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FAIRCHILD IN ASIA

It is difficult for researchers in industrialized countries to gather information directly from the women who work Asia's assembly lines, so we are particularly happy to see a new 70-page pamphlet, "The Invisible Control: Management Control of Workers in a U.S. Electronics Company." Written by Sr. Christina Tse for the Hong Kong-based Center for the Progress of Peoples, "Invisible Control" is available for US\$2.40 plus shipping from CPP, 48 Princess Margaret Road, Homantin, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

Tse's study is based primarily upon interviews of Fairchild Semiconductor employees in Hong Kong and Korea. She discusses the pseudo-representative Joint Consultation Committee, sophisticated personnel practices, and *Fairchild Life* - the company organ - in Hong Kong. In Korea she reviews the control of union leadership, the promotion of "Saemaul Spirit," and company efforts to promote foreign culture. (For instance, company cooking classes teach women workers to prepare roast beef and French toast, although they can't afford to buy the ingredients.)

Tse points out that Fairchild provides better working conditions - such as air conditioning and transportation - than many other firms in Hong Kong, but its pay is among the lowest. Wages differ substantially at Fairchild plants in different countries. In fact, wages are not the same at the company's two Hong Kong plants. One plant, Wing Kai, is not normally identified as a Fairchild subsidiary, perhaps to discourage comparison. In late 1980, Korean Fairchild assembly workers were paid US\$2.98 per day after six months and US\$5.06 per day after seven years, for an eight-hour day. In Hong Kong, the average worker received US\$6.40 after six months and US\$8.60 after six years, for an eight-hour day.

In Korea, Tse points out, the company has sped up production since 1976 with a carefully monitored "units per hour" system. Fairchild

has used the threat of a plant closing - and lay-offs - to discipline workers. In fact, it closed one of its two Korean facilities in 1977, blaming labor difficulties, and eliminated 2,000 jobs.

In September, 1980 Fairchild's Hong Kong branch gave workers the option of reducing hours (to a four-day week) or facing the possibility of lay-offs. By offering compensation the company got workers to apply to be dismissed. Fairchild terminated 300 workers.

Finally, Tse provides sketchy descriptions of strikes at Fairchild factories in both Hong Kong and Korea. In general, those strikes have been successful, despite the numerous mechanisms of visible and invisible control by management.