

managers had made few attempts to involve employees in decisions. In the opinion of McCaffer the company was a deeply autocratic one and would intervene in any development it did not favour. He was unsure about the extent to which the company was serious in its statements about employee participation. In 1991, after he had informally chatted with staff, he attempted to get the company to spend £500,000 on a new air-conditioning unit for the packing department. The board rejected this and the best he could do was to prop the door open. Although ChocCo had formally decentralized pay bargaining to the factories, when he was willing to meet the union demand for a 4% pay increase in 1992 the company refused him permission to make this deal. The company personnel department had taken over when the union called a strike ballot in response. McCaffer had become increasingly cynical about the company for which he had worked and the job they were asking him to do. In many respects he was receiving mixed messages from the company. On the one hand it considered itself up to the mark with current progressive management ideas and practices. However, a previous attempt to launch a company-wide total quality management (TQM) programme had failed when the company had been too prescriptive in its approach. To let McCaffer speak for himself he explained his predicament thus:

*"We are not allowed to get on with the job. Financial benchmarking is all in this company and there is no factory manager whoe does anything else. My managers are performing now that I've made them bite the bullet. I'm aware that other factories have gone for different models and that they are using quality circles and the like. I'm sure we will all get these things rammed down our throats whether we like it or not. I think the people pushing these things are just on ego trips trying to advance their careers. I don't think the company is really committed to any of that. I see myself as the custodian of this job. When I leave it I hope to pass on a factory which has properly restructured itself."*

McCaffer had become a harsh disciplinarian, had appointed a production manager as his personnel manager, drastically reduced overtime working and shortened the contracts and average tenure of shopfloor employees.

In contrast to AssortedChoc, the BarChoc factory was a high-technology plant employing permanent (mainly male) skilled workers. The key event that triggered change was a threat by the US distributors not to renew the company's contract due to the poor quality of some products. In response the factory manager, Jim Graves, introduced the Excellent Manufacturing Programme and sought to develop high trust relationships with employees and the trade unions. The trade unions became fully involved in developing new employee involvement programmes and the unions themselves ran a quality group on health a safety issues. Individuals tried to solve production problems in numerous newly created problem-solving groups. Although Graves himself had become firmly committed to a high-involvement route, he faced several problems. The first was in convincing the company of his approach. In the words of Graves:

*"I would go along to meetings with the Board and the old style managers would be obsessed with establishing control, reducing absenteeism and getting rid of shop stewards. When they asked me what we were doing I felt I was fighting a losing battle. For the involvement approach to win you need management commitment right at the top but we didn't have it. This company is very strictly controlled by*

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