Interview with a Factory Worker: December 1999 interview with workers at Merton's Dongguan factory

By Li Qiang, China Labor Watch

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Merton Company Limited is a toy manufacturer and a contractor with Disney and McDonalds. This report is based on the interview conducted by Li Qiang to the workers in Merton Company Limited. The date of interview is December 31, 1999. China Labor Watch also has an extensive report on conditions at Merton's factory.

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PART I

Li Qiang: How many sections do you have in your factory?

Worker: The Painting Subsidiary has three sections including oil spray, oil coloring. There must be 3000 to 4000 workers in the Painting Subsidiary.

Li Qiang: How many in the Feather Machining Subsidiary?

Worker: I don't know.

Li Qiang: And what other subsidiaries do you have?

Worker: There are subsidiary and departments of Gluing, Assembling, Sewing, Packing, Warehouse, Printing, Accounting, Purchasing, Repairing and Maintenance, Woodwork, Administration.

Li Qiang: Let's talk about the hourly wages.

Worker: The change color doll is our product. We used to be paid 11.20 Yuan for 100 pieces. After a while the wages for 100 pieces was lowered to 7.80 Yuan.

Li Qiang: What is the response of the workers?

Worker: They didn't say anything.

Li Qiang: So nobody argued with the boss. What did the workers think?

Worker: Counting the pay as 11.20, the workers will get a higher wages every month. So the boss lowered the pay. If the workers get the pay by 100 pieces for 11.20, the average monthly wage would be around 1000.

Li Qiang: Didn't the workers think about the reason?

Worker: Though they had some thoughts they have no idea what to do.
Li Qiang: Didn't anybody feel that was unfair? So the boss just calculates the wages with the lower rate?

Worker: We don't know how our wages are calculated. The wage slips were done by the accounting department, showing that we got piecework wages. We don't know what rated the boss is using.

Li Qiang: So in fact the pay rate is set by the boss, isn't it?

Worker: I don't know how the boss did it.

Li Qiang: How did you get the job in this factory?

Worker: Through the job agent.

Li Qiang: Did you get recruited in your home town or in the job agent in Dongguan?

Worker: The job agent in Dongguan.

Li Qiang: What is the location of your factory?

Worker: Sangyuan district in Fucheng.

Li Qiang: What is the name of the job agent?

Worker: Fucheng job agent. It is in Zhushan.

Li Qiang: Where are you from?

Worker: Huanggang County in Hubei Province.

Li Qiang: You started work from June 24, and when did you get your wage for the first month?

Worker: In August 15th.

Li Qiang: How much did you get at that time?

Worker: Only the pay for the seven days in June.

Li Qiang: What brand product does this factory produce?

Worker: Disney, McDonald, and Franklin.

Li Qiang: Any other brand?

Worker: We produce toys.

Li Qiang: What is your working hour?

Worker: Morning term from 7:30 to 12:00 am, afternoon term 1:00 to 6:00 pm, extended work from 7:30 to 10:30 pm. In total 12.5 hours.

Li Qiang: What do you have for breakfast?

Worker: We can have rice, steamed bread, rice porridge, and fried cookie.

Li Qiang: Can you have enough for breakfast?

Worker: Not always. For example, we can have only one steamed bread.

Li Qiang: Do you have hot water, how about soup?

Worker: No rice porridge for the breakfast. You can always have rice. Sometimes porridge is available sometime not. And if you are late you can’t get rice porridge.

Li Qiang: How about lunch?

Worker: We have two vegetable and one meat
Li Qiang: What kind of vegetable and can you have enough?
Worker: Radish, potato, and cabbage.
Li Qiang: And how about the meat?
Worker: Sometimes we have ribs and pork liver.
Li Qiang: What is the quantity of these dishes?
Worker: In total about 100 to 150 gram.
Li Qiang: What is for supper?
Worker: Usually the same as lunch.
Li Qiang: Is there any night snack after extended work?
Worker: Yes, mostly there is something like rice noodle.
Li Qiang: Do you have enough food?
Worker: Fairly. Some people having a big stomach still hungry. The dishes are not enough.
Li Qiang: How much rice can you have?
Worker: Rice is for all you can eat.
Li Qiang: What is the condition in the dormitory?
Worker: Fifteen or sixteen people share a single room.
Li Qiang: How big is the room?
Worker: There is only a one-meter-wide alleyway between the beds.
Li Qiang: How is the bed allocated?
Worker: Six bunk beds, three on each side, and two more on the back. In total eight bunk beds are in one room.
Li Qiang: How is the washroom?
Worker: There are washrooms in each floor, none in dormitory.
Li Qiang: How many shower rooms do you have?
Worker: Four.
Li Qiang: How many people can use a shower room at the same?
Worker: Each shower room can hold ten people.
Li Qiang: How many people are living in a single floor?
Worker: About three hundred.
Li Qiang: How many rooms are there in a single floor?
Worker: About twenty.
Li Qiang: How many toilets are there in a single floor?
Worker: Twenty toilets for twenty people at the same.
Li Qiang: Does the factory provide quilt and beddings?
Worker: No. The workers have to buy them.
Li Qiang: How about the supply of hot water?
Worker: No constant supply for hot water. When the workers go back the dormitory after the extended work at night there is no hot water. Now it is in winter and the workers have to use cold water for bath.

Li Qiang: Is there any designate time for bath? How many people do you think can’t get hot water for bath?

Worker: There is no time limit for bath. But we usually don't get hot water after the night work unless running back the dormitory faster. But sometimes even we run very fast we can't get hot water.

Li Qiang: Not it is really cold.

Worker: It was even colder several days ago. I have no idea.

Li Qiang: How many people do you think can get hot water for bath?

Worker: About one hundred people can get hot water.

Li Qiang: How much did you get for your first month work?

Worker: In that month I worked only seven days and I get 75 Yuan.

Li Qiang: What kind of deduction was it?

Worker: The gross was 90 Yuan, but I got 75 after 15 living fee.

Li Qiang: What is the recent pay day?

Worker: In December 9th, I got 377 Yuan.

Li Qiang: Which month is it for?

Worker: For October.

Li Qiang: Is it for October 1st to October 31st, or September?

Worker: I think it is for October 1st to October 31st.

Li Qiang: How many days did you work in October?

Worker: I worked for 27 days.

Li Qiang: Why 27 days?

Worker: We did have too many orders in the month so we had four days off.

Li Qiang: How many hours do you work for every day then?

Worker: On average 12.5 hours per day. In Sundays we work for 9.5 hours.

Li Qiang: When you do extended work time, do you get overtime pay?

Worker: No. Our wages is counted by piecework.

Li Qiang: How is the method to count piecework? Do you know your pay rate?

Worker: The pay rate is different for different products.

Li Qiang: Can you give me an example for the pay rate?

Worker: Such as changing color dolls...

Li Qiang: What is the brand of it?

Worker: Disney.

Li Qiang: What is the piecework rate for it?

Worker: It used to be 11.20 Yuan for 100 pieces, or 0.112 Yuan each.
Li Qiang: How many people are needed to work it out?
Worker: Eight people.

Li Qiang: That is eight people work on the doll, getting 11.20 for 100 pieces.
Worker: But the rate is lowered to 7.80 Yuan.

Li Qiang: Why?
Worker: Because some workers would get over 1000 Yuan monthly if calculated by 11.20. The factory administration lowered the pay rate to reduce cost.

Li Qiang: What part do you work?
Worker: I am working on paint spray.

Li Qiang: How high is that changing color doll?
Worker: It is a small doll with 10 cm high.

Li Qiang: How do you spray on it?
Worker: We eight workers each sprays on a different position.

Li Qiang: Do you produce any other products?
Worker: A lot of them, such as Buzz Lightyear (in Toy Story series).

Li Qiang: What is the brand of it?
Worker: Disney as well. It is a robot.

Li Qiang: What part work do you do?
Worker: Still paint spray.

Li Qiang: What is the pay rate for that?
Worker: It used to be 27.5, and then was lowered to 24.

Li Qiang: How many people work on it?
Worker: There were twelve people working from twelve different positions.

Li Qiang: How long do you thing to finish the whole procedure for a single toy?
Worker: It is a production line so I am not sure. When finish painting on dozens of it and then bring it to the next worker. We are working in that way so I don't know how long it takes for the whole process.

Li Qiang: Do the workers get overtime pay for extended work?
Worker: No at all.

Li Qiang: Do you have output quotas of production?
Worker: Sometime is the factory is hurried for an order we will have quotas. Sometime we will be forced to work no matter how late to finish the quotas.

Li Qiang: How do you get forced to work?
Worker: That is to require you to work overtime.

Li Qiang: Work overtime to what time?
Worker: Till eleven or twelve.
Li Qiang: Can you finish the quotas when you work overtime?
Worker: Usually we can.

Li Qiang: How much time do you work in December?
Worker: ...

Li Qiang: I am asking if you get any rest in December.
Worker: No one day break in December other than today afternoon. That is because tomorrow is January 1st, 2000. In fact we don't have one day off, and we work 12.5 hours averagely. Only Sunday evenings we don’t have extended work.

PART II

Li Qiang: From December 1st to December 31st, do you have overtime work only except Sundays?
Worker: We don't have overtime work only in the Sunday evening.

Li Qiang: What time do you take off in Sunday?
Worker: We work till 6:30 pm, in total 9.5 hours.

Li Qiang: How about the other days?
Worker: In general we work 12.5 hours per day. There is no extended work only in Sunday evening.

Li Qiang: So you work a lot from Monday to Saturday. Did you take some days off for the National Day holidays (October 1st and 2nd)?
Worker: We have one day off during National Day.

Li Qiang: How many days?
Worker: Only one day.

Li Qiang: How many days were you off during November?
Worker: Not a single day off.

Li Qiang: How about October?
Worker: We had four days off because we didn't have enough work to do. Some other worker got lots of work and they only had one day off.

Li Qiang: So the day off is the Nation Day (October 1st).
Worker: Not actually. So subsidiaries were so busy that they had only half day off in October 1st. That is all the time off in the whole month.

Li Qiang: How about September?
Worker: ...

Li Qiang: How much did you get in September and in October?
Worker: I got 385 Yuan for September.

Li Qiang: Can you tell me how many days were you off?
Worker: I got only one day off in September, which is the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival. I didn't get any other holiday in September. I got four days off in October only because we didn't have enough work to do. The workers in the other subsidiaries had only one day off in the whole month.

Li Qiang: How many people are there in your factory?
Worker: In total more than 10,000 people.
Worker: In total more than 10,000 people.
Li Qiang: How many are there in your subsidiary?
Worker: About 500 in total.
Li Qiang: So you got 385 Yuan in September and you had only one day off in that month. Do you get the pay slip when you get your wages?
Worker: No. The wages were in the wage envelopes. After the workers get the money, the wage envelopes are returned.
Li Qiang: So the money you get is from the envelope. Do you have the same wages as the amount of money in the envelopes?
Worker: Right, they are the same.
Li Qiang: Are the wages for every worker posted beside the factory gate?
Worker: Right.
Li Qiang: Do you have a wage sheet?
Worker: That is a fake wage sheet. We can't see that sheet.
Li Qiang: How do you know there is such a fake wage sheet?
Worker: Because I have a countryman who is working as a treasurer. And his job is to make this fake wage sheet.
Li Qiang: How does this fake sheet work?
Worker: The fake sheet would present a higher wage than the actual thing.
Li Qiang: Who is this fake wage sheet for?
Worker: This wage is shown to the inspectors from the governmental Labor Bureau.
Li Qiang: Anything more.
Worker: The sheet is prepared to cope with the inspection from the Labor Bureau.
Li Qiang: Will that be shown to the customers?
Worker: I don't know.
Li Qiang: Are you required to sign when you get your wages?
Worker: We do.
Li Qiang: Now you are working for a very long time. Do you have any medical insurance?
Worker: No.
Li Qiang: What do you do when getting sick?
Worker: You have to pay for the medical expenses by yourself, usually deducted from the wages.
Li Qiang: Do you know any work injury in your factory?
Worker: Very few in my subsidiary.
Li Qiang: Do you have fine penalties?
Worker: Yes, such as if the boxes are untidy, those packing boxes.
Li Qiang: How much?
Worker: The fines are twenty or ten Yuan.

Li Qiang: Anything else?
Worker: We are in the subsidiary of Oil Painting. The paint is messy. Some of my colleagues would have some white paper covering their pants, so their pants won’t be spoiled. But if the customers are visiting this is not allowed. If you have paper covering your pants you will get fined?

Li Qiang: So you will get fined for putting a paper cover. What is the fine?
Worker: Usually getting fined for twenty.

Li Qiang: Do you know that the paint is poisonous?
Worker: I don’t know. But it smells terrible.

Li Qiang: Do you wear masks?
Worker: The factory doesn’t provide mask. If you want one you have to buy one.

Li Qiang: How about the inspection?
Worker: When the customers coming for inspection, the factory will have the workers to wear masks. You will be fined if you don’t wear one. It doesn’t matter if you don’t wear it in general time and you will not be fined.

Li Qiang: How much is the fine?
Worker: Twenty Yuan.

Li Qiang: Any other fines, such as playing poker in dormitory and smoking?
Worker: Gambling will be fined. And you will be fined for bring toys out of factory.

Li Qiang: How much for toys brought out of the factory?
Worker: Sometimes fifty.

Li Qiang: Let me ask you, you got 385 as wages in September, and how much is deducted?
Worker: Living fee 55, hydro 24, and miscellaneous costs 26.

Li Qiang: So you got deducted 105 in that month. What is your living standard?
Worker: I am not so sure.

Li Qiang: How do you think about the cost of your meal?
Worker: About three Yuan per day, or 150 per month, no more than that. The workers pay 55 and the factory will path 95.

Li Qiang: What kind of people goes to your factory for inspection?
Worker: Usually the officials from the Labor Bureau. And some clients will come to visit.

Li Qiang: What do the customers observe?
Worker: They come here to check the production. They just come and take a look without asking anything.

Li Qiang: Do you have any workers died during work or commit
Worker: I don’t know about that.

Li Qiang: What is the rate of female workers versus the male workers?

Worker: About two to one, two female and one male.

Li Qiang: Do you know that the oil paint is poisonous?

Worker: Sure the oil paint is toxic, but we don’t get any protection.

Li Qiang: Do you get any compensation for this?

Worker: No protection and no compensation.

Li Qiang: Do you use toluene? What do you use to clean the paint?

Worker: We use banana oil. (Amyl Acetate)

Li Qiang: Is it caustic?

Worker: Of course. I can feel that.

Li Qiang: Do you wear gloves when working?

Worker: Usually not. Some people get gloves but most don’t get them.

Li Qiang: Do you get a pair of gloves?

Worker: Only when I do that model and I will touch it by hand.

Li Qiang: What if the paint spoiled on your hands?

Worker: We would use banana oil to clean it. You can see the skin of my hand is leaking.

Li Qiang: Oh my god! Your skin is leaking!

Worker: It is getting better these days. You can flesh couple of days ago.

Li Qiang: Is it popular in the factory?

Worker: Many people are like this. Some workers have to put bondage on their hands.

Li Qiang: Do you have a union in your factory?

Worker: No.

Li Qiang: The last time you brought copies of labor law to your factory. How do they think for the workers read the labor law?

Worker: The people read the labor law thought it is useless.

Li Qiang: Why?

Worker: There is too much violation to the labor law in the factory, and you can’t fight the factory.

Li Qiang: Don’t you think about getting organized to protect yourselves providing your wages are so low.

Worker: Some thought about that but they dare not to take action.

Li Qiang: Do you find any people who dare to rebel among the workers in contact with you?

Worker: Very few.

Li Qiang: What will you do later? The condition in this factory is so bad,
and do you think you will be working here forever?

Worker: I hope that I can transfer to a better factory.

Li Qiang: What do the workers think when you talk with them about union?

Worker: I talked with them. They thought it is impossible to organize the union. I talk them the union will help the employees in fighting for welfare, protection workers’ rights. But the workers thought that is no possible.

Li Qiang: Did you discuss a lot about this topic?

Worker: Nobody wanted to deepen this topic.

Li Qiang: What are the education levels of the workers?

Worker: Most of them are from villages and finished junior high school. There are also some haven’t finish primary school. The workers know only a few things.

Li Qiang: What is the requirement from the workers to the factory?

Worker: They want less extended work hour and increase wages.

Li Qiang: Do the work think how to achieve these?

Worker: In general the workers take their fates. Some are waiting for the boss to make the improvement.

Li Qiang: How do you think?

Worker: I want to protect myself through organizing a union, but it is not easy.

Li Qiang: It will take time. Don’t be discouraged. You talked with the governmental union, what did they say?

(Note: this worker went to the governmental union to asking about the procedure of organization of the union, which was encouraged by the activist of CLW. I know that after while, and this is the first time I meet this worker.)

Worker: I told them that labor law is not obeyed in many aspects in my factory.

Li Qiang: When did you go there?

Worker: In November. I told them that labor law is not obeyed in my factory and we workers wanted to organize a union to protect ourselves. The officers of union said that many factories are not able to obey with the labor law strictly.

Li Qiang: Did he say anything else? Who did you meet in the union?

Worker: The officer from the Propaganda Department.

Li Qiang: How long did you talk?

Worker: About 20 minutes. When I told him that there is no union in my factory and I want to know the requirement of forming the union, he made a phone call to investigate the situation. He called the Fucheng union and told me the following story. Our factory was formed by the merger of three factories, and one of them once had a union. After the merger, the union disappeared.

Li Qiang: Did you tell the union officer about the situation in your factory. What did he say?

Worker: I told him about the overtime work, wages, etc. When he heard that there are 10,000 people in my factory and there was no union, he seemed not convinced. He made a phone call to check and then say
nothing. He asked me some questions and then he said if I can call by phone if there is anything and I shouldn't visit his office. I was told that I can impeach anonymously by phone call and I shouldn't go to their office.

Li Qiang: Where should you impeach?
Worker: For union I should go to the Labor Bureau.
Li Qiang: What else did you talk about?
Worker: I just told him the situation in our factory.
Li Qiang: How did he respond to the union stuff?
Worker: He didn't say a word and he didn't ask for it.
Li Qiang: Can you tell me more?
Worker: I told him I want to organize a union and he didn't want to talk about that. He digressed to some other topic. He also said that overtime work is popular in Dongguan area as well as many government owned factories.

Li Qiang: And more?
Worker: Once I talked about union he would digress to other topics. He just told me to call when necessary. He also proscribed me to be careful about the boss, don't be retaliated and don't be fired.

Li Qiang: (laughing...)
Worker: And then he said "that is all." That meant he wanted me to leave.

Li Qiang: How many people were there in his office?
Worker: Only him.

Li Qiang: How did you find him?
Worker: I went into the building and asked for the union office. I said that I wanted to know the requirement of organization of a union. The gate guard told me his office.

Li Qiang: Did the officer ask for your name?
Worker: He checked my factory ID and talked with me for twenty minutes.

Li Qiang: When you told the story to the other workers, what were their thoughts?
Worker: They thought it is normal. Most of them didn't think that I should go to ask.

Li Qiang: (laughing...)
Worker: (laughing...)

Li Qiang: Do you think it will be easier to organize the union with support from the governmental union?
Worker: Very low possibility.

Li Qiang: Why?
Worker: It is too difficult to get the workers organized.

Li Qiang: Why are they difficult to organize?
Worker: They are afraid of losing their jobs. Most of them thought this is useless.

Li Qiang: Why?
Worker: It is too difficult to get the workers organized.

Li Qiang: Why are they difficult to organize?
Worker: They are afraid of losing their jobs. Most of them thought this is useless.
Li Qiang: They don't revenge though the pay is so low. Do the workers want to work overtime?

Worker: Yes. Some workers want to work overtime to get a little more pay.

Li Qiang: Aren't there a lot of worker dissatisfied?

Worker: They are dissatisfied. But they don't know about the organization. Some of them are thinking, one day the boss gives his alms deed, (laughing...), and we get an increase.

Li Qiang: There was a strike in May. Can you talk a little about that?

Worker: I am not sure about that.

Li Qiang: Tell me something you know.

Worker: When the wage slips were posted, some workers say their wages were so low then they stroke and destroyed some factory properties, such as glass, chairs, and garbage cans. I am not sure about the details. Many workers were fired at that time.

Li Qiang: Do you know the date?

Worker: No. Two hundred workers lost their jobs at that time. I've heard that the armed police were call out, and they were equipped with armored cars and guns.

Li Qiang: So some workers saw that.

Worker: Yes.

Li Qiang: What kind of thoughts do the workers in this factory have?

Worker: Only working.

Li Qiang: Do they think about anything else?

Worker: Those old workers want to work longer as they get the higher pay. The new employee would leave and find a better factory when they get the chance.

Li Qiang: How about the future, don't you think about anything for long term?

Worker: No, I don't think that much.

Li Qiang: Then what do you think?

Worker: Now I am thinking about getting united and forming a union. But it isn't easy. I just want to work.

Li Qiang: What do you think about working after 20 years?

Worker: I will go back my hometown after several years working.

Li Qiang: How about marriage. Your wages are not enough covering your living. Do you have money to marry a girl?

Worker: I don't have any thoughts about that.

Li Qiang: How about the other workers?

Worker: Most of them are the same. They will go back after several years working.

Li Qiang: Do you have the same pay rate, or the old workers would have higher pay rate?

Worker: No. The old workers are experienced and they have higher pay.
Li Qiang: You hands are really hurt. That is supervising! There are lots of breaks on your left hand and I can even see the flesh.

Worker: Many workers' hands are like this. The banana oil has causticity.

Li Qiang: Do you think it is possible to organize a union in the factory?

Worker: ...

Li Qiang: How many people have you been talking with about the union?

Worker: I talked with more than ten people.

Li Qiang: How many people don't want to talk with you?

Worker: Most of them don't want to talk about that. Only one or two discussed Labor Law with me.

Li Qiang: Do the workers that stroke and got fired get their pay?

Worker: They were fined and got their partial pay.

Li Qiang: They are fired after fined?

Worker: There are lots of people still in the factory getting fined and don't get their pay.

Li Qiang: Do the worker think like this? The condition is so bad, I can't work any more, and I will fight for the improvement of working condition, if I failed I will leave after all. So the workers are organized and talk with the boss.

Worker: The workers don't get a chance to meet the boss and nobody wants to do like that.

PART III

Li Qiang: So in general, it is pessimistic, isn't it?

Worker: Yes.

Li Qiang: There is no chance to succeed. The workers need time to know about union. And there is some practical situation. The workers have a low requirement of their own rights. Do you think we need a book listing some practical steps we can take? We can encourage the people through this book. Is it possible like this, say after all I am leaving, so I can be associated with the people and fight and defend my own rights?

Worker: The key point is to let the workers know what to do and how to organize the union.

Li Qiang: The labor laws include a lot of prescripts. We should let the books tell the workers to fight for their rights, step by step. The first, we should increase the level of the cognition of the worker. As you know, the mass of workers is moving out. After all they left, why not let them require an increase in wages. It is simple. The unit rate of this item, he can be paid for 28Yuan or 26 Yuan. It is not impossible to have the company to pay the higher wage, but the workers just dare not to be against the company. As I said, can't we get the higher pay? We should tell the workers about the labor laws and have them organized. If we are not united, then nothing will help.

Worker: It is very difficult to get the workers organized.

Li Qiang: Weren't there several strikes before? Do you know the strike in January 1999? More than 300 workers were fired after that time.

Worker: I know. But the workers don't want to get involved. There is another strike in May and 50 people were arrested and imprisoned.
Li Qiang: Do they have been released?

Worker: I am not sure about the detail but I've heard that most of them are released.

Li Qiang: There are a lot of problems here. We should contact and organize the people first. We should have a clear demand, such as to increase the wages and to reduce overtime work. We should use lawful method. We should contact the governmental union first and get the governmental union to help the workers. We should appeal to the higher authorities for help according to the law. We should avoid violation method, which will be the excuse of the factory.

Worker: Now the problem is that after several strikes, many workers were fired. The remainder workers are scared and they are difficult to be organized.

Li Qiang: We may wait for the chance and contact more workers; we should propagandize; use lawful method; and go find the Labor Bureau...

Worker: Now many workers don't trust in the Labor Bureau. Many workers appealed to the Labor Bureau and they are not paid attention to.

Li Qiang: Do you know any people like that? You should go find the people going to the Labor Bureau and organize the workers.

Worker: I know them. But they were fired after they went to the Labor Bureau.

Li Qiang: Can you give me a name among them?

Worker: Huang Juping, a guy from Sichuang Province.

Li Qiang: Has he been fired for appealing the conditions of the factory to the Labor Bureau.

Worker: He was a group leader. Because the workers in his group didn't fulfill the output quotas, his supervisor refused to give his workers food. He argued with his supervisor and was fired by the manager.

Li Qiang: How many people are in his group?

Worker: Twenty four. He was fired and fined for 240 Yuan.

Li Qiang: Is it useful to appeal to the Labor Bureau?

Worker: The Labor Bureau required the factory to return the 200 Yuan fine.

Li Qiang: So that is effective. When did it happen?

Worker: In October 30th.

Li Qiang: Is there anybody else appealing to the Labor Bureau?

Worker: Very few.

Li Qiang: It is close to the Spring Festival now, and many factories will withhold workers' wages. We many take this chance.

Worker: Now the workers are used to their wages being withheld.

Li Qiang: This way is effective in some other factories. The minimum monthly pay of 540 Yuan in Shenzhen was the result fought by the workers. It is obvious that we should wait for the good chance. At present we should get the workers united. When there is something happens, we can get the workers organized. The key point is to get the workers united and find the common demand of the workers.
We can only depend on ourselves to fight for our rights. We can't wait the bosses to show their mercy. We should have our strategy step by step. We should get more workers to demand a little improvement, such as the gloves, then the overtime work, and more. We shouldn't have a very high requirement because the factory administration won't satisfy us. When the factory administration answers for our requirement, we can start the next step... We should have detailed requirement.

Worker: Now it is difficult to talk with the boss.

Li Qiang: The key point is to get united.

Worker: Some don't want to work over time, while some prefer to work overtime.

Li Qiang: To conduct something like that, workers' support is a necessity. The organizers must be facing some trouble. We should do it like this, you go to find some people and form a core, and then each people of the core go to find some people, step by step you will form an organization. Obviously you must be very careful.

Worker: Sometimes we will talk about our wage increase and work time reduction. But many of us are afraid of losing their jobs.

Li Qiang: When more workers are interested in their wages being increased, you can tell the mass, we are going to send some delegates to negotiate with the boss for the wage increase. But the delegate may be fired. We hope that everyone donate ten Yuan to form a mutual fund as compensation to the delegates when they are fired.

Worker: Some workers would rather spend this ten Yuan in some other way. Perhaps only a few will donate this ten Yuan. Some workers would think like this, you talk with the boss and if the boss doesn't satisfy your demand, you will get nothing.

Li Qiang: This method is effective in some other factories. In another factory, the workers make it in this way, there were 1000 people in this factory and he gathered 1000 Yuan, providing 100 people donated. That factory withheld workers' wages for up to three months and none of the workers got paid. We should pay attention to the chance like that. If every time the organizers get not feedback and always lost, nobody would be the organizer again. So it is important to find some money and everybody share the burden. The benefit will go to everyone after all. It is important to get it started, if you can persuade ten people then there is a hope. I tried it in my previous factory and it is my real experience.

Worker: There is no sharp conflict in our factory. The workers can afford overtime work. That is all. Though very low but we can get paid on time. The condition in our factory is better than the others nearby. And I think the people like me are too little.

Li Qiang: We need to brave men the start the first step like everything.

Worker: I've heard some story. They killed the boss.

Li Qiang: We should solve the problem through the law and avoid any violation.