THE MAKING OF INDONESIAN WOMEN WORKER ACTIVISTS

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by

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ABSTRACT

This study is an effort to combine activism and academic work. This study is not only aimed for academic purposes, but also for practical utilization by labor activists in their work to improve workers' conditions.

My research focuses on the increasing evidence of industrial women workers' militancy in contemporary Indonesia. This issue is significant because, first, Indonesian women workers are able to manifest their political voice despite pressure on the labor movement by the ruling powers. Second, the increasing militancy of contemporary Indonesian women workers represents the voice of the lower class women, which has not been represented by the women's organizations dominated by middle class women.

The research utilized a case study method. The information was gained from a group of women workers in Alpena factory (pseudonym) in Jakarta. The study aims to find out how women workers manifest their resistance, and to understand the process whereby they become activists. Through the case study of Alpena women workers, it is found that resistance is manifested through acts that range from everyday forms of resistance to open and

organized collective action. The everyday forms of resistance are acts that are unorganized, informal, individually initiated, and not evidently challenging authority; for example gossiping about the management's oppressive policies, talking back to supervisors or taking a long time in the toilet.

Everyday forms of resistance can lead to open and organized collective action, such as a strike. The everyday forms of resistance function as a glue that keeps the workers' spirit of resistance up and provides experience in learning to resist. This finding is in keeping with long standing feminist efforts to redefine politics, which traditionally have been seen as limited to the realm of formal organizations, such as trade unions, political parties, and governments. The old definition ignores many of women's most important political acts.

This research is also a critique of Manning's Neoclassical economic argument that the increasing workers' protest actions in Indonesia are not yet significant enough to enable an organized labor movement. Manning argues that Indonesia is still in a situation of a labor surplus economy. This study also posits a critique of the Marxist labor activists'

perspective that Indonesian workers are not political because the present resistance is only about economic demands and not about the overturning of the dominant capitalist structure and the hegemonic ruling powers. The main critique of both the Neoclassical economic position and the Marxist perspective is that they ignore the significance of grassroots politics and concentrate too much on formal levels of political movement, in this case the trade unions, the government, and political parties.

The second finding is that there is an interrelated process that leads women workers to become activists. In the case of Alpena, there were many oppressive issues at work that angered the women: issues that relate to working conditions, such as minimum wage violation or insufficient health benefits, and issues that relate to respected values, such as the degrading treatment of workers by management or unkept promises by management. Outside the factory, there is oppression by the state that society, particularly the working class community, feels and reacts to. For women workers, there are also patriarchal values that some experience as oppressive. These factors interrelate with each other and generate the conditions that enable women workers to become activists.

In sum, this study provides support for the argument that Indonesian women workers today play an important role in labor politics because they have become a group that are able to manifest their resistance. In other words a politically conscious group of working class young women activists is in the making in contemporary Indonesia. By showing the importance of women workers in the rise of working class' resistance in contemporary Indonesia, it is hoped that this study can help to improve women's position within the independent labor movement and help to eradicate patriarchal obstacles within the movement.

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This thesis is the manifestation of not only my work, but also that of a lot of others. I received help from many people, most of whom I cannot mention. The foremost gratitude goes to the women workers of Alpena and the labor NGO activists who opened their doors, their hearts and minds, for me. It is to them that this thesis is dedicated.

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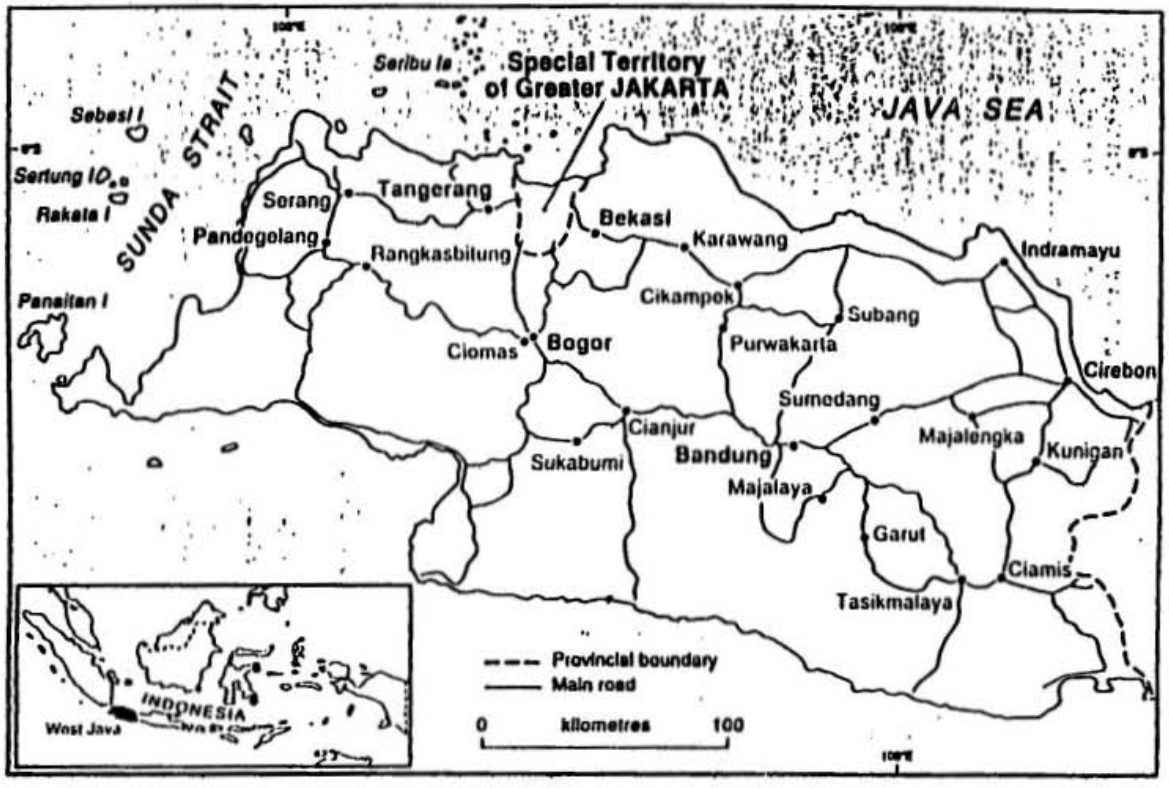
Although many people have "taken part" in formulating this thesis, the responsibility of its contents is only mine to bear. Finally, I hope that this thesis can really be of use to the Indonesian labor activists by improving the movement and making it more accountable to women.

Source: Legge 1977, ii

MAP 1

Map of West Java



Source: Manning and Hardjono 1993, 44

MAP 2

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study: Integrating Activism and Academic Work

This research is an effort to integrate my activism and my academic work. Since my undergraduate days in early 1980s I have been involved in the radical student movement and in 1991 I took part in the establishment of a women's Non Government Organization (NGO), *Yayasan Perempuan Mardika*, that focussed its work on the industrial women workers' sector. I worked full time for the NGO until 1993. The NGO itself, however, had a bitter end in 1995 when it had to be dissolved because of various difficulties, including the longstanding issue of the split between activism and academic work.

During my grassroots work with women workers and intense relationships with other labor NGO activists[1], one of the frequently debated issues was the split between activism and academics. The grassroots activists accused the academics of merely talking without wanting to take the risks in organizing at the grassroots level. Phrases such as the following often came out in discussions on labor issues; "Research and theory is fine but the

reality is ..." or "Let's not NATO (no action talking only)!" I remember one discussion in 1994, in Jakarta, when a graduate student who was presenting his paper on labor issues reminded a trade union activist that one of the shortcomings of current Indonesian labor activists was the lack of the habit of documenting important events and grassroots works for future study and evaluation. In other countries, he claimed, such activities were already common among labor activists, and it was not surprising to find activists doing research such as that which he was presenting in our discussion session.

The NGO community work of developing educational projects for women workers was an important experience for me. This period was my praxis period where I was immersed in the interplay between theory and action. I was trying to unite activism and academic work instead of splitting it. In 1994 I took up a scholarship in women's studies, which led to this thesis, as an effort to further unite activism and academic work. A more personal reason for taking up the scholarship was that I thought I needed a break from the intense grassroots work and that I hoped I could use the scholarship opportunity to do research on women workers which would also function as a medium for reflection on my NGO work experience. I believe that this research, which aims to understand the phenomenon of

intensifying women workers' militancy in Indonesia, can be utilized by labor activists.

One of the labor issues that I argue is an important development in Indonesia today is the evidence of women workers' militancy that I found from my own interaction with the women workers during my NGO work, from the increasing number of women workers' protests reported in the media, and from this research. Never before in Indonesian history have women workers displayed their resistance as they do today.

One of the most recent stark examples of women workers' militancy is, unfortunately, the death of Marsinah, a young woman worker activist. She was found dead in a field on the outskirts of Surabaya, East Java, in May 1993. She had been battered to death and was raped prior to her murder. Marsinah had been missing for several days after taking part in leading a strike at the watch factory where she worked (YLBHI 1994).

Marsinah's death shocked the whole nation. To the general public and to workers in particular, her death manifested the powerful existence of violence against (women) workers. To labor activists, her death removed the commonly held idea that female worker activists would not be subjected to physical violence as severe as that

suffered by male worker activists.

Another example of contemporary Indonesian women workers' militancy and the risks Indonesian women workers face, is in the less publicly known case of six women worker activists who were sentenced to one year's imprisonment for taking part in leading a strike in Pematang Siantar, North Sumatra (Tapol 1994).[2]

The women workers' militancy exemplified by Marsinah in Surabaya, East Java and the six women workers in Pematang Siantar, North Sumatra, which are two industrial cities thousands of kilometers apart (see Map 1), suggest that there is a widespread increase in militant women worker activists within the contemporary Indonesian industrial working class. These militant women workers are, I believe, common in the rising Indonesian industrial cities: the great Jakarta-Bogor-Tangerang-Bekasi (Jabotabek); Bandung and its surrounding towns in West Java; Semarang and Solo in Central Java; Surabaya and its surrounding towns in East Java; and Medan and its surrounding towns in North Sumatra (see Map 1 and Map 2).

Having researched industrial women workers in Tangerang, West Java in 1979, Celia Mather (1985) concluded that women workers had been successfully subdued, partly by the network of capitalists and male community leaders through the utilization of patriarchal

values. Mather's work was the first study on contemporary Indonesian women workers' politics. I agree with Mather's analysis that patriarchy plays a role in controlling women workers' lives; however this does not mean that women are consequently silenced and Mather's argument now needs to be revisited, if only in response to the examples of militancy referred to above.

Aside from Marsinah's militancy, there is another reason for taking industrial women workers' role in workers' resistance seriously. Strike statistics show that the number is increasing, particularly in factories where women comprise the majority of workers. For example, 74 percent of strikes in West Java in 1991 occurred in textile and garment factories where women workers are predominant (Hadiz 1993, 188).

Available strike statistics show that strikes in Indonesia totaled only 39 in 1988 and steeply increased to 114 in 1991 (Hadiz 1993, 187). Meanwhile another source recorded that for the 'Jabotabek' and West Java area, the strikes totaled 257 in 1992, 303 in 1993 and 334 in 1994 (YLBHI 1995, 102). The available strike statistics are conservative estimates, mainly based on news reports. Many strikes go unreported, as the findings in my field research also show.

Smaller scale collective resistance is happening behind closed factory doors. These forms of resistance are unlikely to be reported by the media. The kinds of workers' resistance very likely to be reported are those that involve hundreds or thousands of workers, or when the workers have attracted attention by marching on the streets, or by protesting at the Manpower Office.

Other kinds of resistance that are unlikely to be reported, or even acknowledged as resistance, are the various forms of everyday resistance. As my research findings indicate, everyday resistance is going on continuously and is significant in making open and organized collective resistance possible.

It is in these forms of everyday resistance and smaller scale collective resistance that go unreported that women workers have played a predominant role. The phenomenon of women workers' resistance is especially significant when one considers that it is occurring under a repressive regime.

The evidence of rising militancy among women workers in contemporary Indonesia is the phenomenon that I address in this thesis. My research tries to answer the following questions:

1. How do women workers manifest their resistance?
2. How do women workers become activists? What factors

are at play in their becoming activists?

3. What is the impact of women workers' activism on the labor movement?

Findings in this study offer a critique of the Neoclassical economic's view, represented in Manning's work, where he argues that an organized labor movement in Indonesia is not yet possible because there is still a condition of labor oversupply (1995, 52). My study also provides a critique of the Marxist perspective, which argues that Indonesian workers today do not have a political consciousness since the existing resistance only demands for social and economic reforms and not structural and political changes (Cahyono, Napitupulu, and Razif 1994, 89-90; Razif 1994). Both the Neoclassical and the Marxist perspectives ignore the various forms of everyday resistance and focus too much on politics at the level of large and well structured organizations, such as trade unions, political parties and the government.

This study shows that women workers do resist and that their resistance is, indeed, political. My case study of Alpena women workers supports the long-standing feminist arguments for the need to redefine politics, that is not to limit politics to the realm of formal politics or large organizations, and to include grassroots actions

(Bookman and Morgen, 1988). Scott's concept of everyday forms of resistance (1985) is in line with feminists' efforts to redefine politics. Scott argues that the myriad and continuous individual acts of resistance are the basis of larger scale resistance (1985, 35-36). It is chiefly in the range of everyday forms of resistance and open organized collective resistance (that never get the media's attention) that Alpena women workers manifest their political consciousness.

In this study, I adopt an interactive model in the effort to understand Alpena women workers' resistance. The model is developed from Aldon Morris' work that argues for the need to study political consciousness as an interactional system (1992). The interactive perspective argues that there is an interaction of factors that determine the generation, sustenance and inhibition of political action (Morris 1992, 359). By utilizing this perspective, I argue that there is a complex overlapping of factors that generate, sustain and inhibit women workers' resistance in Alpena.

Factors that made women workers become activists include the existence of role models, family support, social activities within the workers' community, working class political culture, access to urban communication infrastructure, and support from labor NGOs. The complex

interrelated factors also inhibit women workers' political activism and prevent it from developing into a larger national labor movement. It is not only that government's repression is effective, but there are also other factors constraining the labor movement, including the persistence of patriarchy, fear of losing jobs, and disappointments and distrust among labor activists themselves.

I was initially tempted to identify factors that generate and sustain women workers' resistance by generating a list of factors determinant in the making of Indonesian women worker activists; a process analogous to developing a recipe for the labor movement. I realized in the process of my research that such an endeavor is impossible, as social processes are not something mathematical, but complex and dynamic.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gain understanding of the processes that lead to women workers becoming activists. I propose to do so by looking into the experiences of a group of women worker activists in the Alpena factory; by examining the complex processes at play in their becoming activists, and how these women workers manifest their activism. Another purpose is to understand

what the impact of Alpena women workers' activism has on the wider labor movement in Indonesia, that is how they relate to the trade unions and other workers' organizations.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Industrialization has become important in the Indonesian economy today. In the process of industrialization, women have increasingly been absorbed into manufacturing work. These women workers have also been showing their resistance. The phenomenon is a politically important development because living under a repressive government and especially after the long silence of the women's movement since 1965, these women workers are able to manifest their resistance. The militancy of Indonesian women workers, who are representatives of the lower class, represents an important development within the women's movement because the upper and middle class women have for long been predominant in the women's movement.[3] Militant women workers who organize at the grassroots level, like Marsinah, never come to the limelight of official women's organizations' activities unless they meet a sad fate such as hers. I believe that there are more Marsinahs out

there among women workers; that is why I argue that women worker activists are important in the making of resistance in contemporary Indonesia.

Through understanding the importance of the various forms of resistance that the women workers of Alpena manifest, we can appreciate the importance of everyday forms of resistance and the role of informal organizations. Women's position within the trade unions and the labor NGOs can be improved by utilizing the knowledge about the presently developing Indonesian women workers' resistance as well as the constraints women workers face in the male dominated labor organizations.

Women workers in other developing countries have organized themselves in various mass organizations, such as the KMK (*Kilusang ng Manggagawang Kababaihan*) in the Philippines (Rosa 1994). Meanwhile, women workers in the industrialized countries have for some time organized themselves in national organizations that were significant in pushing for improvements in women's position in the trade unions. For example, in the United States there are the Coalition of Labor Union women (CLUW) and the working women's organization '9 to 5' (Milkman, 1984). These women workers' organizations are not competitors to trade unions, as many Indonesian trade unionists fear[4];

instead, they can work side by side with the unions (Rosa 1994).

My experience in Indonesia leads me to believe that, although the labor activists see the importance of having more women active in the movement, there is fear that bringing in women's issues can split the female and male workers. Male labor activists tend to argue that there should only be common interests as ungendered workers. Such fear is a legacy of the Marxist movement, and is, I think, an obstacle. I will argue here that if the labor activists in Indonesia can see the significant role of women workers that is developing, then they will be more likely to tap into women's resources to build a stronger labor movement.

Lastly, the significance of this study is to fill the gap in existing research on contemporary Indonesian women workers, particularly research that looks on women workers' politics.

1.4.The Context of Contemporary Indonesia

Indonesia's population in 1995 is over 195 million, with 60% living on the island of Java, which only represents 7% of the total landmass (BPS 1995, 29). Java has been the center of government since the Dutch colonial

times in the 16th century and has the most developed infrastructure. Hundreds of ethnic groups comprise the Indonesian nation, with the Javanese ethnic group being the majority. Religion plays a strong role in people's lives with more than 90% of the population being Islam believers.

By and large, Indonesian society is patriarchal. The manifestation of patriarchy differs from one ethnic group to another as the case studies on gender differences in various Indonesian ethnic groups compiled by Atkinson and Errington show (1990). Women's efforts to challenge patriarchy also differ from one political economic situation to another. In general there was more room for women to struggle in the pre 1965 period, especially during the liberal democracy period 1945-1959, compared to the situation today under the New Order government (Blackburn, 1994, Wieringa 1992).

The ruling Indonesian New Order government came to power in 1965 after successfully clamping down on the so called aborted coup by the left (Rachman 1993, 4; Caldwell 1975). Suharto, a former military general who led the clampdown on the coup, has been president for almost 30 years now, and is currently serving his sixth presidential term.

Since 1965 the Communist Party and the various mass

organizations of the left have been banned. The military regime has also successfully put a rein on political life in the name of stability required for development. In 1971 the various political parties were fused into two parties, the Indonesian Democratic Party (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia* or PDI) as the fusion of nationalists and Christian based parties, and the Development Unity Party (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* or PPP) as the fusion of several Islamic parties. These two political parties have never been able to develop sufficient opposition against the ruling *Golkar* party (Fierlbeck 1994, 161-162).

Mass organizations were also fused into ones that the government could control. For example the peasants' organizations were fused into the Union of Peasants Solidarity of Indonesia (*Himpunan Kerukunan Tani Indonesia* or HKTI); the youth and students' organizations were fused into the National Committee of Indonesian Youth (*Komite Nasional Pemuda Indonesia* or KNPI); and the workers' trade unions were fused into the only trade union allowed by the government to exist, that is the Federation of All Indonesia Workers Union (*Federasi Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia* or FSPSI).

The FSPSI is widely viewed as a union that represents less the workers' interests than the emplcyers' and

government's interests. The union was inaugurated in 1985, under the name of SPSI (*Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia* or All Indonesia Workers Union). It is a unitary form organization, in which industry based unions have no independence, and the leadership is top-down from the national level to the district level.

The federation form of FSPSI was only put in place in 1995, to replace SPSI, as an effort to reduce international criticism that the Indonesian government repressed labor rights, particularly the rights to organize. It was claimed that under the federation form, industrial based unions would have more independence. However many labor activists seriously doubt this possibility because of the government's strong influence within the union. The past longstanding SPSI chairperson, Imam Sudarwo, was also an employer, which added to the criticism of SPSI's weakness.

Before 1985, the sole union was the FBSI (*Federasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia* or Federation of All Indonesia Workers). The New Order government pressured FBSI to be turned into SPSI, as FBSI was considered to still have radical elements and the term *buruh* was considered to be leftist (see glossary on *buruh*).

The Indonesian New Order government's method of ruling consists of "three elements: strong central

control, an official emphasis on tolerance, and economic growth" (Rachman 1993, 4). Government officials always argue in the media that the country needs stability to be able to implement economic development, which has indeed grown, amidst fierce criticism of the inequality in distribution of economic gains. The World Bank praises Indonesia for its development record that is comparable to the dynamic East Asian countries, whereby Indonesia is able to attain an average GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of almost 7% p.a. (World Bank 1994, 2).

The New Order Government's economic success initially rested in oil. Being one of the world's 15 biggest oil producers, Indonesia enjoyed an economic prosperity from the oil price increase in the 1970s. However, "Indonesia faced severe external shocks in the mid-1980s, including the collapse of oil prices..." (World Bank 1994, 3). The Indonesian government was pushed to reduce economic dependence on oil and to develop a non-oil economy through a series of deregulating economic policies that opened up room for private investment in the mainly export oriented economic activities (World Bank 1994, 3; Fierlbeck 1994, 157-159). Between 1985 and 1990 the country's output of manufactured goods more than doubled in value. Non oil export earnings totaled US$21 billion in 1992, an increase

of over 250 % in five years (Rachman 1993, 6).

One aspect of the current Indonesian context that is significant for this study is the number of women employed in manufacturing industries. The percentage of women in manufacturing employment in Indonesia is comparable to that in other Asian Countries: 44.9 % in Indonesia in 1990, 41.7% in South Korea in 1991, 45.3% in Thailand in 1988, 45.5% in Malaysia in 1988, and 40.7% in the Philippines in 1990 (Manning 1995, 61).

Mather's study notes the increasing employment of women in factory work. Her study that was implemented in Tangerang, West Java, reported that,

> "From the early 1970s to early 1979, some 56 factories were built in Kelompok, mostly producing consumer goods for the domestic markets.... The labor force of all these factories together numbered some 6,000 people, of whom just under half were women" (1985, 156).

Mather's study is significant because it was conducted in the period when women began to be massively employed in factory work.

In the years after Mather's study, as the government eased economic policies for foreign investors to boost non-oil exports, more women were absorbed into manufacturing work. Women comprise the majority of workers in factories producing for export. A study in one

garment factory for export in Bandung, West Java, notes that 92 percent of its 1,402 workers are women (Lok 1993, 157). Another study of garment factories in West Java by Verdy Yusuf points out that when production is geared for export then the feminization process takes place, where the management replaces male sewing-machine operators with female workers (1991, vi-x).

The women massively employed in factories today are predominantly young and unmarried or women with children who have to work out of economic necessity. The female labor force participation rate in Indonesian urban areas shows an increase from 24.3 percent in 1971 to 40.7 percent in 1987 for the age group of 20-29 (Gardiner 1991, 7).

Why is it that young unmarried women are employed in the factories? Cheap labor is certainly one of the main reasons and women are considered to be more willing to do the monotonous factory work for a cheap wage. In 1990, the daily minimum wage in Jakarta was Rp.2,100 (US$1.14)[5]. It was far lower than the minimum wage in 1990 in other Asian countries: 90 Baht per day (US$3.50) in Bangkok, Thailand; 160-200 ringgit per month (US$6-7 per day) in Malaysia; and 89 pesos per day (US$3-4) in the Philippines (Manning 1995, 61-62). The minimum wage at the time of this research in 1995 was Rp.4,600 per day

(US$ 2). This minimum wage in Indonesia does not even meet the Minimum Physical Need[6] standard that is set by the government. In 1991, the minimum wage in Jakarta only met 76.73 percent of the Minimum Physical Need (Simanjuntak 1993, 52-55).

With very low wages these women workers can only afford subsistence living. In other words they have become offerings on the altar of sacrifice for development. Women workers in the Indonesian industrial cities mostly live in cramped, rented rooms (*kontrakan*) in the slums surrounding the factories where poor living conditions are hazardous to their health.

Workers' occupational health and safety is an issue that has been neglected (Kemp 1994). There are no data available to show what health sacrifices the women workers have made for industrial development, especially when one considers that the impact of the worst health hazards at work can appear years after these women stop working.[7] However, case studies are a reliable source that can go beyond superficial official reports. My case study in Alpena found that many women workers suffer from lung disease. One young woman worker had to resign and return to the village to die when she could no longer afford the cost of living and medication in Jakarta.

Another reason for employing women is that women are considered "to be naturally more docile and willing to accept tough work discipline, and naturally less inclined to join trade unions than men" (Elson and Pearson 1981, 93). Lok, who studied a garment factory owner's perspective, stated that "women have so far proved easier to control than men" (1993, 160).

There is, of course, an internal push for women to seek factory work. For the many young women who are leaving home to work in the city factories, work is seen as some form of liberation (Deyo 1989, 185; Yusuf 1991, v). For these young women, having jobs in the city means an escape from family control and the money earned mean freedom to spend it on whatever they like. However, these women are not as free as they seem. There are still patriarchal values upheld in working class communities where these women live.

I believe that the massive employment of women in factory work in Indonesia today is an important development. Never before has such a high number of women been concentrated into modern wage work employment. The increasing number of women in factory work has implications for the labor movement in particular and the position of women in the society in general.

Notes

[1]Since the late 1970s, labor NGOs have sprung up in Indonesia. This rise of NGOs is because the New Order government that came to power in 1965 implemented a repressive policy on the labor movement and allowed only one government controlled trade union, the FSPSI, to be established.

The work of labor NGOs is mostly in the form of education and legal assistance for workers. The difference between labor NGOs and trade unions is that the NGOs do not have workers' membership and they do not operate inside the factory. Therefore labor NGOs have different functions than trade unions and can never replace trade unions.

Labor NGOs have often been accused by government officials of being the third party that instigate labor unrests. Labor NGOs have recently tried to work together, as in the establishment of Workers' Solidarity Forum (*Forum Solidaritas Buruh*), based in Jakarta, in 1992.

[2]The Urgent Action issued by Tapol, the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign, based in England, also stated that a lawyer who was defending the workers was arrested, beaten while under interrogation, and was awaiting trial under charges of incitement.

The report also stated that "a number of women have suffered sexual harassment ... by officers from the local military command; they were targeted because they were trying to raise solidarity funds". This report brings to the fore the specific repression faced by women workers.

[3]The Indonesian women's organizational level was greater during the pre-1965 period, particularly during the liberal democracy period from 1945-1959. Even though middle and upper class women dominated the women's movement at that time, lower class women were also participating actively during that period. The lower class women, mainly residing in the rural areas, were able to channel their voices through the left mass women's organization called Gerwani. With the abolishment of Gerwani, lower class women lost their means of channeling their voice. A thorough study of Gerwani was done by Saskia Wieringa in 1992. A concise and comprehensive look at women's organization in Indonesia can be found in Susan Blackburn, 1994.

Today, the women's movement has been coopted into government-controlled organizations, such as the Kowani (Kongres Wanita Indonesia or the Indonesian Women's

Congress), which was initially a nationalist women's federation set up in 1928; the PKK (Pendidikan Kesejahteraan Keluarga or Family Welfare Education), which is a program at the village level initiated by the government to educate women on various aspects of family welfare; and the Dharma Wanita, a national organization of civil servants' wives. Middle and upper class women dominate these organizations. The women appearing in public are middle and upper class.

[4]Such fears were voiced by many male and female labor activists. I encountered these fears particularly when discussing gender issues in the labor movement.

[5]Minimum wage in Indonesia is differentiated by regions. Jakarta is the region with the highest minimum wage. For example, in 1990, the minimum wage per day in Jakarta was Rp.2,100 (US$1.14), and in Central Java was only Rp.750 (US$0.40) per day. However there are fewer factories built in Central Java because there is a less developed infrastructure, such as electricity lines and roads).

[6]Minimum Physical Need (MPN) is a standard of what an individual worker needs to maintain subsistence living. The standard includes the prices of rent, food, clothing. The standard is set by the government. The MPN standard has often been criticized as not reflecting the current needs of a worker, as items included in the standard are based on a regulation dating back to 1959. Workers have complained that the items do not include all their needs, particularly needs for health, social activities, and education.

[7]Some available studies present data about the condition of workers' health. An official report of the Manpower Department stated that in Indonesia in 1989 there were 3,120 industrial injuries, with 370 women injured (Kemp 1994, 169). The data presumably only recorded injuries that were reported to the hospital for emergency treatment, such as fingers cut off by machines. Workplace hazards that cause longterm sickness are less likely to be included in the data. Kemp's own survey of 19 women workers in a textile factory shows that they have various complaints, including persistent headache, respiratory difficulties, and menstrual disorders. Another survey of 700 women workers sponsored by the ILO found that "anemia, worm infestation, menstrual disorders, fatigue, dizziness ... are common" (White 1989, 10). These

findings still only reflect the outer layer, as longterm sicknesses that are most probably caused by workplace hazards are not reported.

CHAPTER II

DISCUSSION OF THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

In this section I intend to discuss, first, the position this study has taken, that is a critique of the Neoclassical economist and the Marxist approaches towards the contemporary workers' movement in Indonesia. Second, I will discuss feminist efforts to redefine politics that support my critique. Third, the concept of 'everyday forms of resistance', which is central to this study, will be elaborated. Fourth, I will expound another central concept in analyzing women workers' resistance in this study, that is understanding political consciousness as an interactional system. Lastly, I will discuss the justification for a qualitative research methodology, with a case study strategy, that this research has used.

2.1 Critique of Neoclassical Economist and Marxist Approaches

Workers' resistance in Indonesia, particularly as noted in the number of strikes, has increased in the 1990's (Hadiz 1993, 187; YLBHI 1995, 102). Commenting on this development, Chris Manning, a Neoclassical economist,[1] argues that,

> "Although the industrial relations climate has changed in Indonesia since the late 1980s, there has not been any change in fundamental labor market circumstances which might sustain a greater role for organized labor.... [Economic condition] has still not reached the "turning point" in economic development which might be viewed as marking an important transition from a labor surplus to a labor scarce economy" (1995, 52).

Manning's argument is seen as representing the Neoclassical economist perspective where economy is the main factor at play. The terms "labor surplus economy" and "labor scarce economy" is typical of the Neoclassical economist. Manning's quoted argument can be interpreted that Indonesian labor activists have to wait until Indonesia's economic development has reached a condition of a labor scarce economy before workers' resistance can have any impact to push for change.

The problem I have with Manning's argument is that, first, it implies that the politically significant aspect of the labor movement is in the realm of large scale labor organizations. My criticism, that has also been the longstanding feminist criticism, is that the argument ignores the significance of the grassroots labor movement, which under the current repressive politics in Indonesia is important. It is in these grassroots movements that women workers mainly manifest their political consciousness. I am not saying that organized labor is

not important, but that all levels of resistance are significant.

The second problem is that Manning's argument implies that the determinant success factor success in the labor movement is the objective factor of an organized labor movement. This argument ignores the subjective aspects of workers' resistance. Workers also benefit in subjective ways from their resistance experience, such as through the acquisition of debating skill or the rise of a new awareness. These subjective gains are also a necessary part in building a labor movement. I am arguing here that resistance at the factory level, which is widely staged by women, does generate changes in favor of the workers' interests. Therefore their struggle is subjectively and objectively meaningful to them. Beyond the factory level, workers' political consciousness has sustained resistance and increased the bargaining position of the working class' against the repressive coalition of government officials and business owners.

The third critique is that Manning is too preoccupied with economic factors. Political factors actually also play an important role in making an organized labor movement possible in Indonesia, as exemplified in the pre-1965 period. Prior to 1965 there were many strong trade unions in Indonesia (Tedjasukmana 1958). After

1965, the New Order government successfully clamped down on the trade unions, particularly the leftist trade unions, and has since only allowed one trade union, the FSPSI, which can be controlled (see p.14-15). Until the 1990s when organized challenges began to materialize, the government's repressive measures towards the labor movement were successful.

In 1990, the first attempt to form an independent trade union was initiated, with the establishment of the SBMSK (*Serikat Buruh Merdeka Setia Kawan* or the Solidarity Independent Workers Union). Even though SBMSK only lasted until 1992, it paved the way for another more lasting attempt, that is the establishment of the SBSI (*Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia* or the Indonesian Prosperous Workers Union) in 1992 (Bourchier 1994b).

I believe that these independent trade unions have only been able to emerge and stay afloat because the widespread grassroots labor resistance has created sufficient room for them to exist.[2] Therefore there is a relationship between everyday workers' resistance at the factory level and the resistance of formal labor organizations. Manning's argument that a labor scarce economy is needed in order for an organized labor movement to be possible is, then, in need of revision.

Another perspective that I want to criticize is,

ironically, one that is held by some of the Indonesian labor activists from the Marxist faction.[3] Many labor activists are pessimistic about the possibility of workers organizing and challenging the FSPSI as the dominating government backed trade union. This pessimism has been maintained despite evidence of increasingly widespread workers' resistance and that much of which has challenged the FSPSI. Marxist labor NGO activists argue that Indonesian workers today are not political, even with the evidence of increasing strikes (Cahyono, Napitupulu, and Razif 1994; Razif 1994). The study by Cahyono, Napitupulu and Razif states that,

> "One cannot hope too much to meet a critical worker or even more with a political consciousness in the Indonesian New Order.... [The workers'] political and critical capability has been curtailed by cutting them off from information sources and political power" (*Tidak dapat terlalu berharap untuk bertemu dengan buruh yang kritis apalagi memiliki kesadaran politik di Orde Baru Indonesia. Mereka telah dipangkas kemampuan berpolitik dan kekritisannya melalui pemutusan terhadap sumber-sumber informasi dan dari kekuatan-kekuatan politik* (My translation)) (70).

The study also states that since the workers' strikes mainly bring forward demands for the implementation of New Order labor regulations, such as the implementation of minimum wage or the formation of FSPSI trade union factory unit; and very rarely pursue demands beyond those issues,

such as the formation of an independent trade union that can challenge the dominating FSPSI, therefore the Indonesian workers today are still not political (Cahyono, Napitupulu and Razif 1994, 89-90).

The arguments put forward by these labor activists reflect the Marxist contention that subordinate classes in a particular society are passive because they have incorporated the dominant ideology. The argument is developed from Marx's proposition that, "the ruling class everywhere establishes its own ideology as dominant in society, and ... this indoctrinates subordinates who uncritically accept it as true" (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner 1988, 76).

The key to the Marxist labor NGO activists' explanation for the weakness of Indonesian workers' movement today is in the argument that the New Order state has successfully severed the workers' ties to their past, by eliminating the left wing trade unions since 1965, and by allowing only one government backed trade union, the FSPSI. Thus the Indonesian working classes cannot be politically conscious because there is no longer an independent trade union to provide political education to the workers as there was in the pre-1965 period (Razif 1994, 18, 22).

Cahyono, Napitupulu and Razif further posit their

doubt that the Indonesian workers can develop a political consciousness on their own. They suggest that since the progressive left trade unions have been banned and that there is no freedom to organize, then there is no agency that can provide political education to the workers. They argue that "never in the history of any society of the world has workers' consciousness developed on its own" (1994, 94). This argument is similar to Lenin's proposition that,

> "Workers left to themselves would create only a trade-union consciousness which sought limited social and economic reforms, and ... a true revolutionary awareness could only be developed by a communist party with a socialist ideology" (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner 1988, 38).

My criticisms of the arguments of Marxist labor activists are that, first, by doubting the workers' capability to develop a political consciousness on their own, they are undermining the workers. Such an argument only provides a justification for the view that the working class needs to be led by a political organization, that is by the trade unions and the party. In Lenin's terms, workers need the guidance of the revolutionary socialist party. Such an argument is detrimental to the labor movement itself because the very idea inhibits the political potential of the worker activists to develop,

and will only justify the dependency of worker activists on the labor NGO activists of middle class origins.

My second critique is that they limit the definition of politics to the realm of organizations. Feminists have long argued for a redefinition of politics to go beyond this limitation (see the following section p.33). What counts as political to NGO activists is when workers struggle through (independent) unions and if workers involve themselves in political parties to take up national issues. Razif clearly states that prior to 1965, workers' organizations were political and argues that during that time "the unions were tied to the political parties ... [and that] trade unions were active not only on social and economic issues [such as wages], but also in the political arena" (1994,18). I argue that my case study shows, that women workers' efforts in demanding social economic issues are very much a political struggle.

By limiting the definition of politics to the realm of organized political movements the Marxist labor activists ignore the continuous grassroots resistance that women workers stage. Most of their everyday forms of resistance and even their overt, organized collective resistance do not make it to the media; this is exemplified in my case study on the struggles of the Alpena women workers.

The third critique is that this Marxist analysis is too preoccupied with nostalgia about the pre-1965 glorious Indonesian labor movement. I do not argue against the position that there was a stronger labor movement in the pre-1965 period;[3] however the labor movement today cannot be compared with the pre-1965 period as there is a different context that characterizes the labor movement of the two different periods.

The labor movement in the pre-1965 period mainly consisted of government workers, such as the railway workers and the state's plantation workers. These government workers are now organized in a government-sponsored organization and are not part of the labor movement.[4] Today, only nongovernmental workers can unionize and today's labor movement is characterized by first, a domination of manufacturing and service sector workers. Second, far more women are employed in wage labor than in the past. These two characteristics were not present in the pre-1965 labor movement and therefore comparing the present labor movement with the past can be misleading.

My study does not deny the fact that the New Order state has successfully implemented repressive measures regulating the labor movement. However, the state cannot mute the workers' political potential altogether. By

broadening our political definitions, we can grasp the political nature of contemporary workers' resistance, especially and significantly that staged by women workers. This is a new, politically significant, phenomenon that the Neoclassical economist and the Marxists have both ignored.

2.2 Feminist Redefinition of Politics

Feminists have long argued that when women are considered apolitical it is because the definition of politics has been limited to formal politics where men dominate, e.g. the trade unions, political parties and governments (Morgen and Bookman 1988, 8-9). They argue for the importance of studying grassroots activities where women are mainly involved, because these activities lead to the building of formal politics (Morgen and Bookman, 1988; West and Blumberg, 1990). Therefore, women's grassroots activities are just as political as formal politics.

Sandra Morgen and Ann Bookman (1988) point out that feminists are not the only ones who have challenged the limited definition of politics. The Marxists are at the forefront in arguing for working class political issues. However, feminists have shown that Marxist' theories were

limited because they place too much emphasis on the sphere of production. Marxist theory also "ignores and devalues community-based political struggles in which working-class women have historically played major roles" (Morgen & Bookman 1988, 9). This focus on the sphere of production also tends to limit political studies to certain work-places, particularly to large industries, which for the most part, exclude women.

Feminist studies that focus on working-class women's individual and collective resistance reflect efforts to address the shortcomings of traditional studies of political action. Feminist studies "focus on how the class position and the racial and ethnic backgrounds of women specify their personal and political concerns and shape the types of political involvement they choose to participate in" (Morgen and Bookman 1988, 9). Thus, for feminist, unlike Marxists, it is not only class that is determinant in generating political resistance, but an interaction of class, race, ethnic, and other elements that determine the generation and maintenance of resistance.

A study of black women domestic workers in the United States shows how individual tactics of confronting the employer can be linked to collective forms of action. Bonnie Thornton Dill (1988) found that black domestic

workers were not only individually confronting their white 'missus' but were also much involved in the civil rights movement. This study provides a significant critique of Marxist's argument that what counts as political is only acts within an organized movement. Here it is shown that the struggle of individuals and organization are linked. In other words, everyday forms of resistance are linked to formal organized resistance.

Another example of feminist efforts to redefine politics is exemplified in a study of working class women in a peripheral fishery community, in Newfoundland, Canada, by Barbara Neis (1988). The women had set up a protest line against employer's efforts to close down a fish plant. The study points out that women's experiences in the socalled "traditionally expressive" form of organizations (e.g. women's fund raising drives) are also the basis of political understanding that becomes a resource when the Newfoundland women need to organize themselves collectively on the protest line.

Thus, feminist efforts to redefine politics have begun to have an impact in bringing women's activism to the fore. The efforts also push for a broader perspective in analyzing politics, to view the importance of an interaction of factors, such as class, race, and ethnicity. This interactive perspective provides a

critique of the Marxist perspective that limits the critique to class factors and the sphere of production to the exclusion of other factors.

2.3 On Everyday Forms of Resistance

One important concept that supports feminist efforts to redefine politics is the concept of everyday forms of resistance that James C. Scott puts forward in his study of a Malaysian peasant community (1985). Scott defines the everyday forms of resistance as,

> "the prosaic but constant struggle ... [between the oppressed and the oppressor, where] most of the forms this struggle takes stop well short of collective outright defiance.... [These everyday forms of resistance] require little or no coordination or planning; they often represent a form of individual self-help; and they typically avoid any direct symbolic confrontation with authority or with elite norms" (1985,29).

In the case study of Alpena women workers I found that, indeed, the everyday forms of resistance that the women staged, such as talking back to supervisors, go-slow initiatives, and gossiping about the company's stinginess, were significant in maintaining the spirit of resistance that eventually made open, collective resistance possible.

Everyday forms of resistance like those the

Alpena women workers put up not only function as a glue that sticks together the spirit of resistance, but can also generate changes in the workers' interests. This argument is exemplified in Alpena in the case of widespread persistent demands by individual workers for a wage increase in 1992. The demands were voiced everyday for months. They culminated in the slowing down of production, without ever staging an open strike, so that management finally had to comply. On the significance of everyday resistance, Scott says that,

> "Multiplied many thousandfold, such petty acts of resistance ... may in the end make an utter shambles of the policies dreamed up by [the oppressor].... Everyday forms of resistance make no headlines. Just as millions of anthozoan polyops create, willy-nilly, a coral reef, so do thousands upon thousands of individual acts of insubordination and evasion create a political or economic barrier reef of their own" (1985, 35-36).

So far, history and social science have marginalized women by defining politics as operating only on the formal level, such as trade unions or political parties, and on big events, such as major strikes, revolution or presidential elections. Scott puts forward an argument about this that applies to the peasants,

> "History and social science, because they are written by an intelligentsia using written records that are also created by literate officials, are simply not well equipped to uncover the silent and anonymous forms of class struggle that typify the peasantry.... Collectively, this unlikely cabal contributes to a stereotype of the peasantry, enshrined in both literature and in history..." (1985, 36-37).

Scott's perception of the stereotyping of peasants as a passive class parallels that of women stereotyped as docile and apolitical.

2.4 Political Consciousness as an Interactional System

Another contribution feminists have made in understanding the sources of women's oppression, as well as the sources of women's resistance, is their argument that it is important to see the interrelationship of work, family and community spheres. Much feminist work points out how the workplace and family are interconnected in maintaining women's subordinated position in the labor market (Bradley 1989, Ecevit 1991, Gannage 1986, Mackintosh 1989, Mather 1985).

Feminist work also points out how the interrelationship of family, work and community spheres function in developing women's political collective actions. Martha A. Ackelsberg (1988) puts forward a new paradigm that takes into account the politics of relationship. By

recognizing women's experiences as located within the relationship of family, community and work spheres one can understand how these interrelationships have created a particular configuration of political consciousness and actions.

Karen Brodkin Sacks' (1988) study of black women hospital service workers shows how the women organizers utilize community and family resources in their drive to unite workers in their efforts to demand workplace changes. In that study she found that women organizers utilize, for example, baby showers and work-time potlucks to strengthen workers' unity.

In her study, Cynthia B. Costello concludes that "sexual hierarchy in the workplace, the family, and the labor unions ... [led the women workers to] demonstrate a significant capacity to mobilize for collective action" (1988, 117). This study is valuable because it shows explicitly how gender based oppressions in the three institutions of work, family and trade unions are intertwined and push women to organize a strike.

Another study, on a multiethnic electronic factory, by Ann Bookman (1988) shows how gender and ethnicity, two factors that are commonly seen as an obstacle to unionization, are in fact interrelated and supportive in the unionization process. Bookman argues that although

class consciousness is important in the unionization process, "there are other factors or central experiences that shape class consciousness beyond what happens at the point of production. In particular ... [through] the intersection of gender and ethnicity" (1988, 160).

All of these studies demonstrate how sources of oppression lie within the network of family, work and community spheres and how sources of resistance can also develop from this interrelationship. These studies also show the importance of the interaction between class, gender, ethnicity, and race. In the following discussion I will point out how these feminist theorizing efforts have made a significant contribution to the study of collective actions. The main feminist theoretical contribution is to argue for the importance of adopting a perspective that acknowledges the interrelationship of work, family and community and the recognition that out of those interrelationships, an interrelated form of consciousness is also developed. It is this perspective that has been adopted and developed by Aldon Morris (1992), a revisionist within the Resource Mobilization analysts of the social movement theory.

One feminist theorizing effort that Morris adopts is Deborah King's (1988) study of black women's consciousness. King proposes what she calls 'multiple

jeopardy' as an interactive model that is a more accountable tool of analysis of black women's consciousness than the additive model of double or triple jeopardy. In the early 1970s, the term double jeopardy was introduced to describe the dual discriminations of racism and sexism that oppressed black women, and later the concept was expanded to triple jeopardy to include class discrimination. King criticized this early conceptualization,

> "Unfortunately, most applications of double and triple jeopardy have been overly simplistic in assuming that the relationships among the various discriminations are merely additive. These relationships are interpreted as equivalent to the mathematical equation, racism plus sexism plus classism equals triple jeopardy.... Such assertions ignore the fact that racism, sexism and classism constitute three, interdependent control systems. An interactive model, which I have termed multiple jeopardy, better captures those processes. The modifier "multiple" refers not only to several, simultaneous oppressions but to the multiplicative relationships among them as well" (1988, 47).

Thus King explicitly emphasizes the importance of looking at the complex interrelationships of multiple forms of oppressions. Aldon Morris hailed King's study and other similar feminist studies, including those of Collins (1990), Dill (1983), and Rollins (1985), as insightful conceptual and empirical studies that contribute to the

development of an interactive model in studying political consciousness (1992, 361-362).

One significant contribution from Morris' work for my own study is his proposition for studying political consciousness as an interactional system (Morris 1992, 359-365). I consider his argument sympathetic to feminists and also an important contribution for feminists theorizing efforts on women's political collective actions. Morris argued that,

> "Class consciousness, race consciousness, gender consciousness, and the like cannot be understood comprehensively or properly assessed as independent entities ... [and therefore] the interrelated system of political consciousness and the systems of human domination that gave rise to them ... should become the focus of analytical inquiry" (1992, 359).

By 'system of human domination', Morris means "a constellation of institutions, ideas, and practices that successfully enables one group to achieve and maintain power and privilege through the control and exploitation of another group" (1992, 362).

Morris argues for the need to look at "structural and cultural determinants of collective action and how they interact to generate or inhibit collective action" (1992,369). His term 'structural determinants' covers a wide range of factors; some that he has pointed out are:

"human systems of domination [e.g. class, race or gender based systems of domination], ... threats of violence, polity membership, ... networks of communications, formal and informal social organization, availability of leadership, financial resources, and so on" (Morris 1992, 370). Meanwhile he refers to culture as mainly political consciousness which can be differentiated into hegemonic and oppositional consciousness.

Another of Morris' contributions that I find especially useful is his argument that political consciousness can be differentiated as (1) that held by the dominant groups who maintain systems of domination (referred to as the hegemonic consciousness), and (2) that held by the subordinate groups who struggle to demolish the systems of domination (referred as the oppositional consciousness).[5]

Following Morris (1992), one important analytical endeavor in researching collective action is the effort to point out existing systems of domination. Looking at the Indonesian industrial women workers today I identify at least three systems of domination at work: those of class, state, and gender systems of domination. By the class system of domination I mean the capitalist institutions, ideas, and practices that enable, in this case, the factory owners and their entire management

staff[6] to achieve and maintain power and privilege through the control and exploitation of the production workers. By the state system of domination I mean the state institutions, including the manpower ministry, police/military, and the government backed sole trade union of FSPSI; ideas and practices, including violence and judicial control, that successfully enable individuals and groups within the state to achieve and maintain power and privilege through the control and exploitation of the workers. Lastly by the gender system of domination I mean the patriarchal institutions, including the family, the education system and religion; and ideas and practices, including the utilization of patriarchal labor control which successfully enable individuals and groups to achieve and maintain power and privilege through the control and exploitation of the women workers.

It is these interrelated systems of domination that are prominently at work against Indonesian women workers today. These interrelated systems of domination lie in the work, family and community spheres. Understanding women workers' resistance through the interactional perspective is important because there is not just one factor that explains workers' oppression and reasons for resistance, as in the Marxist analysis that production is the source of exploitation. We have to consider the

interaction between class, gender, race or between the production, culture and personal spheres or between the workplace, family, and community.

2.5.How Reliable is a Case Study?

To answer my research questions about how women workers become activists, how they manifest their activism and what impact their activism has on the labor movement, I decided to undertake a case study. I argue that with the current lack of understanding about Indonesian women workers' political consciousness, a case study will enable me to explore the issues in more detail than other methods, such as a survey.

I would also argue that case studies enable the researcher to comprehend everyday processes with complex relationship of factors, such as the interrelationship of gender, class, religion, ethnicity, etc.

There are still very few studies of contemporary Indonesian women workers in manufacturing industries, especially those that look at the issue of political consciousness. The only recently published book on this issue is Diane L. Wolf's *Factory Daughters*, which analyzes young women workers' lives in rural Java within the developing capitalist system (1992, 7). Another

contemporary work is by Ratna Saptari who studied women workers at the *kretek* cigarette industry in East Java (1994). An earlier study on contemporary Indonesian women workers that is often cited is Celia Mather's research on women workers and Islamic Patriarchy in Tangerang industrial region in the late 1970s (1985).

Studies on women workers of the Third World, particularly industrial women workers, are not as numerous as in North America. A few have been undertaken, such as in the works of Mather (1985), Joekes (1985), Wolf (1992), Rosa (1994), but our knowledge is still very incomplete. At this stage, case studies are a valuable addition to this knowledge.

Besides the fact that studies on women workers and political action in contemporary Indonesia are still rare, there are practical reasons that made me decide that a case study would be the best research strategy: the limitations of time and funding. Focussing on a particular group of women workers at one factory enables me to go into detail as well as conserving time, energy and cost.

The case study method is part and parcel of qualitative research methodology. There was a time in the feminist movement when qualitative research was viewed as the only feminist research method. The view that there is

a particular feminist method was developed in the early stages of feminist scholarship. This view puts forward the significance of the qualitative approach in research where the method of participant observation and unstructured interviews are utilized. The qualitative approach is preferred because it "focuses more on the subjective experiences and meanings of those being researched, [and this] was regarded as more appropriate to the kinds of knowledge that feminists wished to make available" (Maynard 1994, 11).

The proposition that qualitative methods are feminist research methods arose from the need to criticize the dominance of quantitative research methods at that time. Social science research, especially in North America, was dominated by positivist sociologists when second wave feminist scholarship became eminent in the 1970s. Their quantitative research purported to be gender blind, but, as Margrit Eichler points out sexism can indeed be found in survey research, where, "[sexism] can enter through selection of *whom* is being asked *what* as well as through the formulation of questions" (Eichler 1990, 33). An example that Eichler gives is that surveys in the field of family sociology used to ask only wives about family issues, but then the researchers treated the wives' responses as reflecting their husbands' views as well

(Eichler 1990, 33).

In the effort to avoid gender blindness in quantitative approaches, feminists turned to qualitative approaches. However, the trend has become one where the qualitative approach is considered as the only feminist approach. Maynard warns in her article that the qualitative approach developed as,

> "an unproblematized orthodoxy against which the political correctness ... of *all* feminist research could be judged. It began to be assumed that only qualitative methods, especially the in-depth face-to-face interview, could really count in feminist terms" (12).

Eichler also argues that any method can be used in a sexist or non-sexist manner. To her, qualitative methods are preferred by feminists "not because they are particularly appropriate for the study of women, but because they are appropriate for exploring subjective experiences" (32-33). Learning more about women's subjective experiences is needed, especially when insufficient knowledge about women still exists. This is also the justification for my taking up a qualitative approach in my research. I believe that there is no set feminist method. A particular method can be used by feminists and non-feminist alike. What is important here is the perspective, in this case a feminist one, that lies

underneath a method.

The argument that feminism is a perspective and not a method is also supported by the many feminist researchers whose works are cited by Reinharz in her book *Feminist Methods in Social Research* (1992). Reinharz concluded that feminist researchers consider feminism "to be a perspective on an existing method ... that can be used to develop an innovative method" (Reinharz 241). Further, she states that,

> "Feminist social research ... is research that requires a method supplied by the disciplines (e.g., experimentation, ethnography, survey research, content analysis) or created by the researcher (e.g., drama, genealogy, group diaries). That method is not supplied by feminism itself. The researcher has to learn the disciplinary methods, rules of logic, statistical procedures, ... and whatever else is relevant to the field in which she wishes to work" (Reinharz 242-243).

Thus, I take up a case study strategy not merely because it is the approach sympathetic to the feminist cause, but more because it is the most appropriate research strategy in the context where research on industrial women workers' political action in Indonesia is very limited. I see that the case study method enables me to better understand the complex everyday processes.

I consider that my study on women workers' political consciousness is one that is exploratory in nature.

According to Marshall and Rossmann, the purposes of exploratory study are: 1)to investigate the little understood phenomena, 2)to identify/discover important variables, and 3)to generate hypotheses for further research (1989, 78). My study about contemporary Indonesian women workers' political activism is a phenomenon that is still little understood. I therefore intend to broaden our understanding of it and discover the important variables pertinent to it.

Qualitative research projects that adopt case studies as one of the main research strategies and utilize observation and in depth interviewing as the main techniques are often considered unscientific. When I presented a qualitative research report about women workers in one seminar in Indonesia in 1990 I received strong criticism that my research was more of a diary or story book instead of a scientific academic work. I believe that the same criticism remains to this day in the Indonesian social science community.

This view is not so widespread among Western academics (Geiger 1986).[7] Feminists have been at the forefront in establishing the credibility of qualitative research and promoting research about and for women. There are various case studies that have enriched our knowledge about women workers. Charlene Gannage's

research on women workers in a garment factory in Toronto is one classic case study (1986). *Women, Work and Protest* is an important and often cited collection of case studies about women workers' resistance in the United States dating from the early twentieth century (Milkman 1984). Another collection of case studies that is also often cited is *My Troubles are Going to Have Trouble with Me*, which looks on the contemporary working women in the United States (Sacks and Remy 1984).

In my research, I decided to focus on a group of women workers at one factory and treat it as a case study. I purposely looked for a group of women workers who were known to have made efforts at resistance. Through the help of a key person who is a labor Non Government Organization (NGO) activist, I gained access to a group of women workers in a factory that produces various kind of pens. I explained to him my plan of research and asked for his support. Once my key person had permission from the NGO where he worked, I was immediately helped to meet the first woman worker at the factory I call Alpena. This NGO had facilitated education activities and legal assistance with the Alpena women since 1992.

The first woman worker I met was Cahaya. She is an extremely bright young woman who is also the current leading activist in Alpena. It was through Cahaya that I

was able to gain most information about Alpena and the history of the women workers' struggle. Through Cahaya I was able to meet other women workers of Alpena. It was a snowballing process where I got to know one person and from that person I got to know the others. I also got to know the families and neighbors of the women workers.

Cahaya became my major source of information. After getting acquainted with Cahaya and her friends I found that she was the most articulate person in her group. Cahaya's stories were better structured and I could understand a certain topic better and faster when conversing with Cahaya than with other women workers, so I soon came to rely on her. I used to ask Cahaya for background information before meeting other women workers. I also relied on Cahaya to carry out a survey on Alpena workers because I could not enter the factory. The key person who introduced me to the Alpena women workers also suggested that my presence is better not known by Alpena's management as it may jeopardize the women workers' position.

However, I realized that I could not rely on Cahaya's information alone, so I crosschecked Cahaya's information with other women workers. I tried to keep the principle of checking each person's stories with others. Throughout the research, I also relied on Walimah for detailed

information about workers' struggles at Alpena.

Altogether I talked to eleven people in order to gain information about Alpena women workers' resistance. Out of the eleven people, seven are Alpena women workers. They are Cahaya, Walimah, Djamilah, Kus, Sumringah, Sarimah, and Hesti (all pseudonyms); and one is a former Alpena woman worker, who I call Feni. The other three that I talked to were Cahaya's father, Tukiran, and mother, Ngasiyem; and Walimah's mother, Risma.

I gained information through various formal and informal activities. The formal activities included attending the NGO education sessions and presenting a topic in one of the sessions. The informal activities were more numerous. They included visiting a sick woman worker, attending a wedding ceremony, attending a farewell party, visiting informants' homes to meet the families, and having the women at my home for a return visit. I was able to record my major interviews with Cahaya, Walimah, Feni and two of the group meetings. However, not all meetings were recorded because some situations were not appropriate to tape record, for example when a new person I had not previously met, such as a neighbor of the woman worker, joined the gathering.

For ethical and security reasons, I have taken all steps to guarantee anonymity of all my informants. The

factory name and all names of individuals are pseudonyms. Identifying details have been changed. For example names of place have been changed. Some events have not been mentioned unless I can be sure that they can not be tracked down. For example, I opted to present Cahaya's interview with a television company in chapter III because in recent years, since the establishment of private television stations, there have been many workers appearing for comments in labor news. Cahaya's appearance is only one of many such interviews. Therefore I conclude that it is safe to mention the event of her appearance on television. Aside from that Cahaya's appearance did not mention her company's name.

In the beginning of my thesis, I mentioned that this thesis is an effort to combine activism and academic work. I refer to activism as all efforts at the grassroots or together with the masses, in this case the workers, aimed at empowering the workers. In Indonesia today these efforts are conducted by individual worker activists, small groups of workers and some NGOs.

There is an argument among some of the activists that activism is different to academic work. The activists often accused the academics of being in the ivory tower. I argue here that it is not necessarily so. I see my thesis as arising from my experiences working with the

women workers as well as from the experiences of women workers themselves in resistance. I expect that my thesis can be contributive towards the labor movement in strengthening the movement by paying more attention to women. This is the link between activism and academic work at a broader level.

Unfortunately I cannot say much about the impact of this thesis research on the Alpena women activists. I feel that I cannot claim that this thesis research benefit them immediately. I also did not purposely prepare any means to measure the impact of my presence on the women during the research. However, from the general observation, I can say that my relationship with the women activists did not end when the research ended. We maintain communication by letters and sometimes we meet. The women, particularly Cahaya, discussed problems in organizing and seek for advice. Maybe then there is something, however small, that I have contributed to the women.

Notes

[1]Indonesian contemporary working class politics is a topic that still receives little attention. More attention has been given to the state and middle class politics (Hadiz 1994b, 65). Manning's work is therefore one of the few studies on Indonesian contemporary working class politics. Unfortunately no other Neoclassical economist's work on this issue was found.

[2]I believe establishment and maintenance of independent trade unions, notably the SBSI, is only possible because of the existence of widespread labor resistance, particularly at the factory level and in the forms of everyday resistance. The push for change from the labor masses reduces the intensity of repression against these independent trade unions.

Widespread labor resistance also enables labor NGOs to be established and gain a significant position in the labor movement. These NGOs have pushed for changes, for example, in revoking a Manpower Minister's regulations that allowed military intervention in labor disputes. Therefore, even though these labor NGOs are not organized labor movements that Manning referred, but they are significant in the labor movement.

[3]There are very few publications written from the point of view of the Marxist labor activists. The work of Cahyono, Napitupulu and Razif (1994) is one of the few that I had access to.

[4]There were many strong trade unions emerging in the early twentieth century that were involved in the struggle for independence. After independence was gained in 1945, trade unions were also very much involved in the nation's politics. Particularly strong were the left trade unions. Tedjasukmana's study states that "the administration of the unions is not always businesslike and is often determined or affected by the circumstance that the unions are a sort of political association" (1958, vii).

[5]Morris developed his conceptualization about political consciousness from Gramsci's work on ideology (Morris 1992, 363).

[6]Staff is differentiated from workers because in Indonesia, the term staff (*karyawan*) refers to white collar workers. Meanwhile the term worker (*buruh* or *pekerja*) refers to blue collar workers.

[7]As early as 1973, Huw Beynon published his book based on a case study called *Working for Ford*. His work is an effort to break down the barrier between the researcher and the researched.

CHAPTER III

CAHAYA: FROM QUIESCENCE TO RESISTANCE

In mid January 1996, people in the densely populated *kampung* were exhilarated when they saw television crews come to the home of one of the residents. People were curious about what had interested the television crew enough to bring their sophisticated gear of video camera and bright lights to the house of *Pak* Tukiran. The children were excited. They giggled and circled the crew, trying to take a peek at what was going on inside *Pak* Tukiran's home. Adults tried to see too. They asked each other, "What is going on?"

Ibu Ngasiyem, the wife of *Pak* Tukiran, Cahaya's mother, told me with pride about the events of the day the television crew came to their home. She seemed proud to have something that would show her neighbors her family was important. The real star of the show was Cahaya. She had agreed to be interviewed by the television company for comments from the workers' side regarding the minimum wage increase announced by the Minister of Manpower in early January 1996.

Cahaya's willingness to take the risk of appearing on television is surprising: a testimony to her political consciousness. It is also surprising to see the family,

particularly Cahaya's father, united in support of Cahaya's appearance on television. The family was actually also at risk. For example, should anything happen to Cahaya at her job, then the family's survival would be affected. Cahaya, naturally, had asked for her parents' permission before agreeing to the television company's request to interview her.

The event just described was the last that I recorded for my field research before I went back to Canada to write my thesis. The event convinces me that I am on the right track in bringing Cahaya's life story into a special chapter that discusses the process of how an individual woman worker becomes an activist.

In this chapter I have one major aim, that is to show how Cahaya, an example of a woman worker activist, developed from a quiet and accepting woman worker into the activist that she is today. I will first describe the background of Cahaya's family life. Second, I will elaborate on the process of Cahaya's development from quiescence to activism. Third, I will present my analysis of Cahaya's development into an activist, particularly how this one individual case study is significant to the wider discussion of the labor movement.

3.1 Story of the Displaced: Cahaya's Family Surviving in Jakarta

Cahaya was born in 1969. At the time of the research she was 25 years old. She is the 5th of seven children. Of the seven children, only she and her brother Jumadi, the 6th child, survived. The first two children died when her parents were still living in a village in Jogyakarta, Central Java. In the early 1960's, her father Tukiran and mother Ngasiyem moved to Jakarta where the other children were born. In Jakarta, the 3rd, 4th and later 7th children also died because of sickness. It was the death of the seventh child, a girl, at the age of 9 years that brought particular sorrow to the family. The kinds of sickness that caused these deaths were never clear to Cahaya's family. This is not surprising when one considers the scant public health service and the level of people's poverty.

When Cahaya's parents moved to Jakarta, they lived for some years with a relative in South Jakarta. However her parents could not bear the gossip and ridicule of being dependent on a relative for so long. In 1985 the family decided to move to West Jakarta where they live to this day.

Cahaya's parents rent a small place (*kontrakan*) from

a local landlord for Rp.75,000 (US$32.6) per month. The place, of approximately 4 X 5 square meters, is divided into one living room (that is turned into sleeping quarters at night), one bedroom, a narrow kitchen and a toilet that the family share with two other families who rent from the same landlord. Initially their rented *kontrakan* had only bamboo walls and was without electricity. It was only in 1994 that the landlord put up brick walls and installed electricity. Six months before I came, the handpump well and toilet were also installed, at the expense of the residents. Before that they had to share a public well and toilet with eleven other families.

Cahaya's father is a construction worker. He works on call, that is when people ask for his services or when his friends ask him to come along on a job. He is paid daily, sometimes with additional food. *Pak* Tukiran used to work with the landlord. *Ibu* Ngasiyem, who told the story about the landlord said, "the landlord *Haji* Yahya is kind to us, he lets us postpone our installment if we have no money". However, the landlord's kindness is clearly not free of charge. "My husband also works for the landlord, but he's making him work hard from early morning, from 6.30 AM to 6 PM, with only a short break for lunch. He also watches the workers very closely so it is hard to take extra breaks", said *Ibu* Ngasiyem. The

landlord is a local Betawi resident who owns a great many properties. When the region expanded into an industrial area he profited from the influx of migrants looking for rooms to rent. Most of the migrants are factory workers, petty traders or workers in small service businesses.

"When *bapak* worked for *Haji* Yahya he received Rp.50,000 (Us$ 21.8) a week plus food, but the work is too hard. *Bapak* said he would rather get less in another place. He is too old now to work too hard", Ngasiyem said about her husband. Cahaya said that her father is often sick and can't always work, therefore the family members are mainly dependent on her for their livelihood, as she is the only one who has a constant income.

Pak Tukiran is a remorseful man. Cahaya said that her father regretted being unable to bring the family out of poverty. At one of my visits, *Pak* Tukiran talked about his thoughts and feelings about life. He was particularly pleased when we discussed his involvement in the independence war and the present injustices. He was very bitter about the present economic and political situation. I was quite surprised by his sharp comments. He said,

> "Today's oppression is more subtle, it is through control of the economy, during colonization the enemy was clear to be seen....
> Today our people oppress their own people....

> All my life I've worked hard but things doesn't seem to change, we remain poor.... If we had enough land in the village we would not have come to Jakarta".

Even though *Pak* Tukiran understands the ills of society with such high wisdom, he hesitates about doing something about it, especially when the person doing it is his daughter. Cahaya said that during the initial years of her activism, particularly when the workers Education Group was active and used to have meetings at her home, *Pak* Tukiran voiced his disagreement. He argued that Cahaya should not talk and be involved in politics because she would not get anything in return anyway. He used to grumble when Cahaya went out to attend meetings, sometimes being away for a whole day, coming home late at night, or even staying with friends. Such behavior is indeed generally viewed as improper for a girl in Indonesia. The differences of opinion between father and daughter became quite bad for a time and the two tended to avoid each other and talked less with each other, each determined to maintain their position.

It was *Ibu* Ngasiyem who used to mediate the differences between father and daughter. It seems as if she has done a good job at it too, because *Pak* Tukiran is now lenient with his daughter. In fact, just before I ended the field research, *Pak* Tukiran and Cahaya had

started talking with each other more warmly than before. I think that *Pak* Tukiran's acceptance of Cahaya's choices in life is not merely based on the fact that his daughter is a significant contributor to the family income, but also because he begins to see that Cahaya is making a meaningful life that deserves to be praised, such as her bravery in going on television.

Ibu Ngasiyem is a very cheerful woman. She always tried to take part in the conversations that I was having with Cahaya or her father. I also made special efforts to talk to her more, especially while we were in the kitchen. It was through her that I gained more information about the personal history of the family. *Ibu* Ngasiyem works at home minding their next door neighbor's small children. She gets Rp.35,000 (US$ 15) per month for minding two children while their parents go to work.

Cahaya's family is a typical picture of an uprooted rural family who have to survive in the cities. Thousands of Indonesian rural families are flooding the cities as agricultural sources of living have declined and development strategies have favored the cities instead of the villages. It is this kind of urbanized family that has become predominant in contemporary Indonesia (Young 1994).

3.2 Angel of Family Survival

Cahaya completed her junior high school level education (SMP) in 1985. She did not go on to high school because her parents couldn't afford it. Cahaya wanted to work in the factory right away but the factory where she wanted to work required a *KTP*, and she did not have one since she had not turned 17 (see glossary). Cahaya tried bribery to get a *KTP* from the local government that stated a false older age; however she failed. "They refused to grant me the letter so I couldn't work although I wanted to", Cahaya said. I suspect that the local government of the district, which is in the city center, is under stronger control than other districts on the outskirts of Jakarta. The Alpena women workers I interviewed who are living on the outskirts of Jakarta were able to work at a very young age. For example, Walimah, one of the longstanding Alpena women worker activists, started working when she was 10 years old. Out of school and with no work, Cahaya helped her mother, who at that time was making cookies to sell. Cahaya was also responsible for taking care of her younger brother and sister.

Some time after the family moved to West Jakarta in 1985, Cahaya was told by a neighbor of a vacancy in a new factory producing mosquito coils not far from where the

family lived, around 25 minutes walking distance away. According to Cahaya, the requirements were simple, a *KTP* as an identity card or a letter from the local neighborhood chief or *kepala Rukun Tetangga (RT)*. She started working in the mosquito coil factory in April 1986.

She worked as a machine operator at first. As soon as Cahaya started working she was subjected to a new way of life, that of a controlled worker. Cahaya said, "My friends and I had to wear a badge all the time. If we were found not wearing one we were told to get out and not allowed to work." Cahaya remembered that the work was heavy because she had to work in shifts. The first shift was from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., the second from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m., and the third from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m.. Her work as an operator was to watch over the machine and collect the mosquito coils that came out of the machine.

Cahaya worked for almost two years in the mosquito coil factory before it claimed to be bankrupt and proposed that its workers voluntarily resign. The workers were offered work in another mosquito coil factory in Tangerang, the bordering industrial city to Jakarta, that took over the "bankrupt" enterprise. Cahaya tried to work in the new factory; however she only worked there for one week because the pay was less and the place was so far

away that she needed to take public transport. Cahaya said that now she realized the factory was actually not bankrupt but had set up some sort of joint venture with the other mosquito coil factory in Tangerang. It declared bankruptcy in order not to pay severance pay. Instead the workers were given what the management call complimentary money (*uang kebijaksanaan*) of Rp.60.000,- (around US$29). The letter of recommendation that Cahaya got from the factory actually stated that the she resigned on her own free will.

Cahaya was then in and out of factory jobs. Once when she had been out of work for 3 months, a friend from Cahaya's days of working in the mosquito coil company told her of a vacancy in a furniture factory, also in the area where she was living. Cahaya applied and was assigned to work in the packing section. She only lasted for one month. "The work was too hard for me. I had to carry heavy furniture parts. Then I caught typhoid and had to quit altogether," Cahaya said.

Cahaya was then out of work for another 3 months. Through another friend she got work in a shoe factory. She was assigned to the dipping section. She only lasted for one month because she couldn't stand the smell of the chemicals. She was again out of work for a month when a former worker friend told her of a vacancy in the pen

factory. In November 1988 Cahaya started to work in Alpena, a factory that produces various kinds of pens and ink, where she works to this day. All of the factories where Cahaya had worked were located not far from her home. Those factories are also not too far from one another.

Cahaya's work is significant for the family's survival. Her job is the guarantor of the major regular income for the family. As Cahaya's parents become older they cannot work as hard as before. *Ibu* Ngasiyem does not have the strength to make cookies to sell anymore. The family has asked her not to do too much. Although *Pak* Tukiran also cannot always work because his health has deteriorated, obviously from years of hard work; he is still very eager to find jobs.

As for Cahaya's younger brother, Jumadi, he does not yet bring in a regular income for the family. Jumadi is the golden boy in the family, so he can afford to be choosy about work. His dream is to become a truck driver; however he has not been able to realize that dream yet. Jumadi used to have a job as an assistant to the driver who does deliveries for a home industry that produces cakes. However, just before ending my field research, he had quit his job. Although out of work, Jumadi refused to work in a factory. In short, Jumadi is still very much a

dependent on the family at most times. This reflects the underlying patriarchal values in the family.

Cahaya's contribution to the family is not only financial but also emotional and practical, for she does a fair amount of domestic work. While I stayed overnight at her home, I saw Cahaya getting up at 4.30 a.m. to wash the previous night's dishes and help her mother make breakfast before having a shower, doing the morning prayer and preparing herself to go to work at 7.30 a.m.. Cahaya also does the washing and ironing of clothes for the family. She told me that she did not want her mother to work too hard as she was also often sick. *Ibu* Ngasiyem has asthma and now mainly just cooks for the family along with her child care work.

The significant role that Cahaya plays in her family economy contradicts the findings in the study of women workers in Central Java by Diane Wolf (1992) where she found that the income of young women workers did not support the family, and, on the contrary, parents often still subsidized them. The most important difference is, I think, that Diane Wolf was studying rural Java families who still had land, even though most probably only a meager plot, and other sources of income. By contrast, the phenomenon of displaced families like Cahaya's is, I think, a more representative one, as the trend in

Indonesia is more and more towards displacement. Lea Jellinek's study (1991) on the proletarianization process in Jakarta, with particular impact on a woman petty trader's life, is an example of the adverse impact of development.

3.3 The Development of an Activist

Cahaya has not always been rebellious. In fact she told me that she used to be very quiet and timid, always minding her work, and that she was praised as one of the best and most diligent workers in Alpena. Cahaya recalled, "I used to be quiet (*pendiam*) and concentrate only on working hard (*kerjanya rajin*). That was because I didn't know about the law and my rights." Even when other women workers dared to follow Rokhayah's call, at that time the most prominent activist, in staging the trousers and cullotes strike in November 1993 (see chapter five, p.107-111), Cahaya did not dare to participate in the strike. She admitted that at that time she was still afraid of repercussions. The fact the Cahaya still had fears shows that she was typical of other workers. She did not turn into a leading activist in a flash, like a heroine. It was a process of continuous learning and fighting the fears inside her that turned Cahaya into the

firm activist she is today.

What has enabled Cahaya to be a strong activist? The existence of a role model seems to be a significant factor. That role model was Rokhayah, who at the time of my research had already resigned from Alpena; therefore my accounts of her are based mainly on Cahaya's and Walimah's information, which is also supported by other women workers of Alpena to whom I talked. Rokhayah is a year older than Cahaya. She came to work in Alpena in early 1992. Before working in Alpena, Rokhayah worked in other factories in Bekasi industrial Area, on the east border of Jakarta. Cahaya recalled that *mbak* Rokhayah was brave (*pemberani*) because she was experienced (*sudah pengalaman*) as she had worked in other places before (*sudah kerja dimana-mana*).

There were other women who were also considered as leading activists by Cahaya, namely Darlina, Maryati and Feni. They all resigned as soon as they were married, except for Feni who was laid off by the Alpena management. However, for Cahaya, Rokhayah seems to have been the main role model.

What did Rokhayah do to increase resistance in Alpena? I believe that what Rokhayah and other leading women activists did was something like opening the lid of a beer bottle full of fizz. After the bottle was open

then the fizz and bubble could come out and the beer could be poured easily. The beer is an analogy to the workers' grievances that have built up for so long.

According to Walimah, who has been working in Alpena since 1985, there was not any resistance (*tidak pernah ada apa-apa*) in Alpena until the day Rokhayah started leading other women in efforts to demand workers' rights. The event that provoked the women workers to band together as activists was the effort to get a wage increase, as stipulated in a new government regulation on minimum wages in early 1992 (see chapter 5, p.111-116).

Rokhayah and Darlina led the efforts to demand the implementation of the wage increase by getting other concerned women workers to work something out. This included seeking external support from a labor NGO and contacting other women workers to come to meetings after work (at the workers' homes). Cahaya, at that time, was more or less an assistant to Rokhayah.

The group of women workers who talked about going as a group to demand that management implement the wage increase was never successful in actually holding the meeting with management. Instead, management called several women workers together before the women workers' plan was ever implemented. Management announced their decision not to increase wages, which generated widespread

unhappy feelings among the workers and intensified the go slows that finally pressured management to implement the new minimum wage in November 1992.

It seems that the unification of the concerned women workers into a group interested in seeking changes did not stop there. In the years after 1992 there were more demands for change. Some of the demands were successfully fulfilled, such as having a *musholla* built, having clearly written company regulations, and having clearly printed pay slips, etc.

Through Cahaya's participation in group meetings with management she found that she had more courage to speak out. However, she did not have the guts to speak out against management on her own. Cahaya reminisced that she used to refer with admiration to Rokhayah's courage, "How could Rokhayah be so brave? How come I can't be like her?" Cahaya said that this admiration really challenged her. She said, "Ah, there's no way that I cannot be like her. We both have similarities, we are both women, we are both not mute, so I must try."

Cahaya's moment of enlightenment finally came. She recounts the turning point at which she began to gain courage. On 11 January 1994 Cahaya submitted a letter from her *kepala RT* to get permission to go back to her village for five days for the traditional event of

visiting the grave of ancestors prior to the Moslem fasting month of Ramadhan. A company regulation stated that if a worker wants to have permission for leave then he or she must submit a letter of support from the local neighborhood head (*kepala RT*) as proof that indeed he or she is leaving for home. However Cahaya did not discuss the matter with management, she just handed in the letter before she left. Management decided that was her mistake.

Cahaya was called into the boss's office the day she returned to work. She wondered what could be the matter and was very apprehensive. In the office, Aken, the boss, was waiting with one personnel staff, *Ibu* Henny. "You are called here because you have violated the company's regulation. You were supposed to discuss your request for leave to go back to your village before taking off. Can you not read the regulation?" asked *Ibu* Henny. Cahaya argued that the printed regulation stuck on the wall was too long to be remembered in detail. She further argued that as far as she knew she had followed the rules. She had submitted the *Kepala RT*'s letter stating that indeed she and her family were going back to the village. Based on her arguments Cahaya refused to sign the warning letter that was prepared for her. "I refuse to sign because I feel that I have not done anything wrong ... I have followed the regulation, yet you are still saying that I

have violated it." Cahaya and *Ibu* Henny argued on and on. *Ibu* Henny kept on taking up other issues to put Cahaya down while the boss looked on and stayed out of the debate. Cahaya was able to counter *Ibu* Henny's arguments every time. Here is some of the conversation that I found interesting as evidence of Cahaya's bravery that could also be considered a crash course in workers' debating skill.

Ibu Henny: "Why didn't you use the two days menstruation leave to go home to your village? You are taking then another five days leave to go back home. You are disrupting production!"

Cahaya : "*Ibu*, don't you know that for Moslems, it is forbidden to visit the grave during menstruation?"

(*Ibu* Henny is a non Moslem Chinese)

Ibu Henny: "Now, do you understand about the company regulation?"

Cahaya : "I know that there is a company regulation, but I do not understand it!"

Ibu Henny: "Can you not read it? It's displayed on the wall!"

Cahaya : "*Ibu*, it's not that I cannot read ... My break is only one hour, it is all used up for *sholat*, eating and resting. Where do I find the time

to read and study the regulation? You are the one who is supposed to distribute it to every worker!"

Ibu Henny: "I was only given one copy by the superiors and that's to be shared with other supervisors".

Cahaya : "It's your own fault. Why didn't you ask for more from the superiors!"

Meanwhile Aken, the boss who looked on, shook his head but couldn't do anything. Later *Ibu* Henny confided to another worker that she felt ashamed not to be able to talk back against Cahaya in front of the boss. This woman worker later told Cahaya about it. Cahaya seemed proud to hear this news.

Cahaya confided to me that she did not know how she got the guts to speak out like. I suspect that because Cahaya, being alone, was under so much pressure, she realized that she had to defend herself or lose. All the learning experiences in the past two years were called into play at that moment. Indeed I believe that the experience of having to face management's pressure alone was a very empowering one for Cahaya, as afterwards she took a more active and leading role in organizing resistance and in speaking out in meetings. For example, she spoke at a meeting demanding the revocation of the sweeping duty regulation in March 1994, organizing a

surprise inspection in Alpena by the Manpower official in April 1994 and demanding unpaid wages in January 1995.

The moment that Cahaya was pushed to be more brave than ever before came between late 1994 and early 1995, when the leading women worker activists, namely Rokhayah, Darlina and Maryati, had all resigned because they got married and had to follow their husbands who worked in other cities. Cahaya was looked upon by her co-workers as the remaining leader. She admitted that her co-workers gave the nickname "senior speaker" (*pembicara senior*) to her and Rokhayah. Cahaya confided to me that she felt her friends looked up to her as the remaining leader after Rokhayah, Darlina and Maryati were gone. However, I think that the abilities of other women workers as activists may have been underestimated by predominantly male worker activists and labor NGO activists. Other women activists that I have also talked to are actually at the stage where Cahaya was before she had her empowering experience. The T-shirt strike in July 1995 shows that other women workers can also take a leading role like Cahaya when the situation demands. I talk about this event in detail in chapter six on women workers' resistance.

My amazement at Cahaya is never ending. It is really exhilarating to see that a young woman who is only a junior high school graduate can develop so far. Cahaya's

strong commitment to justice is so rare in society today, that it deserves respect. Her consistent efforts to make each day worthwhile in the struggle to improve workers' lives are evidence of someone having the quality of a deep faith. Such qualities that Cahaya has are her main source of strength, despite the fact that many of her activist co-workers have left.

Cahaya has also acquired impressive skills as an organizer, for example using the telephone media to push the local Manpower official to pay a surprise visit in April 1994, or writing official letters for Feni, a co-worker who was dismissed and who had to defend herself in the labor tribune. Cahaya has also developed good speaking and writing skills. It is still rare to see a worker activist having the patience to keep a diary, which she started doing in May 1995. Cahaya started writing notes about the Alpena workers' experiences of resistance and about other things she had found important since meeting with the NGO activists. She also collects documentation, such as the payment slips. In her words, "It was since meeting the NGO activists that I started to do things like educated people". She showed me a bunch of payment slips that she had kept. She goes on, "My friends also kept their documents, but hardly ever kept them in order. I once investigated what others were doing with

their payment slips. Some crumpled them up, some kept them under their clothes".

Cahaya collected data and documents she thought to be important, because as she said, "I have struggled hard for those documents, you don't just waste them away. That's why I kept them." Therefore she thinks that labor education programs, such as those run by the NGO that supported the Alpena women workers group, are very important. NGOs are needed because the workers are uninformed about their rights as workers. Cahaya demonstrated that although some workers in Alpena are graduates from high school many have little information about labor laws. Cahaya thinks that it is important to let her friends know about the Indonesian labor laws, and if necessary to go forward on behalf of her friends whose rights are violated, as an act of solidarity with fellow workers.

3.4 What Can be Learned from Cahaya's Example

At the time of my research, Cahaya complained a lot about being left alone, since the leading activists had gone and the remaining ones were also planning to get married or to return to the village. I suspect that Cahaya's sense of being the only remaining leader arises from her concern and passion. In my belief she takes too

much responsibility, and is demanding too much from herself. What Cahaya does not realize is that she, too, has actually become a role model for other women workers and therefore there is very high possibility that if these other women workers are put in a pressured position when Cahaya is not around, then they can take a leading position as well. This proposition was actually manifested in the T-shirt strike in July 1995 (see chapter five, p.118-123).

There are several factors that interact in the process where Cahaya becomes a leading activist today. First, the factory itself is a hot bed of injustice. Alpena workers actually know that they are being exploited, as they can plainly see that they can only just survive on their wage while management staff get rich. On top of that, the degrading treatment that the workers get from the staff increases the workers' sense of demanding justice. This knowledge alone has already generated everyday resistance.

Second, leaders who have the courage to break the workers' silence provide the need for role models. Rokhayah provided Cahaya's need for a role model. Under the leadership of Rokhayah, efforts to resist collectively were made, and Cahaya took part in them. Third, the collective resistance efforts were a learning experience

for Cahaya, where she acquired her debating skill and built up her courage to face management. At these group actions, Cahaya watched how the role model leaders displayed their courage.

Fourth, based on this case study, there is no doubt that the labor NGO has become a medium for the workers to develop their consciousness, especially for Cahaya. It was through the NGO that the women activists of Alpena learned about labor law, learned various tactics of resistance, met worker activists from other factories and learned from their experiences in organizing resistance. The NGO's Education Group functions as an eye opener, providing the weapons in the form of knowledge on labor law that Alpena workers can use.

Fifth, working class culture is another factor that nurtures the spirit of resistance in a working class community. Cahaya learns from worker friends who live in the same neighborhood about a strike here or there. In social gatherings Cahaya and her friends converse about grievances in their respective workplaces and talk about what can be done about it.

Sixth, the mass-media further nurtures this culture of resistance. News about a strike or announcement of new minimum wage regulation that gets reported in the television, radio or newspaper becomes a topic of

conversation in social gatherings.

Seventh, not to be ignored is the support that Cahaya gets from her family. Cahaya's mother is especially supportive of her actions and even seems to be proud that her daughter is doing courageous things in her life. Cahaya's father has a divided view towards his daughter's political activity. On the one hand he supports Cahaya's efforts in demanding her rights as a worker; on the other hand he also shows resentment. There are two explanations for his resentment. One is the possibility that Cahaya will lose her job while she is the steady contributor to the family's economy. Cahaya's father may just simply think that the factory owners and the government are too powerful.

Another reason is that Cahaya's father wants to maintain his prestige being the head of the family. He may feel that he should keep his daughter in control. Being politically active as a woman means acting against the patriarchal values, such as going out late at night or spending the nights at friends' places. All of these factors interact to produce Cahaya as an activist.

The story of Cahaya's and how she became an activist describes, I believe, a process that is happening to many other women worker activists. I believe that Marsinah, the famous woman worker activist who was killed in mid

1993, was like Cahaya. There are many other restless young woman worker activists out there in the making in contemporary Indonesia.

From Cahaya's experience one can see that, first, there is a continuous process that produces women worker activists. Second, if one considers the significance of everyday forms of resistance as ways of learning to be an activist, then one will also acknowledge that there is more going on than what one can see in the publicized reports of workers' strikes. Third, from Cahaya's case, one can see that the workers' struggles are not limited to the factory, but can expand outside, to the home and the community.

CHAPTER IV

THE PEN FACTORY 'ALPENA'

4.1 The Location

As one travels from the city center of Jakarta, where rows of modern high rise buildings generate a metropolitan atmosphere, and enters the western outskirts of the city, one will notice the difference. The road traveled is not as smooth. Dusty looking workshops and factories stand in rows on both sides of the roads; the traffic is congested with all sorts of vehicles: bicycles, motorbikes, *bajaj*, minibuses, trucks and containers. At certain hours, herds of people, mainly workers, swarm the roadside.

Alongside the main road are smaller streets that lead to the inner part of the region where many more factories are located. Along the streets are many alley (*gang*) openings that lead to the densely populated living quarters (*kampung*). The better-off communities have concrete alleys that accommodate motorbikes, the less better-off have to deal with dirt covered paths with gravel that turn muddy on rainy days. The better areas also have concrete gutters which in many parts are clogged with dirt that cause regular flooding when the rainy season comes.

The following account of my first trip with the key labor NGO activist to the place where Cahaya lives gives an idea of the hard city life,

> "On a Saturday, at 2.00 p.m. my key person, Rahamimah, and I decided to be on our way. Frankly speaking, this was the first time I traveled on public transportation again since my return from Canada. No need to tell, the journey was of course difficult for me. First we took a minibus to the bus station. We waited for around 20 minutes in vain for the bus that would take us directly to the main road where Cahaya lives. We then decided to take another route that required us to take two different buses. Even though it was a Saturday, the bus was full and the traffic jam was heavy. Rahamimah and I did not get seat all the way. It turned out that a brand new shopping mall was one of the causes of the traffic jam as cars tried to get in and out of the mall compound.
>
> The bus literally crept. The fumes mixed with human sweat and smoking odor were suffocating. We could plainly see that walking was faster; however we were still far from our destination. I felt angry to have wasted so much time. Nearing our interchange stop we decided to get off the bus and walk. The pavement was muddy, people swarmed all around me, and the air was polluted, creating my headache which would intensify later on. I staggered behind Rahamimah trying not to appear weak, I did not want her to see me as too much of a bourgeois.
>
> We finally got on to our final bus. The bus travels along an industrial area. Factories were lined up on the left and right side of the road. In between the brown and dusty buildings are middle class residential and shopping centers, that feature new imported trends of living, such as a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet. When we finally got off it was around 4.30 pm. I felt such a relief, even though a whole 2.5 hours has been wasted. We then began our real journey on foot into the city's poor workers' community, into the *kampung* or slum.
>
> We walked through the *kampung's* maze on a narrow cemented trail cutting through two factories and later a small market. The trail is meant only

> for people, bicycles and motorbikes. Alongside the trail are open gutters, often clogged with garbage and sometimes human excrement . We finally arrived at Cahaya's home, the first woman worker of Alpena that I met".

The area of my research was initially a rural area which has now become completely urban, as *Mpok* Risma, the mother of Walimah, recalled. She remembered that in the 1960's there used to be rice fields around her home. Today, in 1995, the area is full of houses and factories.

In early 1986 when Cahaya's family moved to the *kampung* in the outskirts of Jakarta, the area was not as densely populated as today. Cahaya's mother, Ngasiyem recalled,

> " When we moved here, the houses were some distance apart, the small market near our house was still a rice paddy. Now it's so crowded. Most people living in this area are factory workers from many places in Java: Sundanese and Javanese, and from outside Java, One neighbor here is from Irian."

The outskirts of Jakarta, where Cahaya's family live, is one of the early industrial areas. Some factories are now expanding and need larger spaces. Some have moved to newly built special industrial areas further out of Jakarta. The various new industrial towns are now linked with Jakarta, hence creating the acronym of Jabotabek (short for Jakarta, Bogor, Tangerang and Bekasi). While

they are legally different municipalities, they have physically started to amalgamate into one great city.

It is in this outlying part of Jakarta that the Alpena factory is located. The factory compound is lined with high brick walls and fronted by a high iron gate. The factories beside it look just like it. It is amazing to see that container trucks can wiggle through the small and dense streets. Indeed some factories are so large that they are like a small village (*kampung*) of their own. The total area of land of the Alpena factory, around 5,000 square meter, is huge considering the fact that a worker's family of five is living in a ten square meter plot of land beside Alpena's wall. The Alpena factory compound has enough grounds to enable a container truck to make a turn. It now consists of four factory workshop buildings, one warehouse, one office building and a dormitory.

The Alpena company has two different sites. The production section is located in the outlying district of Jakarta, where this field research took place. The marketing and distribution office is located in China town or in the Old City part of Jakarta. The Alpena factory has no sign board, like many other factories around the area. No passerby can know what kind of factory is behind those walls. There are several reasons for this practice,

one being that Alpena is an 'illegal' factory seeking to avoid official tax (paying bribes to the local government and tax officials to avoid "detection").

The factory iron gate is closed most of the time, unless a vehicle enters or exits. During working hours, the factory gate is opened a little, just enough for people to walk in or out of the factory. Security guards (*satpam*) are posted at the gate. With its high brick wall, tall iron gate and security guards, the prison image of Alpena is complete.

4.2 The Owner and Management

The Alpena factory in Jakarta was established in 1978. It was then a small Chinese family business. The company has since expanded and has business ties with Japanese investors. Alpena produces various kinds of pens with a brand name of 'P' that is quite popular in Indonesia. Some of the products made in the Alpena factory are labeled 'made in Japan'. The products are distributed mainly in the domestic market and some are exported, including to Japan.

I have not been able to obtain more information about the business history of Alpena. I requested information from the National Investment Coordination office, but the

office did not have any information about Alpena. I decided not to try to get information through the management, as I feared that it would create suspicions that might endanger the research and the women workers I interviewed. Meanwhile the women workers I interviewed know very little about the business history of Alpena other than what they have seen or heard from fellow workers. What I am writing now about the company is based on information from the women workers. For example it is through their payment slips that I can verify what the company's name is.

The founder of Alpena died in 1994. Since then one of his sons, Sumarno (his Indonesian name) or Aken (his Chinese name), has become the director of Alpena. Another son, Amen, is heading the distribution office in China town. Only those two sons appear officially in the company's hierarchy. However the Aken's mother, other sons and relatives, as well as the wife of Aken are very much involved in the day to day running of the business.

Each one of Aken's brothers comes every other day to supervise the workers in the factory directly. They give orders and sometimes develop new rules. This often confuses the workers. A woman worker, Walimah, voiced her complaints, "I was told by one brother to do things one

way, the next minute another supervisor came by and asked me why I did things that way. I was really mad!"

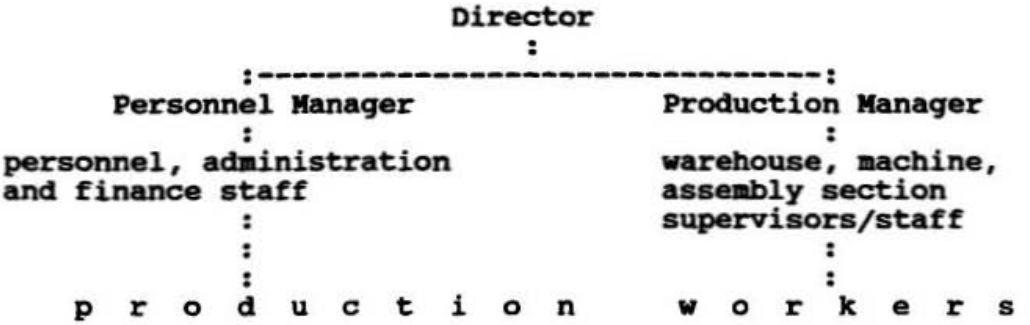
Almost all of the managers and staff members are Chinese, except for several male Javanese personnel staff and production supervisors. The issue of Chinese ethnicity is a sensitive one in Indonesia. There has been longstanding envy from indigenous Indonesians of the Chinese. The envious feelings, if not actually racism, originated in the Dutch colonial times, when the colonizing government gave economic opportunities and a priority civil status to the Chinese ethnic group, over the Indigenous people.

After Indonesia gained independence in 1945, one of the government's aims was to strengthen the Indigenous economy, especially that of Islamic groups.[1] The program never really worked. When the New Order government came to power in 1965, there was a specific policy to abolish any disputes based on race, ethnicity and religion.[2] However, the indigenous Indonesians' suspicion of the Chinese still lingers and occasionally erupts in open riots (Budiman 1994, 230).[3]

It is against this background of the Chinese ethnicity issue in Indonesia that the Alpena factory is set. Cahaya said that there are no negative feelings

among the Alpena workers against the Chinese management. However, I encountered several situations that showed that the negative feeling of the Chinese lingers on and sometimes even come to the surface.[4] Alpena management must also be aware of this. They may believe that having the management staff predominantly Chinese will guarantee more control.

The management structure in Alpena is quite simple:



While there appears to be a separation of the management personnel and production personnel, in operational terms this separation is illusory. Initially there was no strict management structure: the director (referred to as the boss), was involved in all of the work processes. However, as the company expanded, there was a restructuring of management, and a clearer job division was established. For example, the personnel manager was only installed at the end of 1994.

The term "staff" is widely used to refer to employees

who are neither in the production section nor in managerial positions. The term "staff" includes the people who work in the office, i.e. the personnel, administration and finance section, and also the people who work in the production section, i.e. the machine and assembly staff assigned to supervise the workers and the warehouse staff who run the administration of finished goods.

Meanwhile the workers are referred to as "*karyawan*" or employees. The use of the term "*karyawan*" is widely propagated by the New Order government as it blurs the exploitative relationship that is substantiated by the term "*buruh*" or workers. The term "*buruh*" is viewed as related to the left movement. However progressive worker activists, such as the women workers activists of Alpena, always referred to themselves as "*buruh*", and not "*karyawan*" in conversations I had with them.

4.3 The Workers

Alpena is a small factory with (at the time of the field research) no more than 150 workers. The data concerning number of workers, gender composition, sexual segregation, age, and working term are based on a survey conducted by Cahaya. As I could not enter the

Alpena factory and I could not find information about the factory from government agencies, I have had to rely on information from the workers. I trusted Cahaya and I asked her to conduct a simple survey. I asked her to write down every worker's name, department where they work, and the estimated length of working time.
During my research, between June and September 1995, the number of workers decreased from 144 to 130. As of September 1995, the majority of workers were female, only 17 being male. There is a clear gender segregation applied by the management in Alpena. Women workers are employed in the assembly and machine section, while male workers are employed in the machine and warehouse section.

Table 1. Alpena Workers by Sex and Job Section

Sex	Job Section			Total
	Assembling	Machine	Warehouse	
Women	75 (58%)	38 (29%)	-	113 (87%)
Men	-	6 (4.6%)	11 (8.4%)	17 (13%)
Total	75 (58%)	44 (33.6%)	11 (8.4%)	130 (100%)

Source: Cahaya's Survey, September 1995

The women in the assembly section literally put the pens together. The work here requires patience in doing the same thing over and over again, as well as manual dexterity. The women in the machine section mainly watch over the machines, while the men do the heavy duty work of mixing the ink chemicals and putting the ink and plastic pellets into the machine. The men in the warehouse section lift the boxes to and from the container.

Most workers in Alpena have worked there between one and five years. Very few stay longer than five years. The women workers I interviewed said that many did not last a year. Many quit for various reasons, including dismissal of workers at the end of a probation period, dismissal of workers who made mistakes, resignation of workers searching for better wages, or resignation of women workers due to marriage or birth. As many workers do not last long, the company seems to keep on recruiting new workers. At the time of the research there were six women workers who had been working less than three months, which is the probation period. The statistics on labor turnover in Alpena are, however, not available.

Table 2. Alpena Workers by Sex and Work Term

Sex	up to 1 year	over 1 and up to 5 years	over 5 and up to 15 years	Total
Women	30 (23%)	59 (45.4%)	24 (18.5%)	113 (86.9%)
Men	9 (7%)	5 (3.8%)	3 (2.3%)	17 (13.1%)
Total	39 (30%)	64 (49.2%)	27 (20.8%)	130 (100%)

Source: Cahaya's Survey, September 1995

While a number of the women workers of Alpena are drawn from the local Betawi ethnic group, the majority are migrants from East, West and Central Java. Some of the women migrants live with their families, with the whole nuclear family having moved from the village to Jakarta, such as Feni's and Cahaya's families. Most of the migrants, however, are on their own. All of the male workers in Alpena are migrants.

The migrant workers live in rented rooms, mostly shared by at least one other worker. In most cases, three to five women workers share a room. The local residents who profit from the influx of migrants have built rows of rooms which are further subdivided. For example the row of five rooms which Djamilah and her four other friends

share has one water pump and two toilets. Djamilah subdivided the room into three sections: living room, bedroom and kitchen.

The local women workers who live with their parents also live in meager conditions, their houses being filled with many family members and relatives. The high population density intensifies the problems of lack of water and sanitation.

Most of the Alpena women workers are young, being between the ages of fifteen and twenty five. A few women are over thirty years old, such as Walimah, Salmah, and Endah. As there are no exact statistics available, my figures are based only on Cahaya's survey and what I know from other women workers.

Most of the women workers in Alpena are unmarried (79%), only 24 women (21%) are married. Most of the married women started working in Alpena when they were still single. Economic necessity seems to be the main reason for them to remain working after marriage. Five of the married women are neglected by their husbands, who either have left altogether or have another wife and no longer give any financial support. Three of the married women have low earning husbands who are also factory workers.

Interestingly most of the 16 married women who remain

working do not yet have children, or can negotiate with their husbands, arguing that the family needs the money. It seems that for these women work is an important part of their life where they gain personal satisfaction. Endah, who had been married for thirteen years and is childless said that there was no point in sitting idly at home and only gossiping and that she would rather make money by working. These women seem to have tried hard to negotiate with their husbands to let them stay working for as long as possible, usually until a child is born. Djamilah, who has managed to leave her baby with her parents in-law, said that she was reluctant to go back to the village when her husband started telling her to quit working altogether. However she did finally give up.

Indeed, in the end, the men and the whole patriarchal family mostly wins in putting pressure on the women workers who are married to stop working, particularly when a child is born. One of the prominent women activists, Sarimah, got married during my research. Later Cahaya confided to me that she was warned by Sarimah's new husband to stay away from Sarimah. He said to Cahaya that Sarimah is now his (*milik saya*) therefore he does not want Cahaya to ask Sarimah to join the workers' activity outside work hours. It is really incredible to see how strong the patriarchal values are. Sarimah's husband

literally used the language term *milik saya* (mine to own) which refers to Sarimah as a thing being owned, just like a house or a radio.

The young women workers mostly have low educational levels. Again, there are no statistics available. However based on Cahaya's survey there are at least 16 (12%) women who graduated from junior high schools and only 3 (2%) who have graduated from high school. The rest graduated from primary school or dropped out of primary school after a few years. Of the eight Alpena women workers I talked to, only Cahaya graduated form junior high school. The rest are either primary school drop outs or graduates of primary school.

4.4 The Production Process

Alpena workers are divided into two sections, assembly and machine sections. The machine section workers work three shifts: morning shift from 6 am to 2 pm, afternoon shift from 2 pm to 10 pm, and night shift from 10 pm to 6 am. There are four groups of 10 workers who are assigned to the machine section. Most of the male workers are in the machine section. The assembly section workers, the majority of whom are women, work the day shift from 8 am to 4 pm.

The machine section workers have two main jobs that

involve machinery that produces the parts of the pen's bodies. Plastic pellets are mixed with chemicals in the machines to extrude the pen components: the body/casing, the end tip, the cap, the ink body, and so on. The workers have to monitor the operation of the machines. Another job in the machine section is inserting the ink into the ink body.

In the assembly section, the women's main job is to assemble the pens' components, attach the labels and pack the pens. The assembly workers work together in groups at large tables. Working together at one table enables the women to know each other more. When the supervisors were not around they would chat or plan 'mischief', such as taking turns for a break by pretending to go to the toilet. However, the newer women workers are known to be less likely to join such 'mischief' acts. Understandably, the new workers are afraid of losing their jobs, particularly if they are still in the probation period.

Thus in one part of the production process there are men put to work to utilize high technology and in the other part, where women workers are mainly employed, the work is still manual. In the past not as many of the jobs were done by machine. Cahaya recalled that when she began work six years ago, women workers inserted the ink manually. Alpena today is more capital intensive. Some

machines, such as the machines producing the pen's body/casing, need only one worker to watch over each one.

Most of the women production workers are paid by the day, the wage they receive each Saturday being based on the sum of the days worked. Only the women workers are paid on this daily wage system. Meanwhile the male production workers get a monthly salary. The justification given by the company is that the men do extra work. The men live in the dormitory. The extra work they do includes staying up at night if a container arrives with goods to unload, and sweeping the factory grounds and buildings.

The women workers' daily wage is based on the minimum wage set annually by the government. The minimum wage at the time of the research in 1995 was Rp.4,600 (US$ 2.10) per day. In January 1996 the government announced a new minimum wage of Rp. 5,400 (US$ 2.30). The new regulation was to be effective by April 1996. The time discrepancy between announcement and implementation of a new minimum wage regulation is to give time to employers to ask for postponement in implementing the regulation after proving that they did not have a good business year. Those who have worked for more than a year get an additional amount ranging from Rp.50 (US 2 cents) to Rp.500 (US 22 cents) . Salmah, who has worked for 15 years, and is the only long

serving woman worker, receives an additional Rp.500.

Initially the Alpena workers did not get a payment slip, therefore they did not know what they actually earned and what the components of their wage were. After a demand from Walimah, a woman worker activist, they now get a payment slip which ordinarily outlines the main components of their salary: basic wage, position benefit (*tunjangan jabatan*), transport benefit, and food money (*uang makan*). However, as they do not get any of the benefits, receiving the basic wage only, management claims that the transport and food money is already included in the basic wage and that this is in accordance with the minimum wage regulation. The women worker activists have been talking about demanding additional food and transportation money; however they fear of going against the government regulation that stipulates that the daily wage of a worker already includes benefits, such as food and transport benefits.

Additional income for the workers comes from two sources. First, the women workers get an additional two days' wages if they do not claim their entitlement to two days menstrual leave per month. The workers are also entitled to an annual bonus of a month's wage for their major religious holiday (*Hari Raya* benefit). Since the majority of workers are Moslem, they get the *Hari Raya*

benefit on the *Idul Fitri* or *Lebaran* day at the end of the fasting month.

To offset the additional income, the workers also got a salary deduction of Rp.500 per week for the ASTEK (abbreviated from the words *Asuransi Tenaga Kerja*) health and safety insurance.

Most of the women workers I interviewed said that the wage they received was just enough to keep them and their family alive. Any savings they were able to make usually went to meet family needs. Cahaya, for example used her savings for her father's medical needs when he was severely ill and to finance the whole family visiting their home village. She never manages to accumulate savings for her own use. When the women workers are able to save, they usually put it in the form of gold jewelry that can be resold easily any time they need cash.

This section has described the situation within Alpena. The Alpena factory itself is set within the particular political, economic, and social context of Indonesia. The discussion of the Alpena factory serves to give the reader an idea of where the women workers' resistance is embedded.

Notes

[1]A popular program that was initiated by the Old Order government, which was in power between 1945 and 1965, was called the *Banteng* program in 1959. The program aimed to give more opportunities to indigenous businesses, mainly those of the Moslems, by purposely providing opportunities to nonChinese business owners. The program failed due to the corrupt nature of the nonChinese business owners.

[2]The New Order government put out an agenda to abolish what it calls the issue of *SARA*, abbreviation of *Suku, Agama, Ras* (Ethnicity, Religion, and Race). In short, any grievances that relate to the SARA issues must not be voiced and disputes or resistance based on SARA are met with reprisal. What this policy does is actually to repress the sensitive issues, and not deal with the issues democratically.

[3]Several anti-Chinese riots erupted in Solo, Semarang, Ujung Pandang and Aceh cities between 1980 and 1981. The bloodiest one was in Tanjung Priok, in Jakarta, in 1984, when a Moslem group demonstrated against the government for policies favoring the Chinese. The demonstration ended with the military shooting at demonstrators (Budiman 1994, 230). These riots have happened in cities throughout the archipelago over a long span of time. Therefore it is arguable that despite the government's efforts to curb SARA issues, they are still very much lingering in people's lives. Beneath this anti-Chinese issue, and other SARA issues, is actually disappointment about economic inequality and the concentration of political power in the hands of the few.

[4]A stark example of an anti-Chinese feeling that erupted was when Feni told me how she was mad at the factory guards who were instructed not to let them in. Feni angrily accused the guards of being Chinese stooges. Another more salient example is the women workers' refusal to call the Chinese staff by their Indonesian names, especially outside of work.

To assure assimilation between indigenous Indonesian and the Chinese, the New Order government has required the Chinese community to have Indonesian names, aside from their Chinese names. Alpena management also saw the need of this. The supervisors asked the workers to call them by their Indonesian names and to use the term *ibu* or *bapak* (see glossary).

CHAPTER V

DYNAMIC RESISTANCE:

THE PROCESS OF CREATING ACTIVISTS

This section is the heart of my thesis. Here I will discuss the dynamic resistance that the women workers of Alpena staged throughout the period under investigation, that is from the establishment of Alpena in 1978 until the end of January 1996 when I ended my field research. The history of Alpena's resistance is as told by the women workers I met, particularly by Cahaya and Walimah.

What I want to argue for in this section is that, first, there are many kinds of resistance. Resistance ranges from everyday forms of resistance to open and organized collective actions. Everyday forms of resistance provide the base upon which the open collective action is made possible. The resistance put up by Alpena women workers is dynamic in nature; it flows continuously. There is always something going on, even beneath the seemingly calm exterior. This argument for the importance of everyday forms of resistance counters the narrow Marxist and Neoclassical economist views that only organized strikes count as resistance.

The Alpena women workers' resistance generates changes that benefit them directly. This is an important

point to be acknowledged as many labor activists are bogged down by the highly political agendas of the left, such as the establishment of independent trade unions or even the downfall of capitalism, so that they tend to undermine the gains that women workers make at the factory level (Cahyono, Napitupulu and Razif 1994). The fact that the resistance put up by Alpena women workers does generate change also challenges Neoclassical economists arguments that improvement of the workers' situation will only be possible when the Indonesian labor market has reached a labor scarce situation, that is when supply of labor is less than the demand putting the workers in a better bargaining position (Manning, 1995).

Second, I want to argue that the perspective of political consciousness as an interactional system is significant to an analysis of why and how Alpena women workers resist and particularly how they become activists. There were many issues that made Alpena women workers resist, not only those over wages. In other words, resistance covers not only issues arising from the sphere of production, but also issues beyond that narrow sphere, such as personal respect or religion. All of these issues intertwine and interact with one another in the generation and sustenance of resistance. The interactional perspective is helpful to correct the narrow Marxist

analysis that the exploitative relations in the point of production is the only reason for resistance.

The whole discussion of Alpena women workers' resistance counters the argument that women are apolitical beings, and on the contrary supports the arguments for the need to redefine politics to include the grassroots and personal level of activism where women predominate, instead of looking at politics merely at the level of organizations, parties or governments where men predominate.

5.1 Between the Everyday Forms of Resistance and Open Organized Collective Action

One day in early November 1993, the production manager, Akim, interrupted someone trying to steal a set of pens. He claimed to have caught a glimpse of the suspected thief, who was running away, wearing a red top and dark trousers. Akim assumed that the pens were hidden in the thief's trouser pocket. A search was conducted, but unfortunately many workers were wearing red tops that day. No one was caught. Following this incident, a new regulation was announced that banned all women workers from wearing trousers and culottes.

The new regulation was strictly implemented. Women

workers who were found to be wearing trousers or cullotes were told to go home and change. Those who lived nearby could quickly change and return to work, while those living far away could not make it back to work that day. The ban against wearing trousers and cullotes hurt the women workers' feelings because they felt that they were all suspected as potential thieves. Furthermore, for city girls to be banned from wearing trousers seemed unreasonable as trousers are a regular part of the city fashion.

Many times, the women talked about protesting, but it was not until Rokhayah initiated the protest against the ban on wearing trousers and cullotes that the protest was actually conducted. On 9 December, 1993, Rokhayah asked the women to wear trousers and cullotes for the following day . She said, "all of you must wear trousers or cullotes. Those who do not have any must borrow. I will be responsible if the management pressures you. So don't be afraid."

Not everybody turned up with trousers or cullotes the next day. Actually only around 20 women workers were wearing them. Those who were wearing trousers and cullotes were made to go first in the line entering the factory and those who were not walked behind them. Taslimah was first in line and was told to go home by

Mrs. Lim, the mother of Aken, the boss, who was in the office that morning. Rokhayah stepped forward in defense of Taslimah. The following interchange was reported as having occurred between the Rokhayah and Mrs.Lim:

Mrs. Lim : "Can't you people read the announcement? Go home and change or don't work at all!"

Rokhayah : "I want to ask you, on what grounds are we banned from wearing trousers?!"

(Rokhayah then urged Taslimah to punch her card)

"If you told Taslimah to go home, now I ask you, are you going to pay Taslimah's wage for the day? She lives very far from here!"

Mrs. Lim : "Of course not. She will not be paid because she is not working"

Rokhayah : "Taslimah wants to work, but it is you who tell her to go home!"

The debate between Mrs.Lim and Rokhayah went on while the women workers watched. Rokhayah also demanded other things during the debate, such as the requirement for management to provide workers' uniforms, benefits, menstrual leave and annual leave.[1]

Obviously the management saw that Rokhayah's speech could escalate into a bigger protest because the other women workers were surrounding her. Management then asked Rokhayah to go into the office and negotiate. Rokhayah

refused to go in alone. She said, "It is not only me who works here. Others must come too". Finally the activists, including Rokhayah, Feni, Maryati went in. All other workers, including those wearing trousers and cullotes, were ushered to work.

The debate continued in the office, with the management arguing that the new regulation was designed to make all women workers wear the same kind of clothing. The management further argued that it looked funny if some wore dresses, while others wore trousers or cullotes. Rokhayah then demanded, "In that case, give us uniforms then!" At first the management refused to provide uniforms, but later they decided that they needed some time to think about the request. During the meeting, Rokhayah also demanded that copies of company regulations be distributed to the workers because up till that time regulations were made up as the management pleased.

On 14 December 1993, management finally announced that they would not provide uniforms to the workers, but the women workers were free to wear what they liked, including trousers and cullotes. Thus the women workers won the demand to abolish the restriction on wearing trousers and cullottes.

The significance of the trousers and cullotes strike is in showing that there are reasons for strikes, other

than wages. So far In Indonesia it is usually argued that economic issues, particularly wages, is viewed as the main causes in workers' strikes. (Razif 1994, 21-25). This view is probably held because those big strikes that are reported in the media usually put economic demands at the top of their list. The view that economic issues are the most important issues for the workers unfortunately implies that it is the economy that is the determining factor in workers' resistance. Thus we only get one part of the picture of workers' resistance.

The case of trousers and cullotes strike shows that several factors interact to generate resistance. The resistance initially centered on the issue of revoking the ban to wear trousers and cullotes because the regulation violated the women workers' personal dignity when they were suspected as potential thieves. Later the resistance escalated to other demands, including benefits and leaves. Here we see an interaction of grievances that generate and maintain resistance.

The trousers and cullotes strike may seem to be a trivial strike. However the strike has a symbolic value for the Alpena women workers, because it was the first open and organized collective resistance that they staged. There had been a strike of the male workers in Alpena in 1978, but for the workers in 1993 this strike was the

first after a long silence.

The open organized collective resistance on the issue of trousers and cullotes was actually the fruit of long-term everyday resistance. Assistance from the labor NGO after August 1992 also played an important role in providing support that the women activists needed.[2]

The trousers and cullotes strike in December 1993 was actually linked to the success of the demand for the implementation of a new minimum wage increase in November 1992. The demand for a wage increase had been expressed since mid 1992 in various forms of everyday resistance. However, when everyday forms of resistance are engaged in by all at the same time then they create a pressure as great as open and organized collective resistance. The successful experience of demanding the wage increase in 1992 must have been an important event for helping the Alpena women workers learn about their strength.

A brief account of the wage increase demand in 1992 may be relevant here. A new minimum wage regulation was announced by the government in April 1992. The minimum wage was increased from Rp.2,500 (US$ 1.23) to Rp.3,000 (US$ 1.48) per day. The Alpena workers heard of the new wage regulation from various sources, including the newspapers and workers in other factories in their neighborhood. The new minimum wage regulation became a

hot topic among Alpena women workers because according to it, their wage should have been increased by Rp.500 (US25 cents).

Cahaya recalled that around May 1992, Rokhayah and Darlina, having read the newspapers, began talking to other women workers about how to implement the government's new minimum wage regulation in Alpena. Rokhayah and Darlina had actually just started working in Alpena in early 1992. Rokhayah had worked in another factory before working in Alpena.

As news about the wage increase spread, the workers began talking intensively to one another about the increase, especially during breaks, at the prayer house or *musholla*, or while waiting for the work bell to ring. At work, whenever the women workers had a chance, they asked their supervisors whether and when Alpena management was going to increase their wage. At pay day every Saturday they asked the finance staff about the wage increase.

The women workers' continuous questioning about the wage increase finally pushed the boss to react and give a definitive answer. Aken, the boss and Akim, the production manager, finally called in several women workers they regarded as representatives of the whole group of workers and told them the management's decision. Basically the management refused to increase the wage.

Cahaya recalled that Akim said, "If you want to get an increase, you can just move to that factory [that gives higher wage]. Do not compare our factory with another."

The women workers thought about finding ways to pressure for the increase. Rokhayah and Darlina talked to the others about bringing their grievances before a Legal Aid Institute. However the plan was canceled because Darlina heard from her neighbor that it might cost them at least Rp.150,000 (around US$ 70) for their case to be taken up.

Another means was sought. In August 1992, one of the woman worker activists, Sumringah, who had just started working in Alpena in mid 1992, suggested that they contact an NGO that was helping her sister, Sunarti, who was at that time involved in a dispute. Sumringah's sister worked in a shoe factory in Tangerang whose workers were struggling to increase their wage in line with the new minimum wage regulations. As a result of their struggle, the company planned to dismiss the workers, arguing that the company had gone bankrupt and therefore could not pay the workers a higher minimum wage. The workers, in their efforts against the dismissal plan, were being assisted by a labor NGO. Sumringah's sister arranged a meeting between Rokhayah and Darlina and the NGO activists.

Rokhayah and Darlina told the activists about their

problems at work. The activists then suggested that they gather their friends to talk about the problem, and set up a group. Rokhayah then asked Cahaya to help organize a meeting of Alpena women workers. However, setting up the meeting was not easy. The first meeting was held finally on 1 November 1992. Rokhayah and Cahaya told the women workers that if they wanted an increase in their wage, then they must come to a meeting at Rokhayah's place. Around 15 women workers came to the first meeting of what later came to be called the Education Group (*kelompok pendidikan*)[3].

The meeting was facilitated by the NGO activists. At the meeting, the participants pointed out that the main problem was wages. The NGO activists suggested that the women workers go together as a group to ask management for the increase. However, the women workers never went to challenge management as a group. According to Cahaya they did not yet have the guts to confront management face to face.

Even though the activists never went to resist openly as a group, the unhappy feeling of knowing that their wage was not going to be increased had built up to a stage where everyone was ready to show their unhappiness in various ways. Everyday forms of resistance escalated. The Alpena women workers not only continued to

persistently ask their supervisors about wage increase while at work, especially the finance staff on pay day every Saturday, but they also staged go slows or purposely made mistakes. According to Cahaya, when requested to work fast, many retorted, "Why should we work in a hurry when our salary is not increased". Everyone was working slowly and production slackened off. The Alpena management finally announced a wage increase in November 1992, six months after it actually had to be implemented according to the regulation.

From the case of demanding a wage increase, we can see that the everyday forms of resistance have proved to be successful in pressuring management to finally give the raise. In the following years, when the government announced a new minimum wage increase, it was immediately implemented by management without delay.

Several of the everyday forms of resistance that Alpena women workers staged were the continuous questioning about the wage increase, the go slows, chatting and exchanging information at the work desks, sneaking to the toilets and chatting there, praying for a longer time than necessary in the *musholla* and chatting there. Outside work, some of the women workers walked the same way home and they would talk about the work situation. At lunch time some would go and eat at one of

the workers' rented rooms (*kontrakan*) near the factory. During these times they would voice criticisms against oppression at work and exchange information regarding ways to overcome the problems.

The go slows, by individuals or groups, have been retained as a weapon to be used by the women in the event that their demands are not met. Cahaya gives examples of what women workers do when their demands are not met. The women workers who are typically quick with their work will work slower. If they feel like working efficiently they can pick up, for instance, a dozen pens at once to be assembled. When they decide it is time to work slow they will pick up only five pens. Cahaya is nicknamed 'poison' (*racun*) by the supervisors. She describes how she spread her 'poison'. Everytime the supervisor demanded she work faster she would relate it to a cash increase. For example, when Cahaya was asked to work faster, she would loudly retort, so that other workers working on the same table noticed and supported her, "Where is the money to work faster (*mana uang cepetnya?*)".

Industrial sabotage is practiced as a form of resistance. Cahaya describes how she purposely did not do her work properly. She would screw the pens' caps loosely so that some would fall out. And when the supervisor told her to screw them tightly she would retort, "Where is the

money to screw them tightly? (*mana uang kencengnya?*). Others now copied her ways of refusing orders and relating their refusal to the demand for money.

Everyday resistance also caused a Muslim prayer house, *musholla*, to be built by management in June 1993. Previously, only an unused room was designated as a *musholla*. The majority of the workers are Moslem and are required to pray (*sholat*) five times a day. During the day shift, the workers should perform at least the *sholat Dzuhur* prayer. The devout workers made an effort to perform the prayers as prescribed. However the management was hard on those who performed the prayers. Often the workers were scolded for taking time off to pray, which took at least ten minutes. "Many hide behind the machines to perform *sholat*," according to Cahaya.

The restriction on *sholat* has long been an issue of conflict for the workers. The management see it as a way for the workers to sneak off and take extra breaks, while the workers see it as a moral right to be able to practice their religion. The women workers grumbled about being scolded for praying too long. They also openly asked for a prayer house (*musholla*) to be built. In an unsigned or anonymous protest letter about Alpena management's violation of workers' rights, addressed to the West Jakarta Manpower Office, it was stated "We are not given

time to pray, and if we pray during working hours we will be scolded"[4]. It seems that the management finally saw that it was better to give in to the workers' demand for time to pray and built a prayer house (*musholla*).

The management's decision might also be seen as an effort to avoid the issue turning into a racial and religious conflict, that is of the Christian Chinese against the indigenous Moslems. The *musholla* of course became another meeting point, besides the toilet, where the women workers sneaked extra break time. It was also there that the women workers discussed their grievances and plans of action. The *musholla* is also more convenient than the toilet for a meeting point because there is less possibility for nonMoslem Chinese supervisors to control it. A nonMoslem would feel uncomfortable checking a Moslem holy praying house.

The significance of everyday forms of resistance for maintaining the spirit of resistance within Alpena women workers is again manifested in the T-shirt strike in July 1995. It was the Alpena tradition to distribute free T-shirts with the company logo every year, usually given on the *Lebaran* day. However, there was no T-shirt distributed on the *Lebaran* day in February 1994. Management said that T-shirt distribution was postponed. Again on the next *Lebaran* day of 1995 there was no T-shirt

distribution and it was announced that the T-shirts distribution was postponed. The women workers remembered the postponed T-shirt as a promise and they began intensively asking about the T-shirt again in early July 1995. However, all they got was more promises that the T-shirts were still being prepared.

Ibu Sandra, who is also the wife of Akim, even said that the T-shirt would take a while because it was being made in Japan. These answers enhanced the women workers' expectations that they would get a really special T-shirt, especially when they heard it was to be made in Japan. They talked about the new logo and style the T-shirt was rumored to have. Some even rumored that it was taking a long time because it would be made of silk material. Therefore anxiousness built up in the young women workers about getting a new, special, T-shirt.

Finally on a Saturday pay day, 29 July 1995, the talk about demanding the T-shirt intensified as the women workers had a chance to meet together while getting their pay at the office. The activists, including Narti and Walimah, talked about demanding the T-shirt together. They debated about when to go and ask for the T-shirt. At first Walimah suggested that they demand it right after pay time. However that suggestion was rejected because many women workers were too eager to go home right away

after getting their pay. Meanwhile Cahaya said to her friends not to worry and that if they didn't get one this year they should demand two shirts next year. However her friends disagreed, "Oh no, it's too long ... They might even lie to us!" Finally the agreement to demand it together on the following Monday was made.

On Monday morning the women workers who agreed to participate did not enter the work room after punching their attendance cards. More than 40 women workers sat around in front of the office demanding to see the boss. However, some of the women activists who had planned the strike did not turn up. Cahaya did not turn up for work on the protest day. She decided not to come because she felt that she was already in the spotlight and that others could be pushed to lead. Narti, another woman worker activist who suggested the strike on Monday, also did not go to work because she had to take her child to the clinic. However, even though the leading activists did not come to work, other women worker activists did not back down. Walimah, Sarimah and Djamilah took the lead.[5]

For Sarimah and Djamilah, this was the first time that they took a leading position. They had participated as workers' representatives, but never led or actively spoke out. Their role had so far been more like the backup vocals of a singer. These women took the leading

position in arguing with the management. The upshot was that the personnel staff announced that their demand for the T-shirt was refused and threatened the women workers to start work or go home. The women workers chose to go home.

The next day, they still demanded the T-shirt. The Manpower officials were finally called in by the company. The women workers were told to select six representatives to negotiate. Cahaya, Djamilah, Sarimah, Walimah, Narti, and Kus were selected as representatives and went into the closed door meeting at the office, while the others sat outside the meeting room waiting for the result. The negotiation started at 4 pm and ended at 9 pm. Many stayed on until late that night because they were anxious to hear the results. While waiting, the other women workers pooled their money to buy food; they chatted, sang, made gestures and teased the security guards for being on management's side. The factory gate was closed all the time the strike went on.

The negotiation process itself was turning out to be an important stage in the education for resistance of these women workers. They learned to speak out during the negotiation process. Djamilah and Sarimah, who had never been outspoken in meetings with management before, both learned to speak out on this occasion.

At the negotiation table, the Manpower officials ruled that as there was no regulation for the company to distribute T-shirts, it was management's right not to distribute T-shirts. Therefore the women workers "lost" their demand. The only demand that was fulfilled was that those who were on strike on the first day would be paid, on the grounds that the workers had signed up and had intended to work but were refused by management.

The women workers recalled that it was a very hard struggle, but it was worth it. They felt that they had shown that they were not easily intimidated. They said that the important thing was that they felt that they could defend their rights, even though they lost. "If we just keep quiet, we will continued to be oppressed!", Djamilah said. The T-shirt strike had a positive impact on the new activists. Djamilah, Kus and Sarimah, for example, said that now they have the guts to look Akim, the production manager, in the eye. Before that, they recalled, they had always lowered their eyes when talking to him.

From my point of view, I am sure that the women workers gained experience by staging the T-shirt strike, including how to negotiate with officials and work together in organizing the strike. The rise of new women leaders in the T-shirt strike proved the significance of

everyday resistance. Through the experience of everyday resistance, Djamilah, Sarimah, Walimah and Kus built up their resisting spirit. These women also learned about how to challenge management from other leaders, such as Rokhayah, Darlina and Maryati. Therefore even though these women activists were no longer working in Alpena, their leadership had left its mark on other women workers.

The two day strike really affected the company. Production was crippled, and there were no products in the warehouse. When the women worker activists started work again they were surprised to see *Ibu* Sandra with red eyes from crying. Rumors said that her husband Akim, the production manager, was really mad at her.

After the strike the agreement to set up a savings fund among the women workers was made. On every Saturday pay day one of the activists, either Walimah, Cahaya, Sumringah or another, collected donations from the women workers. They usually donated between Rp.100 and Rp.500 (US cents 4 to 20). Cahaya was given the responsibility of managing the savings fund. They agreed that the money would be used for common needs, such as if they were ever in a dispute again with management or if one of them became sick.

Between the wage increase demand in 1992 and the T-shirt strike in July 1995 there were many resistance

actions staged individually and collectively in Alpena. One of the important acts of collective resistance in this period was the surprise visit by Manpower officials on 2 May, 1994. As has been said, the women worker activists had written a letter in February, 1993 inviting the West Jakarta Manpower Officials to inspect Alpena. However there was no response to that letter. In late April, 1994 they made another attempt to contact the Manpower Office. This time the women decided not to write a letter but to phone.

Members of the Education Group took turns trying to call the Manpower Office from the public phone near the factory. Finally, after several days of trying, Cahaya got through. She was able to talk to the head of the West Jakarta Manpower Office himself. She pressured the man into agreeing to inspect Alpena as soon as possible by giving an indication that they were ready to stage a strike any time.

Thus the women worker activists were utilizing the government for their interests. The visit of the Manpower officials to Alpena in 2 May, 1994 gained victories for the workers' side. Using a public phone facility is an important learning experience for the women regarding tactics of resistance as is the acquisition of modern organizing knowledge, such as the manners needed when

speaking with officials.

The call was made on Friday. The women estimated that the Manpower inspector would come either on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday at the latest. From Monday on, Cahaya, Rokhayah, and the others carried a pen and a small note book all the time. Just in case the inspector arrived they would be ready for the meeting.

Finally the inspectors came. The inspection took the management by surprise. It was a bad time for them, because at the same time the management was involved in a dispute settlement with Feni, the woman worker that they had dismissed. The Manpower officials came around 11 am and went directly to talk to many of the workers on the production tables. They asked questions such as, how long have you worked here? how much is your wage? what benefits do you get? They also inspected the buildings.

The management actually requested that the Manpower officials meet only with the workers' representatives. However the workers protested and demanded that the Manpower officials meet with all the workers. Management finally gave in. The machines were turned off and everybody was told to gather. The officials asked the employer's family and the company management to go inside and to not listen or participate in the ensuing conversation. It was a big thing for the workers. Nothing

like this had ever happened before.

The workers stood in a circle around the Manpower officials who led the discussion. The officials played the role of a parent solving their children's dispute. They asked the crowd of workers, "Okay ladies and girls (*ibu-ibu, mbak-mbak*), now what do you want?" The women workers said that they wanted to ask questions about the violations of workers' rights in Alpena, including the non existent food and transportation benefits, unpaid sick leave, the fact that maternity leave with pay was only given to women for the first and second child, and medical reimbursement covered only 50 percent of the total cost incurred.

The whole conversation between the workers and the Manpower officials (M.O.) pointed to management's stinginess. Harsh words were spoken against the management, for example:

M.O. : "What happens if there is death (*kematian*) among the workers or their families ?"

Workers : "The management staff here has no heart, they don't care if there is a *kematian*".

Walimah : "You must tell the management to really implement the regulations"

M.O. : "Okay, we will tell them later."

Walimah : "No, not later, but now in front of us, so that

when they lie we can pursue the issue!"

M.O. : "Please *ibu*, we will negotiate with the management and press for the implementation of the regulations."

Walimah : "No way, I won't believe it, not until the management is called and you say it in front of us. The management has been fooling us all the time!"

The Manpower officials gave in and called together management and owners.

The next phase of dialogue directly humiliated the management. The Manpower officials questioned the Alpena director in front of the workers and the workers jeered everytime a violation was admitted, as shown in the following parts of the conversation:

M.O. : "I want to ask you as the director of Alpena, is it true that all this time you never paid your workers who are on sick leave?"

The director admitted reluctantly that this was the case and the workers shouted and jeered.

Workers : "huuu, corruptor, shame on you!"

M.O. : "You must not take away the wage of your workers who are on sick leave. It's stated in the labor regulation".

M.O. : "Is it true that you don't give paid maternity

leave to women with the third child onward?"
The director admitted again and the workers shouted and jeered.

M.O. : "If there is a misfortune of death (*kematian*) do you ever contribute?"

Workers : "The boss is stingy ... the workers have more solidarity, we give contributions even if it is only 100 or 200 Rupiahs".

M.O. : "You must not do that anymore. We are a country based on *Pancasila* where people help each other even a little".

Cahaya recalled that there was complete commotion. She said that the only thing left out was to invite journalists. Some of them had thought about it but they did not yet know how to go about it. Although the Manpower officials seemed to have sided with the workers, Cahaya and the others knew that they must have been given bribes to not press further with the workers' rights violations they found, by for instance taking the company to court for breaches of maternity leave provisions.

5.2.Significance of Alpena Women Workers' Resistance

What then is the significance of resistance, such as displayed by the Alpena women workers? I will now

discuss this issue.

Cahaya has kept a special diary of her resistance history since 9 May 1995. She wrote in the first page of her diary,

> "Steps of my struggle with co-workers at Alpena: I started to work in Alpena on 21 November 1988 with a wage of Rp.1,600 (US$ 1) per day. At the time when I started working in Alpena there were no written company regulation, monthly period (menstruation) leave, sick leave, ... special leaves [maternity leave for women bearing the third child], break time for the night shift, pay slip, ... workers in the night shift do not get [extra fooding like] coffee/sweet tea and snacks, and it was difficult for workers to perform *sholat*."

Today, the list of grievances that Cahaya noted when she began to work at the factory have all been eradicated. On a broader analysis, the Alpena women workers' resistance has increased their bargaining position against the management. This argument is proven by the fact that Alpena management now implements government labor regulations without delay; for example, when the new minimum wage regulation was announced by the government, it was implemented right away.

The gains that Alpena women workers achieved are significant achievements. These gains are evidence that counter the Marxist and Neoclassical economist arguments about the contemporary Indonesian workers' movement. Both

perspectives, I believe, overlooked the importance of grassroots resistance where women play a role. Thus it is important to acknowledge the feminist demand that politics not be limited to the realm of organizational politics. In the case of the labor movement, it is important not to be limited to the realm of trade unions. The Alpena women workers have shown that there are other forms of organizing that enable them to attain changes.

This feminist argument does not negate the fact that there is still a problem with the absence of a strong organized labor movement in Indonesia today. How this grassroots resistance can be linked with open, organized movements, such as trade unions, is still a big question. However, it is a mistake not to take grassroots resistance seriously, just because it has not changed the structure of the New Order State. Such an analysis does not place the workers' movement in its context. The context now is that the government has been the dominant power holder for as long as this generation of workers can remember. For these women workers, who were mostly born after the New Order regime took over in 1965, and have therefore been totally subjected to the hegemonic ideology of the New Order, to stage continuous resistance and produce gains is something remarkable. It is a pity that what these young women have gained is often overlooked.

Alpena is only a small factory, yet there are many resistance actions that one can learn to appreciate from it. If from one case study we can find so much resistance staged by the women workers, then imagine what the women workers in the entire manufacturing sector in Indonesia today have achieved. If we acknowledged the extent of women workers' resistance, then we would not be surprised at the existence of Marsinah and Cahaya. I believe there are many more Cahayas and Marsinahs out there and that they are continuously being processed into activists. That is why I call my thesis the making of Indonesian women activists.

5.3.The Interactional Perspective on Understanding Women Workers' Resistance

In this section I will elaborate the complex relationship of factors in generating, sustaining, or inhibiting women workers' resistance. The capitalist system of domination is very well understood by majority, if not all, of the workers. The workers know that they are being exploited. They understand that they are only paid a meager wage and that the employer and management are living very well and doing better all the time. Understanding of this capitalist system of domination

helps creates the political consciousness that further manifests itself in resistance. How one worker manifests resistance depends on other factors, such as the risks one has to take. Everyday resistance is the form of resistance with the lowest risk. For example, when the women workers sneak to the toilet for longer than necessary, when they comment about how the personnel manager passed with his car and did not offer them a ride; or even better still when the women workers work carelessly on purpose.

Besides the capitalist system of domination, there are other issues considered important for the workers and when they are ignored then the workers can view the ignorance as another form of oppression. They are the issues related to what is culturally acceptable and personal respect. As the examples of collective resistance cited above show, the trousers and cullotes resistance in 1993 was linked to personal respect. The women workers did not like the implicit idea behind the ban on wearing trousers and cullotes that suggested that they were all potential thieves. Such issue of personal respect in Alpena that generate an open and organized collective action is linked to resistance directly against the capitalist system of domination, such as the demand for benefits and leaves. Another example of this link is

the T-shirt strike in 1995, where it was again precipitated by a non-economic issue, that is the broken promise of T-shirt distribution by management, and escalated to the issues of benefits and leaves. Therefore we cannot say that the economic sphere is determinant and instead we have to see the interaction between factors.

The workers also understand that there is a bigger system of domination outside the factory, that of the state. Alpena women workers understand very well that the state, manifested at a more abstract level by labor regulations and at a more concrete level by the corrupt Manpower officials, are on the side of the capitalists. It was this understanding that pushed Feni to put up resistance against management's decision to dismiss her, a decision that was backed by the Manpower officials.[6] Another example is how Cahaya went public in a television interview that criticized the new minimum wage regulation issued by the government.

There are many factors that interact and create the ground for the Alpena women workers in becoming activists. The 'less brave' women workers learn from the 'more brave' women workers. Cahaya was not always 'brave', as she put it; she used to admire Rokhayah for her bravery. Everyone has the potential to become an activist to the extent that they are willing to come out, be recognized as leaders,

which therefore places them at more risk of management's reprisals. Such leaders, however, may also be generated by the forces around them, not because they want to become activists. For example, Cahaya was put in a position where she had to speak out and defend herself when management threatened to give her a warning letter in January 1994, or Feni was forced to defend her beliefs and challenge management when she was fired in March 1994. The latest example was that Sarimah and Djamilah became leaders in the T-shirt strike because they believed the show must go on even though Cahaya was absent. These role models are always available, and even when they are no longer in that particular factory, their bravery has left an impression on others who might someday utilize it to come out as leaders themselves.

We must also not ignore the fact that in organizing resistance, the Alpena women activists were able to utilize various support resources that exist outside the factory. The support resources include the labor NGOs, the network of worker activists outside Alpena, the government, the family, the religious activities, and social gatherings.

When Alpena women workers were seeking to pressure management to increase wages in 1992, they met activists from a labor NGO. The activists pushed them to set up a

group. Thus on 1 November 1992, the Education Group was set up with 16 members, including Rokhayah, Darlina, Sumringah, Cahaya, Feni and Maryati. Their main activities were regular meetings every two weeks where they discussed problems at work and labor law. The labor NGO also invited Alpena women worker activists to various events that enabled them to meet worker activists from other regions. What the NGO activists did was mainly to supply the Alpena women worker activists with information, especially about the law, that provided affirmation for them in further demanding their rights. The labor NGO activists did not, however, incite the women workers, as claimed by the government.

Religious activities inside and outside the factory have also been helpful in keeping resistance spirit alive. Since it was built, the *musholla* in Alpena has become one of the meeting points where women workers exchange information and even plan protest actions. Holy Qur'an recital groups (*kelompok pengajian*) outside the factory have also become a means of contact and even consciousness raising. For example, Walimah goes to the same *kelompok pengajian* with Mulia and Lilies (who are sisters). At the time Mulia was seeking medical reimbursement after catching typhoid, so on the way to the *kelompok pengajian*, Walimah used to coach the two sisters on

tactics to demand the reimbursement. More progressive still is the example of a *kelompok pengajian* that is set up by Muslim workers in the neighborhood where Sumringah lives, where they often raise the issue of workers' oppression in the sermons. The government has, for some time, been keeping an eye on public religious activities.[6]

The family can also be a source of energy for resistance. Parents of Alpena women workers who have suffered under the dominating political economic system are very supportive of their activist children. For example, Walimah's mother, who was a worker in a tile factory for years, understands exactly how companies exploit their workers. When I interviewed Walimah, her mother always joined in and supported our heated conversation regarding workers' sufferings. Cahaya's parents were supportive of her activism, although her father initially did not agree with her actions. However, not all family relationships are supportive. As will be discussed in the next chapter, marriage strongly inhibits women worker activists.

The whole picture points to the typical features of a workers' community that is politically aware. There is dynamic resistance in the air. Resources for resistance, therefore, lie not only in the factory, but are also closely linked with the community and family.

Notes

[1]Menstrual leave for women workers is guaranteed by Indonesian labor law. The law provides a paid two day leave for women who are menstruating.

Menstruation leave is not common, it only exists in a few countries, including South Korea and Japan. For Indonesian women workers, the menstruation leave provides a chance to take a break with pay, which seems fitting since they are already paid so little. The case that is most often found in Indonesia today is that companies offer a bonus of two days' pay if the women workers do not take their menstruation leave. Considering the pressing economic needs of these women workers, it is understandable that most women workers choose not to take their menstruation leave if they can help it.

[2]As has been explained, the labor NGO that supports Alpena women workers is part of the rising number of labor NGOs that fill the vacuum caused by the ineffectiveness of the sole trade union, FSPSI. For security reasons, of course, I do not mention the NGO's name. NGOs have always been accused of being instigators of labor unrest.

Vedi Hadiz points out the significance of labor NGOs in supporting the rise of workers' political consciousness in contemporary Indonesia (1994b, 69).

The labor NGOs run some functions similar to trade unions, such as education. Such roles of labor NGOs are something particular to developing countries, such as Indonesia and other countries with repressive governments, like the Philippines and South Korea. Even when freedom to organize for the workers has been gained, as in South Korea, labor NGOs still play an important role in the labor movement, along with the democratic trade unions.

[3]This labor NGO's approach in helping the workers includes the promotion of workers' organizing experience so that the workers are pushed to handle their problems collectively. This labor NGO uses the term "Education Group" to refer to the group that is set up in each factory. Many labor NGOs utilize a similar approach.

[4]The letter to the West Jakarta Manpower Office was written on 22 February, 1993 and sent by mail. A copy was also sent to the Minister of Manpower. The letter was not signed, other than pointing out that the senders were Alpena workers and that they apologized for not mentioning their names for security reasons. Reprisals against workers who are known to openly resist are very common.

Usually worker activists are dismissed on grounds that are fabricated by management.

The letter to the Manpower Office however was not answered. And it was not known whether Manpower officials came to Alpena factory in response to the letter. However there is a possibility that Manpower officials may use the letter to remind Alpena management as it is a chance to demand bribes, instead of really defending the workers' rights. Whatever the situation was, the musholla was built in June 1993.

[5]Cahaya did not tell anyone of her decision not to come to work on the agreed day of protest on the T-shirt issue. On the Monday evening she went to Sarimah's house to find out how the protest went. Sarimah asked her why she didn't come. Cahaya admitted that she was afraid that if she always led the open resistance then management would be more repressive on her and therefore she was trying to be less in the spotlight. Cahaya, however, agreed to come to work the next day, which was the second and decisive day of the strike.

I met with the women workers on the Sunday after the strike. They were all talking and laughing with so much passion, reminiscing about their experience. My tape was so full of noises of people talking at once that I had to listen again and again before discerning the conversation. When I asked Sarimah and Djamilah why they went on with the strike even when some of the activists, especially Cahaya, didn't come, Djamilah answered enthusiastically with Sarimah agreeing her, "Management must be given a lesson, otherwise they think they can do anything to us".

[6]From time to time, government authorities, including the military, made statements warning that public religious activities, particularly in the form of speeches, sermons or question-answer sessions would be monitored. For example, the Indonesian Minister of Religion issued a statement that the government would control religious consultation sessions through televisions (Acara 1996).

CHAPTER VI

CONSTRAINTS ON RESISTANCE

It is clear that even though the women workers' resistance is intensifying, constraints still remain, while management is counterattacking. The resistance and constraints reflect the continuous struggle between capital and labor. This section is written to show that I am not romanticizing the women workers' resistance. I presume that some readers would say that being a feminist then I would naturally want to prove that women are political.

Here I am arguing that even though Alpena women workers are political, there are still constraints that hinder them from further expression of their interests. My acknowledgement that there are constraints on the women workers' movement is different from the Neoclassical economist's (Manning) argument about the constraints on the Indonesian workers' movement. Whereas Manning's argument implies that the present workers' resistance is not meaningful as it is not in the form of an organized movement, I am arguing that the present workers' resistance, where women play an intensive role, is meaningful, because it achieves gains for workers at the factory level, and also has the positive effect of

improving the workers' bargaining position at the national level. Yet real constraints on the women workers' movement also exist.

The next criticism would be, if the Indonesian women workers today are politically conscious then why doesn't an independent and strong trade union where women play a significant role exist? I do not deny the fact that the New Order state has been successful in incorporating the Indonesian trade union movement into the interests of state and capital. Until today, the government backed Federation of All Indonesia Workers Union (*Federasi Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia* or FSPSI), is the only trade union legally acknowledged by the government. Other independent trade unions that have dared to establish themselves, such as the Solidarity Independent Workers' Union (Serikat Buruh Merdeka Setia Kawan or SBMSK) and the Indonesian Prosperous Workers' Union (*Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia or SBSI*), are not acknowledged and are severely repressed. Besides the independent trade unions, other forms of labor organizations, such as the labor NGOs, are also repressed. However, I argue here that strong state repression does not mean that workers are fully silenced. The present workers, mainly the women workers, are manifesting their political voice through the various forms of resistance which do, in fact, generate

changes.

Therefore I do not accept the analysis, put forward by many labor activists, that it is the lack of freedom to organize that is the main obstacle in the Indonesian labor movement today. My criticism is that, first, this argument is too simplistic in that the implication is that if there were freedom to organize then the labor movement would consequently be strong. I argue that this may not necessarily be the case because there are internal obstacles within the labor movement itself, such as the persistent existence of patriarchy. Women workers have the most need for a diversified analysis of the constraints on the Indonesian labor movement, because patriarchy is too often not seen as an obstacle.

My second criticism of the argument that strong state control is the main obstacle to independent labor movement is that it places too much emphasis on the structural level of analysis and forgets the day to day level of analysis. Through the case study of Alpena, this chapter will look at exactly those obstacles faced by the workers, particularly the women workers, at the factory level. I argue that if we acknowledge the obstacles to the workers' movement at the factory level early on, then the movement can probably better develop.

When discussing the constraints faced by women

activists in Alpena, I am referring to the obstacles to the maintenance and development of a workers' organization by the women activists in Alpena. I divide the discussion on the various forms of constraints faced by the women workers in Alpena into two sections. First I discuss constraints inherent in the workers' movement, and second I discuss the counter resistance movement exerted by management. In this chapter, I will also discuss constraints on the workers' movement on a wider scale beyond the Alpena factory, particularly constraints that women workers face.

6.1.Internal Constraints Within the Workers Ranks

The women workers of Alpena have never been able to set up a formal organization that unites and officially represents the workers at the factory, be it in the form of a trade union or another form of organization, such as a cooperative.[1] The labor NGO activists tried to introduce the mechanism of formal organization to the Alpena women workers. The Alpena women workers were asked by the labor NGO activists to try set up a group when Darlina and Rokhayah first asked the NGO to help, in August 1992. It took some months before the women activists were able to organize a meeting of Alpena

workers, where the women agreed to try to set up a group (see chapter 5, p.113-114).

Cahaya wrote in her diary,

> "On 1 November 1992 an organization was set up at the event of an *arisan* attended by 16 women workers of Alpena.... The group aimed at changing the work conditions at Alpena that treats the workers badly because the workers do not yet know labor laws."

The group, referred to as the Education Group, was therefore set up at the suggestion of the labor NGO that had agreed to assist them. There were initially sixteen members, including the leading activists at that time, Rokhayah, Darlina, Maryati, Feni and Cahaya. The group met periodically, at least once a month, when they held discussions, assisted by the labor NGO activists. The discussion topics were mainly around problems at work and labor law. However the group's members attendance at meetings were not consistent. Cahaya commented that those most likely to come to meetings with the labor NGO activist were usually the same few leading activists such as Rokhayah, Darlina, Maryati, Feni and Cahaya.

Cahaya complains that the majority of women workers are difficult to organize. They are usually reluctant to spend extra time going to meetings. Many reasons are given for this unwillingness to attend meetings, such as,

"Oh, I have lots of laundry to do" or "I am tired, I want to sleep' or "Gees, there are always meetings and negotiations but no result". Meanwhile the very young women workers prefer to go to the shopping mall even when it is only for window shopping, according to Cahaya.

Cahaya also complained that many of the workers just simply did not care (*masa bodoh*). For example, many refused to spend money to photocopy the company regulations that the activists in the Education Group has typed up in the for of a handout. Another problem is the fear of being political that some women workers feel. Sumringah once confided her fears to Cahaya, that she would not come to the Education Group anymore because she considered it to have a political tendency. Cahaya said, "What do you mean about it being political? We are only learning about our rights as workers?"

Cahaya's complaints peaked with her frustration and loneliness after Rokhayah, Maryati, Darlina and Feni left Alpena. The first three resigned around early 1995 due to marriage and pregnancy, and Feni was dismissed in March 1994. Cahaya claims that she doesn't have friends any more whom she can talk to and who have the same fighting spirit.

Cahaya may be complaining too much or maybe she has progressed further with her consciousness, and therefore

she becomes impatient with her co-worker activists, or maybe both. One thing for sure is that formal types of meetings and studying labor laws may not meet the needs of all workers. It is understandable that they may indeed be too tired after work and attending to their living chores, such as washing clothes and cooking, and it is understandable that they want to have a good time instead. That is why they would rather go to the malls for window shopping.

Fear of losing their job is, I think, also very real to these women. Such fear is voiced, for example, by women who are older and who have less education. Salmah, the woman worker who has worked the longest, 15 years, voiced her reluctance to take part in open resistance. She feared that because she was older and had a low education level, that is only a few years in primary school, that she would not be able to get a job in another factory. The fear of losing jobs is also described very well by Scott in his research on Malay peasants when he states that one of the obstacles to open resistance is "simply the day-to-day imperative of earning a living--of household survival--which Marx appropriately termed 'the dull compulsion of economic relations'." (Scott 1985, 246).

Another way of looking at why the Education Group

stagnated is that the middle class labor NGO activists may have been asserting their own views about what an organized workers' activity should be like. I noticed that even though the Education Group stagnated, workers still participated in, such as the *arisan*, the *rujakan*, the visits to sick co-workers, and the *kelompok pengajian*. It is in these semi-organized meetings that the workers actually meet. Cahaya may, indeed, have been caught up with the way of thinking of the middle class labor activists who wanted to push for an organized movement, preferably the setting up of a trade union. Cahaya may have looked up too much to these activists and thus become, to a certain extent, detached from the context of her co-workers. To some extent, then, the good intentions of the labor NGO activists may hinder the development of an organization that fits the context of the workers. The context is that the workers have limited time, are too tired, want to have fun, are watched by management and the state, and especially that they already have their own ways to get together (even though they do not take the form of a trade union).

Even though the Education Group does not run well now, the remaining women members, Cahaya, Sarimah, Sumringah, Walimah, and Kus, still meet together on many occasions. New members also come and go, such as Hesti

who participated actively for some time until she got a boyfriend, or Djamilah who suddenly became active after leading the T Shirt strike. These occasions are always filled with consciousness raising events. For example, at one gathering I participated in, they talked about Marsinah, the woman worker who was killed in 1993 and who became a hero. The women workers talked with admiration about Marsinah's struggle. It is clear that the campaign to publicize her murder by many activists and the intensive discussion in the media had a positive impact on the women workers.

The fact that Cahaya complained of being left behind by the co-worker activists, like Rokhayah, Darlina and Maryati who were leaving to get married or have a baby, means that marriage is an important obstacle to workers' resistance. Marriage for Indonesian women is valued highly. The society and the state still determine that a woman's main role is to be a housewife and mother. Paid work is a secondary role. The marital institution is patriarchal, where men are valued as the head of the family. Once a woman is married then the husband will decide whether she will continue working or not. Some married women in Alpena remain working until they get pregnant or until their baby is due to be born.

Actually it is not the marital status *per se* that

hinders women workers from being involved in the movement. One clear example is the militancy of Walimah who is officially still married but is *de facto* without a husband. It is the existence of a man in a woman's life that can be the main factor in hindering women workers from activism in the movement. Many women workers who have boyfriends reported that their boyfriends complained if they went out of the house without them, especially when the women went out of town. Sumringah and Cahaya preferred to break with their boyfriends when their boyfriends complained about their frequent outings (many were to workers' gatherings). Most women, however, will choose not to dump their boyfriends and will hang on to the relationship for as long as possible as part of the effort to find a husband. For example, a young woman worker named Hesti used to be at the meetings at the beginning of my visits to the women workers of Alpena. Later I was told that Hesti now has a boyfriend and that is why she cannot come to the meetings anymore.

The men's power in a marital relationship seems likely to increase when they are in a better economic situation and conversely the men will be more lenient about letting their wives work when they are not in a good economic condition (see chapter 4, p.96). This is illustrated by the case of Sarimah, one of the leading

women worker activists who got married in January 1996. Once Sarimah was married, her husband, who works as an electrician and therefore has better wages than a factory worker, said to Cahaya that since Sarimah was now 'his', he did not want his wife to be asked out for workers' events anymore.

Thus within a patriarchal society, the existence of a man in a woman worker's life tends to hinder her involvement in the workers' activities and even to break her away from the movement altogether. The tendency of men to control women becomes intensified when the relationship is already institutionalized in a marriage where the men gain legal control reinforced by religion, cultural values and by marriage law. However, the tendency lessens when the men are not in a good economic condition, as exemplified by Walimah who insisted to her husband that she remain working even though her husband told her to quit because he was ashamed of what people would say.

6.2 Management's Counterattack

Alpena's management has never been passive regarding control over their workers. Cahaya said that when the company was established in 1978 it recruited mostly male

workers, who later staged a strike because they were not satisfied with the working conditions. After the strike, management only recruited women workers, presumably because it considered women workers would be less able to put up resistance. Indeed management was able to deny many aspects of workers' rights for a long time. It was not until 1992 that the workers were able to force management to increase their wages in accordance with the new minimum wage regulation.

I am not presuming here that it was all quiet on the workers' front between 1978 and 1992. I am sure that everyday forms of resistance existed; however these did not result in any change that benefited the workers. But it is very likely that the pressure of the everyday resistance that individual workers staged was not enough to generate changes.

When women workers' resistance escalated after 1992, so did management's efforts to curb resistance. The supervisors, production manager, the boss and even members of the boss' family watch the workers intensively. They are involved in the work process itself, sometimes working side by side with the workers. The boss, for example is often covered with ink when he works on the machines. They also go around the toilet and *musholla* checking to see if the women workers are lingering. When management

learned that the women used to gather in the toilets and *musholla*, they increased the checks at those places.

Divisions between departments are also a means of blocking stronger cooperation among the workers. It is not surprising that the day shift women workers at the assembly section, who are also the majority, are the most united in terms of staging resistance, because they always meet each other and work together at the same tables. The assembly workers criticized the machine section workers for never supporting them in a protest. Meanwhile the assembly women workers claimed that they always helped out the machine section workers. Djamilah gave an example of a time when the assembly section workers gave support to the machine section, when the women workers protested about not having any break time during the night shift. This resulted in the granting of the one hour break. However some machine section workers later grumbled that because they got the break they then had to work on the Saturday afternoon shift, which means they do not have the time for a Saturday night spree.

Management seemed to know of this unhappy relationship between the two camps of assembly and machine women workers and used every opportunity to deepen the division by trying to set up a social grouping of women workers in the machine section. On the initiative of a

male Chinese supervisor in the machine section, a new grouping of women workers was set up in August 1995. The supervisor suggested a *rujakan*, a kind of fruits potluck. He was even the major contributor of money for the event. Around 15 women came to the *rujakan*. Cahaya, who happened to come by at gathering that day, greeted the women workers, but was not treated with openness. One of the *rujakan* organizers even warned her that there was no more need for protests.

Now that Cahaya has been identified as one of the radical workers, the supervisors are warned not to get too close to her. For example Cahaya was friendly with the supervisors of both distribution/dispatch and the warehouse section. From them she elicited information about the destinations to which the company's products were to be sent. Once she found out that the product was going to be sent to Japan. But now the female warehouse supervisor evades Cahaya and does not want to be seen talking with her.

A new personnel manager, *Pak* Sukri, was hired in late 1994. The formal explanation for this was that the company saw the importance of establishing a professional management and moving from a family-based management to something more modern. However, the old management may also have seen that they had to strengthen their control

over the workers by using professional management. *Pak* Sukri has since developed stricter requirements for new workers to enter Alpena.

Previously it was easy to apply for work in Alpena. The workers only need to bring a letter from the head of their neighborhood head (*Kepala RT*). Since the new personnel manager has been employed, stricter requirements have been applied. Now the applicants have to be under 25 years old and women have to be unmarried. The men can be married provided that their wives do not object to their husbands working night shift. It is, of course, very unlikely that the wives will protest. Applicants also have to submit more official papers. Today, those who apply must submit a copy of an official identity card or *Kartu Tanda Penduduk* abbreviated as KTP (which is issued to those over 17), a statement of good behavior (*surat kelakuan baik*) from the local police headquarter, a minimum junior high school certificate, and a statement from parents that their daughter is allowed to work night shift.

The higher education requirement works to deter the Alpena workers with low education from open resistance. For example, Salmah, one of the woman workers who has worked the longest and did not finish primary school, said that she did not want to join the protests because she was

afraid she could not find another job as the demand is now for workers with better education.

Since the company's establishment, the Chinese owners have relied on their own family and on employees of Chinese ethnic background to sit at the management level. The owners seem to believe that keeping management ranks racially uniform (that is Chinese) will guarantee a united management. Only very few nonChinese are employed as staff. However, an exception has been made since *Pak* Sukri, who is also of Chinese ethnic background, was employed. *Pak* Sukri recruited a staff person, *Pak* Bagus, who is a Javanese. *Pak* Bagus was most probably hired exactly because he is Javanese and thus he has more chance of utilizing the feudal Javanese codes to control the many Javanese workers.[2] In this case the employment of management staff is not merely based on race or ethnicity but also on a rational ground, that is a management system that can best serve the interests of capital.

Pak Bagus is the personnel staff who deals with the day to day matters with the workers. The fact that Pak Bagus is male also points to the belief that women will obey men. Indeed almost all of the supervisors who deal with the workers are Chinese males. Only a few Chinese women are employed as supervisors to women workers. Many of the female supervisors do not work for long. At the

time of the research only one female supervisor, ibu Sandra, who is also the wife of the production manager, Akim, had worked for more than four years.

While workers with seniority are eligible for promotions to supervisory positions, these are only offered to those considered controllable by the management. Among the women workers only Salmah, who has worked since 1978, has been offered supervisory status, but she refused. Walimah and Cahaya suspected that Salmah was afraid that her co-workers would hate her and that she would be unable to control her co-workers if she had taken the job. Walimah commented, "the girls will not want to be supervised by Salmah, they don't even fear the boss!" Most probably Salmah knew this too.

Gender segregation is also applied by management as a means of control on the workers. The minority male workers are treated differently. They receive a monthly wage which is bigger than the women's total four weeks remuneration and other facilities that the women do no get. In short, the men are coopted by the management.

It is interesting to note how Cahaya refers to male workers who do not participate in the demand for wage increases. She said, "the men are powerless. They are not regarded as workers there, but as *servants*". On another occasion, Cahaya said that men cannot be trusted

because they betray the radical women workers' activism. Indeed according to Walimah, who has been at Alpena since 1981, the men have never been involved in protests, nor do they ever complain.

Starting from June 1995, management made public the monthly absentee data. The figures are printed and stuck on the information board for the workers to see. For example, in the month of June 1995 there were 35 women workers who were absent with durations of from one day to nine days. According to Cahaya they were absent for various reasons, such as being sick, having family matters to attend to, or just simply because they did not want to turn up to work.

It seems that the absentee data is an effort to deter absenteeism by creating a mechanism to make the workers feel guilty. Later on, management threatened workers who were often absent, saying that they would not get the increase that is based on the length of time they have worked at Alpena. In late August 1995 management issued warning letters to employees who were considered unproductive. Several women workers were called into the office to be given the warning letter and a lecture. They were told that from then on there would be a system of job evaluation that would determine whether they would receive an extra Rp.300 (US 13 cents) increase or not. The

increase will be given to those who have the least days of absence, are most productive and do the job well.

This announcement created some fear among the activists because one of the staff said that those who used to protest will not be getting the increase. The development of this system is an indicator of how the management constantly searches for ways to divide and rule the workers.

6.3.Structural Constraints

The constraints that Alpena women workers face are very much related to the structural conditions in which they are embedded. I argue that the major structural obstacles are the state's control over workers' politics and the predominant patriarchal values in the society.

Vedi Hadiz describes the main methods of labor control in the New Order regime. They include: an ideological control through the propagation of a concept called the *Pancasila* Industrial Relations (*Hubungan Industrial Pancasila*)[3]; control over the trade union movement, by only allowing one government controlled trade union, the FSPSI, to exist; and, the use of force in clamping down on workers' resistance (Hadiz 1994b, 66-67).

The New Order government's repressive approach to

labor is partly an effort to control political activity, particularly the need to eliminate the left after the 1965 putsch. Another reason is the need for a complacent labor force to lure foreign investment which is needed, particularly since the mid 1980s when the state's oil revenue declined sharply.

Contrary to view that there is more freedom for women since Indonesia has attained a higher stage of development, patriarchy is still very strongly embedded in Indonesian society. Actually patriarchy is continuously being manifested in new forms. The New Order government is utilizing patriarchal values in its method of taking control of politics. The State places itself in the father role and the citizens are in the role of children who have to submit to the father.

Patriarchy is consciously utilized not only by the New Order government to control its citizens, but also by all power seeking groups, including the religious groups, political parties, trade unions, and, sad to say, also the many organizations struggling for democracy, including the labor NGOs. Patriarchal values remain strong even though the opposition organizations claim to be democratic. This is so because patriarchal values are strongly socialized and I believe have penetrated deep into the Indonesian people's subconsciousness.

It is not surprising, therefore, to see so little women's representation, even in the grassroots labor movements, particularly the labor NGOs. Other indicators on the persistence of patriarchal values in labor NGOs include, the dominance of male NGO activists compared to women; the ignorance of NGO activists that the male worker activists dominate the leadership position even in a factory where women are the majority workers; and, the undermining of women's issues, such as women's needs for assertiveness training, compared to issues of wages or political constraints.

My own experience supports this argument. During a meeting of workers from Greater Jakarta area where I was invited to speak in late 1995, the women workers were most of the time silent, including the Alpena women workers who were present and whose militancy in the factory was very well known to me. This is very disturbing because it creates the impression that women are not as militant as men and that women workers have less potential as organizers. This situation should be taken seriously as I believe it is an indicator of strong patriarchal structures that can be found both in the state and in the opposition groups, including the labor NGOs.

By pointing out that there are constraints on the (women) workers' movement, both at the factory level and -

at the structural level, we can understand why the militant potential that is so widespread has still not been able to create a stronger labor movement in Indonesia. I have discussed constraints on the factory level through the case study of women workers in Alpena. These constraints lie within the workers' ranks and are also a result of management's control policies.

Within the women workers' ranks, these constraints include the inability of the women workers to organize themselves into a more formal organization or a trade union. This is a result of the real situation that these women workers face, including the fact that the women are too tired from work to have extra time for formal meetings. The women workers also exhibit fears that are real to them, including the fear of being involved in politics (read as anything that may be considered against the government), or fear of losing their jobs. Another constraining factor is the patriarchal forms of personal relationships that the women workers are involved in. Men start to want to control women from the courtship stage of a relationship, this desire is further strengthened when the relationship is legalized in marriage.

Therefore, there are various constraints within the women workers' movement that hinder formal organizing. This, however, does not mean that the women workers are

not political. Resistance is still manifested through the informal forms of organizing. Only by recognizing all forms of constraint can the movement progress.

Through the case study of Alpena I have also shown that management is very creative in developing control mechanisms, as a response to workers' resistance. Management's control mechanisms include direct supervision over the workers at work; efforts to divide and rule that break the workers' unity; by maintaining and strengthening division of workers by job department; isolating the activists; having seniority division; and, maintaining gender division. Saptari's study of cigarette factory workers in Indonesia also shows how management creates mechanisms to disperse workers' unity (1994).

Another mechanism of control is to utilize a more professional management approach. The new Alpena personnel manager created stricter regulations for applicants for jobs and continuously develops new rules, such as announcing a weekly absentee report to deter absenteeism. The new regulations for applicants also show a more concerted effort to utilize patriarchal values in the family for the benefit of the factory. By demanding a parent's written agreement for their daughters to work night shift, the factory is asking for the transfer of patriarchal authority that the parents have over their

daughters (in this case the fathers as they are most likely the signatories of the letter) to the factory.

The new personnel manager was also more shrewd than Aken, the boss and owner. He has made more rational efforts to ensure workers' obedience. For example, he not only relied on the old management's approach of employing only Chinese ethnics at the management level to guarantee management's unity, but, when necessary he transgressed it, when he hired a Javanese ethnic, as being more likely to control the many Javanese workers that Alpena employs.

The case study of Alpena shows the day to day constraints that women activists face in organizing resistance. These day to day constraints are embedded within the structural constraints confronting the Indonesian labor movement. The two levels of constraints are, of course, interrelated. Thus we cannot say only that the present Indonesian workers' movement is unable to organize a strong independent labor movement because the New Order state has successfully repressed the workers. Such an argument is too limited. Instead we should look at all levels of constraints and see them as interrelated. This way of looking at the constraints faced by the present Indonesian workers' movement will prevent us from being too narrow in analyzing the obstacles that hinder the Indonesian labor movement.

Notes

[1]Many factory managers do not allow a trade union to be set up, but instead support the establishment of other forms of organizing, such as cooperatives.

[2]The Javanese ethnic group acknowledges ranks, which is a result of its feudal system. At least there are two ranks, the gentry and the common. At present time the gentry does not only mean those who are royal descents but also those who have economic and political powers. Pak Bagus' position being a representative of the employer is highly probable seen as an upper class person who has to be obeyed. Being a Javanese he has the capability to use the feudal codes, such as in the language, when relating to the Javanese workers.

[3]The *Pancasila* Industrial Relations (*Hubungan Industrial Pancasila*) concept outlines the "state-capital-labour relations as based on family principles, with the State acting as benevolent father. Workers and capital/management are seen as partners... rather than oppositional elements" (Hadiz 1994, 66). This concept is continuously propagated in the day to day lives of Indonesians. In the case study of Alpena, when a Manpower official paid a surprise visit, the concept was also utilized by the official (see chapter 5).

The concept of *Pancasila* Industrial Relations also denotes a strong patriarchal value where the State is playing the role of a father in the family. Here we can see the interrelationship between the State's political powers and patriarchy.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This study is an effort to integrate activism and academic work. What I mean by activism is efforts at the grassroots or together with the masses, in this case the workers, which aim to empower the workers. There is an argument that activism and academic work are two different things that do not relate one another. I argue here that my experiences working with the women workers and the women workers experiences in resistance can contribute to academic efforts. On the contrary, academic works, such as this thesis, can be used for those working at the grassroots as a medium of reflection and sources of information.

The subject of women workers' activism is taken up in the light of the rising women workers' militancy in contemporary Indonesia. My study intends to remedy the lack of studies on contemporary Indonesian women workers, particularly on women workers' politics.

Findings in this study is a critique towards Manning's Neoclassical economic view that the labor demand-supply law determines whether organized labor movement is possible or not. My study shows that the 'unorganized' workers' resistance, particularly the

grassroots resistance that women workers manifest at the factory level, has created significant pressure for changes benefiting the workers. Beyond the factory level, women workers' resistance has played a role in the rise of working class militancy. Consequently the workers' presence is acknowledged by the power structures.

This study also challenges the Marxist perspective that argues that Indonesian workers today are not political because they only base their demands on issues identified by the state, such as the minimum wage; and therefore the workers are subsumed under the ruling class' dominant ideology. The abolition of progressive trade unions and political parties of the left that were able to lead the workers to develop a class consciousness in the past is seen as the reason for current Indonesian workers' muteness. The findings in this study show that women workers' resistance, particularly the everyday forms of resistance, is significant and meaningful as it generates change at the factory level and at the national level. Therefore workers are not mute and do have a political consciousness.

In sum, the main critique of the Marxist and Neoclassical economic position is that they focus too much on large scale organizations and ignore grassroots resistance where women play an important role. This

critique has been voiced by feminists for a long time and where they have argued for the need to redefine politics.

The Alpena case study shows that women workers manifest resistance that ranges from everyday forms of resistance to open, organized, collective resistance. It is important to stress again that, as the case study shows, this resistance never gained media attention, and yet it is politically significant. I believe that much similar resistance is unknown to the public and to the scholars; and therefore there is more going on the labor front than strike statistics or news reports on labor disputes would indicate.

To understand how women become activists, this study has adopted an interactional perspective. I adopted the interactional perspective from Morris' work (1992). The interactional perspective sees that there is an interaction of factors and processes that generate, sustain and constrain resistance. With this perspective we will not fall into a simplistic analysis that one factor is more determinant than another, which is the problem with both the Marxist and the Neoclassical economist perspectives. Instead, we can understand the complex working of various factors and processes.

The Marxist analysis places too much emphasis on the sphere of production. In the Alpena case study it is

shown that issues based on personal dignity or religious values, for example, can generate resistance. Meanwhile the Neoclassical economist emphasized economic determinants, ignoring other factors, such as politics and patriarchy.

With the interactional perspective we can understand the various factors at work in generating women worker activists in the Alpena case study. There is a continuous supply of role model activists who play the role of transferring resistance culture to new generations of women workers. With support from resources outside the factory, women leaders can rise to lead open and organized collective resistance. The external support is an intricate web of factors, including the existence of the politically conscious working class community, the consciousness raising activities from labor NGOs, the support from family members, and the existence of mass media to transfer new information.

In the factory, aside from the leadership of role model activists, the general workers also continuously educate each other to be militant. Women workers communicate at the working table, while supervisors are not around; they also interact in the toilet, in the *musholla*, or while having a meal at break. They gossip, exchange information and plan resistance. These women

implement what is called the everyday forms of resistance. It is this everyday resistance that provides the women with experience needed for open and organized collective resistance.

This study has pointed out the significance of women workers' resistance, however this does not mean that there are no obstacles to that resistance. This study has also pointed out the constraints faced by the Alpena women workers. Within the workers' ranks there are constraining factors, including the conflict among the workers, the strain of work, the fear of losing jobs, and the persistent patriarchal values. On the other hand, management also continuously develops counterattack strategies. The Alpena management develops divide and rule methods and creates a more professional management capable of turning out new policies to control the workers.

These constraints at the factory level are embedded within the structural constraints of government's repressive policies towards the labor movement and the existence of a strong form of patriarchy. Patriarchal values are not only upheld by the state, but more importantly also by the labor activists. Labor NGOs, which are the most important partner of the Indonesian workers, hold patriarchal values that deter women from

playing a more important role.

From the case study of Alpena I hope that we can see the significance of women workers' role in the labor movement in contemporary Indonesia. This call is not only a desperate plea of a feminist, but more importantly to show what the labor movement is missing. Aside from understanding the importance of women workers' militancy, this study also shows the persistence of patriarchy, particularly within the progressive labor movement agencies themselves. This is an important issue to consider, because this means that the progressive labor movement will have to acknowledge its own weaknesses.

By bringing out Indonesian women workers' political capabilities I also hope that their role in workers' resistance will not be forgotten in history. The lower class women of Indonesia have, for a long time, been undermined. The present Indonesian women's movement has been dominated by upper and middle class women. These women should by now consider working class women more as equal sisters and not as less fortunate sisters waiting to be freed and led.

APPENDIX 1
GLOSSARY

ASTEK

Abbreviation of *Asuransi Sosial Tenaga Kerja* which literally means Workers' Social Insurance. The program is run by a government owned company. Under the law, employers must enlist their workers in the *ASTEK* program, but practice is low. Employers and workers have both complained that *ASTEK* provides bad services.

Arisan

Regular social gathering whose members contribute to and take turns at winning an aggregate sum of money (Echols and Shadily 1989, 29). The *arisan* is popular because it is a means of saving that is far less bureaucratic than a bank. The *arisan* is generally considered as women's activity.

Bajaj

Two-passenger pedicab with motor scooter engine (Echols and Shadily 1989, 42).

Bapak

Literally means Father. It is also used as a form of address to an older man or used as part of a respectful title. (Echols and Shadily 1989, 216). It is often shortened to just *Pak*.

The use of *Bapak* or *Pak* is generally required in public life. The word *Bapak* strongly reflects the persistence of patriarchy in Indonesian society.

Betawi

Name of ethnic group indigenous to Jakarta (Echols and Shadily 1989, 76). Jakarta is the capital city of Indonesia.

Bu

See *Ibu*.

Buruh

Worker or laborer (Echols and Shadily 1989, 97). The government replaced the term *buruh* in 1985 with the term *karyawan*, because the former is regarded as having leftist connotations. The term *karyawan* itself means white collar worker or official employee (Echols and Shadily 1989, 263).

Cuti haid

Menstrual leave.

Under the 1969 Labor law, women workers have a right to a two-day paid leave when they have their menstruation. In most cases, the women workers have to demand it. Many companies prefer, instead, to offer a two-day pay bonus for not taking the leave.

Cuti hamil

Pregnancy leave.

Under the 1969 Labor law, women workers have a right to a three-month paid leave when having a child. Many companies dismiss women workers when they are known to be pregnant, give the leave, but without pay, or give the leave with only part of the pay.

Dzuhur, sholat

One of the five prayers a day that Moslems have to perform. The *Dzuhur* prayer or *sholat dzuhur* has to be performed at mid-day, between 12.00 and 4.00 pm.

FSPSI

Abbreviation of *Federasi Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia* or Federation of the All Indonesia Workers Union. It is the only union acknowledged by the current New Order government.

Haji

A Moslem who has made pilgrimage to Mecca is given this title to use before his/her name. In the general Indonesian Moslem society, this title is highly respected and can gain a person status in public life.

Ibu

Literally means mother. It is also used as a form of address to an older woman or woman in a higher position. (Echols and Shadily 1989, 216). It is often shortened to just *bu*. The use of *ibu* or *bu* is generally required in public life.

The word *ibu* strongly reflects the persistence of patriarchy in Indonesian society. Even an unmarried woman will be referred to as *ibu*.

Idul Fitri

A two-day feast celebrating the end of the fasting month period of Ramadhan for Moslems. Another word for Idul Fitri is Lebaran.

Jabotabek

Abbreviation of *Jakarta-Bogor-Tangerang-Bekasi*. The term refers to the megalopolis of Jakarta and its satellite cities (Echols and Shadily 1989, 229).

In the industrial context, the term refers to the industrial sites within Jakarta and its satellite cities.

Javanese

Name of ethnic group indigenous to most parts of Java island. It is the majority ethnic group in Indonesia.

Kampung

Village or residential area for lower classes in town or city (Echols and Shadily 1989, 258). The *kampung* have slum characteristics: high population density, bad water and waste system, alleys that mostly only accommodate people and (motor) bikes, and poorly structured housing.

Kartu Tanda Penduduk (KTP)

An identity card that all Indonesian citizens turning 17 must obtain from the government. The card contains the person's name, address, age, sex, marital status, occupation and religion, and a special marking for former political prisoners. The card is required in all official business. It is punishable by law not to carry the identity card when one travels.

Karyawan

White collar worker or official employee (Echols and Shadily 1989, 263). See also *buruh*.

Kepala Rukun Tetangga (RT)

Kepala literally means head or leader. *Rukun Tetangga* means neighborhood harmony. *Rukun Tetangga* is the lowest administrative unit of the local government. This unit consist of households in one or two streets. Its main functions include the running of neighborhood social activities and security. The *kepala RT* can be the spearhead of security forces for surveillance. The *kepala RT*s are usually persons, mostly men, from the neighborhood itself.

Kontrakan

The root word is *kontrak* which means to lease. The term *kontrakan* refers to leased rooms of "low" cost for the poor, mainly in the city slums. The workers *kontrakan* are generally around 10 to 20 square meters shared by workers with shared baths/toilet and manual or electricity water pump. The rent is generally paid monthly.

Kelompok Pengajian

Kelompok **means group.** ***Pengajian*** **means recital of the Holy Qur'an. Activities in the** ***kelompok pengajian*** **are not limited to reciting the Holy Qur'an, but may include religious speeches. Islamic religious speeches are viewed as potential threats to security by the government as they are known to be critical of societal issues.**

Lebaran

See ***Idul Fitri***

Mbak

A term of address to a woman, mostly who is older. It is used to be respectful.

Mpok

A term of address to an older woman of the Betawi ethnic group. The term is used to be respectful.

Musholla

Small building or room set aside in a public place for performance of Islamic religious duties, mainly for praying.

NGO

Abbreviation for Non Government Organization. There are thousands of NGOs in Indonesia, mainly for welfare causes. However many NGOs with progressive concerns, such as on human rights, environment, labor, peasant, and women, have sprung up since the mid 1970s because of lack of attention from the government on these issues and widespread violations of existing laws.

Pak

See ***Bapak*****.**

Pancasila

Five basic principles of the Republic of Indonesia: the belief in one God Almighty, humanity that is just and civilized, the unity of Indonesia, democracy guided by the wisdom of representative deliberation, and social justice for all Indonesians (Echols and Shadily 1989, 406).

The intensive propaganda of ***Pancasila*** **as an ideology starts from kindergarten up to university as compulsory courses. For government employees and the general public there are** ***Pancasila*** **crash courses.**

Rukun Tetangga
See *kepala rukun tetangga*

Ramadhan
The holy month for Moslems, where it is required to fast from sunrise to sundown for the whole month. The month is ended by the *Idul Fitri* feast.

Rujakan
A gathering to make and eat fruit salad. *Rujak* is fruit salad. This gathering is considered as women's activity.

Rupiah (Rp)
The national currency of Indonesia. In 1992, US$1.00 = Rp.2,030. In 1996, US$1.00 = Rp.2,359. The *Rupiah* was devalued twice. In 1983, the Rupiah was devalued from US$1.00 = Rp.703 to US$1.00 = Rp.970. In 1986, the *Rupiah* was devalued from US$1.00 = Rp.1,134 to US$1.00=Rp.1,644 (World Bank 1994, xii).

Sarjana Muda
A certificate produced by the university for undergraduate students that who have taken a certain number of courses or a certification that a person has graduated from an academy or technical school.

Satpam
Abbreviation of *Satuan Pengaman* which literally means security guard. They are privately employed but receive some training from, and have close connections with, the police or military.

Sekolah Dasar (SD)
Primary School, which consists of six grades.

Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP)
Junior High School. Consists of three grades. It is the next level of education after primary school.

Sekolah Menengah Atas (SMA)
Senior High School. Consists of three grades. It is the next level of education after SMP.

SBSI
Abbreviation of *Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia* or the Indonesian Prosperous Workers Union. An independent trade union that was set up in 1992 as a challenge to the

FSPSI. The government has never acknowledged *SBSI* and therefore its leadership has faced reprisals, including imprisonment.

Sholat
The Moslem term for praying.
Moslems are required to pray five times a day.

Surat kelakuan baik
Literally means a letter of good behavior.
The letter is produced by the local police where the person resides. It is a certification that the person does not have any criminal record.

Sundanese
Name of ethnic group indigenous to the Western part of Java island.

Tunjangan Hari Raya
The Great Day benefit. Given to workers on their religion's great day, such as on Idul Fitri day for Moslems and Christmas day for Christians. The benefit usually amounts to one month's pay.

Tunjangan Jabatan
Seniority benefit. Workers who have worked a certain number of years have a certain amount of money added to their basic pay.

Tunjangan transport
Transport benefit. Some companies provide a certain sum for transport. Other companies provide buses for their workers.

Uang kebijaksanaan
Literally means goodwill money. It is a term to refer to the sum of money given to a worker who is resigning (even when the worker is pressured to resign). This tactic is to evade protest that might arise from dismissal action and a cheap way to terminate a working relationship.

Uang makan
Literally means food money. It is a sum considered as benefit provided for food. The sum is generally around Rp.300 (US 13 cents) to Rp.500 (US 21 cents) per day for one meal. Some companies provide meals, but many do not provide canteens, so that workers eat on the factory ground.

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