

A History of NB

1975 - 1985

November 26, 1985

FORWARD

In the course of preparing this history of NB it became clear that, in this case, the typical approach to understanding the development of a business would not be sufficient. While most capitalist ventures exist primarily for the purpose of returning a profit to its owners, NB was often guided by other priorities: developing production skills in cadre, exposing cadre to various forms of commercial practice, developing essential business skills, and experimenting with different economic forms of organization. In fact, if NB had been guided solely by the principle of maximizing profits, its history and development would be quite different.

With this in mind, it is more appropriate to view NB's history as a living example of Mao's "On Practice". Cadre were given the opportunity to engage in the various aspects of the economic cycle (O,E,I,S), learn from their experience, and struggle to take their understanding and practice to a higher level. Knowledge evolved from a superficial and abstract understanding of production and capitalist relations, to an internalized appreciation of these concepts through practice. Production skills (baking, data processing, production management, etc.), administrative and organizational practice, active participation in the struggle for capital and the exchange of commodities-- all these come from a commitment to the Marxist theory of development and the primacy of social practice in completing the cycle of knowledge.

The following narrative is an attempt to trace NB's development from a lower to a higher level in the course of its nine-year history, focusing on the key periods of development in various aspects of the business.

"If you want to know a certain thing or a certain class of things directly you must personally participate in the practical struggle to change reality , to change that thing or class of things, for only thus can you come into contact with them as phenomena..."

"Start from perceptual knowledge and actively develop it into rational knowledge; then start from rational knowledge and actively guide revolutionary practice to change both the subjective and the objective world. Practice, knowledge, again practice and again knowledge. This form repeats itself in endless cycles, and with each cycle the content of practice and knowledge rises to a higher level. Such is the whole of the dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge, and such is the dialectical-materialist theory of the unity of knowing and doing."

("On Practice", Mao)