

Moirs: their struggle, our struggle

The information that the GAZETTE has recently received and printed in this issue points out several glaring faults with local industry. These can be classified into three sections which overlap in their inefficiency. All of them are hurting the workers and the consumers — everyone except the people at the top of our society. These groups are factories like Moirs, lax industrial regulations and practices, and most important of all, the unions.

There can be no doubt that Moirs has been either deliberately screwing the people who work there, or they are incredibly negligent when it comes to enforcing the provincial health and safety standards.

But then, we always knew that big business and honesty don't go together didn't we? We know it, do nothing to destroy it and thus indirectly support it.

COMPANIES LIKE MOIRS, who employ mostly unskilled laborers, have the advantage. There are so many people who leave school (for either economic reasons or because they see it as a waste of time) that the job market is practically non-existent.

These workers are forced to accept and hang on to ANY job, regardless of the working conditions or pay.

So these firms always have a supply of workers who are afraid to protest factory conditions for fear of losing their job. When seniority requirements indicate that higher wages are in order the workers can be laid off with no danger to production. There are many, many more who are there to take such jobs.

You can not hold the capitalists who run such companies to blame for this, although everyone seems to expect them to suddenly become generous through "divine intervention" and spend money when they don't have to. Their sole purpose as capitalists is to make as much money with as little effort (monetarily and physically) as they can get away with. And why not, if people let them?

ONE OF THE ORGANIZATIONS that is more responsible for conditions such as those existent at Moirs is the provincial government, which refuses to make its regulations less ambiguous and more realistic for the benefit of the working people and the consumers.

If there are no stringent regulations regarding quality assurance with particular regard to edibles, if the realistic needs (such as reasonable lunch hours and proper working implements) of employees are not guaranteed, and if government inspectors are not required to make frequent and thorough inspections of the plants (they might try talking with the workers), then there can be only one conclusion. The government is obviously more concerned about or afraid of the few with the money than the many without.

But that's logical too. Under this system of capitalism, which we allow to

exist by default of any organized counteraction, these people control. They control the economy, and politics is lost without vast support from the industrialists — so the government bends over backwards, shafting everyone else in the process.

Why not? We allow this type of structure to exist so we should expect such things.

The unfortunate part of the whole dilemma is that the worst offenders are those who are supposed to be closest to the workers and the working environment — in this case the Bakery and Confectionary Workers Union.

This is the type of organization that rose from the frustrations of the working class with the life they were forced into by the "bosses"; the force that united support against the ruling class; a militant force that had a chance of really doing something.

Unions such as the one representing the workers at Moirs is an example of what has happened to far too many. If it has not been bought off by the boss's money or the company's tokenisms, it has formed its own little bureaucratic structure — one of the things the first unions struggled against.

TAKE THE UNION AT THE MOIRS FACTORY. In the early days, any organization that was so divorced from the workers that they felt they had to go to the shop stewardess first rather than directly to headquarters, any organization that wanted to pick and chose what rights of the workers it would defend, any organization that forced the individual member to pay for the expenses in legal hassle with the company, would not have dared call itself a union.

But that's not their fault; it's a trap that many fall into because it's the

easiest way to keep the organization alive. It may reek with stagnation, but it's alive.

What such unions need is a kick in the accelerator from a working group that knows what it wants and is not afraid to grab it if necessary; such people can drag the union along with them if they have to.

A factory like Moirs makes it rough on organization because the worker turnover is so rapid; people just get settled and begin to talk about action and then they are laid off.

What must be realized is that this in itself is an issue; there should be a movement to force the management to guarantee employment periods except in cases of incompetence or gross negligence (and this should be subject to union approval).

THE WORKERS NEED SUPPORT.

They don't know their legal rights and procedures. They fear to complain to authorities or agitate too much — it could cost them their jobs. They know there are others waiting to take over immediately and they know that the company knows this.

This is where students come in. People on this campus need not worry about losing their "jobs"; most students have no family to feed and clothe.

It's time we realized that we can put some of our knowledge to a good use and become involved with the struggles of community people. We will learn from it. Students are really quite isolated from the world outside their academics, and most fail to realize that their degrees will be of little help in finding a soft comfortable job.

Many of us will be working in these factories in five years time, whether we like it or not. It's to our advantage to know what will confront us then, and to understand what such a meaningless existence can do to a person. Perhaps the workers could get along without us and our unreal philosophical ideals, but we will soon need the knowledge that comes from this type of struggle.

There is, however, one long range view that cannot be ignored.

We can boycott Moirs and companies like it; we can refuse to vote in government elections and we can set up alternate workers unions which MIGHT function slightly better — but these will not destroy the cause of the problem.

THE CAUSE OF THE SYSTEM we live in, and more than that, the people (like us) who allow it to continue.

It needs a shake-up, and that must come from workers, students and lumpen proletariat alike. The only solution that can be final is the creation of a system where oppressive companies, governments and unions CANNOT exist — because the people will not allow it.



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