Performance Management and the New Workplace Tyranny

A Report for the Scottish Trades Union Congress

Executive Summary

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Origins, Aims and Data Sources

- This report breaks new ground in that it reveals the impact of emerging forms of Performance Management (PM) on employees on the workplace 'front line'. Extensive primary research was conducted (2010-2), focused largely on the financial services and telecoms sectors.

- This study originates in a resolution by the Communication Workers Union (CWU) and Unite the Union, Finance Sector, passed unanimously at the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) in 2009. It followed reports by union reps and members that new forms of PM were putting unbearable pressurise on many workers and some were being managed 'out of their jobs'. Concerns were raised about links between PM and mental ill-health.

- The STUC commissioned Professor Phil Taylor of the University of Strathclyde to undertake a desk-based study of PM. However, a preliminary reading of HRM textbooks revealed little on the impact for workers. Consequently, it was necessary to review a broader literature on the changed contexts of work and employment and their effects on workers. These contexts include work intensification, lean working, sickness absence and HRM.

- Crucially, given the paucity of research on PM's effects, it was deemed necessary to undertake extensive primary research. Thirty-one extended interviews were conducted with union officers and workplace reps. In representing members and raising their concerns with managers, these are key informants, providing insight into the experiences of a broad population of employees. This might be considered to be a report into the 'survivor syndrome', the experiences of those who have avoided redundancy. The majority were from financial services (Unite the Union) and telecoms (CWU). Other interviews were members of the STUC women's committee, the Director of an Employment Advice Centre and an ex-HR Manager of a telecoms company.

- Evidence was also gathered from 21 union conferences and meetings at which PM was debated. These were valuable for deepening knowledge, as they directly reported the experiences of union reps and workers. These sources are complemented by documentary evidence, a review of employee handbooks, guidelines and *pro forma* on PM.

Mainstream HRM Perspectives on Performance Management

- The mainstream HRM literature contends that PM is a systematic process for improving organisational effectiveness through developing teams and individual workers' performance. The objective is held to be the alignment of individual with organisational objectives.

- Such alignment is not to be imposed in a top-down, directive manner. The underpinning philosophy is of a mutuality of interest between employers and employees, with agreed goals, support, improvement and achievement. Key watchwords include '*dialogue*', '*shared understanding'*, '*agreement*' and '*mutual commitment'*. Such assumptions are reflected in the narratives of the company documentation.

- Underlying the PM process is the performance cycle, a virtuous circle in which three stages - planning performance, supporting performance, reviewing performance – are interconnected. Input from employees is deemed desirable, even necessary, for creating achievable objectives. Line managers are the 'key enablers' in the supporting phase, identifying training needs and providing resources for supporting employee development. Employee feedback is welcomed even though it might lead to downward revision of unachievable targets.

- ‘Reviewing performance’ has been, and remains, associated with performance appraisal, which typically used to be an annual event, although 6-monthly or quarterly reviews are now common. Appraisal now includes wider groups, having been extended from management/ supervisory staff to include technical, clerical and administrative staff and manual grades.

- The scope and method of appraisal varies, with a principal difference lying between qualitative and quantitative forms. Whatever combination of criteria is used, it invariably has a similar outcome – the ranking of individual employee performance.

- Several reasons are used for giving rankings – that formalisation helps overcome subjectivity, and provide a justification for scores, that Performance Related Pay would be impossible to operate without them, and that they are a key for motivating employees.

- Rating scales differ. They can be alphabetical, numerical or based on abbreviations. The most common number of categories is five and their overall use has grown considerably. Typically, descriptors accompany a specific performance rating. For example, a definition of ‘*Exceptional performance’* might be ‘*Exceeds expectations and consistently makes an outstanding contribution that significantly extends the impact/influence of the role’*. ‘*Unacceptable performance’* might be ‘*Fails to meet most objectives/ requirements of the role; shows a lack of ability which has been discussed prior to performance review’*.

- Methods have been adopted to minimise bias and subjectivity in scoring, including the ‘balanced scorecard’ and 360-degree appraisal, the latter involving some self-assessment.

- From the 1990s significant numbers of employees have had a proportion of their salaries determined by Performance Related Pay (PRP), although there is evidence of recent decline in coverage. Whether PRP does improve organisational improvement has been questioned.

- The received wisdom is that managing underperformers should be a ‘*positive process’* based on continuous feedback. The emphasis should be on what can be done to improve individuals’ performance through managers providing *coaching, training, guidance, experience or facilities required to enable agreed actions to happen* the’.

- Authors have referred to performance appraisal as having previously often been an ‘annual ritual’, completed in perfunctory manner with limited organisational impact. The evidence suggests that appraisal has been increasingly integrated into comprehensive PM programmes.

- PM has expanded in scope and now knits together individual goals, departmental purpose and organisational objectives. It incorporates central aspects of HRM; recruitment, induction, training, reward management, capability procedures and termination. Some maintain that PM is synonymous with the totality of day-to-day management activity, bound up with organisation-wide targets and Key Performance Indicators. Some suggest that the drive for continuous improvement has led to harder managerial practice, but the HRM literature views such development negatively, an ill-conceived departure from authentic PM and HRM best practice, which advocate ‘softer’ developmental and motivational approaches.

- Insofar as employees are considered, it is assumed, without recourse to empirical evidence that PM is beneficial and certainly not detrimental. It is held that those employees who do not meet required standards will be managed 'fairly' and given the required support to improve.

Critical Academic Commentary on Performance Management

- Despite the developmental tenor of prescriptive HRM literature, some academic and practitioner work has criticised performance measurement through appraisal indicators and targets. Some argue that performance appraisal and management are compromised. They reflect on the conflict between the line manager's role as evaluator of an employee's performance and that as coach, counsellor or confidant.

- It is conceded that bias distorts ratings; the 'halo' effect, when managers neglect problematic aspects of employee performance; personal preferences and prejudices (including gender, ethnicity, appearance); a 'comparing employees effect', in which task complexity is not taken into consideration; and the 'recency effect', by which a ranking is compiled on the basis of a manager's most recent encounter with an employee. There may be a 'central tendency' effect, by which managers 'play safe', allocating similar rankings to avoid conflict or ease the task.

- The more intrinsic problem is subjectivity. Achieving objectivity is problematic when the notion of 'performance' itself is unclear. To capture an individual's total contribution with a single score oversimplifies the complex factors and influences that impact performance.

- Subjectivity and bias can be exacerbated when employee behaviours, traits, attitudes and personality characteristics are subject to ranking. Although behaviourally anchored rating scales (BARS) and behavioural observation scales (BOS) have been discredited, there is evidence of their re-emergence.

- Subjectivity problems persist despite efforts to deliver consistency through 'calibrating' or 'moderating' managers' comparative scores. The effectiveness of normalisation or standardisation practices can be questioned. If the proportions of the workforce allocated to particular categories are determined in advance, consistent with the amount of money allocated for PRP reward, then top-down distribution does not reflect actual performance.

- Normal distribution has been used by organisations when determining performance rankings. Based on IQ scoring, the Bell curve is employed. A 'typical' distribution might be 10% of employees as 'underperformers', 15% 'failing to meet expectations', 50% as 'meeting expectations', 15% as 'above expectations' and 10% deemed 'excellent performers'.

- The principle problem is that such a distribution is a statistical exercise. Managers are compelled to discriminate between employees according to *a priori* fixed percentages, rather than actual 'performance'. The charge of inequity can be levelled against the 'Bell curve'.

- The literature contends that the Bell curve is used sparingly in the UK, but is more widespread in US companies. In an influential book, '*The War for Talent'*, the authors argued that the bottom 10 per cent of performers must be removed each year in order to overcome inertia and prevent top performers becoming demotivated. Yet, there is no evidence to support the claim that this practice does improve business performance.

Changed Contexts of Work Organisation - HRM, Management Control, Work Intensification, Lean and Sickness Absence Management

- The evolution of PM from being largely synonymous with stand-alone performance appraisal to become integrated and all-embracing did not happen in a political-economic or organisational vacuum. The following factors have been identified as salient; HRM, lean production, work intensification, absence management and occupational health and safety.

- The HRM model that became influential in the UK focused on commitment and employees as valued assets, where skill development was the route to competitive advantage. However, this 'soft' HRM, which stressed development of trust, collaboration and empowerment, was an idealised version that often obscured a 'hard' calculative, 'factor of production' HRM. Beneath the rhetorical façade of high-commitment, there remained fundamental the market imperatives of cost minimisation, labour market flexibility and downsizing.

- What was missed in naïve versions of HRM were broader economic shifts and the growing competitiveness of markets that generated organisational re-structuring and process re-engineering, and which brought significant change to the organisation of work.

- Forms of lean working were often pivotal to restructuring. Despite optimistic claims that lean would lead to worker empowerment and upskilling, studies of manufacturing environments found widespread evidence of *inter alia* tighter managerial control, narrow tasking, stress, burnout and musculo-skeletal disorders (MSDs).

- Lean working in the office is often associated with call centre work. Studies documented the outcomes of intensity, pressure, stress and MSDs. One concluded - '*the leaner the call centre, the meaner it will be'*. Lean's impact on white-collar work more broadly has delivered similar outcomes with harsh micro-management and ICT-based monitoring as pervasive. The evidence from recent studies is that lean and PM have become integrated to produce a more intensified form of labour regulation in white-collar work.

- Synthesising the critical literature on HRM and lean working a significant theme to emerge is growing work intensification. Significant academic research has demonstrated how work effort has increased significantly over the course of the past two decades.

- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are translated into targets that cascade down through organisations, a process by which middle managers set more specific metrics for team leaders who, in turn, impose specific targets on individuals. Target compliance has become a key aspect of work intensification.

- Many studies of work intensification drew on evidence from the decade preceding the great crash. If intensification and work strain were the outcomes of a longer period of technological and organisational change, themselves influenced by broader market conditions, then the consequences for workers in the post-2007-8 economic conditions are more profound. Union respondents are therefore reporting on the 'survivor syndrome', the experiences of those who survived the job culls, but who are now expected to 'do more with less'.

- Emerging evidence indicates that strict absence control has become embedded in many organisations as an integral element of labour cost reduction strategies. Previous distinctions between sickness absence and absenteeism are being eroded as employers increasingly view all absence as, if not illegitimate, an unwelcome cost to be minimised.

- Sickness absence policies and practices have shifted even further from ‘welfarism’ to discipline. In fact, sickness absence policies have been seen to contribute actively to worker ill-health and negative well-being. Workers are increasingly compelled to come to work when ill and to return to work prematurely. Both exacerbate ill-health.

- Government statistics provide some indication of the scale of the problem of work-related sickness and ill-health. Of the 1.2 million cases in 2010-11, 508,000 were afflicted by MSDs and 400,000 by stress, depression and anxiety. An estimated 211,000 people first became aware of their work-related SDA during this reference period.

- Much needs to be done to examine the relationships between workers’ reported ill-health and the conditions of work and employment. These include factors considered briefly in the report - the consequences of ‘hard’ HRM, lean working, work intensification and strict absence management – but other aspects. It is within these changed contexts of work organisation and ‘people management’ that PM has evolved as part of a ‘hard’ HRM strategy that is integrated with forms of lean working and ‘tough’ sickness absence management to produce deleterious outcomes for workers.

Performance Management - The Evidence from the ‘Front Line’

The Emergence of Performance Management

- Interviewees reported that PM procedures had been in place since the 1990s and that appraisals and individualised pay systems dominated early initiatives. In financial services, the first wave occurred in the context of intensified market competition In telecoms punitive PM followed ‘the race to the bottom in pricing’, which put greater pressure on labour costs.

- The collapse of the dot.com boom accelerated trends. Respondents referred to a ‘harder edge’ to PM in the early 2000s and, according to one interviewee, by 2004-5 ‘it was full steam ahead, no holds barred sales and targeting’. The evidence confirms that tougher PM with disciplinary outcomes predated the financial crisis of 2007-8. However, the recession subsequently provided the context and justification for organisations to intensify existing practices of micro-management and discipline.

- Respondents in telecoms and financial services reported that newer forms of PM that depended on ICT-based mechanisms of managerial control were first developed in call centres before being more widely dispersed throughout the different parts of the organisation.

From Performance Appraisal to Performance Management

- Respondents report the transition from annual appraisal to a tightly controlled process of near-continuous scoring and evaluation. Increasingly, employees were rated on five categories consisting of both quantitative (measurable) and qualitative (assessable) criteria.

- PM has been underpinned by wide-ranging statistical measurements of output, which came to be translated into a plethora of targets.

- Increasing importance has been attached to the evaluation of employees' behaviours and attitudes. Company documentation reveals the narrowness of the idealised profile of desired 'behaviours' that companies appear to wish to engineer, both psychologically and socially.

- There are many obvious problems with the process of evaluating these behaviours. What is required for effective performance may conflict with what is deemed to be a good behaviour. For example, focusing on one's own tasks is a behaviour that is often rated poorly, yet this might be just the sort of positive attribute required for, say, call-handling. Given the large number of criteria involved it is inconceivable that a team leader could accurately assess every worker on each factor with such finely-grained distinctions between the rankings.

- Respondents critiqued the nebulous, subjective and even arbitrary evaluation involved. A CWU officer questioned how a telecoms field engineer could be judged on being 'inspired' or on what is meant by their 'heart'. Interviewees believed that such 'soft' targets provided the easiest way to mark someone down. Further, workers had great difficulty in challenging behavioural rankings perceived to be unfair, precisely because of their subjectivity.

- In financial sector companies the balance appears to have shifted in recent years from an emphasis on quantitative measurement to a greater stress being placed on qualitative criteria, customer satisfaction and behaviours. Respondents also reported how monitoring employee performance, in all its aspects, places an enormous burden on the time and resources of front line management.

Performance Improvement

- The real bite in PM comes from performance improvement programmes and their outcomes - corrective actions, discipline and even the dismissal of underperformers. A Unite Officer reported that in one bank, the new Performance Improvement Procedure (PIP) represented a step change in managerial action against 'underperformers'. Previously, it took 18 months to 'exit' someone but now it could take '6 months from start to finish'. The punitive side of PM has increasingly taking precedence over the reward side.

Targets, Work Intensification and Lean

- Interviewees reported that managers had less discretion over targets and were now working much more 'to orders'. Some referred to these tighter controls as causing 'dysfunctional behaviour' and even bullying as managers themselves had to deliver their own targets.

- Respondents testified to a dramatic culture change and a huge intensification of work that was frequently related to the introduction or extension of lean working. In some companies it lean was being introduced '*through the back door'* without consultation.

- Lean brought intensification and, indeed, humiliation when underperformers' names are written up on whiteboards as was the practice in at least one bank. In another, a rep talked of how lean 'was about creating the space in the workplace so that the company could get more out of people for less'. Understaffing was important, so was continuous improvement and the language used 'was all about getting workers to up their game'.

- Unachievable targets were causing *'people to get into difficulties, make mistakes and be disciplined'*. In telecoms, according to a regional officer, the *'noose on working time is tightening all the time'* as the company is *'plugging even the smallest holes in the working day'. PM had become 'a rod over peoples' backs'*.

The Bell Curve and Forced Distribution

- Senior management routinely deny that the Bell curve operates in their organisations. On rare occasions they concede it is used for indicative but not disciplinary purposes. However, company documentation from two banks demonstrates unequivocally that it was utilised in these organisations and respondent testimony affirms its widespread use.

- Interviewees reported that the Bell curve was an integral part of PM, designed to increase control over the workforce with the aim of increasing productivity and reducing cost. For some the less obvious objective was to tighten controls over managers to make them 'more accountable' for their subordinates' performance.

- Respondents described the tone of a language that is directed almost entirely against underperformers. For example, '*You have not achieved, you are an underachiever'*. People are marginalised, criticised for letting the team and the company down.

- The numbers affected by PIPs seems to have increased. One rep reported that if employees scored low on only one criteria, despite being excellent in all the others, they would be judged an underperformer.

- Respondents described 'moderating' or 'levelling' procedures, by which team managers meet senior managers to evaluate the scores. Ostensibly designed to produce consistency and fairness, respondents believed that the purpose was to prevent over-generous ratings. In Bank B, in the view of the national officer, the 'round table' process provided 'another layer of scrutiny and control'. Others believed 'levelling' was designed to ensure that sufficient numbers of underperformers were identified, as a preliminary to reducing headcount.

Underperformance and Managed Exits

- Union officers and reps believed that underperformers were being targeted so that they could exited out of the organisation. It was reported that in Bank A, 700 were exited in 2009. In Bank C, a workplace rep described how from signing an 'action contract' to being exited out of the company could now take as little as 12 weeks.

- Respondents reported the widespread use of compromise agreements, a 'shocking development' in the words of one rep, by which underperformers were placed on PIPs or their equivalents and then pressurised to accept minimal payments.

- ‘Managed exits’ are reported to be commonplace. One workplace rep described the unpalatable choice given to many workers as, ‘*You can leave quietly now with a sum, or leave later with nothing and a bad reference’*.

- The interview with the former HR Manger of a telecoms company provides remarkable insight into company practice. ‘*We were being asked to find grounds to get rid of people without having to pay for it. If we could not find them, we would have to make up the grounds for managed exits. In my section of 80, 9 people were managed out of the organisation on performance grounds…On the company website it describes PM as about coaching, developing people and improving their performance. Yet, in practice, my ex-colleagues are spending about 80% of their time on action of one sort or another against underperformers. What matters is only the last quarter’s Performance Management. You can go from being an ‘Excellent’ performer to ‘Development Needed’ within a quarter. The organisation’s motive is clear, they are out to get you out. It is a horrible and inhuman way for people to be treated.*

- This key informant provides disturbing anecdotal evidence of ‘*a sinister practice that we were to use– ‘the car-park conversation’. A manager would be expected to take an employee, who had received poor performance score, outside for an informal discussion. The manager would then start a conversation along the lines of, ‘You know your last review. It’s only going one way, isn’t it? You should perhaps think about coming to an arrangement’. It was important that the manager never made any explicit suggestion that the worker should leave. We were given training in how to conduct these conversations; a one-day course on employee relations for HR managers, where we would go through the best mechanisms for ensuring that an employee would voluntarily suggest a compromise agreement’.*

Sickness Absence Management

- The interviews provide additional evidence of stricter sickness absence policies and procedures, forcing employees to attend work when ill or to return to work prematurely after illness. One senior rep summarised the view of many, *‘In absence management you saw the whole caring side of the employer just disappear completely’*. For a telecoms national officer, it amounted ‘*bullying people back to work before they are ready to come back’*.

Performance Management – The Effects on Employees

- Respondents reported on the negative consequences for workers particularly when it was associated with lean working. The unrelenting intensity of work generated unprecedented levels of pressure and affects people ‘very badly’.

- An aggressive culture and language where underperformers, it was reported by one rep had been referred to as ‘bottom feeders’, reinforced ‘ a sense of hopelessness’ that some employees had that they were not up to their job.

- It was reported that there was a tendency for employees not to contest ratings perceived as unfair, in the hope that their personal situation would improve. *‘If I don’t put my head up nobody will see me’,* was the thinking reported by the national officer of one bank.

- A managed exit was a distressing event not just for the affected employee but for their colleagues. The wider problem was the profound feeling of insecurity that came with performance improvement plans. Rather than encouraging ‘improvement’ it tended to have the opposite effect of incapacitating employees because of insecurity.

- For the CWU Regional Officer, the punitive measures exacted against so-called underperformers and tough sickness absence policies amounted to ‘corporate bullying’. Respondents reported that growing numbers are being affected psychologically by the constant pressure to perform, internalising the escalating demands of the job and becoming worn down to the point of illness.

- The testimony of the former telecoms HR Manager is again compelling, *‘Many are working harder and harder because they are worried at ending up at the bottom of the performance management heap. The pressure of avoiding becoming a poor performer drives people to work harder and is causing mental health problems, some of them serious…I have had female colleagues breaking down and weeping, I have a man go to pieces in front of me’.*

Gender Discrimination and Disadvantage

- Many reported that PM and its attendant practices disproportionately disadvantaged women workers. For example, women were more likely to have to deal with child care or family issues, demands that could clash with attendance or other performance criteria.

- A CWU branch secretary reported that part-time women were more likely to be put on short-term development plans, which can easily become a path to disciplinary action and exit.

Union Responses to Performance Management

- Clearly, PM has emerged as a major industrial relations issue in a number of organisations. In British Telecom, the CWU has made efforts to negotiate over several years. A motion to the CWU national conference was passed committing the union to industrial action if the company did not cease its ‘cavalier and brutal’ application of PM policies.

- A recent ballot of CWU members suggests that the issues of concern to members have not been resolved. As many as 38 per cent believed that the situation had actually deteriorated.

- In the finance sector both PM and sickness absence management have become key items on the bargaining agenda at the national level.

- At workplace level reps are propagating awareness that unfair rankings should be appealed. Equally, reps are becoming more proactive in challenging unachievable targets before workers fail to deliver on them, and subsequently become designated an underperformer.

- Respondents reported some success in defending workers facing managed exits on the grounds of underperformance. Several reps at conferences and seminars described their how management often broke procedure in their haste to exit people. Others reported how they had effectively used the Disability Discrimination Act to defend colleagues.

- A key theme to emerge from the interview evidence and from the union meetings was the concern reps and officers had regarding the volume of individual cases they were having to deal with. The key question was how to collectivise the individual cases.

- For some the most productive way forward was to adopt an organizing approach to meet with reps regularly, co-ordinate case work, approach management collectively and seek opportunities to organize and recruit.

Non-Union Workplaces and Vulnerable Workers

- If employees in unionised workplaces are experiencing unprecedented pressures from PM as the respondents suggest, then workers in unorganised workplaces, where there is no collective bargaining or representation are even more exposed.

- Compelling evidence was provided by the Director of an Employment Rights Centre who reported on the widespread extent of vulnerable workers facing terrible treatment over sickness absence management and PM.

- Dismissal on the grounds of capability has become increasingly common.

- The conclusion to be drawn from this evidence is the importance of union recognition, in order for employees to benefit from a basic level of protection and representation.

Conclusion

- The mainstream HRM literature depicts PM as a harmonious process for improving organizational effectiveness through aligning employee with organisational objectives.

- PM has evolved from consisting largely of pay-related appraisal to become tighter, more prescriptive and even all-encompassing and central to HRM. PM is now bound up with organization-wide targets and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

- However, despite some understanding that new forms of PM might, through their focus on continuous employee improvement, involve harder managerial practice, the dominant view remains that PM is – or should be – developmental and based upon consent, agreed objectives and mutual agreement between employers and employees. To the extent that a stringent version is seen to exist, it is regarded as an ill-conceived departure from ‘authentic’ PM.

- There has been criticism of PM from ‘within’ HRM for its potential for bias, but is widely believed that normalization measures can overcome these.

- One particular form of PM ranking that has emerged has been the Bell or normal distribution curve. The major problem is that it is a statistical exercise in which the actual performance of workers – even if such a thing could actually be measured – bears no relation to this predetermined categorization. Most notably, many managers are compelled to define a fixed percentage of the workforce as underperformers, irrespective of their actual performance.

- A crass version, without supporting evidence, has been the recommendation of Michaels *et al* from their book, *The War for Talent,* that 10 per cent of the workforce should be removed every year to boost organizational success.

- The dominant perspective in the UK is of PM as essentially supportive of employees. The present study fundamentally challenges that perspective. Performance Management has evolved to become a systematic and integrated process within the context of a sea-change in the political economy of work and employment.

- To the extent that HRM had a soft as well as a hard side, much has been shed or undermined in conditions of intense market competition, cost minimization and then crisis and recession. The growth of lean working has led, not to creative empowerment, but to re-engineering, micro-management, speed-up and work intensification.

- The primary evidence demonstrates unequivocally that the evolved form of PM at least in financial services and telecoms, is synonymous not with developmental HRM but a tightly monitored experience of top-down, target-driven work. The implementation of tough PM with disciplinary intent predated the financial crisis of 2007-8, but crisis and recession accelerated these trends. While the measurements of output remained a central imperative, they were accompanied by the even more subjective evaluation of behaviours and attitudes.

- The real bite in PM lies in performance improvement procedures that lead to corrective actions and create widespread job insecurity. However, the lynchpin in the harsh and oppressive system is often the Bell curve and the forced distribution of performance rankings, which stigmatises a fixed percentage of the workforce as 'underperformers' irrespective of their actual performance. Such a categorization sets up many for 'managed exit'.

- The former HR manager provides the most shocking testimony of the extent to which a company might engineer employees' departure from their employment. The sinister practice of the 'car park conversation' was merely the worst example of appalling treatment.

- It was beyond the scope of this study to establish relationships between PM ad occupationally-related ill-health. However, the evidence overwhelmingly confirms the stressful consequences for workers arising from the new regimes of work.

- What are being described here are not the experiences of a handful of untypical employees under duress, but the widespread extent to which workers are being badly affected by relentless performance pressures.

- A final argument can be made that these PM practices are not merely unjustifiable on grounds of welfare, decency, dignity and well-being, but that they may also be counterproductive from a managerial perspective. They require enormous commitment of resource by middle and front-line management and serve merely to create a deep well of discontent amongst a highly pressurised workforce.