

July 1987

## Labouring Men: Love, Sex and Strife

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### Recommended Citation

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## **Labouring Men: Love, Sex and Strife (1)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Studies of masculinity and studies of class are incomplete unless they take each other seriously. This article explores the interrelations between class situation and experience, paid work, the family-household, masculinity and male heterosexuality as they are borne and reproduced by labouring men. Against the psychologisation of the 'men's liberationists' this article insists on the salience of structure. It suggests that the working class, of which labouring men are a small part, can be understood in its strategic power and weaknesses only through the study of the whole lives of its members, changing and changed by each other as they stand in contradiction to capital, its forces and agencies. The article is based on personal accounts by about forty labouring men. It relies on and attempts to draw together within an historical materialist framework insights from the sociologies of the labour process and the working class, studies of masculinity and Marxist feminism.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The work of Game and Pringle (1983) in particular has helped social scientists become aware that 'studies of gender and studies of the labour process are incomplete unless they take each other seriously'. Their case studies offered new and useful insights into the constructions and maintenance of masculinity at work and women's oppression at home but the authors seem to imply that men's work attitudes and actions are a product mainly of their time at work, as women's attitudes to work are derived within the family-household. This thinking characterises what Wajcman (1982) and Feldberg and Glenn (1979) have called the development and application of a 'gender model' for the analysis of women's work and a 'job model' for men's work.

This article explores the complex set of interrelationships between class situation and experience, paid work, the family-household, masculinity and male heterosexuality. Why is it that Marx's insight that a labouring man is at home when he is not working and not at home when he is working; Engels' [165]

demonstration that there exists materially different gender relations for specific classes; and the general statement of historical materialism on the significance of social reproduction, have remained substantially unextended? One answer is that these areas have generally not been seen in their interconnections and some who have addressed the issue of male heterosexuality most notably the exponents of 'men's liberation', have been less than perceptive.

'Men's liberationists' insist on telling other men to relax and be nice to one another, advice that no labouring man could follow and still last till the end of his shift. This psychologisation of the issues has another ill effect, for the location of patriarchy solely in men's heads leads directly to the nonsense that oppression is a function of the sensitivity of the oppressed such that men and women are mutually oppressive (see Nichols, 1975, 216). The tendency toward a simplistic psychologisation has been countered by a feminist materialism which argues that sexuality is both structured and structuring; is mediated through structures and affects them

reciprocally; and, as Saunders (1983, 104) has demonstrated, is not solely or mainly a question of personal intention. This emphasis on structuration is most notable in contemporary British feminist writings on love and sex, particularly a number of those contained in the Cartledge and Ryan (1983), Snitow, Stansell and Thompson (1983) and the Friedman and Sarah (1982) collections.

Anderson (1983, 21) has identified among British and American Marxists 'a sudden zest, a new appetite for the concrete', and his critic Aronson (1985, 76) agreed that a 'rich and sustained expansion' has occurred not only in the UK but also in the USA where there has been, since the mid-1970s, a literature which takes seriously the nature of the relationship between structure and subject; seeing class relations as something which people experience, create, live day to day. Implicit in this literature is the view that a realistic understanding of the working class and its strategic power and weaknesses requires the study of the whole lives of its members changing and changed by each other as they stand in structured opposition to capital, its forces and agencies. Connell (1983, 77) has written of two patterns of determination within one set of practices, but in understanding that class is gendered and gender classed, attention must also be paid to the differences in the locations of the patterns of determination, and in particular to the relationship between those locations, especially between the family-household and the paid workplace.

This article focuses on these interrelations as they are borne, experienced, and reproduced by labouring men. It is based on the personal accounts of about 40 such people, most published, and some 'collected' at my kitchen table. Theoretically, it relies on and attempts to draw together insights from the sociologies of the labour process and the working class, studies of masculinity and Marxist feminism, within that very large place called historical materialism.

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### **HARD MEN, ANIMALS OR CHILDREN?**

The desire of some young working-class men to work in what is conventionally regarded as 'unskilled' work, has been well documented by, amongst others, Paul Willis (1977), and some of the keenness to do manual work was caught by Studs Terkel in an interview with a steelworker, Steve Dubi (1975, 445):

When we were kids we thought the steel mill was it. We'd see the men coming out all dirty, black. The only thing white was the goggles over their eyes. We thought they were it, strong men. We just couldn't wait to get in there.

Not so well represented in the literature on the working class, is what it means for young men to start their working lives as self-perceived failures. According to Epstein (1972, 104) success in life 'is still a vivid notion' to working-class youth and the majority see the 'climb as still ahead and the abyss ... the pit of simple failure - not all that far behind'.

Whether young working-class men enter the workforce already convinced of their own 'failure' or whether a sense of failure comes with work experience those who remain less than equal blame mainly themselves, for though the rewards of life are apparently available to everyone observation and experience confirm that they are possessed by few. Chamberlain (1983, 139-40 Tables 6.10, .11, .12) found this ambiguity reflected by the working-class respondents in his sample. Eighty-two per

cent (79 respondents) agreed that people can move from one class to another. And yet fifty-one per cent answered affirmatively to the question, 'Do most people have an equal opportunity to get into the top class if they have ability and work hard?'. However seventy-seven per cent said that it was 'difficult', 'limited' or only possible 'if you win money'.

Since all young men are apparently given an 'equal go' at school, those who succeed in obtaining 'life's better things', must do so because they deserve to, work harder, try harder, are brighter, more diligent. If 'they' are in power and authority because they deserve to be, because they are successful, then how do labouring men regard themselves? Even while still at school, some young working-class men attempt to redefine work by associating manual labour with the social superiority of masculinity - strength, activity, hardness and courage (see Nord, in Burgmann, 1960, 456); and mental labour with the social inferiority of femininity - weakness, passivity, softness, timidity and domesticity. Mental work is regarded as effeminate, 'sissy' and it is performed by 'poofers' and 'wankers'. A steelworker commented to me, 'Social workers? They're just like fucking clerks. What would they know about life?' (See also Bedford's, 1983, interview with coalminer Bill Whiley.)

Work made meaningless by capitalist social relations is given significance by patriarchy. The necessity to do boring, repetitive, dirty, unhealthy, demeaning, self-destructive, mind-numbing, soul-destroying work, is turned  
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into a virtue. In the words of a young male worker, 'It's important that you do a job that other people can't' (Hammar, 1984, 62) and most people can't exist in an environment in which 'to survive the day is triumph enough' (Terkel, 1975, 1). Doing (some) manual work provides a source of self-esteem; a job is done that not everyone is willing, able or permitted to do. And yet the sense of self-esteem that is integral to masculinity, and so avidly sought in the world of work, is just as consistently eroded there. Masculinity involves being confident, dominant and self-sufficient (Holloway, 1983, 136). These are the qualities that paid work destroys. Lazonick (1977, 118) has commented that the subjectivity of the labourer can never be completely destroyed for workers become and remain 'inured'. What they become inured to is not only the daily performance by some of tasks which are no more complicated 'than that of the donkey turning the grindstone' (Nuwer, 1979, 59), such that 'mentally defective workers are better employees' (Mann, 1977, 26), but also what Terkel (1975, 12) refers to as 'being spied on' and non-recognition. One of the most common complaints of working people is that they are 'just numbers'. You're just a number out there. Just like a prisoner. When you report off you tell them your badge number. A lot of people don't know your name. "They know you by your badge number. My number is 44-065 (Dubi, 1975, 446).

Paradoxically, an area of life perceived as being 'masculinising' is experienced as infantilising. A vehicle builder's main complaint against the company was that it didn't treat male workers 'like men', and that its policies were 'childish' (Aronowitz, 1973, 33). As Garson (1975, 75) pointed out, 'People are treated like children at work. They can be moved, they can be scolded, they can be punished'. (2) It is not sufficient, even so, simply to do the job. The worker is also enjoined to like it, and if he or she doesn't then this is evidence of a 'bad attitude' which should be corrected.

(The similarities with schooling are sharp.) If the 'bad attitude' persists, then the task is either to remove the workers entirely from the work process or to 'break their spirit'. Sometimes this is done first off to pre-empt development of a 'bad attitude'. When you go into Ford, first thing they try to do is break your spirit. I saw them bring a tall guy where they needed a short guy. I saw them bring a short guy where you have to stand on two guys' backs to do something. Last night they brought a fifty-eight-year-old man to do the job I was on. That man's my father's age. I know damn well my father couldn't do it (Stallings, 1975, 154-5).

More usual is a constant grinding away of authority in action, which coupled with the general dreariness of the work, has the effect of stultifying resistance. A steelworker on the blast furnaces at Australian Iron and Steel Port Kembla told me, 'the foremen are onto you all the time if you try and stand up for yourself: It's usually just in little things, but it's so constant. Most people give in and cop it, or they leave altogether'. Sometimes the wearing  
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down of resistance is accompanied by less protracted procedures. Another foreman in a car assembly plant explained how trainee foremen were instructed by the management to 'get somebody's goat and be cool about it ... either make him do his job or provoke him to smack you up the side of the head' (Aronowitz, 1973, 45). It may indeed be as Connell (1983, 29) suggested that physical aggression is a claim to adulthood and masculinity, but in addition, it is also a matter of survival. This is not to say that most or even many foremen use the threat of physical violence to keep workers in line, but it is a real possibility.

Chesler (1978) has shown that physical violence is constitutive of men's experience of themselves, each other, and the world they inhabit. Confronting and surviving in a world redolent with physical violence, or coping day to day with psychic traumas of the more usual death by inches, provoke a number of responses from labouring men. The coping strategies described here should not be seen as mutually exclusive, all may be pursued by the same people at various times, or all at once. One crucial determinant of which strategies will be adopted and developed is the perception labouring men have of their relationship to and within the family-household.

One coping strategy which has been documented by Roethlisberger and Dickson (1939), Roy (1958) and, most recently, by Burawoy (1979, 77-94) concerns the ludic aspects of work practices constructed in a large variety of ways to break monotony and assert some individual or collective autonomy. Such schemes vary from simple personal strategies, such as that invented by the factory worker who regularly performed his routine job with his eyes shut (Garson, 1975, 16), to the more complex rate-busting and 'soldiering' the description of which is a staple of human relations industrial ethnographies.

The desire to hit back physically, another coping strategy, is generally diffused in a number of ways. Sometimes, physical violence is expressed outside the workplace for in preparing himself to receive and inflict violence, a labouring man is also conscious that its exercise could cost him his livelihood. He fears the consequences of acting out what he has prepared himself to be.

I want to be able to turn around to somebody and say 'Hey, fuck you! You know? [laughs] . . . 'Cause all day long I wanted to be able to tell my foreman to go fuck himself, but I can't. So I find a guy in a tavern to tell him that. And he tells me too ... He's punching me and I'm punching him because we actually want to punch somebody else (LeFevre 1975, 17).

### **AUTONOMY, DIGNITY, FRATERNITY AND VIRILITY**

Labouring men know very clearly what constitutes a good working environment. Graham Connick (1984, 92) a gravedigger, explained 'I have a [169]

good boss. He gives you a job and he's not on your back all the time. He leaves you alone to get on with it'. Williams' (1981) study of miners in Utah company towns in Queensland revealed that the most contentious issues for the Goonyella and Peak Downs miners were those related to job control. About three-quarters of the men saw a discrepancy between the amount of control they were allowed when on the job and the amount they thought they ought to have. Only 20 per cent were happy with the control they were allowed to exercise in carrying out their daily work (1981, 71). Fifty-nine per cent of the 194 issues brought before the company by the Miners' Federation at Peak Downs in 1974 were not over wages and conditions, but job control and management prerogatives (1981, 83).

Although struggle for job autonomy is collective, it is finally about protecting or enhancing degrees of autonomy within particular jobs occupied by individual workers. The struggles are about the boundaries and definitions of discrete jobs occupied individually. Similarly, the outcome of a particular struggle is critically determined in face-to-face confrontation in a situation in which the under-resourced union officials, delegates, rank-and-file are at a considerable disadvantage. Just as in the school situation, machismo can be used as a weapon to 'even the score' a little, as the following description of an industrial conference told to me by a trade union organiser attests.

Some of them [bosses] are real [sexist epithet] ... One of them, a real smart arse, really got up my nose. He kept using big words and laughing at me, thinking I didn't understand. So I leaned across the table and said to him 'You wouldn't like to say that again, just you and me, outside, would you?' That shut him up very smartly.

According to E.P. Thompson in *The Making of the English Working Class*, some employers complained that individual workers were 'naturally turbulent, passionate, and rude in manners and character'. Employers' views it seems have changed little in the intervening 250 years. If they perceive working men with fear - as unstable, irrational, violent, it is not surprising that, in an unequal conflict male labourers use machismo - hard stares, vicious language, personal attack, and threats of violence, thus becoming in the process what they are most feared to be.

Rather too extravagant claims concerning the politicising functions of the socialisation of labour at the point of production have rendered almost invisible the reality that lies behind them, which is that male production workers do at least develop a sense of the interdependence of their job functions. George Grodowski (1984, 31) explained, 'there is enormous pressure placed on us to perform at the

speed of the line. I don't mind letting the company down, but it's when you feel that you're letting your workmates down that causes the trouble'. This sense of interdependence may be developed and expressed in thoughts and feelings of brotherhood. Dave, a steelworker, talked to me of his workmates as 'the brothers'; and  
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'comrade' and 'brother' are not unusual forms of formal address within the male segment of the trade union movement. What is perplexing is that while such practices are redolent of patriarchy, they are not, as Tolson (1977, 31) implied, inherently pro-capitalist.

While it may be sometimes strategically useful to see class struggle as the clash of two mighty forces locked in inevitable and world historic conflict, that is not how it appears day by day. Conflict occurs when other options are closed, when 'there are only two choices: you either fight or suck arse' (Aronowitz, 1973, 108). What is at stake a lot of the time is what Sol Marks, a shop stewards' convener at Ford Broadmeadows called the fight for dignity (Tracy, 1983, 76), a dignity which is at least partially defined against the company and within a collective solidarity and brotherhood (Mann, 1977, 50). Vincent Gardiner (1984, 165) explained 'comradeship is something that comes when people support each other in times of stress', in essence, 'sticking up for one another' when the going becomes intolerable (for example, Stallings, 1975, 155).

This dignity and solidarity is frequently seen as manliness. 'There is', said a vehicle builders' organiser, 'some manliness in being able to stand up to the giant' (Stanley, 1975, 176). The victory in September 1983 at the Commonwealth Engineering plant at Granville, Sydney was celebrated by a worker poet as being quintessentially about manliness,

And as time goes on, we can all recall  
How we stood up and fought him like men  
So if ever he tries the same thing on us  
We'll bloody well beat him again.  
Bill Burns

What is lost if a particular struggle is not successful is much more than the wages or conditions which are the public face of the dispute. To lose is to have middle management, line supervisors and foremen 'on top of you' again. As Ford Broadmeadows shop stewards explained (Tracy, 1983, 60-1), 'if we never went on strike we might have more money but they would treat us like animals like they used to . . . since we have come back the foremen have been so nervous and polite ... it feels good'. (3)

### **UNREAL MEN, SEX AND LOVE**

But the constant humiliation accepted and upfront aggravation occasionally offered at work both seem quite 'unreal' to most men. They know there is more to them than what is expressed on the job. Tolson (1977, 71) recorded a worker saying, 'People say, "Bloody hard him, he's rough and ready", and all that. I don't think I am'. (Bosses, however, are seen as 'hard', Pattinson, 1984, 15.) The family-household, a

place which is defined by labouring men as not-work, is where the man is himself, (4) where he is worthy, where he does  
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not have to watch his back, where he knows 'that there was somebody who was going to be on my side' (Holloway, 1983, 133). It is that place in which the real me who cares, the real me who is sensitive, becomes a vulnerable creature' (Sennet and Cobb, 1977, 216).

Game and Pringle (1983, 22-3) suggested that one way men's sense of power and control is maintained is through the power relation in the sexual division of labour in the household. But it is not only the sexual division of labour but sex itself that is used to construct and sustain male identity. In lovemaking masculinity is asserted and powerfully reflected back (Eichenbaum and Orbach, 1984, 131). In the face of an uncompromising labour regime, the sex act assumes particular importance. Sexual pleasure, like all genuine play, is a re-creative act that elevates one's sense of self (see Seidler, 1985, 160) and regenerates sensual experience. But the meanings men bring to sex may be so internally contradictory as to be self-defeating.

And because my need to be sexually revitalised each day is so great, it becomes the first and most basic part of a contract I need to make in order to ensure it. The goal of this contract is stability, and it includes whatever I need to consume: sex, food, clothes, a house, perhaps children. My partner in this contract is in most cases a woman; by now she is as much a slave to my need to consume as I am a slave to Fisher Body's need to consume me. What does she produce? Again: sex, food, clothes, a house, babies. What does she consume for all this effort - all the material wealth I can offer plus a life outside of a brutal and uncompromising labour market. Within this picture, it's easy to see why many women get bored with sex. They get bored for the same reason I get bored with stacking bucket seats on cars (Vehicle builder in Lippert, 1977, 211).

Lippert (1977, 212) has written that sex becomes central to heterosexual power relations when coupled with the daily necessity to escape from work or return to work, for 'emotional involvement sustains us mentally just as the meals we eat' (Eichenbaum and Orbach, 1984, 23). (5) A result is, as Saunders (1983, 98) has indicated, a widespread accepting of the notions that men need sex in a way that women do not, and both inside and outside marriage, should pay for it (Oakley 1985, 243). Men, as Hamblin (1983, 105) has observed, 'draw on female energy' but they know they do and for this reason as well as others experience themselves to be 'dreadfully vulnerable' (Holloway, 1983, 135) but 'by definition men are supposed not to be dependent. The very notion of masculinity excludes dependence' (Eichenbaum and Orbach, 1984, 56). (See Holloway, 1983, 15, for a woman's account of the realisation of this dependence on her of her male partner.)

Falling in love, said Goodison (1983, 63) is a 'stratagem for survival' and being in love is a 'process of repair to low self-esteem' (Eichenbaum and Orbach, 1984, 134). Getting there, though, is a process fraught and dangerous. The ability to earn money gains the man the possibility to  
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become a husband/ father, but his individuality, so threatened and absent at work and so much in need of nurturance and support must somehow win him love. The heterosexual marketplace is divided by class, and within class, like the labour market, by craft, skill, income, ethnicity and physicality. Men think women are attracted to their self-confidence and competence in the world. Labouring men under capitalism are acutely aware that they do not possess the things that permit individuation, and which allow such self assurance. (6) As Chesler (1978, 233) wrote, 'Of course economically richer and more powerful men do command more sexual attention more easily and for a longer period of time, than economically poorer men do'. The rest are 'the potential "losers" in the sexual free marketplace' (Ehrenreich and English 1978, 284).

Given the importance of home and love in sustaining creating 'real' identity, the finding of Pietropinto and Simenau (1977, 204) from their study of over 4,000 American men is easy to understand. They found that 'while men chose love over sex as what they want most from women, even more men spoke of companionship and homelife as their prime desires ... They wanted most of all a companion with whom they could be honest, so that she would accept a man with all his inadequacies and foibles'. (7) The study also revealed that nearly three-quarters of the men most wanted a long-term relationship with a woman who was concerned for their needs, sincere and affectionate (1977, 220).

That men tend to react with anger, pain, confusion and violence in the face of female sexual expression outside the relationship they inhabit, has been 'explained' by the suggestion that they react this way because their 'property rights' have been violated. Perhaps it is more (or at least as well) that men react this way because the self-worth demonstrated and reconstructed through sex is threatened. Chodorow (1978, 193) has remarked on the 'primacy and exclusivity' of men's emotional relationship to women and when dignity has been achieved with such difficulty, and remains so precariously dependent upon the feelings of one person, its diminution is resisted strongly.

If you express yourself emotionally and sexually with only one person year after year after year, it-that one person becomes the exclusive repository for all your insecurities and hang-ups and need for reassurance - then dependence becomes very real indeed, and 'unfaithfulness' of one partner threatens the whole world of the other (Miles, 1983).

## **RECREATING LABOURING MEN**

Recent commentators (notably Connell) have seen the concern of men for their bodies in terms of the body's relation to violence and force. While in itself a valid view, it remains, none the less, partial. The concern of labouring men for their bodies is both simpler to understand - their bodies are what  
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they sell in order to eat, and more complex - somehow their bodies must bear the weight of the creation and maintenance of social masculinity. Tolson (1977, 53) remarked that concern with physical strength is the most basic of all male preoccupations. It is not difficult to understand why: for labouring men the sale of their labour power means just that, they sell their ability to do any work at all that the

employer considers they are able to do. As Willis (1977, 100-1) intimated what makes labour power saleable in the absence of certificates, diplomas and tickets, is its variability, its plasticity. (See also Warren Allis, 1984, 18; King, 1984, 78; Garson, 1975, 9.)

What is sold at the point of production is a pair of hands, a back, a set of muscles, a body. Labouring men are preoccupied with their bodies because if they malfunction the repercussions are dire. Connell (1983, 18) speculated on the relationship between men's views of themselves, their bodies and sport, defining sport as a combination of force and skill. This definition can be applied to much manual work. Size is also important in some jobs (see King, 1984, 78; Eden, 1984, 46).

In sharp contrast to the older workers younger workers like Hans Jorgensen (1984, 106), a labourer in a coal depot, end the day with a 'good feeling, you know what you're body's done ... your body feels all right after you've done something hard - it's sort of like rugby. . .' (8) But in the life cycle of labouring, force gives way to skill, until skill can no longer compensate for force's diminution. It is at that point, unless he is very lucky, that a man's labouring days are over. The parallels with the professional fighter or footballer are obvious. A rigger said to me recently, 'it's nearly over for me and I wish to Christ it was. The arthritis is really bad, my knees swell up and legs ache and I'm losing my confidence on heights. I have to get out'. He was thirty-six.

When skill can no longer compensate for declining force, workmates must make up the difference. This is more possible if the work is sufficiently heterogeneous and is capable of division based on size/strength criteria. In the underground coal mines of the South Coast of New South Wales generally the older workers 'inherit' surface jobs, and new entrants work the most unhealthy shift. To expend one's life energy in a factory or workshop day after day, year after year, is to be critically and, over time, increasingly concerned with one's body. Will the skills acquired, the obligations created, and the old/ young segmentation of work tasks be sufficient to enable one's body to last the distance?

In the mornings now, it's harder to breathe. I have to get myself up a few hours early ... When I first get up, I normally go straight to the toilet and sit there for three-quarters of an hour, just to get my breathing right again, then I go straight into the bathroom and have a wash, get all set up, come back to the kitchen and sit down again. Then its another three-quarters of an hour before I can think of starting to boil the billy and that. It's only been the last couple of years, I suppose, that it really got like this (Colin Mehlhopt, 1984, 23, labourer, fertiliser works. See also Stan W'ilkes, 1984, 206-7; and Le Fevre, 1975, 18).

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And yet, the very destruction of the physical site of masculinity, the body, can be a method of attaining, demonstrating and perpetuating the socially masculine. To paraphrase Haug (1984, 67) corporality is the foundation of labouring men's identity as well as their subordination.

## **WORKING FOR THE FAMILY/MILITANT FATHERS**

In the face of a life-long engagement in the mundane world of work, many young male workers nurture the hope that something better may come along (for example, Ellis, 1984, 81). The fantasies are remarkably stable over time - to own a farm, a small business, to be involved in professional sports, market gardening, forms of contracting, to win the lottery (Aronowitz, 1973, 39; Busch, 1984, 54, 81; Sennett and Cobb, 1977, 225). Only 40 per cent of Chamberlain's (1983, 47, Table 3.5) sample of 110 working-class respondents said they were not interested in owning a small business, and a substantial proportion had tried.

Similarly the results of two occupational status studies in the United States in 1947 and 1963 reproduced in Sennett and Cobb (1977, 221-5), revealed firstly, that rankings of occupations had changed little over the 16 year period and secondly, respondents valued most those jobs which endowed the greatest autonomy. Similarly, Congalton's (1969) study of social status in Australia, revealed that doctors, professors, solicitors, architects and engineers were all ranked higher than any other occupations. Daniel's (1983) study corroborated Congalton's in finding the professions as being the most valued occupations. (9) Accordingly, Sennett and Cobb argued that it is the professions that workers increasingly see as avenues of escape principally, though not solely, for their (male) children. As a steelworker commented, 'If my kid wants to work in a factory, I am going to kick the hell out of him. I want my kid to be an effete snob; Yeah, mm-hm [laughs]' (LeFevre, 1975, 16; see also Raftopoulos, 1984, 50 and Humphries, 1984, 73).

There are two forces at work here. One is the desire to 'live through one's children', the other to give meaning and dignity to what is meaningless and subhuman by choosing the indignity for the good of one's family. The latter is more often documented than the former, suggesting that it may be more frequent, but clearly, the two are not incompatible and, in fact, probably occur together (see e.g., Jeyl, 1985, 157; Tolson, 1977, 68; LeFevre, 1975, 22; Ellis, 1984, 38).

As a survival strategy for labouring males, it seems to have quite a lot going for it, for meaning is given to work, some dignity is wrestled from the world of pain and at the same time, control over property, income and what it can buy - one of the material bases of patriarchy (Secombe, 1980, 63), is assured. The circle is closed. The family-household gives meaning to the paid work which pays (a lot of the money costs of its material reproduction.

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The trouble is it doesn't work. The internal contradictions of patriarchal power based on the usurpation of the act of giving are twofold. On the one hand the working-class patriarch is sacrificing himself so that his children will not be like him. This involves a denigration of the self before family household members. "Yes, I want my kid to look at me and say, 'Dad you're a nice guy, but you're a fuckin' dummy". Hell yes, I want my kid to tell me that he's not (going) to be like me . . .' (LeFevre, 1975, 22). The tragedy of sacrifice as love is that it is extraordinarily difficult to reciprocate, 'after all, who wants to be the grateful recipient of someone else's martyrdom?' (Cartledge, 1983, 169). If the children do succeed in formally educating themselves, they find it difficult to be grateful, for the sacrifice is seen as an attempt by the parents to manipulate and control them. Not only is ingratitude a frequent response, but also

the patriarch may wonder anew about his own life. Dubi (1975, 450) said of his son, 'Yeah, we're proud of Len. At least he's doing something. What have I done in my forty years of work? I led a useless life. Here I am almost sixty years old and I don't have anything to show for it ... We 're a couple of dummies. We worked all our lives and we have nothing'.

If, on the other hand, the child is not successful, then the father has sacrificed himself in vain. A janitor (Hoellen, 1975, 124), explained 'I got a boy married ... he's twenty, going on twenty-one. He was an honour student in math. I wanted him to go to IIT. He ran off and got married. A kid'll do what he wants to do. He hurt us real bad'. (10)

One final problem with dignity achieved through self-sacrifice is that it sometimes becomes inverted. The family-household, rather than being a motivation and reward for a lifetime of work, is sometimes seen as an imposition, a millstone, impediment to some imagined better future. The son of a carpet-layer said of his father, 'He would come home in the evening and be all tied up in self-hatred and hatred towards us, whom he saw as the reason he had to go through all this shit' (Weissman, 1977, 198 and see also Greaves, 1984, 54). Supporting the family-household can both create resentments and justify, usually retrospectively, the missing of opportunities.

As well as suggesting intergenerational mobility as an aim and justification for work, another strand linking work, the family-household and sacrifice, is the issue of job-related class struggle. A vehicle builder explained to Tracy (1983, 65) 'when these children grow up and come to work and find their fathers have left them the same slavery, the same rotten conditions, they won't respect them, they will curse them'. The familyhousehold may also be an institution through which class consciousness is nurtured and transmitted. Arthur Pauly (1984, 66), a waterside worker, said of his family and trade unions, 'I've got a picture up of John Hymen, who was president of the Eight Hour Day Committee and the Victorian Trades Hall Council. He was my mother's father. So, from a family point of view, the question of unionism isn't something I'd heard from other people'.

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With the establishment of a long term heterosexual family-household working-class men perceive that the option to 'split' when problems of power and authority erupt on the job, is removed. 'When I was single, I could quit, just split ... Now I'm married and I got two kids. . .' (LeFevre, 1975, 16 and see also Humphries, 1984, 72).

For most young men the reduction in options that comes with the establishment of a family-household is not strange, unknown or unanticipated. Alistair Loughton (1984, 51) a labourer in a market garden commented,

At the moment I'm only young, and it's not as though I have any real responsibility, like mortgages or loans and that. I'm free. But if I had a family or anything, I'd have to stick in a job even if it was killing me slowly. I'd hate to get in that situation, but there must be a lot of people in that.

Other options, personal confrontation and absenteeism, are also perceived - even by those who are still single, to be reduced for family men.

I know people that have got young families and it's real tough on them, they have to do all the overtime they can. They can't get out. They don't buy their lunch at work, they bring sandwiches all the time ... when the boss comes

around, you get up slow, but they jump, because they realise what their job means to them (King, 1984, 80).

And a steelworker, Mike LeFevre (1975, 17), explained:

I got broke down to a lower grade and lost ... a hell of a lot ... He [the foreman] came over - after breaking me down. . . and smiles at me. I blew up. He didn't know it, but he was about two seconds and two feet away from a hospital. I said, 'Stay the fuck away from me'. He was just about to say something and was pointing his finger. I just reached my hand up and grabbed his finger and I just put it back in his pocket. He walked away. I grabbed his finger because I'm married. If I'd been single, I'd a grabbed his head. That's the difference.

The prospects for absenteeism, even when illness is physical and medically identifiable, similarly are felt to be fewer. According to John Dale (1984, 36) a labourer in a demolition gang, a couple of months off on the dole would be something that he wouldn't mind, but he explained, with five children he 'has to be working'. He added, 'Today, I just can't afford to take a day off, can't afford to see a doctor, just in case he does put you off work'.

Ehrenreich (1983, 11) is surprised that men have for so long and so reliably adhered to what she called the 'breadwinner ethic'. She added, 'men still have the incentives to work and succeed at dreary and manifestly useless jobs, but not necessarily to work for others' (1983, 12). This is, as we have seen, incorrect. 'Shit work for shit money' has been carried out so reliably and for so long precisely 'for others', even when 'the others' would rather it  
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wasn't. Barrett (1980, 216) observed that it 'is not self-evident that the role of the "breadwinner" is intrinsically a desirable one' and her discussion (1980, 187-216) of women's oppression and the family-household, concluded 'The question as to who benefits from the family-household in contemporary capitalism has, then, no very clear answer'. But she was confident about the nature and direction of the relationship between the family-household and job-related class struggle. The family-household system

maximises motivation to work on the part of the wage labourer and reduces the likelihood of militancy that might jeopardise the maintenance of non-labouring household members. The tendency of the family-household system is to encourage conservatism and militate against protest ... (Barrett, 1980, 212-16; the conclusion is repeated on pp. 222-3).

The discussion of family-household commitments thus far has explicitly developed the view that these are constraining on the ability of labouring men to resist or avoid management imperatives by limiting their recourse to options such as physical aggression, absenteeism and militancy. But in the case of the last mentioned this view is at least partial and possibly inaccurate. In Williams' (1981) study, more married men, particularly men with young children, were 'aggro' toward the company than single men, for whom the option to leave remained open (Williams, 1981, 103; see also a Kelvinator steward in Game and Pringle, 1983, 40). Barrett's view allocates to the family-household a determining but static role in relation to job-derived class action. The British miners' strike in 1984 vividly affirmed the significance of communities, organically interrelated households (see Loach, 1985;

Massey and Wainwright, 1985; Donaldson, 1985) in class struggle, such that it makes sense to see one aspect of working-class action as being 'between households and capital' (Armstrong and Armstrong 1983, 11).

But the relation between the household and workplace militancy has an even deeper intimacy which hinges on the notion of 'manliness'. If manliness is about confidence and dominance, one way to prove it is in struggle, and not to struggle is to show that 'you're not a man'. This was driven home to me when I listened to a miner's wife scream at her soon to be retrenched husband, 'Why don't you do something, you useless bastard' and that man knew with a hideous clarity that he would lose both his job and his membership of this family-household. Clive Mundy (1984,68-9) a railway surfaceman, reflected on a comparable experience,

when [the strike's] all over and you've crawled back to work, she'll look at you and say, 'You've got no fucking guts', to herself. 'That joker next door he's strong'. See? Yeah, the women they know. If you're fucking weak, you'll crawl back. Even if it was to give her more money, she knows in the finish that you're fuckin' weak, and you'll never be trusted, you're not a man.

Or as Harold Stevens (1983, 84), a charge hand in a carbonette plant, summed it up, 'Once a scab, never a man'.

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## **CONCLUSION**

In this article I have tried to demonstrate that it is not the case, as some have suggested., that 'the consciousness formed outside the workplace is brought into the workplace' (Baxandall et al., 1976, 2). Rather, the consciousness of male labourers is crucially formed in the experience of the interaction between the family-household and workplace. As Petchesky (1978, 376) put it, 'work and the family ... are really intimately related modes that reverberate upon one another'. Paid workplaces as represented here, are constructed to induce and reinforce feelings of stupidity, ignorance and powerlessness. In coping with this massive, sustained and pervasive onslaught on their workplace selves, labouring men develop and utilise a set of strategies - escape, game-playing, displaced violence, solidarity and organised resistance, and a set of personal attributes with which to confront the world of wages. The coping strategies devolve around finding and ensuring nurturance, comfort and meaning from and within the family-household which is partially sustained by male wages.

The relation between the two spheres is mediated by the body of the male worker, not only in the maintenance of its abilities, but in the effects of its maturation. The socially defined masculinity which it carries changes too but that connection remains as unclear as it is unstudied.

In seeking to sustain masculinity which is at least as much undermined in the workplace as created there, labouring men develop an intense emotional dependency on the family-household, particularly on its central figure, which in turn threatens the masculinity (re)constructed there. This dependency is recognised as being a necessary precondition for continuous engagement in the world of work which is entered in order that the means for continual participation in it can be obtained.

The result of an analysis of labouring men's lives which refuses to remain locked within the factory gates, is an understanding that the confusion, hostility, anger, fear and violence which sometime feature in all men's lives is the effect of a set of structures which encompass and comprise centrally those of the family-household and the paid workplace and their interdeterminancies. What links them socially is a set of interconnected definitions - man/employee/ unskilled/ worker/ parent/ spouse/ lover/ provider/friend/workmate/unionist - produced in both places. In neither place, however, are the various elements able to be experienced as anything other than fragmented and contradictory. Instead a masculinity undermined at work is assuaged at home, and a masculinity slipping at home is bolstered at work, in a never-ending and always unsatisfactory emotional and psychological hopscotch. Problems created and injuries inflicted by two oppressive institutions and their interrelations are seldom perceived as such and are more frequently ascribed to a lack of manliness, an individual inability to cope.

Once the problem is perceived as structural, the material preconditions [179]

for the integration of the male worker's self as produced and constrained in and by the home/paid work relation, are easy to identify: shorter hours, increased holidays and paid study leave, paternity leave provisions, equal pay and comparable worth, childcare and canteen facilities in the workplaces and union offices. This transformation needs to be accompanied by a thorough rehumanisation of paid work itself.

Listing the material conditions for the (re)creation of human men is as simple as it is unlikely to be effected, for there is nowhere where these issues can be adequately developed into a systematic and programmatic form, and no agency willing or able to carry them through. The trade union movement remains as sexually segmented as the workplaces it organises, and the male and most powerful sections of it remain almost impervious to suggestions that any consideration of work and its fruits must take into account that part of life which comprises unpaid work and ask the hard questions of who does it and why.

Men's consciousness raising groups are likely to be of little strategic utility, preoccupied as they are with the immediate problems of bandaging bleeding egos and learning emotional self-defence. And the women's movement, as split and divided as any social or political current, would be extremely unlikely to offer assistance (or for that assistance to be received), particularly when women are increasingly publicly recognising and defining the uses of the power created by them in the politico-emotional economy of the family-household.

Programmes for rehumanisation can perhaps only be developed in the political organisations of the left and social movements, and yet the possibilities of building a series of proposals for a unifying of personal life are being denied by those who consistently drive a bigger and bigger theoretical wedge between the working class and the social movements. The latter are putatively places in which critical self-reflection (warfare, racism and ecological destruction = maleness) is unavoidable,

but it is in the former that effective power for social structural transformation is located.

The dichotomisation fostered between the class and movements precludes the transmission of experience and knowledge from one to the other. The mutual exclusivity now posited by those who confuse the recomposition of the working class with its demise, has meant that political parties in which political education (however truncated) was a feature, and in which connections and linkages (however one-sided) were made, are more important than ever.

## NOTES

1. Thanks to A. Teesdale, the Denoons, the Barbalets, M. Morrissey, S. Carter, A. Wells, P. Hamilton, S. Short, B. Symons, A. Traynor and participants in the Socialist Seminar Series at Wollongong.

2. The armed services provide an interesting combination of infantilising and masculinism. See Aronowitz, 1973, 33, 40.

3. See also Gary Bryner (1975, 174).

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4. Ehrenreich and English (1979, 286) reflect similar female experience.

5. Ehrensaft (1980, 59) reports a lesbian in paid work who said she felt 'just like a father when she arrives home, wanting to be cared for, attended to by her partner after a long day at work'. 6. There are parallels with women's experience, see Ehrenreich and English 1979, 287.

7. Bickerton (1983, 162) has suggested that women experience the same need.

8. The relationship of sexuality to this 'feeling good' about one's body is difficult to ascertain but Lippert (1977, 109-210) discussed experiences which I have seen described nowhere else, but which struck chords with my own manual work experiences.

9. I'm not sure where this leaves Jean Martin's (1981, 146) assertion, 'In Australia the highest status is accorded to ownership of large businesses and land holdings'.

10. Such disappointment is not restricted to working-class fathers, see W'eissman (1977, 202) for a mother's view.

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Ms. accepted 2 February 1987

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