

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249626937>

Industrial Restructuring and Workers' Resistance in China

Article in *Modern China* · April 2003

DOI: 10.1177/0097700402250742

CITATIONS

68

READS

181

1 author:



Feng Chen

Hong Kong Baptist University

22 PUBLICATIONS 670 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Modern China

<http://mcx.sagepub.com>

Industrial Restructuring and Workers' Resistance in China

Feng Chen

Modern China 2003; 29; 237

DOI: 10.1177/0097700402250742

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://mcx.sagepub.com>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

Additional services and information for *Modern China* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://mcx.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://mcx.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations <http://mcx.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/29/2/237>

Industrial Restructuring and Workers' Resistance in China

FENG CHEN

Hong Kong Baptist University

The Fifteenth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in September 1997 formally sanctioned a radical reshuffling of state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Since then, numerous small- and medium-sized SOEs, in the name of enterprise restructuring (*qiye gaizhi*), have been converted into shareholding companies with mixed public and private ownership, sold or leased to private individuals (either domestic or foreign), merged with one another, or just allowed to go bankrupt. The state is carrying out the restructuring program for a twofold purpose. It wants to rid itself of the financial burden of sustaining small- and medium-sized SOEs that are strategically unimportant, and it wants to transform them into market players by changing their ownership and management.

While it may still be too early to assess the economic effect of the program, its social consequences are troublesome. One of these consequences, as some scholars note, is a rapid transfer of state assets into the hands of managerial nomenklatura and other private individuals (Ding, 2000), a process similar to what has been called "spontaneous privatization" in former socialist countries. But the illicit asset stripping of state firms does not constitute the whole picture of "who gets what" in the divestment process (Ding, 1999). The restructuring program has led to a systemic erosion of labor interests, as it has been accompanied by severe measures against workers, including

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *Funding for this research was provided by the Research Grants Council of Hong Kong. I am grateful to two referees for their comments and suggestions. My thanks also go to Chen Shengluo for his research assistance.*

MODERN CHINA, Vol. 29 No. 2, April 2003 237-262

DOI: 10.1177/0097700402250742

© 2003 Sage Publications

collective layoffs, deprivation of benefits, ruthless labor rights abuses, and brutal working conditions. Lacking effective state protection as well as organizations of their own, workers have become increasingly vulnerable to the “whip of the market” and to despotic managerial power (Lee, 1999).

Although the majority of workers have been quiescent, passive, and powerless, not all of them have remained silent about the ongoing changes that are threatening or damaging their interests. They have protested, even in confrontational ways, to stop or revise divestment programs that they perceive as unfair and unjust. Such “protests against restructuring” reflect the emerging economic conflict that defines China’s economic transition. They differ from two other kinds of labor protest in China—protest by workers who are already under capitalist property relations (i.e., workers in the private sector) and protest by workers who are actually outside the industrial system (i.e., laid-off workers)—in terms of claims, repertoires of contention, and outcomes. This article is intended to investigate labor protest against restructuring by answering the following questions: What claims do SOE workers make in their protests against restructuring and on what grounds? What shapes their repertoires of contention and affects the outcomes of their actions? To what extent do such labor actions reveal workers’ position in and attitude toward the economic transition?

Drawing on the data I collected in Shanghai and Luoyang, Henan province,¹ as well as the cases reported by *Gongren ribao* (Workers’ Daily), I will show that the labor protests in question reflect workers’ strong opposition to a restructuring process that excludes their participation, ignores their interests, and infringes their rights. However, while proactive in terms of their claims, labor actions of this sort remain largely “moral economy” oriented. Protesting workers, in other words, are locked into the concept of rights inherited from the past, and they attempt to redress perceived injustices by recourse to the norms of the old days, rather than seeking to redefine and contest their rights in the new property relations. This labor contention thus points to political and institutional restraints on workers’ consciousness and their ability to define and defend their interests in the economic transformation.

PROTESTS AGAINST INDUSTRIAL RESTRUCTURING

The past decade has witnessed a dramatic increase in industrial conflict in China as a result of the transformation of industrial relations. According to the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), each year from 1992 through 1997, about 1.26 million workers were involved in labor disputes (Quanguo zonggonghui yanjiushi, 1999: 40). Another official source indicates that in 1995, labor-related demonstrations involved more than 1 million people in more than 30 cities (FBIS-CHI-96-007, 19 April 1996). Such demonstrations reportedly leaped to 3.6 million workers in 1998 (South China Morning Post, 26 March 1999). While most of these incidents share something in common, as they represent workers' collective yet spontaneous protests against brutalizing working conditions, widespread rights abuses, and deteriorating living standards in the economic transition, "protest against restructuring" is somewhat unusual in its collective action frames and institutional locations.

The term *collective action frames* refers to a shared understanding that people bring to their situation to legitimate and motivate collective action. Such frames serve to underscore the injustice of a social condition and foment collective attribution to the causes of injustice (Tarrow, 1998: 109-11). A sense of justice arises from moral indignation concerning illegitimate inequality—that is, unequal treatment of individuals and groups that is perceived as unfair (Folger, 1986). But how is an action frame formed and on what basis? Scholars of social movements point out that framing is "a process in which social actors, media, and members of society jointly interpret, define and redefine states of affairs" (Klandermans, 1997: 44), and the construction of action frames relies on public discourse, persuasive communication during mobilizations, and consciousness raising during episodes of collective action (Klandermans, 1997: 45-52).

However, the labor protests in question are not exactly the kind of "social movements"—defined as "collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities" (Tarrow, 1998: 4)—that the scholars have in mind. They are instead spontaneous "contentious gatherings" that occur in a context where public debate, consensus mobilization, and media framing are lacking. Therefore, the rhetorical legacy

of the past—the old socialist conception of public property—becomes one major resource used by discontented workers to construct their “injustice frame” (Gamson, 1992: 68, 73). Protest actions so framed represent what Kevin O’Brien calls “rightful resistance,” as they employ the rhetoric of the powerful to make claims on their legitimate rights (O’Brien, 1996: 31-35). However, claims based on the old rhetoric that has been rendered irrelevant by the market-driven reform turn out to be somewhat nostalgic and defensive about a decayed economic order, as workers find no alternative ways of articulating their demands.

The ways protests against restructuring are framed are in turn shaped by the institutional locations to which workers are attached (Piven and Cloward, 1977: 18-23). Here, my focus is not on the “opportunity structure”² that produces labor protests but on the institutional contexts that shape workers’ patterns of framing or “naming” grievances (Tarrow, 1998: 110)—the way they make claims, as well as the repertoires and outcomes of contention. The line of such an analysis follows the institutional approach that emphasizes the role of institutional structures in shaping both people’s definition of their interests and their actions. In this article, the phrase *institutional locations* refers to an industrial system based on the structure of certain property relations that in turn define specific labor relations. Institutional locations distinguish protests against industrial restructuring from the other two types of worker protests in terms of claims, repertoires of contention, and outcomes of actions.

Chinese workers are currently subject to three different institutional locations. To characterize SOE workers’ protests against industrial restructuring, it is helpful to contrast it with the other two kinds of labor protests in different institutional locations. The first type of labor protest is wildcat strikes or collective work stoppage or sabotage against exploitative practices (such as the withholding of back pay, poor working conditions, forced overtime, and salary or benefit cuts), and it occurs in private and foreign enterprises. Protests of this kind take place within capitalist property relations, which are now legitimized and protected by the state. Protesting workers in this location do not seek to challenge the property relations under which they labor. Rather, they usually target labor processes, working conditions, or rights abuses. Indeed, on most occasions, they do not protest for

decent conditions but against things unendurable and inhuman. In this sense, their contention has an affinity with those labor protests that took place in societies at the early stage of capitalist industrialization (Katznelson and Zolberg, 1986).

The second type of labor protest is launched by laid-off (*xiagang*) workers, formerly employed in state-owned enterprises, who find themselves in a subsistence crisis and who believe that managerial corruption in factories exacerbates their economic plight. These workers do not and cannot strike, even though they blame those who run the factories for their suffering: they are already outside of the industrial system and deprived by their institutional location of the opportunity to use the strike as a form of defiance. Thus, they protest or riot on the streets, camp outside of government buildings, and block vital communication lines such as railroads and highways to bring public attention to their plight and force the authorities to take action. Yet, what they demand is the right to minimal livelihood allowances, rather than a restoration of previous privileges under socialist paternalism (Chen, 2000).

Protests by SOE workers against restructuring programs represent the effort to resist ongoing or proposed restructuring of their enterprises that, they believe, would have adverse effects on their economic interests. Unlike the first type of protest, workers in SOEs have not yet entered capitalistic property relations, although they might be forced to do so as restructuring programs proceed. In their ultimate motivation, workers involved in such protests are also concerned with their subsistence, and their protests, in this sense, are not essentially dissimilar from those of the laid off. They are very clear about their fate if they do not resist and what it would mean to join the army of the laid off.

But protests against restructuring are different from unemployment protests in their timing and claims. As my previous study (Chen, 2000) shows, most unemployment protests took place after workers had been laid off for months, even years, and had received no income at all for a period of time; their job loss was the result of enterprise bankruptcy, closure, merger, or reshuffling. They were already outside of the workplace (even though some of them preserved nominal labor relations with their firms) and were too late to resist the changes that had brought them to their current economic plight. Their protests

were driven by pent-up anger, but their demand was usually no more than some subsistence aid from local authorities. Obviously, their action could have little direct impact on restructuring programs that had already been carried out.

Many protests against restructuring, however, are motivated by what is called a "suddenly imposed grievance" (Walsh, 1981), as they often burst out immediately after a restructuring scheme, which usually entails collective layoffs, is made known to workers. Workers are fully aware of what their life will become if those measures are to be enforced. After all, the suffering caused by layoffs is already painfully visible in society and has been experienced and witnessed by too many people. Protesting workers are determined to prevent it from happening to them—or, at the very least, to ensure their basic well-being after restructuring has taken place. Thus, in this type of protest, strong subsistence anxiety translates into strong claims to firms' property and to a say in the restructuring process. Such claims derived from the old socialist precept of the nature of state property. SOE workers' protests, therefore, may be best viewed as either a refusal to enter new property relations disadvantageous to them or as an attempt at bargaining for some better treatment after restructuring.

CAUSES OF PROTESTS

Industrial restructuring is a major cause of workers' grievance and has sharply increased labor disputes between workers and management over a variety of issues, ranging from job contracts, wages, benefits, pensions, and unemployment compensation to working conditions. National statistics on labor protests are unattainable, but scattered reports from both the official media and the media outside the mainland reveal that restructuring is conflict prone. Some local authorities have openly admitted it. For example, a report by the Provincial Trade Union of Henan indicates that 37.7% of protests in the province in 1997 resulted from the infringement of workers' legal rights during restructuring (Henan sheng zonggonghui bangongshi, 1999). The Shanghai Municipal Trade Union also attributes some large-scale collective contentions to restructuring (Shanghai shi zonggonghui yanjiushi, 1999: 353).

The most inflammatory issue that tends to provoke workers' open protests is collective layoffs. Many restructuring schemes entail collective layoffs in the name of improving industrial efficiency. However, since SOEs are the chief sites of social provision, layoff for many workers and their families means a loss of income, benefits, and indeed subsistence, given that no effective safety net is in place. Thus, workers' reaction to collective layoffs can be strongly emotional, and a collective layoff tends to create a constituency for collective action. Some examples follow.

- Shanghai Zhentai Rubber Company decided on a major reshuffling by merging with two other factories and announced an immediate layoff of all male workers older than age 45 and female workers older than age 44. All the laid-off workers were given three weeks to sign a *xiangang* contract with the company that would ensure a 300-yuan livelihood allowance per month for two years; any delay in doing so would be assumed to be a voluntary resignation, meaning the workers would be ineligible for compensation. However, a thousand workers affected by this scheme refused to sign. Instead, they took to the streets, and their protest activities lasted for two days. Their plan to march to the municipal government was finally called off after government officials promised to reconsider the scheme (Ming pao, 7 March 2001).
- Shanghai Xiechang Sewing Machine Company was converted into a shareholding firm after merging with Feiren Sewing Machine Company, which resulted in the closure of three workshops and thus job losses for more than 400 workers. The announcement of the decision immediately caused a spontaneous rally in the factory zone, followed by a demonstration in the streets that demanded an explanation of the decision from management (interview, January 2001).
- A county government in Hainan province decided to sell the state-owned Changjiang Sugar Factory, worth 118 million yuan, to a private enterprise. The deal would force more than 200 workers to leave the factory, yet offered no lump-sum compensation for those laid off. Sixty workers, all demobilized soldiers in the factory, gathered to discuss measures to defend workers' interests and prepared a collective petition to the county government. Later, 505 more workers signed a petition letter to the provincial trade union, requesting its intervention to resolve the dispute (Gongren ribao, 22 July 1999).

While a collective layoff frequently triggered workers' protests, it is not the only factor that inspired workers' resistance to restructuring.

Even without the threat of layoffs, workers might still stand up against a restructuring scheme if they believed that it would force them to endure harsh labor conditions. SL Group, a medium-sized food-processing factory in Luoyang, Henan province, had faced financial difficulties for years.³ To keep the enterprise running, the management decided in June 2000 to lease it to a private entrepreneur for eight years at 5 million yuan. The decision was strongly opposed by workers who feared a possible collective layoff by the new management. Hundreds took to the streets and blocked the main traffic lines in the city, even using trucks. But it turned out that the new boss had no layoff plans and, instead, was going to raise workers' monthly wages to 800 yuan, which was quite high by local standards. To persuade the workers to accept the scheme, SL organized a trip of worker representatives to visit a factory owned by the entrepreneur who would lease SL, with the purpose of showing them how well that enterprise was run and thereby enhancing their confidence in the new boss.

Contrary to the expectation of the SL management, however, the trip reinforced workers' objection to the leasing scheme. Although employees in that enterprise were warned in advance not to "speak carelessly" (*luanshuo*) to visiting workers, the latter managed to have some private contacts and found that labor conditions there were just too brutal to be acceptable. As some workers told us in interviews, their counterparts in that factory had to work twelve hours a day and seven days a week. They were required to arrive at the enterprise half an hour before work started, line up, and listen to instructions by foremen. Then they would march in a group, like army troops, to workshops. The workload was very heavy, and the workers had to run here and there during their work. Although the wages sounded high, there were various ways to fine workers for "bad performance," which might be only a very minor mistake. For example, a dirty spot remaining on the window could cost a cleaner several yuan. Even bathroom time was limited, and exceeding it would lead to a fine.

As the workers from SL were touring a workshop, they saw a blackboard that recorded fines on individual workers; one person listed had been fined three times, totaling 60 yuan, on a single day. They learned from workers there that many of them would only receive 300 to 400 yuan after various fines, which amounted to a 40% to 50% reduction of their nominal wages of 800 yuan a month. "Even though you work

very hard,” one worker told them, “you cannot get the pay you want, since there is no way to avoid minor mistakes during work.” Unable to endure such brutalizing conditions, most of the workers previously working in that factory had already quit. The majority of the current employees were rural migrant workers.

When the worker representatives returned and spread among their fellow workers news about what they had seen, most felt it unacceptable to work under such a despotic management and called out even more loudly for a stop to the leasing scheme. In the face of the workers’ mounting confrontation, the SL management finally accepted the workers’ demand for a “referendum” on the enterprise. As expected, the scheme was rejected.

Managerial corruption is another major incitement to workers’ protest, especially when workers perceive it as a serious encroachment on their interests. When converting their business to a shareholding company, the management of Shanghai Second Leather Shoes Factory put forward a proposal that allowed only managerial personnel to hold shares and denied workers’ the right to do so.⁴ The management also hid information on factory assets and profits from the workers.⁵ When this proposal leaked out, the workers exploded. They believed that the factory leaders were taking advantage of restructuring to transfer factory assets into their own pockets and rob the workers of their money. Getting no response from the government agencies to which they sent several letters of complaint, the workers started a collective petition (*jiti shangfang*). In the three months from June through August 2000, they went to the municipal government four times, with more than one hundred participants each time. The collective action eventually forced the government to intervene, and the proposal was aborted.

In another case, Jilin City Printing Factory in Jilin province was ordered by the court to go bankrupt. Also stipulated in the court’s ruling was that the factory’s assets of 21.3 million yuan belonged to the 1,253 workers and staff, with each person entitled to a settlement fee of 15,000 yuan. However, the management did not implement the court’s ruling. Instead, factory leaders, together with some managerial personnel, were complicit in grabbing the money to start a new company in the name of restructuring. They all became its shareholders, leaving the workers uncompensated. Angry workers occupied the factory to prevent its assets from being taken away, filed legal suits, and

sent representatives to Beijing three times to seek justice (Gongren ribao, 22 July 1999).

It is apparent that industrial restructuring that produces collective layoffs or has other adverse effects on workers is more likely to trigger protests now than a few years ago. In 1995 and 1996, when industrial restructuring had just begun to affect workers' livelihood, workers quietly accepted their fate, hoping that their plight was temporary. But as their hope of being recalled by their enterprises fades away and finding alternative employment becomes increasingly difficult as the number of xiagang workers in the job market quickly rises, temporary suffering turns into permanent pain. Such social experiences have a great impact on workers who have not yet lost their jobs, making them more sensitive to changes to their disadvantage. Their fear of the hardship of being laid off can explain the increased incidence of protests against industrial restructuring in recent years.

THE PROTEST FRAME AND REPERTORIES OF CONTENTION

Workers justify their protest against industrial programs by pointing to the property rights of SOEs as presented in the old socialist rhetoric, as well as to state-sanctioned procedures that govern restructuring. The generation of workers who are now facing hard times has been indoctrinated for years with the official dogma that factories are publicly owned. Although they do not necessarily believe in it, and many are actually extremely cynical about the rhetoric that vaunts workers as the "masters of enterprises,"⁶ workers hold that they should have a say in whatever changes may affect them, given their lifelong contribution to the factory. Relevant labor legislation and official regulations specifying procedures for restructuring reinforced workers' "rightful resistance" to those measures that disregarded their interests.

The "injustice" commonly complained about by workers is their total exclusion from the restructuring process. In many enterprises, as in all the cases mentioned above, management made decisions on restructuring behind the scenes, deliberately keeping knowledge of them from workers until they were formally announced. While official policies stipulate that in formulating a major restructuring

scheme, especially when it will affect workers' interests, workers must be consulted,⁷ management seldom brings such issues up for open discussion in enterprises. Managers reason that open discussion would only create a mess and hinder restructuring measures since restructuring almost inevitably alters workers' existing economic status. But very often, the move to keep workers away from decision making indicates that managers have something to hide—since many of them have taken advantage of restructuring for their own private benefit.

Workers challenge managerial decisions to change the form of property ownership without their consent, claiming that SOEs are public property and that they have legitimate rights to it—a perception of property rights that their counterparts in private enterprises do not have. As workers from Changjiang Sugar Factory argued in their petition letter to the provincial trade union,

How to restructure the form of property should be democratically determined by workers. The county government cannot unilaterally decide it. . . . Workers are the master of the enterprise and the main body (*zhuti*) of reform. Restructuring without consulting the workers' and staff council and selling the factory without informing workers are serious violations of workers' democratic rights. We demand to get back our democratic rights. [Gongren ribao, 22 July 1999]

Workers' claim to factory property was not simply an exploitation of the official rhetoric. Their experiences with enterprises under the old system further reinforced such a claim. Because most workers spent all their working lives at a state enterprise and contributed to the accumulation of state assets through low wages, they felt strongly that the factory was not simply "theirs" (the managers') but also "ours." When Taiyuan Metal Structure Company was sold to Shanxi Spaceflight Company, workers and retirees were furious, as they learned that the latter firm was actually only interested in the factory estate for resale rather than for production, which meant that workers or retirees would sooner or later lose jobs and pensions. When some retired workers approached the manager and were told that they no longer had a say in factory policy, they retorted, "We started from scratch and built the factory brick by brick in the past; don't we even have the right

now to know what happens to the factory?" One worker said, "We have contributed our entire life to the factory and will never allow any individuals to sell out the workers' interest. We will fight to the last person" (Gongren ribao, 17 January 1998).

The workers from Shanghai Zhentai Rubber Company expressed the same feeling. "They [managers] cannot just sell the factory like this," one worker remarked. "The factory is not theirs. It belongs to all workers. I have worked here for about thirty years. They cannot just send me home like this." The feeling of being attached to the enterprise was symbolized in a slogan that was displayed and shouted in a protest against the sale of the enterprise to a private owner—"Give the Factory Back to Me!" (*Huan wo gongchang*) (Gonghui xinxi, 15 October 2000). Workers with such feelings believed that they were entitled to a say in the changes that would significantly affect their lives, and it was unfair and unjust that they be left out of these decisions. In some factories, such feelings translated into an open challenge to the transition to capitalist property relations. For instance, in their protest, workers from Zhengzhou Paper Mill displayed a huge red placard in front of the factory entrance that read, "Reform Does Not Allow Privatization!" (Li Minqi, 2001).

Thus, unlike protesters in the other two settings whose claims against exploitation or the violation of the subsistence ethic are generally reactive (Tilly, 1976), workers protesting restructuring make not only reactive claims against arbitrary schemes but also proactive ones, as they attempt to influence the changes that concern them or demand to be included in the process.

Workers' institutional locations as well as their perception of property rights also shape their repertoires of contention. Like those laid off, workers protesting against restructuring take to the streets and block traffic. Indeed, for members of a social group without much institutionalized access to political power and economic resources, collective action through gathering in public spaces represents one major means of making a claim (Munger, 1981: 75). By using such "disruptive power" (Piven and Cloward, 1977: 69), they attempt to focus the government's attention on their grievances and pressure management to change the original restructuring schemes.

However, a striking and unique method employed in protests against restructuring is "defending factories" (*hu chang*), which

involves occupying the factory and physically obstructing the restructuring schemes. That is, when they learned of the restructuring schemes that would lead to measures detrimental to them, angry workers blocked the entrance to the factory to prevent new owners from taking over the factory's property, or they occupied the factory to force local governments or management to respond to their demands.

When workers in SL Company learned that the enterprise was leased out and the new boss was sending his security team to take over the factory, they rushed to the factory and drove those people away. Claiming to be defending state assets, they formed their own team to block the factory entrance to keep the security team from entering again (interview, August 2000). The conflict caused by the sale of Taiyuan Metal Structure Company also compelled retired workers to occupy the factory to prevent a takeover by Shanxi Spaceflight Company. One night, about 30 security guards from the latter company raided the factory and pushed two nightshift members of the "defending factory team" out of the main entrance. In just two hours, dozens of workers rushed to the factory, forced the raiders out, and "recaptured" the factory. Immediately following this skirmish, Shanxi Spaceflight put up a notice forbidding the retired workers from entering the factory and threatening a suspension of salary payment for all those who participated on the "factory team." But the workers from Taiyuan Company did not back down and continued to defend the factory while filing a petition (Gongren ribao, 17 January 1998).

In another case, workers from Jilin City Printing Factory used the same method in their protest against corruption that took place during the restructuring. About 400 workers joined in the action of defending the factory, which lasted five days and four nights, until the Jilin municipal government intervened and channeled the dispute into a legal procedure (Gongren ribao, 25 August 2000). Workers from Shuangyang Textile Factory at Dafeng, Jiangsu province, occupied the factory for an even longer time. In this case, widely reported in the Western media, 4,000 workers were forced in 1996 to buy shares in the factory as part of its restructuring. Many workers invested a large portion of their life savings—about 500 to 600 yuan per worker on average, or more than a year's salary each. Then, in November 2001, the factory suddenly and secretly filed for bankruptcy. The factory boss and several other managers emerged as the firm's new owners. Not

only were workers unable to get back their money, but they were told to sign new contracts reducing their salaries by half. Furious workers went on strike and occupied the factory. It took eleven days for the local police to force them out of the factory and resume work (Washington Post, 21 January 2002: A1).

Workers even confronted government officials with the “defending the factory” strategy. When workers from a plastics factory in Shanghai heard that their factory was being forced by its superior agency to merge with another one, they began to worry about the potential danger to their interests. They knew that the other firm involved was actually in debt and that the state agency was attempting to use the merger to rescue it. When the party secretary and other officials of the state holding corporation arrived at the factory to implement the merger, they were surprised to see that angry workers had blocked all the entrances to the factory. Their entry was denied (interview, January 2000).

The workers justified their occupation of the factory as defending public property to which they had legitimate rights. This form of action can be traced back to the tradition of working-class struggle in the final years of the Chinese Revolution. As some workers proudly described it, their action of defending the factory was similar to that of their predecessors on the eve of the communist takeover in 1949, when pro-communist workers formed “worker guard teams” (*gongren jiuchadui*) to protect factories from sabotage by the Guomindang (interview, January 2000). Ironically, however, workers are now using the same method to ward off capitalistic takeovers endorsed by a party-state that still labels itself socialist. In doing so, workers draw a clear line between “them” and “us” and create a situation of “collective bargaining by blockade” to force management or government agencies to reconsider any restructuring schemes that are to their disadvantage.

Institutional locations are important for explaining workers’ choice of defending the factory as a form of contention. Workers in private enterprises seldom employ the same method since they do not perceive factory property as “theirs,” nor do they have the same feeling of attachment to the factory as state workers do. The form is not available for the *xiagang* workers either. Although their conception of factory property might be shared with workers protesting against

restructuring, they cannot “defend” factories, for they had been thrown out of the workplace for some time. Thus, their defiance can take place only on public sites. Workers protesting against restructuring are still employed, even though many of them have not received regular pay because of the financial difficulties of their enterprises. This status enables them to adopt the factory as a site for contention.

Yet strikes, usually the last resort by workers for asserting claims in industrial conflicts, are seldom used in SOE workers’ protest against restructuring. Their rarity is not only because strikes require a high level of organization and coordination, which is obviously unattainable for Chinese workers. It is also because many enterprises undergoing restructuring are not yet in full operation; therefore, workers cannot “choose” to stop work since there is not much work for them to do anyway. Thus, striking does not constitute an effective form of “disruptive power” at the workers’ disposal. Nor does it make sense to the retirees, although they have reason to resist the changes that would make them more vulnerable. Thus, blockade and occupation became ways for workers to claim factory property and take a stand against the “them” that had taken away their rights.

OUTCOMES OF CONTENTION

Workers’ contention in China by no means reflects organized labor power. Most of their collective actions are spontaneous since they are usually unorganized and leaderless.⁸ As a matter of fact, organized labor mobilization is still inconceivable in China today. But spontaneous contentions—no matter whether undertaken by workers in the private or state sectors or by those already laid off—do create a situation of “collective bargaining by riots” (Tarrow, 1998: 34) that places pressure on management or governmental agencies. Nevertheless, the possible outcomes of that pressure are also determined by the institutional locations in which protests occur.

Some of my cases show that workers’ protests against restructuring eventually brought the disputes to workers’ and staff councils (WSC, or *zhigong daibiao dahui*) for a settlement. Most SOEs have WSCs designed to strengthen workers’ “democratic management” in enterprises. However, while the Enterprise Law empowers WSCs to

participate in enterprise administration, scrutinize policies advanced by the management, and supervise managers' performance (Zhang, 1997: 138), their actual role is extremely limited. Few managers take the councils seriously. Asserting that they are the sole persons who have the legal right to make managerial decisions, managers either simply ignore WSCs or just treat their activities as a matter of formality or ritual (Gongren ribao, 13 July 1998). The powerlessness at the enterprise level of trade unions,⁹ which are supposed to be the working organs of WSCs in SOEs, further limits the latter's roles.

However, when tensions escalate between workers and management, largely functionless WSCs can suddenly come into play. They become a power resource for workers and a critical arena where the contestation over restructuring may be resolved. To be sure, most workers are cynical about WSCs' role in enterprise administration. But when their vital interests are in danger, workers may find WSCs to be the only possible means of legitimating their claims and solving disputes in their favor. They can call for WSCs to act, asserting that WSCs, by law, should have a say in major managerial decisions. Having tasted workers' militancy, managers can hardly reject workers' demand for a WSC meeting to settle the disputes. Management tends to capitulate not just because WSCs are legitimate institutions for handling issues concerning workers' fundamental interests but also because of governmental pressure to end any disorder sooner rather than later.

For example, after days of open confrontations on the streets and at the factory entrance, the management of SL conceded to the workers' demand that the leasing scheme be approved by the WSC. The WSC in turn proposed a "referendum" in the factory as the final solution. According to the workers there, this was the first time in the factory's history that they had voted to decide something important to their interests. The scheme was rejected by 80% of the workers and staffers who cast votes. Similarly, the dispute in Jilin City Printing Factory also invoked a "referendum" that, with an overwhelming vote of 703 to 1, rejected the management's conspiratorial plan to form a new company by stripping workers of their layoff compensation (Gongren ribao, 25 August 2000).

In another case, the management of Jianhua Cloth Factory in Shengyang City sold the factory estate to another company without

informing the workers. It was not until the beginning of the renovation project by the buying company that workers found that the factory had already changed hands. They immediately filed a collective petition to the Municipal Textile Industrial Bureau. Under pressure from the workers as well as the government agency, a WSC meeting was called. The factory leaders were forced to make their secret deal known to worker representatives. Angry workers described it as a *mai shen qi* (i.e., a form of indenture in which one sells one's own family members). By a vote of 21 to 2, the WSC meeting resulted in a demand that the deal be immediately terminated and the manager removed from his post (Gongren ribao, 2 April 1999). In the case of Shanghai Xiechang Sewing Machine Company, workers' protest forced the management to suspend the restructuring program. Over the next few months, the program was revised several times to incorporate workers' demands for a better compensation scheme and was finally approved at a WSC meeting (interview, 20 January 2000).

Protests against restructuring in some SOEs have led to the involvement of WSCs, which provide workers with certain limited institutional checks on management (something unavailable to workers in the private sector), but such an outcome must also be attributed to governmental intervention. It is true that while official rhetoric holds that workers' interests should be well taken care of when restructuring programs are implemented, local governments often ignore or acquiesce in the violation of workers' rights during the process. Some local governments are even complicit in such violations. For example, Liuzhou Automobile Industry Sales Company in Guangxi province merged with City Cold Storage Plant without prior consultation with the trade union and WSC. When the merger failed to ensure continued employment to all workers, as the management had previously promised, workers filed a collective complaint. However, it turned out that the merger had been approved by the municipal government, which therefore sided with the management. One official responded to the dispute by saying, "The merger does not have to be approved by the WSC and if any workers disagree with it, they can just walk out of the factory" (Gongren ribao, 8 September 2000).

But when perceived rights violations trigger open protests or persistent collective petitions (*jiti shangfang*), government agencies may have to step in. Acting primarily out of political considerations, they

sometimes take a position in favor of workers to keep labor contention at bay. The SOE restructuring is a governmental program, and there is no doubt that the government wants to see it succeed. Nonetheless, social stability remains the regime's paramount concern. Local governments are all under pressure to defuse "unexpected incidents" (*tufa shijian*), as popular action is officially called, and to maintain local social order. They cannot reach this goal simply by suppression. Suppressing workers who make no political demands and whose claims are often derived from the official rhetoric on working-class interests would place the government in a morally and politically indefensible position. Thus, when labor protests arise, local governments usually try to placate workers by promising to take care of their "legitimate rights" or to harshly deal with corrupt practices so as to contain workers' discontent and keep social stability from being disturbed.

The effects of government interventions in dispute settlements vary with the different institutional locations in which protests take place. The private sector (either domestic or foreign enterprises) is still largely beyond the direct reach of governmental bureaucracies. When protest incidents occur, the common practice of local governments is to mediate worker-management conflict through local trade unions or labor bureaus rather than intervening directly. If a breach of the Labor Law is evident, local labor bureaus or trade unions might seek legal redress on behalf of workers. For the laid-off workers who gather in the streets, moreover, the government has little organizational means to redress their claims since they are outside the work unit (*danwei*) or work unit system, practically speaking. Local governments usually disperse such contentious gatherings by a promise of a couple of hundred yuan to cover back pay (Chen, 2000: 62).

For protests by SOE workers against restructuring, however, the pattern of governmental intervention is different. First of all, despite reforms aimed at separating the government and enterprises, local governments still have institutional leverage over SOEs. Superior bodies of these enterprises, whatever they are now called (e.g., general companies or state holding corporations), are de facto official agencies within the structure of government institutional control. Once a protest erupts, these official organs are able to exert direct and decisive influence on dispute settlements. They can even send "investigation teams" to enterprises (clearly, the government cannot use the same

methods to handle disputes in the private sector). In the cases I gathered as well as those reported by the media, governmental agencies played a critical role in pressuring management to respond to workers' demands.

For instance, when the dispute in Xiechang Company, Shanghai, led workers to gather first in the factory zone and then in the streets, the company's superior agency, Shanghai Light Industry (Group) Holding Corporation, sent a deputy party secretary to talk with workers and to ask the company to reconsider its original restructuring scheme. The revised scheme, finally accepted by the WSC, resulted from official mediation as well as workers' resistance (interview, January 2000). In the case of Jianhua Cloth Factory, the workers' collective petition got the Shengyang Municipal Industrial Bureau involved in the settlement process. The bureau pressed for a WSC meeting, at which the sale was rejected. When the buyer, a company outside the jurisdiction of the bureau, refused to withdraw from the deal, the bureau encouraged a second WSC meeting at Jianhua, which decided to bring the dispute to the court (Gongren ribao, 2 April 1999). Workers' militancy in SL Company "convinced" the municipal government that "the affairs of the enterprise should be decided by workers" (interview, January 2000). The WSC meeting and the ensuing referendum were both endorsed by the local government. The protest triggered by corruption in the restructuring of the Shanghai Second Leather Shoes Factory led to an investigation by the factory's superior, Shanghai Light Industry (Group) Holding Corporation. As a result, the manager was removed from his post and the restructuring plan was suspended (interview, January 2000).

It must be pointed out that in all these cases, neither the involvement of WSCs nor official intervention would have happened if workers had not first taken collective action. WSCs are powerless and functionless in most SOEs, entirely ignored by management most of the time. But their organizational presence and law-stipulated roles make it possible for them to become an institutional weapon that workers can use to challenge management. Open protests tend to create a situation in which workers seek dispute settlements within the WSC framework, a legitimate demand that managers have few reasons to deny and government agencies usually endorse. Similarly, official intervention takes place only when workers' resistance takes the form of open

contention and may, from the government's perspective, disturb social stability. The more loudly workers voice their protests and the more militant their actions become, the more likely it is that governmental agencies intervene. China still lacks institutional mechanisms of negotiating labor dispute settlements before disputes turn nasty. Nevertheless, although both the involvement of WSCs and official interventions are forced responses to workers' collective action, they often tip the balance in workers' favor.

*CONCLUDING REMARKS: FROM
MORAL ECONOMY TO WORKERS' RIGHTS*

Labor protests against restructuring programs in SOEs represent workers' attempts to resist the formation of capitalist or quasi-capitalist property relations that are detrimental to their interests or to ensure their basic welfare after restructuring. They differ from protests by workers who are already either in capitalist property relations (i.e., private enterprises) or outside the industrial system (i.e., those laid off from SOEs) in both their form and content. Protests by workers in the private sector target labor processes and rights abuses but do not challenge property relations per se. The common forms of their resistance are strikes or collective stoppages. There are some similarities between protests by those who have been laid off and those who are against restructuring since both types are driven by subsistence anxiety, but their differences are obvious. Workers in the former protests demand subsistence aid, while workers in the latter demand inclusion in the decision-making process that may threaten their subsistence. Like those laid off, workers involved in protests against restructuring often take to the streets, but they also take over factories—a form of contention not available to those laid off—to contest, symbolically, the hegemonic conceptualization of property reforms.

Defining the nature of state workers' collective action against restructuring is difficult and may remain controversial. If restructuring is the only possible way for many ailing SOEs to escape demise and is necessary for China's reform, then the resistance to it appears backward looking and anachronistic. These contentions seem to take on some characteristics of "moral economy" protests by the subaltern

class in other social contexts, such as peasants' resistance to capitalist penetrations into a traditional economy that threatened their subsistence (Scott, 1976) and artisans' resistance to the capitalist mode of production in the early days of Western industrialization (Thompson, 1968). Chinese state workers' protests against restructuring can be seen as a response to the erosion of state paternalism by the market reform that has broken their "rice bowl." Such resistance, like moral economy protests in other contexts, is "defensive" and "restorative," informed by prereform ideological legacies and aimed at maintaining the status quo or a condition at least no worse than the present one.¹⁰ But it has not proved to be a viable strategy for furthering workers' interests. As a matter of fact, even though workers may benefit from concessions from either local governments or management in the short run, they cannot reverse the imperative of the market-driven reform and may have to bear much worse consequences if they refuse restructuring. Take SL Company as an example again. After the termination of the leasing scheme, the enterprise was unable to find alternatives to solve its financial troubles. This failure to reorganize led to wage and pension arrears and caused many workers to regret the veto against the leasing scheme, which would have at least ensured their wages.

Workers' nostalgia for the good old days and resistance to new labor relations sometimes can be counterproductive and even self-defeating. A well-known SOE in Anhui province went bankrupt and was purchased by a private entrepreneur in 1998. The new management enforced some restructuring measures that were not entirely unreasonable, such as checking work attendance, reducing pay when the production quota was unmet, prohibiting workers from using the factory's electricity in the residential area, increasing the number of security guards at the factory entrance to prevent workers from taking factory assets to the residential area, and so on. However, workers viewed these measures as offenses against their "self-respect," complaining that "they no longer had freedom" in the factory. When the management requested workers to sign labor contracts, none of them responded. The management next decided to lay off a number of workers with a one-time severance package, calculated on the basis of years served, and then hire more temporary laborers. The workers went on strike. Under pressure, the local government charged the

enterprise with “not properly settling down laid-off workers in accordance with the purchase contract,” and the court ordered it to close down. Although the private entrepreneur was a loser in this dispute, the workers were by no means victorious—with the inevitable closure of the factory, they were all out of a job.¹¹

Indeed, protests against industrial restructuring indicate the dilemma that Chinese workers face in their struggle for justice and fairness in the economic transition. From the workers’ perspective, extremely low wages in the past several decades not only contributed to industrial capital accumulation but also were an investment in their own welfare. Restructuring amounts to taking away their long-term investment with little or no compensation. As my cases as well as numerous media reports indicate, workers are by and large ignored, excluded, and abused in a process so critical to their interests. However, as they are increasingly subject to the forces against them, they are cognitively and politically unprepared to define and defend their own interests in the new economic relations. This condition has something to do both with the impact of institutional legacies and with present political restraints. Under the old socialist industrial structure, labor interests were embedded in paternalist state institutions. Nevertheless, the formation and development of such institutions, unlike welfare regimes in the West, resulted not so much from working-class struggles that made rights claims to the state (Tilly, 1989) as from a revolutionary societal transformation steered from above by a party-state that ruled in the name of the working class. Thus, Chinese workers have had little experience in making claims for their own interests since the founding of the People’s Republic of China. They perceive their interests as naturally tied to the paternalist framework and have in fact never been confronted with the issue of how to define their interests beyond it.

When forced into this confrontation, as the market-driven reform has dismantled socialist paternalism, workers find that institutional opportunities for them to shape countervailing forces vis-à-vis the market do not in fact exist. They are prohibited from independent organizing, which is critical for the development of their class consciousness and of their ability to define and defend their rights under new property relations. The official trade union, which is subject to the

control of the state, is not helpful in shaping organized labor power (Chen, forthcoming). Thus, their contentions are largely spontaneous, seeking to frame claims that are somewhat linked to the rhetoric of the past and the old concept of ownership, the rights that have become unenforceable and indeed irrelevant under market-dominated economic relations. China's state workers still lack an alternative language to define their interests and present their demands.

However, even moral economy-oriented protests against industrial restructuring could help construct workers' collective experiences. In nineteenth-century Europe, it was artisans who played the leading role in working-class protests. "The artisans," as Barrington Moore observes (1978: 152), "felt moral outrage at an attack on their rights as human beings. The loss of allegedly ancient rights constituted the core of their grievances." Their collective actions were responses to proletarianization that destroyed their rights, responses that engendered working-class formation and pioneered labor movements. In their opposition to the infringement of old rights caused by capitalist development, the Chinese state workers' moral economy protests are somewhat similar to those of artisans in nineteenth-century Europe. Such collective experiences may not necessarily amount to the emergence of new consciousness, but they do enlighten workers, helping them to see their place and identity in the new system of power and to critically reevaluate their relations with employers and the state. Rampant corruption during the industrial restructuring particularly reinforces their sense of injustice and the antagonism between labor and management. As one worker from Dafeng declared angrily during the strike, "Officials live off the labor of the workers!" (Washington Post, 21 January 2002: A1).

Nevertheless, whether Chinese state workers can turn their moral economy protests into a labor movement that strives to protect their rights in an increasingly capitalist economy will depend on some overall structural changes that allow political space for independent organizing. There are reasons to be pessimistic about such a prospect in the near future. But the large-scale, cross-enterprise collective protest at Liaoyang in March 2002 indicates that workers have begun to be aware of the importance of organizing. Although the protest was unsustainable and short-lived given the crushing power of the state,

the Chinese working class may learn from such experiences how to redefine its identity, role, and interests in the market economy.

NOTES

1. My research collaborator and I conducted field investigations into several protest incidents that took place in these two cities. We interviewed a few workers, union cadres, and managers involved in each incident.

2. Tarrow (1998: 19-20) defines the opportunity structure as consistent—but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national—dimensions of the political struggle that encourage people to engage in contentious politics. McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996: 10) spell out four dimensions of the opportunity structure that affect the structuring of collective action: (1) the relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system, (2) the stability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity, (3) the presence of elite allies, and (4) the state's capacity and propensity for repression.

3. The account of SL given here is based on the investigation conducted by my research collaborator and myself in the summer of 2001.

4. The account of Shanghai Second Leather Shoes Factory given here is based on my investigation in the summer of 2001.

5. According to some workers, although the factory lost money on its main products, it made enormous profits by renting out factory estates and buying stocks.

6. For example, in a survey conducted by a provincial trade union in the northwest, 64% of respondents said that the declaration "workers are the masters of enterprise" is not in accordance with reality. An All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) investigation in 1997 collected workers' complaints, such as "now the manager is the real master," "workers are now living tools and do not have any rights," and so on (Quanguo zonggonghui yanjiushi, 1999: 140, 182).

7. For example, according to a document issued by the Ministry of Labor regarding the enforcement of the Labor Law, an enterprise must notify the union and workers of the layoff plan 30 days in advance. The union and workers have the right to express their opinions about the plan and revise it (see Zhongguo gongyun xueyuan gonghui xi, 2000: 231).

8. Although the majority of protests now are spontaneous, organization and leadership do exist in a very limited number of labor actions. See Ching Kwan Lee's (2000) work on the micromobilization preceding labor insurgency in a city of Liaoning province. The recent large-scale, cross-enterprise protest in Liaoyang in March 2002 indicates that independent organizing is emerging.

9. As a de facto part of the government, all "union bureaucracies"—the ACFTU and its provincial, municipal, and district branches—are able, to varying degrees, to intervene in or exert pressure on enterprises within their jurisdictions in cases in which rights abuses occur and to seek resolutions in favor of workers. However, enterprise unions do not belong to the government structure, though they are formally subordinate to "union bureaucracies" above them. Rather, they are organizationally fused with and actually subject to management. This creates a formidable obstacle to unions' representative function. For detailed discussions, see Chen (forthcoming).

10. For an application of the moral economy perspective to labor protests, see Posusney (1993) and Kopstein (1996).

11. The case is cited from Feng Tongqing (2002: 72-73).

REFERENCES

- CHEN, FENG (2000) "Subsistence crisis, managerial corruption and labor protests in China." *China J.*, no. 44 (July): 41-63.
- (forthcoming) "Between the state and labor: the conflict of Chinese unions' double identity." *China Q.*
- DING, X. L. (1999) "Who gets what, how? When Chinese state-owned enterprises become shareholding companies." *Problems of Post-Communism* 46, 3: 32-41.
- (2000) "The illicit asset stripping of Chinese state firms." *China J.*, no. 43 (Jan.): 1-28.
- FBIS-CHI-96-007 (U.S. Foreign Broadcast Information Service-China).
- FENG TONGQING (2002) *Zhongguo gongren de mingyun* (The fate of Chinese workers). Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe.
- FOLGER, ROBERT (1986) "A reference cognition theory of relative deprivation." Pp. 33-56 in Olson James, Peter Herman, and Mark Zanna (eds.), *Relative Deprivation and Social Comparison: The Ontario Symposium*. Vol. 4. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- GAMSON, WILLIAM (1992) *Talking Politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Gonghui xinxi [Union Information]. Beijing.
- Gongren ribao [Workers' Daily]. Beijing.
- Henan sheng zonggonghui bangongshi [The General Office of Henan Federation of Trade Unions] (1999) "Analysis of workers' street demonstration in Henan province during 1998." *China Labor Bulletin*, no. 50 [Online]. Retrieved Dec. 1999 from http://www.china-labor.org.hk/9912e/henan_demos.htm
- KATZNELSON, IRA and ARISTIDE R. ZOLBERG [eds.] (1986) *Working-Class Formation: Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press.
- KLANDERMANS, BERT (1997) *The Social Psychology of Protest*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- KOPSTEIN, JEFFREY (1996) "Chipping away at the state: workers' resistance and the demise of East Germany." *World Politics* 48, 2: 391-423.
- LEE, CHING KWAN (1999) "From organized dependence to disorganized despotism: changing labor regimes in Chinese factories." *China Q.* 157, 3: 44-71.
- (2000) "The revenge of history." *Ethnography* 1, 2: 217-37.
- LI MINQI (2001) *Guanyu Zhengzhou zaozhichang zigong fanfubai fansiyouhua douzheng de yanzheng shengming* (A solemn statement about the struggle of workers in Zhengzhou paper mill against corruption and privatization). 18 March [Online]. Retrieved Dec. 1999 from <http://www.bignews.org/20010326.txt>
- McADAM, DOUG, JOHN McCARTHY, and MAYER ZALD (1996) *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Ming pao [Bright Daily]. Hong Kong.
- MOORE, BARRINGTON, JR. (1978) *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt*. White Plains, NY: M. E. Sharpe.
- MUNGER, FRANK (1981) "Contentious gathering in Lancashire, England, 1750-1893." Pp. 73-110 in Louise Tilly and Charles Tilly (eds.), *Class Conflict and Collective Action*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- O'BRIEN, KEVIN (1996) "Rightful resistance." *World Politics* 49, 1: 31-55.
- PIVEN, FRANCES FOX and RICHARD CLOWARD (1977) *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*. New York: Vintage.
- POSUSNEY, MARSHA PRIPSTEIN (1993) "Irrational workers: the moral economy of labor protest in Egypt." *World Politics* 46, 4: 83-120.

- Quanguo zonggonghui yanjiushi [Research Office of the ACFTU] (1999) 1997 nian Zhongguo zhigong zhuangkuang diaocha (Survey of the status of Chinese staff and workers in 1997). Beijing: Xiyuan chubanshe.
- SCOTT, JAMES (1976) *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press.
- Shanghai shi zonggonghui yanjiushi [Research Office, Shanghai Municipal Federation of Trade Unions] (1999) "Chanquan biange zhong de laodong guanxi zhuangkuang yanjiu" (A study on the state of labor relations during the change of property rights). Pp. 353-59 in Quanguo zonggonghui yanjiushi (Research Office, ACFTU) (ed.), 1997 nian Zhongguo zhigong zhuangkuang diaocha (Survey of the status of Chinese staff and workers in 1997). Beijing: Xiyuan chubanshe.
- South China Morning Post. Hong Kong.
- TARROW, SIDNEY (1998) *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. 2d ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- THOMPSON, E. P. (1968) *The Making of the English Working Class*. London: Penguin.
- TILLY, CHARLES (1976) "Rural collective action in modern Europe." Pp. 9-40 in Joseph Spielberg and Scott Whiteford (eds.), *Forging Nations: A Comparative View of Rural Ferment and Revolt*. East Lansing: Michigan State Univ. Press.
- (1989) "Where do rights come from?" Pp. 55-72 in Theda Skocpol (ed.), *Democracy, Revolution, and History*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press.
- WALSH, EDWARD (1981) "Resources mobilization and citizen protests in communities around Three Mile Island." *Social Problems* 29, 2: 1-21.
- Washington Post. Washington, DC.
- ZHANG, YUNQIU (1997) "From state corporatism to social representation—local trade unions in the reform years." Pp. 124-48 in Timothy Brook and B. Michael Frolic (eds.), *Civil Society in China*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.
- Zhongguo gongyun xueyuan gonghui xi [Union Department, Chinese Labor Movement College] [ed.] (2000) *Xinshiqi gonghui gongzuo zhongyao wenjian xuanbian, 1993-2000* (Selected important documents on union work in the new period, 1993-2000). Beijing: Zhongguo gongyun xueyuan.

Feng Chen is an associate professor of government and international studies at Hong Kong Baptist University. He is the author of Economic Transition and Political Legitimacy in Post-Mao China: Ideology and Reform, and his current research focuses on China's state-labor relations.