may still not be tailored to the industry’s requirements:

Existing VQs are said to be too bureaucratic. They produce too much paperwork and are largely irrelevant in context, for example making people use precision tools far more accurately than is necessary in model making (Skillset 2003b2:87)

There was a view that senior people in the video sector are less aware of the technological possibilities than the technicians involved in manufacture and content creation... (Skillset 2003b:109)

And even if the taught skills are appropriate, there is evidence that over capacity leads to a surplus of qualified entrants. The skills survey of 2003 reported that “a key industry organisation estimates that the TV and film industry needs 10-20 entrants per year in sound” and then listed the twenty FE or HE institutions training sound engineers. Evidence to the DCMS revealed the frustration that this surplus could generate:

I think it is a terrible mistake to waste a lot of money, whether it is state money or not, training people to work in an industry that has no jobs for them. It seems to me crazy. It creates false perceptions, people feel very bitter, they whinge a lot, because they feel ‘I have done my training. Why isn’t anybody taking any notice?’ The reality is that the jobs are not there. (DCMS 2003:Q22)

The result of inappropriate training, an oversupply of aspiring film-makers and production companies eager to reduce costs is that this inexperienced supply of

¹² *Developing UK Film Talent* listed only two Masters courses as suitable for camera training. There were no undergraduate courses (Skillset 2003b:66).

labour is utilised to fulfil junior, possibly inappropriate roles. While this does provide a foothold, and a potential meeting with contacts, many entrants then move unwittingly between seemingly glamorous, but structureless appointments.

One respondent, James, obtained two weeks' unpaid work placement on *Walking with Dinosaurs* and then a few weeks in a very low paid job on another production with the same company. However, helped by a helpful production manager (his first sponsor), he was called by another company to work on the *Hit 10 UK Chart Show* in a role for which he had received no training:

....within a few days, on the first kind of shoot, which was just an interview, but we were filming it, and I was operating the camera and all that kind of stuff and I got involved in research and I took care of all sorts of bits and bobs. [Organising] the competition [which was] not inspiring work, but a responsibility when you have to get three prizes in. It was just more interesting work.

However, the choices faced by the inexperienced are not easy for them to assess. A successful director likened the entrants' job choices to a straw poll; a lottery at which the ill-informed could be easily side-tracked towards dead-ends:

If you don't know about the business, it's very hard becauseyou see straws there and 'Maybe I'll just go for that one 'cos it looks the most attractive to get me in.' But you need someone to say 'you see all those straws there, forget them because 90% are just a waste of time.'

In taking the seemingly more exciting *Chart Show* appointment, James had rejected an offer of a position as the multi-lingual researcher (French, Spanish and Italian) on *The Property Show*:

At that point I didn't know anything about TV and what any of these jobs were and what they meant and actually how, if I'd started straight off as a multi-lingual researcher, that's skipping out quite a lot of hard work at the lower levels. Anyway it was a property show, not interested in that at all, I had other things in the pipeline....

When it was re-offered, he took the job and made another rapid advance in skill and responsibility because on location it was:

Basically me and the director. In terms of producing everything [it was] me: script content, finding the houses; sorting out the recess; the shoots; film permissions... It was a very, very demanding, tiring job.... an incredible education.

However, when that contract terminated, he had had no opportunity to line up a new job and so was unemployed for four months, dependent on parental support but spending his time making a short film and editing his own material. Eventually, that work gave him sufficient credibility to get employed as a director/editor on corporate instructional videos. At his interview:

I came in and said, 'Yea I can do both of those things' ... and was able to pull out my ipod and say, "have a look" and they saw my little film, had a giggle ... and I got this job.

So eighteen months into the business, James had effected four different entries and thus experienced four very different types of production, pursued his own project and was now gaining experience with the complete creative control which would take years to attain in a mainstream film career. However, he remained in a backwater to the main industry and none of his working experience had brought him any closer to full-time employment on a recognisable career path.

An experienced director described this challenge of making the correct career choices:

It's just the beginning of the battle. You've got many wars to go through and you're going to lose several of them. But at least it's the right war to be fighting to get through. Forget all the other ninety [choices], not only are you going to lose – you are going to be killed, and by the end of it you won't have anything left, you'll end up doing something else.

Conclusions

Given the growth in the size of the industry and the simultaneous easing of the closed shop, two possible outcomes for employment in the audio-visual industry might have been predicted in the early 1990s. First, that the union's fears of a free market system exposed to external economic forces would be fulfilled and there would be a reversion to the exploitative methods of the 1930s. Alternatively, it might have been that the hopes of those such as Kelly ("talent should be found and the best use made of it with fewer of today's hindrances" (1966:166)) would at last be realised and that the industry would have become a true meritocracy, where

recruitment would be based upon talent and aptitude and where formal training would replace the closed shop's rite of passage.

In practice, there appear to have been three outcomes for the production industries. The first, perhaps unexpected, but as demonstrated in earlier chapters, is that employment within the feature film production workforce remains largely unchanged. The internal labour market remains extant and largely self regulating because its stability suits workers and employers alike. The second outcome is that Kelly's hopes have been partially realised in that each year approximately 25,000 graduates are able to study and train in media-related subjects thus theoretically preparing themselves for a media career uninhibited by the mystery of closed shop admission – and some do successfully forge a career. However, the contemporary challenge is that the barrier of closed shop entry has been replaced by a confusing maze of alternatives created by a third outcome, the breakdown of the previously predictable structures into a largely deregulated, fragmented industry.

This third outcome has meant that in most sectors there has been a return to the free market where economic forces predominate and managers have taken control to protect their interests and ensure they maintain their place in a competitive market. As shown, this is especially prevalent in television production where a plethora of companies are competing for the same limited funding distributed by the publisher-broadcasters. In these sectors, even if there is no illegal exploitation – and some would claim that an excessive use of unpaid work experience *is* exploitation - there is certainly pressure to secure the maximum output from each individual for the lowest practical wage in the knowledge, by both parties, that there is a large labour surplus. Thus new entrants cannot be selective or demanding.

In this respect, audio-visual entry has always been difficult and there are many warnings about the pitfalls. The contemporary Skillset website lists the following warnings to would-be film industry entrants:

- It's a tough business. More people want to work in the industry than there are jobs available. Some people work for nothing, even agreeing to work in dangerous conditions.
- A lot of jobs involve long hours and uncomfortable working conditions. You might have to work shifts and weekends.

- It's easy to get stuck in the badly organised, low/no budget end of things.
- You might have to do a few menial jobs on your way up the ladder.
- You have to make your own luck.

(www.skillset.org/careers/getting_in 16 Sep 2005)

This 2005 list of warnings is probably more dire (e.g. “dangerous conditions”) than might have been issued thirty years earlier at the height of the pre-entry closed shop, or fifty years earlier during the big studio era. During the latter period, there had been distinct routes for new entrants in every department and therefore they were properly appointed members of staff, salaried and placed in specific appointments with personnel departments to monitor their progress. That progress may have been slow, but there was an identifiable route of advancement with some degree of security assisted by union agreements that would ensure that overtime and shift work was appropriately recognised.

Subsequently, in the less structured, freelance system of the 1970s and 1980s, there were many faults and inconsistencies for new entrants, but the all-pervading influence of the unions did ensure that everyone, members and non-members, received some protection because industry agreements imposed some budgetary constraints and thus limited overtime, weekend or bank holiday working. Even if new entrants, such as runners, tea-boys, drivers or make-up assistants were not union members, the accepted conventions of the period required that they were reasonably treated and rewarded; the crew who they worked alongside, perhaps empowered by their knowledge of the union’s influence, would expect no less. Additionally, the union’s required crewing levels ensured that there were recognisable supernumerary positions where new entrants would gain the required experience – and hence access to the essential union membership with the assured status that implied.

The challenge in the contemporary environment is that there is so little protection and so little guidance for the entrant whose enthusiasm for any employment makes them vulnerable to the economic forces to which the employers themselves are subjected. As shown, the union is no longer able to do more than “recommend

minimum wages”, assuming that the employer is signatory to an appropriate agreement, and it is less likely that the entrant will be a union member and aware of that entitlement – or that there will be a union representative within the company to ensure the agreement is enforced. And in these other audio-visual sectors the formality of the union has not been replaced by the observance of custom and practice seen amongst the feature film crew, partly because the expansion of the industry has so diluted the workforce that there are few who remember those practices, and partly because the new working practices do not create the hierarchy, and the associated paternalism, that still exists within the self-selecting internal labour market. In the film production workforce, there are still accepted customs, practices and loyalties that will still motivate an individual to take a stand when they observe what they deem to be an unfair practice:

When I asked for an additional trainee to run the video, he [the producer] said ‘Oh we’ve got £100 left in the budget. Do you think anyone would do that and we’d obviously feed them?’ and I had to say ‘Well I don’t know anybody who’d do it for £100 for a 72 hour week.’ And I’ll be interested to see if he does find anyone and I will be interested to see if I happen to ring anybody up and say ‘look there’s someone working for below the minimum wage’ since I feel slightly strongly about it. (Focus puller)

The contrast in the other audio-visual sectors is that there are few customs and practices and little of the loyalty or career path created through on-the-job training. This runner had been promoted to production assistant after two years with a company:

I didn’t really get on with the producer ... we were very different people... After we completed the first job, I got the ‘flu so I took three days off work.... Of course, she got another PA on the job and before I knew it, they were hiring somebody in for full-time.... Then I went back to being a runner ... and realised actually once they had hired in her new PA there wasn’t going to be another opportunity for me to move up for six to nine months – and I wasn’t willing to wait that long

In short, the other audio-visual sectors provide none of the stability or assurances of the internal labour market.

Chapter 9 CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This thesis started with the premise that little appeared to have changed in British film production employment practices since the demise of the closed shop and so one primary research question was posed:

How has the workers' control of employment practices and demarcation been perpetuated in the contemporary feature film production industry despite the removal of the enforcement implicit in the closed shop?

However, in order to answer that question, it was considered necessary to first explore several subsidiary questions in order to establish how employment practices are created and maintained in any working environment, and specifically how employment practices had been established in the evolving British film production industry:

1. How do workers obtain and exercise power in the workplace?
2. How were employment practices and associations first established in the film production sector?
3. How did the closed shop affect the industry's employment practices?
4. What factors contributed to the demise of the ACTT closed shop?
5. What has been the outcome in those audio-visual sectors where employment practices have not been maintained?
6. What has been the role of the employers?

The consideration of these questions, allied to the analysis of the various forms of power associated with labour markets, inevitably revealed that although these

questions could be approached separately, the answers were often interlinked and interdependent. Therefore, while each is answered in these conclusions, the format is adjusted to avoid repetition and to add clarity. Appropriate references to the cited evidence are included.

9.1 Limitations and strengths of the research

Limitations:

The principal challenge to this research must be that in such an unstructured and poorly documented industry it is unlikely that the sampling will ever be sufficiently comprehensive to ensure that the findings will be universally valid. As explained in the methodology chapter, employment in the feature film industry has been, until recently, of secondary interest to the product. The lack of surviving union records from the closed shop era and the paucity of historical statistical records does mean that the research is dependent on secondary evidence or individual recollection that may now be coloured by subsequent events.

Even contemporary research is constrained by the willingness and availability of respondents to participate in surveys or submit themselves for interview. Skillset in their comprehensive survey of the 2002 workforce conceded that their statistics excluded an estimated 50,000 freelancers not working on Census Day (Skillset 2003c:8) and that when they conducted their subsequent survey of the 9,700 identified individuals working in feature films they discovered that they could locate no contact details for 55% of them (Skillset 2005:19). With such a disparate workforce it was impractical to impose a strict interview protocol on respondents.

Also, it has been necessary to make distinctions between the various audio-visual sectors which may not always exist because there can be no defined boundaries when freelance workers are employed on project work. Although, as shown, the majority of workers will only do either only film or television work, inevitably there are some less hardened in their preferences and some will drift between the sectors although, as shown, the barriers around feature film production remain firm (pages 189-190).

In defence, no evidence has been presented that has not been verified by other sources, but there might yet be alternatives unexplored.

Strengths:

The author's privileged access and knowledge of the industry meant that it was possible to locate and interview individuals not otherwise readily available and also, knowing the hierarchy and vocabulary, to then understand and recognise the values of the opinions offered. Although there are potential hazards in the researcher knowing too much about the subject matter (pages 34-35) the evidence presented has been exhaustively tested and verified against alternative sources.

However, the main strength of the research is that it attempts to impose some historical context and theoretical structure on the persistence of an institution which is relatively under researched. Although the film industry workforce has attracted some interest because of its use of networks and the organisation of boundaryless careers (Jones & Walsh 1997; Blair 2001; Blair et al, 2001; Saundry 2005) few, if any, have examined the foundations of those practices and especially the operation of the closed shop and its enforcement in the fifty year period 1940 to 1990. Already the memories of that institution are fading and one objective of this research was to ensure that some its features were recorded

Lastly, looking forward, it is hoped that this research will provide some insights into how the feature film workforce really operates, and thus influence future policy for the maintenance of a viable industry.

9.2 Labour power and internal labour markets

That film production workers still exercise significant control over demarcation and their employment was demonstrated in Chapters 7 and 8, where the contemporary conditions of film production employment were contrasted with those of other audio-visual sectors. While some of the latter are sectors created after the closed shop's demise (pages 225-226), there are many workers that in the closed shop era had enjoyed a status similar to that of the film production workers but are now employed in less favourable conditions. Therefore, there has to be an assumption

that the film production workers still possess sufficient influence and power to match or counter the normally dominant power of the employers.

The exploration of the literature on labour power revealed many potential sources: innate talent; acquired skill; closure; unity and numerical strength; custom and practice; and social networks. The chronological evolution of the film production workforce summarised in this thesis shows that all of these powers have been utilised at some stage. However, the theory that incorporates them all, and which has most resonance with the conditions which have remained prevalent in the film production industry, is the internal labour market theory where the “pricing and allocation of labour is governed by a set of administrative rules and procedures” that operate seemingly independent of external economic variables (Doeringer & Piore 1971:2).

The primary test for an internal labour market is that there must be distinct, visible boundaries demonstrating rigidity in the rules of a specific workforce (Doeringer & Piore 1971:5-6). Thereafter, it should be possible to identify the other criteria that Doeringer & Piore identified as critical to an internal labour market: skill specificity; on-the-job training; and customary law. These seem appropriate criteria with which to test the persistence of employment practices from the closed shop era to the contemporary film production industry.

9.3 The origins of film production employment practices

The research has identified that the employment practices evident in the contemporary industry have been shaped during three phases of employer / worker relationships in British film production: the pre WW2 period, when employment relations within the embryonic industry were haphazard; the war-time and subsequent forty-five years of more formal industrial relations with the operation of a pre-entry closed shop; and the post 1990 period when the industry reverted to less formal arrangements. This section will consider the first two periods, the third will be considered in more detail in sections 9.6 and 9.7.

The demarcation between the first two periods was the government intervention of 1940 which changed the status of the ACT from a respected, but not universally

recognised, union and employment bureau to being the legitimate organisation which would identify those whose work was of sufficient value to be designated as a reserved occupation (page 113). By this unusual method closure was finally achieved and enforced because those outside the union were conscripted and thus rendered unavailable for employment. By 1945, the ACT had established, and was able to maintain, a closed shop (page 116) and thus had the “geographical and occupational jurisdiction” (Doeringer & Piore 1971:2) necessary to designate the production workforce as a craft market.

The principles that had governed employment in the pre-war period are less easy to define because of the relative weakness of both employers and employees in an industry that was still evolving rapidly with little stability or coherence. By the 1920s and 1930s the distribution and exhibition elements (page 99) of the film industry were becoming a major commercial and cultural feature of Britain. However, the British production industry had always been in the shadow of the much larger American studios (pages 99 & 118) and survived as a separate, often faltering entity mainly through protectionist government intervention (the Cinematograph Films Acts 1927 and 1938). The power of the employers was thus weak, engaged in an activity “in which the difference between showmanship and racketeering is often slight” (Klingender & Legg 1937:7) and dependent on the supply of capital from speculative financiers whose support was erratic and unpredictable (page 105).

However, in this era the employees also had little control over their employment. Employment conditions were harsh with few statutory controls: there was no declared limit on the working day, although twelve hour days and six day weeks were the norm; there was no provision for sickness or holiday pay; and workers were laid off at the completion of each film project (page 36). Although there was an embryonic union in the ACT, its membership often dropped below one hundred (page 102) and the only apparent form of employee generated power appears to have come through emerging social networks: the limited evidence available

indicates that entry to the industry was either by accident or by invitation¹ and it was already becoming established that heads of department would choose their own crew (page 191) – an indication of nascent customary law. When the ACT eventually emerged as a potential bargaining authority in the late 1930s (page 103) it possessed few meaningful powers exercisable in collective bargaining because the employers were themselves still weak and transitory (page 106). The rare success the union achieved in collective bargaining on behalf of the laboratories in 1939 was negated when the employers' federation was dissolved (page 104).

Elsewhere the ACT had sufficient influence to successfully lobby the government regarding the 1938 Cinematograph Films Act (page 104) and registering their opposition to foreign, “ace” technicians (pages 106-107). However, it should be noted that this influence possibly had more to do with the social connections of the union's hierarchy than the power of their numerical strength². The ACT had also received some praise for their considered proposals to introduce a formal apprentice scheme – and although their efforts failed (page 109) it is clear that in the immediate pre-war period that the necessary skills were becoming sufficiently specific that there was no other means of acquisition than on-the-job training - thus there was an emerging internal labour market. Furthermore, that acquired skill had to be recognised by the emerging social network for there to be employment opportunities and thus customary law was becoming more defined.

Any uncertainty about the degree of closure, the strength of the employees and the endurance of the employers was removed during the Second World War. First, as already shown, the ACT achieved effective closure through government intervention (page 113) and was thus able to legitimately represent all technicians actively employed in the film production industry between 1941 and 1945. Second, film production was decreed to be an important part of the war effort and so the industry was consolidated, joining together what had been disparate groups: left-wing documentary makers; feature film producers; the laboratories; and

¹ Or both, Muriel Box got her first, secretarial, appointment in a studio through a friend, and her first break into continuity when someone else had appendicitis (Box 1974:98 & 100).

² The ACT's General Secretary, George Elvin, was the son of the Chairman of the TUC (page 102). The ACT's President from 1934 was Anthony Asquith, son of Herbert Asquith (ACTT 1983:13).

entrepreneurs, such as J Arthur Rank, and their associated capital (pages 114-115). The era is regarded by many to have been the pinnacle of independent British production and during this period the ACT, the sole representative of the available skilled workforce, was able to formalise collective bargaining agreements regarding crewing levels, the closed shop and inter-union demarcation (pages 118-119). Thus the internal labour market, where “pricing and allocation of labour is governed by a set of administrative rules and procedures” (Doeringer & Piore 1971:2) was institutionalised and this thesis has argued that many of the working practices established in that period remain extant today – only the formality of the union’s participation has been eroded.

In the immediate post-war period, the big studio system maintained a continuous stream of new productions utilising methods and industrial relations similar to those of any contemporaneous large-scale manufacturing organisation. Boardroom strategies were communicated through tiers of management to be executed by full-time employees deployed in co-ordinated and specialised divisions: script, studio; construction; electrical; wardrobe; props; drapes, publicity and camera (page 36). This was an era of “conventional” industrial relations between two strong actors whose respective powers were those of employers, the possessors of capital and the ultimate sanctions over employment, and the employees’ representatives, possessing the powers associated with collective action. Although the peak level relationship was acrimonious, compromise was usually reached, there being only one major strike in 1954 (significantly, as will be shown, in the laboratories) while relationships on the studio floor between management and workers remained amicable (Kelly 1966:170-171).

However, this period of formal industrial relations was relatively short-lived because the studio production system with its associated hierarchies and full time employment did not survive in the competitive post-war markets. By the late 1950s, the major companies were either insolvent or they had abandoned production to concentrate on the more profitable distribution and exhibition and so the studios became “four wall” operations – empty space to be rented by independent producers for single production projects (page 127).

This conversion had two significant effects. First, technical crew were invariably released from full time employment to become freelance workers – albeit that they usually endeavoured to work within established teams, bounded by their own social networks (page 127). Second, subsequent producers of feature films no longer had direct links to assured capital – but simultaneously their need for capital investment was reduced because all the elements required for filmmaking could be readily hired (page 212-213). This second effect will be dealt with in more detail below, but it should be noted that those individuals now acting as employers were essentially independent entrepreneurs, only loosely bound to any employers' federation (indeed many, having started their careers as crew, remained members of the ACTT) (pages 37 & 101).

The significance of the technical crew becoming freelance might have been more critical had the workforce fragmented into a pool of independent contractors, each negotiating individual deals with the now independent and relatively uncoordinated producers. However, the ACTT was able to impose their geographical and occupational jurisdiction over the freelance craft workers and their employers through their control of the more conventionally employed laboratory workers (page 151). The laboratory process was, until the advent of video (pages 166-167), critical to any visual production and producers came to realise that it was in their best interest to conform to the prescribed crewing levels, demarcation and employment conditions (pages 151-152) and thus it was they who observed the rules and thus maintained the union's authority over the itinerant freelancers.

Thus the internal labour market, loosely established in the pre-war period and formalised through the exigencies of wartime production, was sheltered by the overwhelming power possessed by the ACTT's control of the laboratory workforce - "the industrial powerhouse of the union" (ACTT 1983:33). The fear of the potential sanction ensured that all employers not only complied with, but also policed, the union arrangements: the administrative rules and procedures that governed entry, labour allocation, demarcation and pricing. Despite radically changing external factors in the post-war period which created unpredictable peaks and troughs in British film production and employment (pages 119-120), the rules

were never varied and, when full employment returned, the same rules for demarcation and crewing levels were relentlessly and ruthlessly applied.

9.4 The effect of the closed shop on employment practices

Such was the power exercised by the ACT, and then the ACTT, during the fifty year, closed shop era that it is not easy to define what might have been the post-war outcomes had it not existed. Employment relations within the film and television production sectors were shaped by the union to the extent that composition and the divisions within the various post-war industry were defined by the associated union agreements (page 11).

Certainly exacting regulation should have been a major concern of the ACTT in the era of the 'big studio' collective bargaining. Without the protection of a strong union it is possible that living standards of film production workers would have suffered as all British studios sought to reduce costs and so remain internationally competitive. Although Flanders believed that most employers had an interest in "curbing 'cut-throat' wage competition among themselves" (Flanders 1975:91), the challenge for the big studios was not the competition of their domestic rivals, but the American studios. Thus the British studios had a justification for seeking to collectively reduce production costs by any available means - and the union an equal justification for protecting its members' interests.

However, as already shown, after the decline of the big studios the ACTT retained a commanding position over relatively weak employer associations, and it used that power to ensure that there was little change in the practices, demarcation and operation of the industry. While under that protection, the membership showed no inclination for reform of employment practices: the ACTT was reluctant to change crewing levels despite very apparent technical changes (pages 164-165); it was dismissive of the potential effects of the Employment Acts (pages 157-160); and it failed to adjust traditional barriers and demarcation to accommodate the composition and population of the emerging video and digital sectors (page 186). The majority of conference motions in the early 1980s endorsed the union's

position in opposing any change (page 160) and although there were occasional calls for reform, these rarely referred to specific aspects of the industry (page 162).

In so maintaining the status quo of studio floor practices, the ACTT was fulfilling a predictable function:

Union organization often served to strengthen or reinforce processes of [informal] regulation that were never completely eliminated (Flanders 1975:91)

Union involvement meant that any changes to those now strengthened regulations could only be effected through collective bargaining (Doeringer & Piore 1971:25), but with such an imbalance between the union and the employers, there was little need to make concessions. Furthermore, the workforce also possessed its own considerable influence through the internal labour market to resist any changes to the administrative rules:

In addition to custom, changes in the rules are subject to several other constraints. One of these is inherent in the nature of skill specificity and of on-the-job training. Both place a tremendous amount of power in the hands of the experienced labor force (Doeringer & Piore 1972:32)

The result was that this was a labour market doubly protected from external forces because workers not only possessed the legitimate constraints of skill specificity and on-the-job training, but they also operated under the umbrella of the ACTT's overwhelming power over the employers: "its power and influence were out of all proportion to its size" (Seglow 1978:54). The union's rigorous control of crewing levels (pages 145-147) meant that union membership was critical to anyone who wanted to work in the industry (page 132) and entry required a knowledge of the admission requirements and processes (page 133) acquired either through a family or friend's introduction (page 138) or the serving of some quasi apprenticeship (pages 134-136). Even relatively minor boundary concessions, such as allowing the transmission of the material produced by students of the □FS, were agreed only reluctantly and on a technicality (page 182). Thus only those already socialised as acceptable to the production community could expect admission and, perhaps more importantly, subsequent employment.

Thus, as Weber had predicted, closure had become “an ever recurring process” (1968:342) and, as several generations of film production workers evolved through an unchanging cycle, so “wage relationships and sequences of promotion which are followed repeatedly tend to become customary” (Doeringer & Piore 1971:32).

9.5 Causes of the demise of the closed shop

The closed world of film production employment started to erode in the 1980s not primarily, this thesis argues, because of the Employment Acts (pages 156-164) but because of new technology. The effect of video and then digital technology was twofold. First, it meant that productions could bypass the processing laboratories (pages 167-169) which, as union strongholds, had previously been the ultimate sanction because of their influence over the fortunes of the production company employers at every stage of shooting and post-production. Secondly, the advent of digital editing and effects introduced a cohort of new workers who owed no allegiance to the traditional mysteries and the union. These newcomers were often graduates in electronics, computers and engineering - passionate ‘geeks’ for whom completion of a challenging and innovative task was more interesting than past battles fought for better terms and conditions of employment (pages 177-178).

These changes in the structure of the industry, the declining sympathy of the freelance members for left-wing agendas (pages 161-162), the failure of the union to recognise the effect of women in senior roles (pages 182-183) and to accommodate graduates with no traditional ties (pages 180-181) together meant that the union’s authority was weakened. By 1988, before The Monopolies and Mergers Commission the film industry unions were no longer willing (or perhaps, because of the Employment Acts, no longer able) to defend the closed shop (pages 170-175) which had already been breached in the television sector at TVam (page 176).

9.6 Post closed shop outcomes in the other audio-visual sectors

The changes in the wider audio-visual industry in the early 1990s were far greater than the ending of the closed shop arrangements and the consolidation of the associated unions (page 8). Not only was there a rapid growth in the size of the sector because of deregulation (page 230), but there was a proliferation of new technologies and new formats (page 226) which required new proficiencies and attributes for which past skills and on-the-job training had little relevance. At the same time there was an expansion of formal education, the volume of which (25,000 media related graduates annually (Holgate 2006:9)) had little relationship to the requirements of the audio-visual industry.

The outcome for the film production workforce after the closed shop will be considered in the next section but, while there are a few exceptions (e.g. high-end television drama) (page 222), many of the other audio-visual sectors now display the characteristics of a competitive market where there are

jobs which are not contained within well-defined administrative units and for which the process of the allocating and pricing of labour occurs in a more or less competitive fashion (Doeringer and Piore 1971:4).

The exploration of the reasons for that competitive market reveals that in these sectors the elements which had maintained the internal labour market have been eroded or discarded. After 1990, the union was unable to maintain any formal boundaries around the proliferation of new sectors (page 225) and the much debated expansion of formal education (pages 238-241 & 246) meant a decline in on-the-job training and skill specificity (page 250). The result is an oversupply of those with just sufficient skills ready to meet the very basic requirements of the new sectors (pages 248 & 251) and, without the socialisation associated with on the job training, there has been no transmission of customary law. Additionally, the utilisation of new, low-budget production techniques has meant that there is less relevance for the past, high-value skills (page 252).

Moreover, as this expanded workforce lost all the power associated with talent, acquired skills, collective action and social networks, the power of capital increased. Contemporary television programmes are competitively tendered and so

production facility houses and programme makers make rational calculations of their potential profit on any production (pages 229-234). As a result, labour costs and conditions are squeezed as producers seek every possible economy, thus salaries are low (pages 235-237), employment turnover is high (page 237 & 256) and management has established control over the pricing and allocation of labour (page 236).

9.7 Indications of, and reasons for the persistence of the internal labour market

That they are older and better paid than workers in the other audio-visual sectors is an immediate indication that the film production workforce remains a distinctive labour force (page 189-190 & 208). However, this alone does not show that an internal labour market persists, nor does the continuity of the associated trades (pages 18-19).

However, the tests suggested by Doeringer & Piore confirm that there continue to be rigid boundaries surrounding this workforce which is shielded from the direct competitive influences of the external market. Those tests showed that the rules relating to the deployment of labour are long-standing and as consistent as they were in the closed shop era (pages 191-192) and many of the principles relating to wage determination also remain firm, although there have been some changes in how the principles are interpreted (page 197). Secondly, there continue to be seemingly irrational practices that would not be acceptable in a truly competitive market. Relph showed contemporary British film production to be inefficient, in purely economic terms, when compared to British television (page 199) and analogous European and American film production (page 200).

Thirdly, labour remains critical to the film production process, which requires a high degree of skill specificity, unique to the sector (page 202-203), that can only be acquired through on-the-job training (page 204-205). On-the-job training is not only critical to gaining the necessary experience and skill, it also enables the acquisition of social capital and thus advancement (page 207-208) because Doeringer & Piore's fourth factor requires that there should exist community

custom and practice which decrees what behaviour is acceptable and what might violate the accepted codes. Again, there was clear evidence that there were recognised conventions (page 206) and divisions (page 209-210) which have no formal, organisational backing.

Thus the evidence indicates that an internal labour market, where “the pricing and allocation of labour is governed by a set of administrative rules and procedures” (Doeringer & Piore 1971:3), remains extant in the feature film production industry.

However, while all that evidence showed that an internal labour market remains active and showed the reasons why it might perpetuate itself, it gave little indication why the employers should tolerate its continuity. If there are seeming irrational practices and inefficiencies in worker established rules of labour pricing and allocation, then the assumption must be that the employers engaged in feature film production should eliminate them - especially when there is no formal organisation to protect them as there had been in the era of the closed shop.

The explanation of employer tolerance is found in the nature of capital and those who deploy it. In the feature film production process, the producers - the employers - are not risking their own capital. Unlike their television counterparts who are competitively tendering and thus seeking to reduce costs and increase their profit, feature film producers are offering a unique, bespoke product which they will manage for a fee, usually a percentage of the total cost. Thus, exposed to little capital risk themselves, their main concern is that the project should proceed as smoothly and successfully as possible by utilising the talents of the best crew available. Therefore, producers have no interest in reforming a workforce which, as Doeringer & Piore predicted, through efficiencies in recruitment, screening and training will always deliver a well integrated and professional working team to each project.

However, official policy views this internal recruitment strategy, not as a logical and proven means of assembling successful, working teams, but as “nepotism and contacts, rather than open selection and aptitude” (Skillset 2003a:5) and it assumes the solution to broadening admission to the sector is that: “Government [should] ensure an integrated approach to education and skills training” (DCMS 2003:47).

Thus the DCMS enquiry believed that while apprenticeships were useful in providing job experience “which many in the industry value”, the advantage of formal education was that it provided open access to all and so reduced the influence of nepotism - even though they heard evidence that the “obvious limited size of the industry” (DCMS 2003:47) was as much an obstacle as the lack of adequate training, or worse, inappropriate training:

Lots of media studies courses all over this country that are all disparate, nothing plugs into anything (Sir Alan Parker to DCMS 2003: Ev 237)

Therefore government policy is to continue to encourage formal education which often fails to recognise, and therefore makes little attempt to match or reform, the requirements valued by those operating the gateways to the extant internal labour market (page 193 & 242). The result is that many of those who qualify merely flood the competitive market and so reinforce the determination of those in the film production sector to maintain their distinctive boundaries.

Whether the internal labour market will continue to deliver the employment stability that the workforce craves remains closely linked to the success of the British feature film. However, this thesis shows that as long as British production remains an “undercapitalised ‘cottage’ industry” (DCMS 2003:3) the producers will maintain their partnership with the workforce because their own livelihood depends on the continuity of skills that the internal labour market can deliver to each new project.

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- Broadcast
- Daily Film Renter
- Economist
- Film & Television Technician
- Kinematograph Weekly
- London Reporter
- Screen International
- Stage Screen & Radio
- Today's Cinema

Sources

Alrick Riley	Director
Andy Egan	ACTT / BECTU
Angus More Gordon	Production Manager
Belinda Harris	Head of Archive and Rights Clearance
Ben Southgate	Furniture restorer - ex runner
Chris Coleman	Media student
Chris Stoaling	Second AD
David Chipp	Former board director TVam
David Jeffers	MD Post Production Facility
David Wells	Grip
Eddy French	Editor
Edward Joffe	Director / Producer
Fred Smallbone	Former Lithographic printer
James Levelle	Director / Editor Corporate Productions
Joe Marks	Producer
John Keen	Director of Photography
Julian Bucknall	Focus Puller
Louise Decouteau	Producer
Martell	Producer
Mark Cooper	Producer
Martin Foley	Camera operator
Mary Hillman	Make-up
Michael Apted	Director
Michael Levelle	3rd Assistant
Mike Allen	Cameraman
Murray Ashton	Location Manager
Murray Close	Stills Photographer
□ancy Platt	Producer
Patsi Bucknall	Producer
Penny Kay	Producer
Peter Levelle	Producer / Director
Roy Lockett	ACTT / BECTU
Sally Fisher	CineGuilds GB
Sara Langton	Production lawyer
Sarah Lane	Skillset
Sharon Goode	Director FT2
Sue Gibson	Director of Photography
Tim Sullivan	Director
Tudor Gates	Former President ACTT
Vadim Jean	Director

Appendix 1 Job Titles & Grades in Contemporary Film Production

Production

Director
 Writer
 Producer
 Executive Producer
 Line Producer
 Associate Producer
 Co-Producer
 Production Co-ordinator
 Assistant Production Co-ordinator
 Producer's Assistant
 Director's Assistant
 Production runner
 Production Manager
 Production Assistant

 Script Supervisor
 Continuity
 Script Editor
 Development Co-ordinator

Assistant Directors

1st Assistant Director
 2nd Assistant Director
 3rd Assistant Director
 Floor Runner

Art, set decorating & props

Production Designer
 Supervising Art Director
 Art Director
 Standby Art Director
 Assistant Art Director
 Storyboard Artist
 Draughtsman
 Junior Draughtsman
 Graphic Artist
 Art Department Trainee
 Art Department Runner
 Set Decorator
 Assistant Set Decorator

 Production Buyer
 Assistant Production Buyer
 Drapes master
 Art Department Assistant

Property Master
 Props storeman
 Chargehand Dresser
 Chargehand Standby Prop
 Dresser
 Junior Dresser
 Standby props
 Dressing props
 Greensman

Camera

Director of Photography
 Camera operator
 Focus puller
 Clapper loader
 Key Grip
 Camera Grip
 Assistant Grip
 Steadicam operator
 Crane operator
 Camera trainee
 1st Assistant Camera
 2nd Assistant Camera

Sound

Sound mixer
 Sound maintenance
 Sound recordist
 Boom operator
 Sound assistant
 Sound trainee
 Sound editor
 Sound designer

Electrical

HOD Electrician
 Gaffer
 Best boy
 Electrician
 Rigging gaffer
 Rigging electrician
 Apprentice electrician
 Genny operator
 Electrician trainee

Costume

Costume designer
 Assistant costume designer
 Costume supervisor
 Wardrobe supervisor
 Wardrobe master / mistress
 Wardrobe assistant
 Costume assistant
 Costume maker

Make-up & hair

Make-up and hair designer
 Chief make-up artist
 Make-up artist
 Assistant make-up artist
 Chief hairdresser
 Hairdresser
 Assistant hairdresser

Construction

Construction manager
 Assist construction manager
 Construction secretary
 Supervising carpenter
 Chargehand carpenter
 Carpenter
 Stand-by carpenter
 Chargehand machinist
 Machinist
 HOD Painter
 Supervising painter
 Chargehand painter
 Scenic painter
 Painter
 Stand-by painter
 Painters' labourer
 HOD Rigger
 Supervising rigger
 Chargehand rigger
 HOD Stagehand
 Supervising stagehand
 Chargehand stagehand
 Stagehand
 Stand-by stagehand
 Scenic carpenter
 HOD Plasterer
 Plasterer

Post-production

Editor
 Assistant Editor
 Floor Production supervisor
 Post-production supervisor
 Editing trainee
 Visual effects supervisor
 Visual effects producer

Location

Location manager
 Assistant location manager
 Unit manager
 Location finder
 Locations assistant
 Location marshal

Accounts

Financial controller
 Supervising accountant
 Production accountant
 Assistant accountant
 Accounts assistant

Casting

Casting director
 Casting assistant

Publicity

Unit publicist
 Stills photographer

Special Effects (SFX)

SFX Supervisor
 SFX Co-ordinator
 SFX secretary
 SFX workshop supervisor
 Senior SFX technician
 SFX technician
 SFX trainee

Stunts & doubles

Stunt co-ordinator
 Assistant stunt co-ordinator
 Stunt secretary
 Stunt performer
 Stunt driver
 Stand in

Catering

Catering Manager
Chef
Catering assistant

Music

Composer
Music agent
Music supervisor

Transport

Transport manager
Actors' / Director's driver
Unit driver
Minibus driver
Driver

Others

Dialect coach
Armourer
Animal wrangler
Health & Safety advisor
Aerial crew
Divers
Unit nurse
Researcher / archive

Source : Skillset (2005:139-141)

Appendix 2 An Example Call Sheet

C A L L S H E E T

PRODUCT: CANON OFFICE EQUIPMENT
TITLE: BRAINS (1 x 50 seconds)
PRODUCTION NO: B299
SHOOT DATES: TUESDAY, 2ND SEPTEMBER, 1986 PRE-LIGHT/TEST
 WEDNESDAY, 3RD SEPTEMBER SHOOT
 THURSDAY, 4TH SEPTEMBER SHOOT
 FRIDAY, 5TH SEPTEMBER SHOOT BLUE SCREEN
AGENCY: WIGHT COLLINS RUTHERFORD SCOTT PLC
 41/44 GREAT QUEEN STREET
 LONDON
 WC2B 5AR
 TEL : 01 242 2800
AGENCY PERSONNEL: PRODUCER : DAVID TROLLOPE
 COPY WRITER : PETER GAUSIS
 ART DIRECTOR : MIKE WHARTON
STUDIO: CANNON ELSTREE STUDIOS STAGE 1
 SHENLEY ROAD
 BOREHAMWOOD
 HERTFORDSHIRE
 TEL : 01 953 1600
UNIT CALL TIME: MAIN UNIT 8.00 a.m.

BEECHURST FILM PRODUCTIONS LIMITED.
 REGISTERED OFFICE, 9 MANSFIELD STREET, LONDON WIN 2EL. REGISTERED NUMBER 1209519. REGISTERED VAT NO. 24209976L
 PETER LEVELLE, JACK BANKHEAD, IAIN REID, ELIZABETH BARNES, KAY LUCKWELL.

UNIT

DIRECTOR:	PETER LEVELLE		385 7535
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER:	IAIN REID		828 9306
PRODUCER:	PATSI EDEN		580 8142
1ST ASSISTANT:	ROGER INMAN	B/E	81 52391
PRODUCTION RUNNER:	MURRAY ASHTON		221 4375
LOCATION MANAGER:	GILLY CASE	WIZZO	749 6416
LIGHTING CAMERAMAN:	MIKE CONNOR	GAS	65 22851
OPERATOR:	JOHN KEEN	B/E	895 3902
FOCUS PULLER:	IAN SMITH	GAS	948 2746
CLAPPER LOADER:	MARK MORIARTY	GAS	467 0098
GRIP:	TONY ROWLAND	GAS	0753 681187
CAMERA TRAINEE:	JULIAN BUCKNALL		979 3086
VIDEO OPERATOR:	JUSTIN MULLER		821 8058
BLUE SCREEN CAMERAMAN:	DENNIS BARTLETT		567 9478
BLUE SCREEN ELECTRICIAN:	GIL GATES		953 1600
SOUND AS PER:	BILL BURGESS	B/E	866 3540
	DAVE SUTTON		
GAFFER:	PETER ARNOLD		837 3061
ELECTRICIANS:	MR. LIGHTING		837 3061
ART DIRECTOR:	ROD STRATFOLD	WIZZO	979 2630
PROPS BUYER:	LESLIE FULFORD		0932 44406
PROPS MEN:	JERRY BOURKE	B/E	207 1473
	KIERON MACNAMARA		953 9657
CONSTRUCTION MANAGER:	PETER NODWELL		627 4704
SPECIAL FX:	RICHARD JOHNSON		703 1026
MAKE-UP:	MARY HILLMAN	C/B	568 7892
HAIR:	JEFFREY HAINES	C/B	289 3706
WARDROBE:	MANDY SCOTT		734 4310
CAMERACAR DRIVER:	JOHN MORRILL		673 6245
STAND-BY CREW	Chippie:	JOHN ALLEN	
	Painter:	MICK EATON	
	Stag:	IAN TOWNSEND	
	Rigger:	JOHN BARRY	

Beechurst/Canon Office Equipment

2nd/3rd/4th September 1986

<u>ARTISTES</u>	<u>AGENTS</u>	<u>HOME</u>	<u>DAYS REQUIRED</u>
<u>BRAINS</u> Steven Beard	Lou Coulson 734 9633	677 1586	Wednesday/Thursday Call time: 8.00 a.m.
<u>BRAINS' ASSISTANT</u> Christina Avery	Libby Glen 735 4558	625 6730	Wednesday/Thursday Call time: 8.00 a.m.
<u>OFFICE DELIVERY MEN</u>			
Gary Beadle	Anna Shear 278 2101	609 8214	Wed/Thurs/Friday Call time: 7.30 a.m.
Wally Thomas	Margery Abel 499 1343	907 1510	Wednesday/Friday Call time: 7.30 a.m.
<u>Extras</u>	<u>Action Personnel</u>	392 1818	Friday only Call time: 8.30 a.m.
Steven Jensen		531 3057	
Peter Finn		0279 21052	

CAMERA EQUIPMENT

BEECHURST FILMS Julian Bucknall 01 580 8142

Arriflex 35BL Mk111 Camera 24FPS Crystal Locked
Variable Speed Control 6-32 FPS
3 x 400'/3 x 1000' Mags
Complete Video Playback (colour)
Ground Glass/Extension Eyepiece/Sliding Base Plate
Batteries, Leads, etc.

Zeiss Supaspeed 16mm (T2.1)
Zeiss Ultraspeed 18mm (T1.3)
Set of Zeiss Ultraspeeds (T1.3) comprising: 25mm, 35mm, 50mm and 85mm
Zeiss Planar 135mm (T2.1)
Cooke Varotal 5-1 20mm to 100mm T3.1 Varotal Zoom complete with
6 x 6 Mattebox, Zoom Control, etc.
4" Mattebox
Follow Focus Set

6" Circ. Pola/4" Sq.Pola Anamorphic adaptor DF961 : Peerless
4" 81EP
4" 85 & 85B
6" & 4" Supafrosts
4" Lowcons
4" ND's

Technohead Mk2 with tall and short legs
Satchler Fluid 15S with T/S Legs
Arri Bowl Adaptor/Moy 3-way leveller
Bazooka and base
Unit Box

Beechurst/Canon Office Equipment

2nd/3rd/4th September 1986

CAMERAS LIMITEDJasper Fforde01 387 0676

Arrifinder (1 week)
 40mm Zeiss lens
 Arri MkIV BL with BNC mount (body only)
 Phasebar Adjuster

TECHNOVISIONRichard01 891 5961Tuesday/Friday only

3-1 Anamorphic Cooke Varotol
 40mm & 50mm Anamorphic Prime Lenses

Wednesday - Friday

Hustler Dolly
 6 x 8x4 Tracking Boards TO BE DELIVERED TO ELSTREE BY TECHNOVISION
 6.6" Colour Grads
 6.6" Softline ND Grads

FILM STOCKJulian Bucknall01 580 8142

10 x 1000' KODAK 5247 Emulsion 918

N.B. CAMERA EQUIPMENT AND FILM STOCK TO TRAVEL IN BEECHURST CAMERA VAN
 WITH JULIAN BUCKNALL

LIGHTING EQUIPMENTMr. Lighting01 837 3061

2 x Brutes	4 x Skypans	12 x 12 frame
2 x 10Ks	16 x single dinos	Poly, gels,
2 x 5Ks	2 x Maxibrutes	etc.
2 x 2Ks	2 x Blondes	
4 x Misars	1 x Spacelites	

SOUND EQUIPMENT

To be supplied by Bill Burgess

BLUE SCREEN

16' x 12' Contact: Bill Kirkpatrick 01 953 1600

Beechurst/Canon Office Equipment

2nd/3rd/4th September 1986

RUSHES INSTRUCTIONS

LABORATORY : TECHNICOLOR LIMITED 01 759 5432
 P.O. BOX 7
 BATH ROAD
 WEST DRAYTON, MDDX.

 CONTACT : BOB CROWDEY

EDITORS : EDDY FRENCH ASSOCIATES 01 734 3313
 181 WARDOUR STREET
 LONDON, W.1.

RUSHES VIEWING : THURSDAY 4TH/FRIDAY 5TH SEPTEMBER
 @ Cannon Admin. Theatre @ 8.30 a.m.

SATURDAY, 6TH SEPTEMBER @ 9.30 a.m. @ Cherrills

RUSHES TO BE DELIVERED/COLLECTED TO/FROM ELSTREE MAIN GATE BY TECHNICOLOR
 1ST VAN CHERRILLS SATURDAY 6TH A.M.

PRODUCT

All product will be delivered by Cannon to Elstree studios on Monday 1st
 September @ 9.30 a.m.

PROPS/SPECIAL EFFECTS

ARIAD Van : To be advised
 Computer Effects : Richard Johnson
 Brains' tools : Leslie Fulford

CATERING Tim @ Location Centre 207 1296

For approx. 45 people

WARDROBE/MAKE-UP/HAIR FACILITIES

PRODUCTION OFFICES: 226 & 227
 WARDROBE: 102 DRESSING ROOMS: 124/125/126
 MAKE-UP/HAIR: 221/211

Beechurst/Canon Office Equipment

2nd/3rd/4th September 1986

Appendix 3 Overseas Location 'White Card'

ACTT

2 SOHO SQUARE, LONDON W1V 6DD

OVERSEAS LOCATION CLEARANCE

The undermentioned member is cleared for the location shown overleaf in compliance with Rule 19.

NAME: Iain Reid

GRADE: Producer

DATE OF ISSUE: 25.2.86

HEAD OFFICE STAMP: _____

SIGNATURE: [Signature]

Rule 19
Location Clearance:
No member will be allowed to proceed on a film (quota or non-quota) or television foreign location or reconnaissance abroad (with the exception of urgent newsreel assignments) without informing Head Office of the fact. Any member failing to comply with this requirement may be subject to disciplinary action. Clearance certificates will not be issued to any members whose Trade Union subscriptions are in arrears.

NAME OF COMPANY: Beetroot Films

TYPE OF PRODUCTION: Commercial

INCLUDING TITLE: Barclaycard.

LOCATION: USA

DATE OF DEPARTURE: 26.2.86

DATE OF RETURN: 22.3.86

This card is issued subject to the travel, insurance and accommodation requirements and all other terms and conditions of the F.P.A. or F.S.F.A., A.C.T.T. Agreement.

F.C.P. 1972/146

Appendix 4 Responsibilities of a camera operator

PREPRODUCTION

- ❖ Read and digest the script
- ❖ Discuss with the Director and Cinematographer/Director of Photography (DoP), all aspects of the script.
- ❖ Discuss style of shooting.
- ❖ Recce all locations.
- ❖ Review all set plans.
- ❖ Determine technical details such as – where tracks are to be laid, size of crane or dolly.
- ❖ Determine type of heads – remote, fluid, geared or hand-held and tripods.
 - or Steadicam (usually by a specialist operator).
 - or tracking vehicle.
- ❖ Check on any new equipment available.
- ❖ Discuss with the DoP choice of 1st AC, 2nd AC, Central Loader and Grip(s).
- ❖ Liaise with the DoP, Camera Crew and Grips on camera and grip equipment lists.
- ❖ Walk all locations, sets and stages with the Director and DoP.
- ❖ Shoot camera and lens tests, especially checking the ground glass ratios and format by shooting a leader.
- ❖ Check Projection in rushes theatre for any discrepancies of framing.

SHOOTING

- ❖ The camera operator will be closely involved at all times with the setting up of shots with the Director and DoP.
- ❖ Directors may have very strong ideas on photographic style and/or framing and lenses and impose these on the production.
- ❖ Alternatively, Directors are sometimes more concerned with their actors and performance and thus give the camera crew a freer hand in how the film looks.
- ❖ □ormally it's somewhere between these two examples.
- ❖ Once the way a sequence to be filmed has been decided in the way of rehearsals, the Operator will be involved with the Director and DoP on the choice of lenses and the way the camera may move.
- ❖ The Operator will then supervise the 1st and 2nd ACs and the Grips to set up the shots while lighting and rehearsal of actors are in progress.

- ❖ The Operator will check with the Script Supervisor that directions and eye lines (lefts and rights) are correct – although for an Operator that should be instinctive.
- ❖ Liaise with the 1st AD of the extent of the shot so that extras and background action can be set, and not wasted in non-photographed areas.
- ❖ Check for any irregularities with make-up, hair and costume that may not have been spotted by their departments.
- ❖ Work with the art and props departments with the setting of any dressing on the set, either in the foreground or background.
- ❖ Check for any off-set items that may have crept onto the set such as lamp stands, cables and unwanted props or crew personal possessions.
- ❖ Rehearse the scene and fine tune all camera moves.
- ❖ Shooting involves the Operator looking through the eyepiece, panning and tilting the camera to follow the action.
- ❖ After each take the Operator will be able to say or should say to the Director and/or DoP whether or not the shot was good technically.
- ❖ With the almost universal use of video assist, many people can have an opinion about a shot, but the Operator should still have his say, as he knows what he's looking at and what for.

ROUND-UP

- ❖ As the Operator is the member of the crew who looks through and operates the camera he or she must be fully conversant with any type of head.
- ❖ Also he or she should ideally have been a Clapper Loader and Focus Puller prior to becoming an Operator so that the skills and difficulties in these grades can be appreciated.
- ❖ It is essential to know all crew members' names. Standbys (carpenters, painters, riggers, plasterers and stage hands), Grips, Art department personnel, Props and Electricians are constantly working at the behest of the camera department.
- ❖ Occasionally the Actors – as well as the Director or DoP will ask the Operator for his or her opinion on some matter concerning a shot, at this time a certain amount of tact may be required.
- ❖ The essence of film-making is team work and the Camera Operator is right in the middle of it all, so he should be a good communicator.
- ❖ All departments ask the Operator questions and the answers should be forthcoming, or at least, fielded to the person who is better qualified to answer.
- ❖ The expertise and hard work of every department is eventually telescoped into those images produced by the motion picture camera which is why the Operator is such a key member of the crew.

<http://www.bscine.com> 27 March 2005

Appendix 5 Overtime Codes BECTU / AFVPA agreement

A list of the Overtime Codes used in the now defunct AFVPA/BECTU and AFVPA/ AEEU agreements (1st July 2000 to 30th June 2001)

Code	Description	Notes
VEC	Very Early Call	between 00:00 and 05:00 at start of day, Overtime at 3x
ECL	Early Call	between 05:00 and 07:00 at start of day, Overtime at SOR
MFD	Monday to Friday Day	8 hours minimum
SOT	Standard Overtime	OT starts after 8 hours (GP3 after 10 hours) at Standard Overtime Rates for first 6 hours
XOT	Excess Overtime	more than 6 hours, all Groups at 3x
AM	After Midnight	from 24:00 at end of day, all Groups at 3x
SWD	Standard Working Day	8 hours minimum
TC	Normal Time of Call	from 07:00 to 10:00, see ETC and LTC
ETC	Earliest Time of Call	07:00 but before this time, ECL or VEC rates apply
LTC	Latest Time of Call	10:00
SOR	Standard Overtime Rates	GP1 at 1.5x, GP2 at 1.25x, GP3 at 1x but only over 10 hours
GP1	Group (i)	Rates up to and including £216, Overtime at 1.5x
GP2	Group (ii)	Rates over £216, up to and including £362, Overtime at 1.25x
GP3	Group (iii)	Rates over £362, Overtime at 1x but only over 10 hours
CWD	Continuous Working Day	7 hours minimum
COT	CWD Overtime	All Groups after 7 hours at SOR, for all hours
MFT	Monday to Friday Night	All Groups at 1.5x for minimum 8 hours, all other hours at 3x, plus 1 or 2 Rest Days at 1x
SS	Saturday and Sunday Night	All Groups at 2x for all hours, minimum 8 hours, plus 1 or 2 Rest Days at 1x
SAD	Saturday Day	GP1 and GP2 at 1.5x, GP3 at 1.25x for all hours, minimum 8 hrs
SUD	Sunday Day	GP1 and GP2 at 2x, GP3 at 1.5x for all hours, minimum 8hrs
HOL	Statutory Holidays	GP1 and GP2 at 2.5x, GP3 at 2x for all hours, minimum 8hrs
TRV	Travel	All Groups at 1x for all hours, less TRX
TRX	Travel Exception	Deduct 1 hour from TRV
TOC	Time Off the Clock	11 hours, except last day
BRK	Breakfast Meal Break	0.5 hour
LU	Lunch Meal Break	1 hour
SUP	Supper Meal Break	0.5 hour, from 2 hours up to 4.5 hours
OMB	Overtime Meal Break	1 hour over 4.5 hours, plus additional hour every 4 hours
MB	Night Meal Break	1 hour

(<http://www.macgregortech.com/MACBudgeting/Calculators/OTCodes.html> 28 Apr 04)

Appendix 6 Examples of Independent Television Tariffs

Channel 4 Tariff for 2003

6.2 Proposed Tariff

Channel 4 Hourly Cost for Core Rights (2003)

Genre	Minimum Cost £'000	Maximum Cost £'000
Drama series (Peak)	350	800
Drama serials/events (Peak)*	300	900
Drama Documentary (Peak)*	250	400
Drama (Off Peak)	50	120
Entertainment Archive (Peak)	100	190
Entertainment Formatted Entertainment (Peak)	90	320
Entertainment Narrative Comedy (Peak)	350	560
Entertainment Broken/Scripted Comedy (Peak)	150	450
Entertainment including quizzes (Off Peak)	15	80
Factual (includes)		
Current Affairs (Peak)*		
Documentaries (Peak)*	low: 70	low: 110
Factual Arts/Culture (Peak)*	mid: 110	mid: 150
Factual History (Peak)*	high: 150	high: 180
Factual Religion (Peak)*		
Factual Science and Medical (Peak)*		
Features/Lifestyle (Peak)	50	150
Other Factual (Off Peak)	15	60
Music Performances*	70	350

Excludes all programmes under 30 minutes duration, Animation, Long-Running reality Breakfast, Long-Running Drama, News, 4 Learning and Sport

Peak is defined as 17:30 to 24:00

The tariffs represent Channel 4's contribution for Core Rights. Those categories marked with an asterisk are those most likely to require deficit finance

ITV Network – “Indicative Tariffs” for 2004

ITV1 Network Indicative Tariff	
Programme Type	Indicative Tariff
Daytime (09.30 – 18.00 excluding Children's)	
Chat Show	£20,000 – £40,000 per hour slot
Lifestyle/Factual	£15,000 - £30,000 per half hour slot
Gameshow	£20,000 - £30,000 per half hour slot
Peak Time (18.00 – 23.59)	
Drama	£415,000 - £800,000 per hour slot
Soaps	£110,000 - £150,000 per half hour slot
Entertainment (including Arts)	£125,000 – £500,000 per hour slot
Factual	£150,000 to £250,000 per hour slot
Nighttime (00.00– 06.00)	
Entertainment (including arts)	£4,500 – £25,000 per half hour slot
Factual	£ 6,000 - £25,000 per half hour slot
Gameshow	£8,000 - £20,000 per half hour slot
Children's (15.20 – 17.00)	
Drama	£65,000 - £145,000 per half hour slot
Preschool	£7,500 – £35,000 (10 and 20 minute slot)
Long form animation	£30,000 - £60,000 per half hour slot
Short form animation	£5,000 – £35,000 (5 and 15 minute slot)
Entertainment and gameshows	£35,000 - £70,000 per 25 minute slot
Factual	£30,000 - £50,000 per 30 minute slot

Channel Five Broadcasting Limited – Tariffs for 2004

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APPENDIX 1

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Channel Five Programme Tariffs for Commissioned Productions Taking Primary Rights Only for 2004

GENRE	SUB-GENRE	TIME SLOT	COST
Education	Gen Doc Adult Ed Social Action	Peak Off - Peak Off - Peak	£20k - £50k for 30 mins £1k - £ 5k for 30 mins £25k for 60 mins
Arts		Peak Peak	£25k - £40k for 30 mins £50k - £75k for 60 mins
Current Affairs		Peak Off Peak	£100k for 60 mins £10k for 60 mins
Children's	Drama Animation Entertainment Factual Pre-school	Off-Peak Off-Peak Off-Peak Off-Peak Off-Peak	£15k for 30 mins £15k for 30 mins £12.5k for 30 mins £12.5k for 30 mins £4k for 10 mins
Documentary/Factual	Single Doc Single Doc Single Doc Series	Peak Peak Off-Peak Peak	£40k - £60k for 30 mins £80k - £90k for 60 mins £60k - £75k for 60 mins £70k - £90k for 60 mins
Drama	Soap Single/Series	Peak Peak	£45k - £50k for 30 mins £150k - £600k for 60 mins
Entertainment	General Game Show Quiz	Peak Peak Off Peak	£30k - £60k for 30 mins £20k - £40k for 30 mins £5k - £10k for 30 mins
Features and Factual Entertainment		Peak Peak	£60k - £110k for 60 mins £30k - £60k for 30 mins
News	Not applicable		
Religion		Peak Off-peak Peak	£25k - £40k for 30 mins £10k - £15k for 30 mins £55k - £80k for 60 mins
Sport	Not applicable		