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L'évolution des fonctions du syndicat en Belgique

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Face à une situation de crise où la balance du pouvoir penche en défaveur des syndicats, comment ceux-ci réagissent-ils en Belgique?

Telle est la question à laquelle cette communication veut tenter de donner un premier élément de réponse. Premier élément car l'analyse qui suit concerne essentiellement les réactions publiques des appareils syndicaux. Au-delà de ces manifestations visibles, il existe sans doute une face cachée de l'iceberg, faite d'initiatives locales et de réflexions individuelles. Dans l'ensemble, elles n'ont pas fait partie de cette première investigation.

1. Quelques précisions en guise d'introduction.

Avant d'aborder le coeur du sujet, quelques informations concernant les syndicats belges s'imposent.

- 1) Le syndicalisme belge est dominé par deux syndicats interprofessionnels de force sensiblement égale : la Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens (C.S.C.) et la Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique (F.G.T.B.). Le premier appartient à la famille sociale-chrétienne, le second à la famille socialiste. Ils ont une structure similaire reposant sur deux axes : celui de l'industrie et celui - interprofessionnel - de la région. Le premier axe est à la base des "centrales" professionnelles qui ont une place prépondérante dans l'organisation, le second axe étant à la base des "régionales". Ces dernières sont regroupées dans les deux syndicats selon la division Flandre, Wallonie, Bruxelles, chacune de ces régions développant de plus en plus une problématique économique et sociale propre.

2) Contrairement à ce qui se passe ailleurs, la Belgique reste un pays de haute syndicalisation. Si la F.G.T.B. parle d'un tassement, la C.S.C. faisait encore état d'une croissance du nombre de ses membres lors de son dernier congrès, en avril 1985.

Par contre, la structure des effectifs a connu des changements importants au cours des années récentes tout comme la structure de la population active. La proportion des non-actifs (chômeurs et pensionnés) se situerait dans une fourchette de 25 à 40% selon les centrales.

Ces deux caractéristiques sont en liaison avec une fonction importante remplie par les syndicats pour leurs membres : la prestation des services (informations sociales, assistance juridique, paiement des indemnités des fonds de sécurité d'existence, de la prime syndicale et... des allocations de chômage). C'est certainement là une des premières raisons d'affiliation.

2. La démarche de la C.S.C.

La problématique du syndicalisme face à la crise a été abordée de front à la C.S.C., et ce dans deux instances différentes.

La première, son aile wallonne avait entamé depuis 1981 un important travail de réflexion sur le mouvement syndical et sur la stratégie qu'il fallait développer dans les années à venir au sein d'une société que la crise économique est en train de transformer fondamentalement. Elle devait aboutir en 1984 à un document, assez élaboré, Syndicalisme des années 80-90 en Wallonie (1) qui réunit les conclusions des débats menés. L'Assemblée wallonne des militants allait ensuite, en décembre 1984, adopter les 79 propositions qui en découlaient (2).

Cette démarche allait être partiellement reprise par la C.S.C. nationale qui a proposé en vue de son congrès statutaire d'avril 1985 la discussion d'un autre document, lui aussi assez important, Syndicalisme : démocratie et solidarité (3). A partir d'un diagnostic posé dans des termes similaires, il se centre surtout sur les problèmes internes de l'organisation (4).

2.1. Le point de départ.

Les difficultés auxquelles est confronté le mouvement syndical en Belgique sont essentiellement liées à la crise économique et sont partagées par beaucoup d'autres nations. Rappelons-les très schématiquement.

Le syndicalisme s'est d'abord trouvé en échec dans ce qui était depuis longtemps sa principale fonction, négocier une juste répartition de la croissance. Parallèlement un autre problème devenait prioritaire : celui de l'emploi. Et ces difficultés sont encore accrues par l'évolution technologique, l'internationalisation du capital et la désarticulation du tissu industriel en Wallonie.

Non seulement l'évolution économique a remis en cause l'efficacité du syndicat, et ses modes d'action traditionnels, négociation collective et grèves, mais elle a aussi sapé sa base. Alors que le syndicalisme s'appuie traditionnellement sur les ouvriers masculins qualifiés, l'importance de ces derniers s'amenuise alors que croît le nombre des employés, des femmes et des sans emplois, catégories plus difficilement mobilisables. Le développement des P.M.E. et des statuts d'emploi précaire vont eux aussi dans un sens défavorable aux syndicats.

De plus, au cours des dernières années, un discours patronal et néo-libéral très critique du syndicat a été largement diffusé par les médias et n'a pas été sans influencer les travailleurs. Le patronat est également ressenti comme voulant déforcer le syndicat lorsqu'il développe des structures de communication dans l'entreprise ou lorsqu'il impose des négociations d'entreprise.

Les difficultés du syndicalisme belge allaient encore être renforcées par la politique du Gouvernement social-chrétien-libéral en place de décembre 1981 à octobre 1985. Il a largement mis les syndicats hors jeu et la négociation collective "en liberté surveillée" et, voulant oeuvrer au redressement économique, il a aussi réduit le pouvoir d'achat des travailleurs ainsi que les prestations sociales.

Et à l'intérieur des syndicats, les affiliés sont déçus, découragés et de plus en plus difficiles à mobiliser.

Le défi est de taille.

2.2. Les réponses

Le mode de fonctionnement de l'organisation

Parmi les différentes réactions possibles devant cet état de choses, la C.S.C. a choisi de privilégier la dimension interne. Son secrétaire général l'a expliqué :

"Certes la récession a engendré une situation où le rapport de forces pur joue en défaveur des syndicats. Mais l'essentiel...est la dégradation du capital de confiance auprès d'une bonne partie de leurs affiliés.

Aux yeux d'un nombre croissant de travailleurs, les syndicats apparaissent désormais comme des grandes organisations distantes et comme un pouvoir en place.

Rénover le syndicalisme c'est d'abord restaurer cette confiance-là car elle figure le soubassement de toute nouvelle stratégie sociale digne de ce nom. Il ne sert à rien d'arrêter de grands objectifs si l'on ne met pas les gens dans le coup et, surtout, si les gens n'ont pas réellement le sentiment d'être dans le coup...

J'insiste sur cette dimension : la restauration de la confiance du syndicat auprès de sa base sociale. Sans cette confiance toute "nouvelle" stratégie ne dépassera pas le seuil d'une stratégie d'appareil...

Pour restaurer la confiance, il faut d'abord rénover les pratiques syndicales à l'intérieur de l'organisation et rendre la pratique cohérente avec le discours... Il est en effet essentiel que, dans le syndicat, l'affilié et le militant le sentent chez eux. Cela postule un mode de fonctionnement qui, si je puis dire, rayonne la démocratie..."(5).

Un important volet de "syndicalisme : démocratie et solidarité" propose de nombreux aménagements qui vont tous dans le sens d'une meilleure écoute des souhaits et des besoins des militants et des membres ainsi que de leur plus grande participation à la prise de décision et à son contrôle.

Des lieux d'actions différents pour aborder d'autres champs et créer d'autres solidarités.

Si la C.S.C. nationale insiste sur le renforcement du syndicalisme d'entreprise, dans la ligne d'un "syndicalisme à la base", les deux documents mettent aussi l'accent sur le développement de la section locale interprofessionnelle comme lieu de l'action syndicale. Sa nécessité résulte de l'importance dans la "clientèle" syndicale des sans emploi qui ne disposent plus de l'entreprise comme lieu de référence. Mais l'animation locale permet en outre de drainer vers les syndicats les aspirations et les intérêts des milieux locaux. Et elle représente un moyen de créer la solidarité entre des gens qui ont des vécus différents.

La section locale interprofessionnelle apparaît à la C.S.C. comme le lieu par excellence qui va permettre de "recoaler les travailleurs par des objectifs unificateurs" dont certains ne font pas partie des objectifs traditionnels du syndicalisme.

La C.S.C. a beaucoup d'exemples à proposer :

- celui d'une action déjà en cours, l'action prix-consommation : jusqu'ici, il s'est agi surtout de dépister et de dénoncer les irrégularités des pratiques commerciales des grandes surfaces ; ce sont surtout les militants des "groupes spécifiques" comme les sans-emploi et les pensionnés qui se sont engagés le plus dans l'action mais plusieurs centrales professionnelles se sont également impliquées dans cette campagne ;
- pressions syndicales sur la politique communale : à partir d'un programme syndical, dans le cadre de priorités définies, on procède à l'analyse du budget et on formule des propositions ;

- actions relatives aux problèmes locaux en matière de consommation, d'achats en commun, de sécurité routière, de transports en commun, de taxes communales, de logement, d'urbanisme, d'enseignement;
- actions (à spécifier) dans des domaines prioritaires tels que épargne; transport, énergie, radios locales, santé, urbanisme, enseignement.

L'action interprofessionnelle locale apparaît encore comme le lieu du développement de nouvelles relations au sein du mouvement, professionnelles celles-là, via des comités de militants d'un même zoning et des comités de militants de PME d'une même région et d'une même localité.

Participe aussi de l'idée de créer une solidarité au-delà des structures traditionnelles, une proposition comme celle de l'Assemblée wallonne des militants qui suggère de réunir des représentants d'entreprises de matériel roulant et des secteurs des communications avec des usagers pour combiner dans un plan d'ensemble des propositions de renouveau industriel du matériel roulant, un plan d'investissement en transport public et des exigences de qualité et de service.

S'exprime aussi la volonté "d'interprofessionnaliser l'action professionnelle". Là aussi, les exemples ne manquent pas, tels que :

- amélioration des transports publics en faveur de tous les travailleurs d'une même région au lieu d'une augmentation des salaires des travailleurs d'une entreprise (référence à l'action de l'entreprise italienne Ottana);
- élaboration d'un plan pour l'emploi en faveur d'une région avec la collaboration de militants d'entreprise et au chômage;
- action dans l'entreprise pharmaceutique Labaz (Bruxelles) : les travailleurs ont refusé le "chantage à l'emploi" de la direction qui souhaite leur soutien dans une politique de prix défavorable au consommateur;
- action dans l'entreprise Volkswagen (Bruxelles) : lutte contre les heures supplémentaires pour l'emploi.

Il s'agit chaque fois d'éviter que l'action professionnelle ne s'oriente exclusivement vers la défense des acquis des actifs en position de force et que l'action interprofessionnelle ne se cantonne dans différentes formes d'assistance aux travailleurs en situation d'exclusion.

Ouvrir les champs de la négociation collective.

Cet objectif (6) nous paraît également important dans la mesure où il témoigne d'une volonté :

- d'élargir les champs (vers l'investissement entre autres);
- de redéfinir les acteurs (le groupe économique face aux travailleurs de filiales diverses et de dépendances diverses par rapport au groupe).

En effet, les accords du futur devront être notamment :

- les accords étendus à des éléments traditionnellement non négociés;
 - les accords par filières économiques;
 - les accords par lieu de travail englobant tous les patronats impliqués;
 - les accords obligeant certains investissements considérés comme prioritaires;
 - les accords imposant des tarifs et des services dans le secteur public.
- C'est dans cet esprit, estime la C.S.C. wallonne, que l'on peut convenir d'un nouveau compromis liant réaménagements sociaux et fixation du capital.

Les autres réponses.

Si les nouvelles formes d'action et les structures internes ont été privilégiées récemment, la C.S.C. nationale et/ou wallonne a d'autres éléments de réponse à son analyse de la crise du syndicalisme :

1) la réduction de la durée du travail en faveur de l'emploi est la revendication prioritaire depuis de longues années; à la fois comme réponse à la montée du chômage et comme objectif unificateur du mouvement;

2) A son assemblée de 1984, la C.S.C. wallonne fixait comme premier objectif la fixation du capital pour éviter la désindustrialisation. Ainsi, elle prône la mise au point de plans industriels qui feront l'objet d'engagements contractuels entre le secteur privé et le secteur public dans le cadre d'une planification comportant les axes prioritaires des aides à apporter;

3) Le soutien apporté par la C.S.C. au travers de la Fondation Oleffe à l'économie alternative, expériences d'autoproduction et nouvelles coopératives, représente une tentative de réponse à la détérioration de l'emploi et une initiative sur le plan économique.

4) Les difficultés actuelles ont amené un processus de redéfinition des liens avec les partis politiques, surtout du côté wallon. Le parti social chrétien au pouvoir a cessé de répondre aux exigences de la C.S.C. wallonne. Les espoirs politiques de la C.S.C. d'apporter une réponse à la crise reposent maintenant sur Solidarité et Participation (SeP) qui présentera pour la première fois des candidats aux élections législatives du 13 octobre. Les propositions visent là à faire prévaloir "un prolongement politique capable d'assurer le relais, sur le terrain politique des aspirations et des préoccupations des travailleurs" (7).

3. A la F.G.T.B.

Contrairement à ce que l'on a vu ces derniers temps à la C.S.C., aucun débat sérieux n'a été engagé jusqu'ici sur ces questions à la F.G.T.B. Néanmoins, certains membres de la F.G.T.B. ou certaines centrales, lors de leurs congrès, principalement (8), ont abordé cette problématique sous différentes facettes.

La réflexion la plus approfondie a été menée lors d'un colloque de trois jours organisé en septembre 1982 par la Fondation André Renard - le centre d'étude de la Centrale des Métallurgistes - sur le thème "le syndicalisme en devenir" (9). Ses organisateurs voulaient réfléchir aux conditions de l'action syndicale dans les dix à vingt prochaines années et avaient invité une série de personnalités à venir apporter le fruit de leurs recherches quant aux perspectives d'évolution de la société, de l'économie, des nouvelles technologies et aussi des modes d'action de l'organisation syndicale. Mais ce colloque, très académique dans sa conception et dans son contenu, était peu susceptible à lui seul d'amorcer une réflexion approfondie au sein d'un mouvement qui n'a pas de tradition dans ce domaine.

Que relever dans les points de vue exprimés?

On notera tout d'abord que, dans le droit fil de la position de la F.G.T.B., ils se réfèrent explicitement ou implicitement à un contexte idéologique de lutte des classes.

C'est déjà le cas du type d'analyse économique néo-marxiste de la crise retenu, sinon par l'appareil, du moins par les services d'étude : la crise économique actuelle est perçue, à la suite de R.Boyer, comme une crise des régulations, la régulation étant "la conjonction des mécanismes concourant à la reproduction d'ensemble du système, compte tenu des structures économiques et des formes sociales" (10). A partir de ces prémisses, l'attitude adoptée par le mouvement syndical "interprète la crise comme le point culminant des contradictions du capitalisme et comme une césure dans son mode de développement. Elle fonde son action sur l'idée que la réponse à la crise est ouverte. Il revient alors au mouvement ouvrier, à la branche syndicale en particulier, de mobiliser les travailleurs sur une base d'action élargie. Elle délimite de nouveaux terrains revendicatifs. Elle vise à intégrer, à partir de la recherche de nouvelles pratiques, les nouvelles figures du travailleurs. Sous-jacente à cette dernière démarche, la volonté de recomposer la force collective du monde du travail et de transformer, d'une manière radicale, les bases du capitalisme" (11).

Nouvelles pratiques, nouveaux terrains revendicatifs : ce sont là des termes qui reviennent sous d'autres plumes (12) mais dont la portée exacte apparaît encore floue. Il s'agit surtout d'élargir le champ de l'intervention syndicale, par une autre négociation collective, à des problèmes de structure industrielle, de localisation de l'investissement, d'organisation du travail, notamment et de créer ainsi d'autres rapports avec le patronat.

Le contrôle de l'investissement apparaît ainsi comme une nécessité prioritaire (13). Mais quel contrôle?

Du côté wallon, un petit groupe s'est formé pour examiner les nouveaux terrains revendicatifs. De son côté, le Setca (14) a rejeté, lors de son congrès de décembre 1983, le point de vue défendu en la matière par certains de ses permanents les plus actifs, qui prônaient la "cogestion par objectifs". Pour ses tenants, cette dernière doit permettre de mieux gérer les entreprises par une participation des travailleurs sur le terrain des investissements, de la qualité des produits et de la politique commerciale. Elle est cogestion "par objectifs" dans la mesure où elle ne s'appliquerait pas sur n'importe

quel terrain, ni à n'importe quel moment, mais à ceux qui apparaissent les plus propices. Il faudrait à ce moment là que le personnel et les cadres compétents agissent pour améliorer la gestion de l'entreprise. Elle fût condamnée sans véritable débat semble-t-il, parce que trop proche de la cogestion, rejetée par la F.G.T.B. qui veut au contraire mettre en oeuvre le contrôle ouvrier. Mais quelles pratiques conformes à la doctrine du contrôle ouvrier pourrait efficacement viser l'objectif de "maîtrise de l'investissement"? Il n'y a pas encore de réponse claire à cette question.

La désillusion syndicale à l'encontre de l'investisseur capitaliste amène la F.G.T.B. wallonne (15), à mettre l'accent sur le rôle que pourraient jouer les pouvoirs publics. Le renforcement de la revendication régionale et de la demande fédéraliste vont dans ce sens. A la F.G.T.B., on n'attend plus tout de l'Etat néanmoins. Pour J.Yerna, par exemple, "...il convient d'être plus réservé par rapport à l'attitude qui fut trop souvent la nôtre dans le passé et qui consistait à renvoyer à l'Etat la fonction de régulation de l'économie... Notre erreur a été de croire que l'Etat était une institution neutre agissant dans l'intérêt général alors qu'avant tout, l'Etat est au service de la classe dominante qui a abandonné l'objectif du plein emploi. En outre, l'Etat belge est un régulateur impuissant (16)".

D'autres propositions visent à agir sur l'investissement et son rapport à l'emploi. Dans cette optique, à la F.G.T.B. aussi, certains évoquent le rôle, nécessairement limité, des coopératives et des entreprises alternatives.

Il y a d'autres points de convergence avec les objectifs fixés par la C.S.C. : la nécessité d'ouverture de l'action syndicale à des champs qui paraissent extérieures au champ d'action traditionnel du syndicat (environnement, luttes de quartier, radios libres, etc...) et la nécessité d'organiser les travailleurs sans emploi ou les pensionnés.

On relève aussi certaines actions menées à la F.G.T.B. qui ressemblent fort à celui que la C.S.C. prône pour "l'action interprofessionnelle locale". A la Centrale Générale des Services Publics (CGSP), par exemple, il existe un souci de combiner l'action des travailleurs du secteur et la défense des

usagers du services public : qu'on pense aux actions contre l'augmentation des prix dans les transports en commun ou à celles de la défense de l'école officielle dans l'enseignement (17). On s'y interroge aussi sur l'opportunité de la grève comme moyen d'action. Ou encore, en novembre dernier, le Setca de Liège lançait une opération "Mettez du rouge" dans laquelle elle avait l'intention de démontrer, sur base d'exemples précis et vérifiables, la responsabilité des groupes financiers et du gouvernement dans la détérioration de l'emploi.

Face à la politique défavorable aux syndicats menée par le Gouvernement Martens V, les ailes wallonne et bruxelloise ont tenté une démarche politique, tout comme la C.S.C. wallonne mais de façon fort différente. Elles ont conclu le 11 juin dernier un accord avec le parti socialiste sur un programme de gouvernement à la veille des élections législatives. L'un des objectifs principaux de l'organisation syndicale était l'obtention d'un relais politique propre susceptible de faire droit à la revendication syndicale de retour à la liberté de négocier des conventions collectives (18). Dans la mesure où les volets principaux de l'accord concernent la mise en place d'un fédéralisme radical et la définition d'une politique industrielle pour le Sud du pays, il exprime aussi la volonté de faire échec au déclin industriel wallon.

Enfin, ces différentes stratégies ne doivent pas obscurcir ce qui reste les deux objectifs prioritaires de la F.G.T.B. :

- rétablir le pouvoir d'achat
- réduire la durée du travail (avec maintien des salaires) en faveur de l'emploi.

Au-delà du bénéfice que peuvent retirer les travailleurs de la satisfaction de ces revendications, il s'agit de restaurer le rapport de force en maintenant le mur de défense traditionnel.

4. Conclusions

On constate ainsi de nombreux points de convergence entre les éléments de stratégie proposés à la C.S.C. et à la F.G.T.B. Plusieurs différences apparaissent néanmoins.

La première tient au substrat idéologique : à la F.G.T.B., on conteste globalement le système économique et il est exclu, en théorie tout au moins, de "gérer l'austérité à l'intérieur du salariat", par exemple en acceptant une réduction de la durée du travail accompagnée d'une réduction des salaires.

La deuxième tient à la démarche adoptée : systématique et se voulant décentralisée à la C.S.C., sporadique et non organisée à la F.G.T.B. Faut-il y voir l'indice d'une organisation plus archaïque, plus rigide et peu adoptable? Peut-être aussi le poids des centrales plus important y freine-t-il la possibilité d'une démarche qui est par essence interprofessionnelle.

On relève encore l'accent mis par la C.S.C. sur la problématique interne. Certains y voient un choix opéré en fonction des circonstances. Il se peut. Il n'en reste pas moins vrai que les problèmes de démocratie, de circulation de l'information, d'organisation des chômeurs, de structures se posent avec acuité, à la F.G.T.B. comme à la C.S.C. d'ailleurs.

Au-delà d'un examen des divergences dans la démarche des deux syndicats, récapitulons ici les différents types de réactions qu'ils proposent au vu de leurs difficultés actuelles. Outre la poursuite des actions traditionnelles, auxquelles nous assimilons la demande d'une réduction de la durée du travail, on peut les classer comme suit.

Les propositions concernant le fonctionnement interne de l'organisation.

Elles visent toutes à une plus grande mobilisation et implication des membres, tenant à renforcer la dimension "mouvement social" du syndicat.

Les propositions qui élargissent le champ de l'action syndicale.

Certaines veulent peser sur l'économie en franchissant les limites fixées habituellement à la négociation collectives et en modifiant les relations avec le patronat. D'autres, moins centrales d'ailleurs, confèrent au syndicat une fonction d'acteur économique à part entière lorsqu'il apparaît comme initiateur ou comme soutien lors de la création d'entreprises. Ces deux types de propositions veulent définir une action plus pertinente par rapport aux enjeux nés de la crise économique.

D'autres propositions encore visent à investir des domaines d'action sociale où le syndicat était peu - ou pas - présent jusqu'ici. Celles-ci peuvent être lues comme un aveu d'impuissance du syndicalisme dans sa fonction première, la défense des intérêts matériels de ses adhérents. Le syndicat tenterait ici une multiplication de ses buts, faute de pouvoir réaliser le premier. C'est là une réaction classique des organisations (19) qui veulent ainsi accroître l'adhésion de leurs membres ou encourager le recrutement de nouveaux membres. Mais, on l'a vu, il s'agit aussi de "recoaler" des clientèles de plus en plus divergentes dans leurs besoins et dans leurs désirs.

C'est ici, surtout, que l'on peut parler de nouvelles fonctions pour les syndicats.

Les propositions concernant de nouveaux modes d'action.

A côté des grèves et des manifestations, une panoplie de possibilités sont évoquées : actions de sensibilisation, campagnes de presse, actions du type "tarif zéro" et "prix-consommation". Dans nombre d'entre elles, apparaît de plus en plus clairement, la volonté d'associer des groupes sociaux qui n'agissent normalement pas ensemble.

Les propositions concernant le champ politique.

Peut-on parler ici de réelle nouveauté? Ce n'est pas sûr mais nous avons mis en évidence des indices très nets d'un repositionnement par rapport au champ politique.

Tout cela se trouve encore en pleine mouvance. Bon nombre de propositions, y compris parmi celles de la C.S.C., nécessitent un affinement. Les priorités n'ont pas été fixées. Et la mise en oeuvre ne représente pas la moindre des difficultés, ne serait-ce qu'en raison des besoins en formation et de la nécessité d'apprendre une nouvelle pratique collective. Enfin, et c'est la question cruciale, ces propositions contiennent-elles l'amorce des réponses les plus adéquates pour les années à venir?

NOTES

- (1) Publié dans Syndicaliste C.S.C., n°221, du 25 juin 1984.
Ce document comprend trois parties :
I. Introduction : le syndicalisme en questions et débats.
II. Le repli du mouvement syndical : analyse.
III. Priorités et stratégies : pour la renaissance du mouvement ouvrier.
- (2) Publiées dans Syndicaliste C.S.C., n°234, du 10 février 1985.
- (3) Publié dans Syndicaliste C.S.C., n°223 du 10 août 1984.
- (4) Il est structuré comme suit :
I. Le syndicalisme en temps de crise.
II. Un syndicalisme pour l'avenir.
 A. Un syndicalisme de base.
 B. Un syndicalisme démocratique.
 C. Un syndicalisme solidaire.
- (5) R.D'HONDT, Secrétaire général C.S.C. : "Quel syndicalisme à l'aube de l'an deux mille?", Wallonie 84, pp.394-395.
- (6) Il n'est repris que par la C.S.C. wallonne qui, curieusement, le caractérise principalement comme interne au mouvement ouvrier.
- (7) Dont la C.S.C. est l'une des composantes.
- (8) Les principaux exemples sont :
- Fédération des métallurgistes FGTB de Charleroi, 22 octobre 1983, à Charleroi.
- Setca, 13 au 15 décembre 1983, à Bruxelles.
- F.G.T.B. Liège-Huy-Waremme, 21 novembre 1984, à Liège.
- (9) Dont les actes ont été publiés dans le Bulletin de la Fondation André Renard, n°133, avril 1983 et n°136, octobre 1983.
- (10) G.GRINBERG, Directeur du Service d'études de l'Interrégionale wallonne de la F.G.T.B., "le syndicalisme face à la crise des régulations", Bulletin de la Fondation André Renard, n°133, avril 1983, pp.37-52.
- (11) Ibid., p.39.
- (12) Voir par exemple J.GAYETOT, "1996", Wallonie 84, pp.387-393.
- (13) Voir aussi J.YERNA, Secrétaire de la régionale FGTB Liège-Huy-Waremme, "Crise économique et stratégie syndicale", Bulletin de la Fondation André Renard, n°133, avril 1983, pp.69-75.



THE PRESENT STAGE OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN EUROPE : AN ERA OF CHANGE

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Maastricht

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CONTENT

INTRODUCTIONARY REMARKS

I. RELEVANT FACTORS

1. The Economic Factor
2. The Social Factor
3. Ideology
4. The Introduction of New Technologies

II. IMPACT ON ACTORS

1. Employers
2. Trade Unions
3. Governments

III. SOME CONSEQUENCES

1. Flexibility
2. Collective Bargaining
3. Managerial Participation
4. New Technologies : Privacy

IV. SOME QUESTIONS

CLOSING REMARKS

INTRODUCTIONARY REMARKS

No one will contest that we live, also in the industrial relations area, in an era of dramatic change; that a variety of social, economic and technological factors have brought our industrialised market economies in a period of great transition and transformation.

There may however be less consent on what kind of changes we are talking about, what their effect is and especially where they lead to. Surely, expanding on the immediate future of industrial relations, even if one limits the discussion to the year 1985 is as tricky and hazardous as speculating on the stockmarket 10 years ahead. Indeed, in reflecting on present and future events we draw upon past realities and experiences, as if the present and the future lie in the past. Anyone can see the drawbacks of such an exercise. But it is the best we can do. Whether our evaluation and guesses will be right will largely depend upon whether the elements we know - be it in an embrionic stage - and we are familiar with, will be viable, flexible and adaptive enough to survive and integrate in and within new factors, which are unforeseenable. In elaborating on the exercise one can fortunately recall that, unless a

revolution occurs, fundamental characteristic or features of a given society (e.g. overall attitudes) have a more or less permanent nature, although one has to keep in mind that even if certain institutions and attitudes may continue to exist, their role and depth may be affected, diminished, enhanced, changed ...

Evaluating the present and forecasting the future is even more difficult today than yesterday, because new elements, having tremendous impacts, are introduced in an ever growing rapid pace. New scientific discoveries are daily news. Success today, may mean bankruptcy tomorrow.

There is no doubt that one of the more important factors affecting the outcome and outlook of our societies at large and of our industrial relations systems in particular is the introduction of new technologies, which has made our industrialised world - at least for a number of products and services - look like a small marketplace, with almost full information and global dataflow; NT which provide the market continuously with new products or services, affect jobs, number, qualification, skills of employees, work organisation and the like.

NT certainly have an influence on other, sometimes directly related factors (e.g. economic, social ...), which we have to consider, in building a bridge between today and tomorrow, the past, the present and the future.

In doing so, we would first like to have a closer look at those different factors, including NT (I), then see what their influence is on the actors in our IR systems, namely employers and their associations, employees and their representatives as well as upon governments (II) in order to be able to draw some consequences, formulate some questions and to conclude with some tentative remarks on what the present contains and the immediate future may hold (III).

From the outset however it should be emphasised that IR are also as much the outcome of cultural patterns and historical traditions in a given country or region and that therefore systems may react differently on a given number of more or less universal economical, technological and other factors.

This does however not take away that the more general elements should be singled out, analysed and put in perspective.

I. RELEVANT FACTORS

Industrial relations are, like any societal subsystem, influenced by a number of factors, which are selfevidently interrelated. Again let me say that these factors operate, as F. Fürstenberg indicates, via a mediating set of institutional and organisational variables, like the structure of the labour market, the structure and orientation of industrial relations actors and the institutional framework of industrial relations including governmental regulations, underlying the uniqueness of each system ... This again does however not exclude that the speed with which those factors evolve and the nature of the change they undergo, are of the utmost importance for the functioning and evolution of a given IR system.

Let's retain some of the most important factors which are mentioned most, namely the economic, social, ideological and technological factors. Each of the terms used is self-evidently problematic in itself,

a.o. as far as content is concerned; they may be overlapping, mean different things to different people, be devilled by ideology ...

1. The Economic Factor

The economic situation, with regard to the industrial relations, shows three remarkable characteristics, which are not new, but are now more important than before for reason of momentum and for reason of magnitude.

There is first, at least for a growing number of services and products, an increasing international competition, a real international market, challenging the competitiveness of countries and enterprises, which seem de facto to squeeze the IR systems together from the point of view of cost.

IBM, to give one example is recently reported to continue to emphasise a costcutting drive throughout its operations. IBM has reduced its

worldwide expenses by 15 per cent in the third quarter of this year (1985) compared with the same period a year before.(1)

An Australian colleague told me recently that Australian firms have their accountancy done in Singapore by Singaporeans, trained in Australia.

At the same time many are personally confronted with the fact that high quality and low prices put non-competitive enterprises out of business.

There is at the same time a tremendous everongoing change in the range of services, products and technology available on the market, putting great strains on the adaptability of the enterprises to the changing demands of the markets.

RD becomes even more important in the battle of survival of the fittest.

Many nations and enterprises are at present in the red as we pass through a period of rather low growth.

(1) Financial Times, Nov. 7, 1985, p. 21.

We live, it seems, in a kind of economic war, between countries, regions, enterprises. Share of the markets, return on investment and for some enterprises economic survival are repeatedly put on the table of arguments.

Provided that a reasonable open international market is not swallowed up by protectionist forces, these characteristics are there to remain for a number of years.

2. The Social Factor

In quite a number of industrialised countries with market economies there is an evergrowing number of unemployed. The bulk of unemployed are older workers, unskilled workers (or workers whose skills have become obsolete), youngsters - a number of them with inadequate training - female workers ... There is a decreasing participation period for major groups of employees due to prolonged education and training periods, unemployment and provision for early pensions.

More than 30 % of the unemployed in the EEC are below 25 years of age; in the US almost 50 % of the young blacks are idle ... Quite a number of the new jobs are reported to be unskilled or lowskilled jobs, and may lead to a greater segmentation of the labour market.

It is my impression that this feature of massive unemployment, a.o. due to the (positive ?) structural adaption of enterprises as to the introduction of NT (robotisation and the like), will be with us for some years to come.

Another important factor seems to be the fact that our populations get older putting enormous strains on our social security systems.

One can also add a more positive note and report an increasing participation of women as a part of the labour force.

3. Ideology

The so-called battle for economic survival, the call for adaptability has induced management, which has in most European countries at least, - in the IR area - compared to the USA, rather been on the defensive for so

many years - to become more offensive, insist - sometimes without compromise - on managerial rights, on competitiveness, on flexibility, on managerial cooperation in the enterprises. Management tries to take back managerial prerogative, which has to a certain point been lost, as much as possible, filling in a sense the power gap left by the trade unions, which have in a number of countries lost some of their clout on the labour market and in the political arena.

There is no doubt that the employers' message is heard and gets a lot of attention, even support in wider circles of society. The call for free enterprise as the way to preserve and to expand the economic tissue of society as a precondition for social welfare is adhered to by quite a number of political decisionmakers. Meanwhile the union message of reducing working time and redistribution of available labour does get less attention. Demands for (more) job security, income security and sharing of power seem to have lost their status as selfevident and primary goals in society. The mood of the times, favouring free enterprise, managerial rights, flexibility, adaptability, deregulation, is here to stay for some time.

4. The Introduction of NT

The introduction of NT seems to us one of the most important factors, as it has amongst others an impact on certain groups of workers, which will drastically diminish in numbers or disappear altogether (e.g. the automobile worker, the steel worker; as well as some middle management functions ...); brings about the creation of new categories of workers (programmers, software specialists ...) with new more sophisticated skills.

Important is also the possible impact of NT on working time and the place of work: work "a la carte", where (also at the periphery) and when you want it; work any time ... diminishing the number of meetings of jet managers. (2)

NT may allow the organisation of work in such a way that the legal link of "subordination" between employer and employee disappears and a legal status of so-called self-employed, collaborators, consultants ... is

(2) Hijacking of aeroplanes may well contribute to a more rapid expansion of the use of international screen meetings.

established thereby saving costs for the employer, like social security contributions and avoid the application of labour law, collective agreements and the like.

NT may favour the establishment of smaller, more adaptive units, plants and or enterprises, possibly linked with information technology, but putting an end to huge plants, with thousands of employees, marking the end of the role of industrial dinosaurs.

Finally NT gives enterprises with a complex structure, according the philosophy of the group, the possibility to enhance centralised decisionmaking or to promote decentralised decisionmaking, namely by allowing topmanagement to have detailed and complete knowledge about the different units around the globe or by giving the local manager all the necessary information to make a group-integrated decision.

II. IMPACT ON ACTORS

Let's evaluate the impact of these evolving factors on the IR actors,

employers and their organisations, employees and trade unions, governments.

1. Employers

The new situation has brought employers and management to sort out clear objectives and consequent actions. Management in general wants no-nonsense business. Most managers insist on the possibilities to adapt freely to the changing conditions of the market, mainly on economic grounds. Labour laws, protection of employees, are by many looked upon as so many "social constraints" which are ultimately selfdefeating, since restraints make adaptation more difficult or impossible, the enterprise less competitive and thus kill jobs.

Since the enterprise has to be competitive, costs have to go down; personnel is a specific area, rewarding for cost cutting in labour intensive industries.

Management seems to be, at least in quite a number of important countries, less willing than before to recognise, inform, consult, and

bargain with representatives of employees, particularly in sensitive matters, like investment, NT and the like. Many employers are not enthusiastic about participative structures and see them as possible obstacles for sound management instead as a vehicle for adequate involvement of employees; they further and successfully reject international labour relations, by insisting that labour relations discussions should be kept at local level.

Many employers insist that decisions have to suit the aims of the operative unit; so that the decisions are best taken at that level, and should be flexible: thus flexible working hours, place of work, job content, wages, and, eventually an adaptable work force, with a permanent core of employees, which will know (Japanese style) how to perform different jobs (internal flexibility) and around that permanent core a group of less established workers (part-timers, temporary workers, sub-contracted workers, consultants, collaborators and the like) giving the enterprise external flexibility.

At the same time the enterprises seek to involve employees, through quality circles, or other devices, drawing on the employees' qualities

of initiative, creativity, sense of responsibility and the like in order to a.o. assure the production of quality products or the rendering of quality services. The sophistication of the human resources policies of (the larger) employers (US style) are of the utmost importance.

Employers ride high on the mood of the times.

2. Trade Unions

Trade unions have in a number of countries lost glamour, societal appeal, legitimation and consequently power, this for a number of reasons, which may vary, also as far as magnitude is concerned, from country to country.

Trade unions have lost members in certain countries, with exceptions however; especially the number of traditional industrial workers, once the power base of the unions, is gradually declining. The new worker, more technical, more individualistic, more service, is not yet greatly attracted to trade union membership, neither are part-timers, temporary workers, subcontracted, university graduates ...

Even in countries or sectors where union membership does not show a negative balance, their labour market strength has diminished due to the great(er) difficulty of mobilising members for industrial action, as workers may feel that they may either not win, risks their jobs or unnecessarily hurt the enterprise in its viability.

There is no doubt that trade-unions are in many countries on the defensive, being in an extremely difficult position of having to monitor structural adaptation, while preserving the interests of their members in particular and of those of the labour force at large in general.

The role of the trade unions is not only challenged by employers, but also by some other groups of workers, which may gradually become of real importance, like staff groups, or organisations of "cadres", which consider that the links they may have with other groups of workers are less important than their own specific interests.

There is no doubt that the trade unions still will play an important role; in some countries (e.g. Scandinavian), and in some sectors (e.g.

the public sector) more than in others, ... But the loss of influence is generally recognised.

3. Governments

Most of our democratic governments have to engage in different battles at the same time : against unemployment; for competitiveness of the enterprises; against (huge) deficits and equally for votes.

The battle against unemployment has been mainly fought by efforts to deregulate and render the enterprises more competitive, through wage moderation, tax cuts and the like. Many Governments seem to lean more towards the demands for free enterprise, trying to attract (foreign) investment, than furthering demands for jobsecurity, workers participation and the like, which are, to say the least, not pursued in the present time of crisis.

III. SOME CONSEQUENCES

The new environment has a number of consequences as far as the IR

realities are concerned, and do raise quite a number of very challenging questions.

Let's consider some of them.

1. Flexibility

First flexibility, especially in the area of working time. The fairly rigid notions of the working day, working week, often laid down by law, are fading away. Today the emphasis, notably in the FR Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and France has been on accompanying certain reductions of working time with an easing of legislative and collectively bargained constraints on the arrangements of working time. In Belgium an Economic Recovery Act of Jan. 1985 included amongst others arrangements for flexible annual hours of work, provided the arrangement is covered by a collective agreement. Other parts, relax obligations in the area of probationary employment, establishment of health and safety committees, ... In FR Germany the Employment Promotion Act became effective May 1st. In France, although no overall agreement could be reached, constraints on part-time working, fixed term contracts and

temporary lay offs were equally relaxed ... One may assume that, if the opposition wins the next french elections, the role of the labour inspector, in permitting economic dismissals, will be greatly affected.

The greatest flexibility, seems to me to lie in the fact, that labour laws may be less strictly applied than before, provided some employment is generated and unemployment statistics go down; the fact that some courts interpret the labour law provisions in a more relaxed way, that some governments do not (dare to) insist upon the follow up of e.g. Guidelines for MNE's, they themselves promulgated, in order not to create an impression of not being investmentfriendly.

The new mood is certainly also responsible for the fact that at EEC level since 1980 no new directives in the area of labour law and industrial relations were adopted, although quite a number of interesting proposals are now for many years on the table.

2. Collective bargaining

Collective bargaining is equally influenced in many ways. In a number

of countries, e.g. Belgium, France, Spain, Denmark, the autonomy of wage bargaining has come under great stress due to farreaching government intervention in the name of a.o. international competitiveness.

Even more important seems the move for greater decentralisation of bargaining, away from interindustry or industry bargaining. Many reasons may collaborate toward that end. First, the fact that in certain countries simply no agreement could be reached at those levels ... Moreover the newer enterprises are typically smaller and less stable than was the case with auto, steel, machinery, which have lost their traditional leadership on the labour markets. The attention for the workshop adds to these centrifugal tendencies. Next, competition obliges employers to see to it that wage costs are in line with their results on the marketplace. Rewarding individual jobperformance may be another element. The growing professionalisation of human resource managers leads them to seek greater autonomy in dealing with their own employees.(3) Another factor is the need for training programs, due to NT which will call for more input at local levels.

(3) E. KASSALOW, Future Industrial Relations, roneo, 1985.

Again, exceptions may illustrate the rule ... as e.g. the Australian example of a national pay and prices agreement, negotiated with the help of the government.

It is not sure that bargaining at lower levels does not amount, in a number of cases, to a form of information, consultation of employees and de facto unilateral managerial decisionmaking.

One has to add that some employers continue to negotiate concessions from their employees. Two tier arrangements (USA) are a clear illustration.

International labour relations, let alone international bargaining, still prominent on the agenda 10 years ago seem to be almost completely forgotten.

3. Managerial Participation

A trend toward more managerial participation of employees, in the sense of more cooperation can also be observed, as already indicated above.

4. New technologies

Let's dwell a moment on NT and on one of the aspects which is becoming alarming, namely individual privacy. The realisation of this danger is growing. A recent international opinion poll showed that 75 per cent of people interviewed in the UK had fear in that direction. The figure was 71 per cent in France, 56 per cent in Norway, 51 per cent in FR Germany, 50 per cent in Japan, and 37 per cent in Italy.

We need urgently rules to cover such aspects as the purpose of personal data collection, access to computerised information and restriction on its disclosure, the right of individuals to verify their files and request changes, as well as sanctions for unauthorised divulgations or misuse of computerised personal information.

A regional court in (Roermond) the Netherlands gave recently an important ruling on the right of employees to privacy at work. The case concerned the siting of video cameras in the production hall at KOMA, a company manufacturing cooling, heating and air conditioning systems. The company installed 18 video cameras on the factory floor, linked to

monitors in the production manager's office, to improve control over the production process. In his ruling the judge said that the installation of such a system could be justified only by very clear and very important reasons and ruled that the cameras should be removed immediately. (4)

IV. SOME QUESTIONS

Reflecting on the stage of the IR in Europe one has obviously more questions than answers. Some of the important questions which come to mind are the following :

- Will the trade-unions succeed in attracting what has been called "the new labour force". Trade unions, the ETUC rightly reports, will have to think on how to attract workers in sectors where they are weak, like private service sectors, but also in the new tech-industries, and one may add the small and medium sized enterprises. What kind of "collective" interest will they be able to really concentrate on and will they in a position to overcome the

(4) European Industrial Relations Review, Idem, p. 8.

steady growth of non union human resource - management systems, which have been so successful in the USA and start to be successful here?

- What will be the effect of the diversification between employees, the core of permanent workers and the growing group of peripheral workers on the trade union organisation ?
- Will the trade-unions succeed in really integrating and represent the interests of the unemployed ?

Along the same lines :

What about central versus specific groups of employees ? What about conflicts between professional and manual workers unions, public vs private sector workers (see Sweden etc. ...).

- There is an enormous task to see to it that the interests of all workers are safeguarded, that new work systems are compatible with workers' needs, health and safety, that displaced workers are properly retrained, that the costs and the benefits of NT are equally and fairly spread.

There is the formidable task to see to it flexibility does not lead to destruction of basic standards built up over the years.

- What will be the role of employers' associations, given the decentralisation of production, the international centralisation of finances and strategies, putting the local manager under considerable stress to control costs, with consequent decisions at that level, and the activities of human resource managers, working with the individual and work groups in order to obtain maximum commitment and cooperation ?

- At what level will there be trade union, employees' influence on management decisionmaking ? And what kind of influence ? How to harmonise levels, if notwithstanding a decentralised push, industry level bargaining will continue to exist ?

- What will be the role of the Government and the EEC, given the changing roles of trade unions and employers' associations ? More intervention, less ... in order to remain competitive and socially

and politically acceptable ... Will there be more or less tripartism ?

- Has the international level, as important as ever, if not even more, still a place in IR ? We are not only thinking in terms of MNE's and centralised decisionmaking, but also in terms of international competition and international standards.

CLOSING REMARKS

It may well be that the basic assumptions on which our IR systems have been driving are fading away : the gradual progress of the classic institutions of our IR systems, trade unions, employers' associations, expanding collective bargaining with the government more or less in the background. Dualisms, divergencies are developing, also within the same countries and sectors of industry. We seem to enter a more management inspired labour relations era, with weakened bargaining, less representation at lower levels, more unilateral standard setting, individualism and probably a more active government intervention in formulating the rules. All of this will obviously have its local flavour, following

traditions, existing institutions parties behaviour and strategies involved.

X X X

This state of the union is out of necessity incomplete and superficial, not only because of time limits, but also because of the complexity of the subject and its variances in different systems and subsystems.

X X X

Our IR are being radically transformed. We all are observers as well as actors. We all have a responsibility to see to it that the basic human rights of citizens, of employers and of employees for that matter, which constitute the immortal and glorious essence of our western pluralistic democracies, are fully preserved and not swallowed by the mood of the times.

Address by
Mr. Bertil Bolin
Deputy Director-General
International Labour Office



at the

Conference on "The Role of Trade Unions in the Coming Decade"
(Maastricht, 20-22 November 1985)

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I appear before you today, not so much as to represent the International Labour Office but rather to participate in your important discussions on a personal basis drawing, however, from my experience in the ILO over the last eighteen years.

We in the ILO have followed with great interest the work of the Centre since its establishment some six years ago. In fact as many of you may recall our Director-General, Mr. Francis Blanchard participated in your conference last year when you examined the question of the future of the welfare state.

I was particularly impressed not only by the subjects chosen as the themes of your conferences but equally with the subjects upon which you have published so many topical and important studies.

I have certainly welcomed this opportunity to share with you some of my thoughts on the subject under discussion: "The Role of Trade Unions in the Coming Decade", which is at present the object of innumerable discussions and numerous and widely divergent views.

In examining this subject, I assume that we will do so within the experience of the Industrialised Market Economy Countries rather than on a global basis which would encompass those countries within what we often refer to as the Third World, where the experiences, problems and prospects for the future are far different and, in some cases, perhaps more exciting. On this point, may I simply comment that it seems to have been the common practice to analyse such situations within IMEC countries themselves or in the context of the relationship between trade unions within the so-called North-South dialogue. If I may be so bold as to begin my contribution with a concrete proposal, I would like to suggest that we could perhaps all benefit from an examination of this question: from a purely internal perspective of the future role of trade unions within developing countries. However, in so doing, we must recognise that the possibilities and potentials vary widely between each continent; perhaps, regional fora would lead to a greater understanding.

By the same token while pursuing the theme of this Conference, even within the confines of the IMEC experience, we must be aware of the fact that conditions vary from country to country, and that what might appear as progressive in one has indeed been the common practice in others for many years. It is therefore with the strong recollection of the five blind men examining the elephant that I venture to proceed.

It would appear that one of the most popular subjects being pursued today by many pundits, whether journalists, jurists, academics or simply self-styled prophets of doom, is the face of "trade unions in crisis". I was therefore glad to note that you have put the question in its more proper perspective "trade unions and the crisis", for indeed it is not simply so much a question of a crisis for trade unions but as of the crisis of the industrialised and post-industrialised society and the role of trade unions with a society in crisis. Surely if an enterprise goes out of business it is the management and shareholders who equally feel that it is indeed a shared crisis. There are those also who seem to take great delight in reporting a decline in trade union membership and declaring that this is a positive indication of the loss of influence of workers and their organisations not only at the workplace but in society as a whole. I would beg to differ with this argument. It is true that you can do many interesting things with figures just as you can develop formulae to explain any particular point of view.

The fact of the matter is that over the past thirty or forty years we have experienced marked fluctuations in union membership - for instance, in France, you had in the 30s around 48 per cent, in Sweden around 40 per cent; at the end of the 50s, France was down to 18 and Sweden up to 80 per cent - and when membership increased there were forecasts of impending doom and panic in the fear that the unwashed working class was going to destroy the sacred cow, capitalism. On the other hand, when membership declined there was a great sigh of relief that now at last the threat was over.

Within the current context the situation varies widely from country to country, as I said before. On the one hand there are countries where the unions play a significant role in managing social security programmes, where the union membership has increased despite growing unemployment; there are other countries where the total membership has declined but where the organised trade union movement represents the largest percentage of the workforce in its history and of course, admittedly, there are countries where membership and the percentage of the organised workforce have both declined.

But what should we conclude from the mathematical exercise - what are we to see as we gaze into our crystal ball? I am reminded of the following quotation:

"The growth of unions means that the United States is gradually shifting from a capitalistic community to a labouristic one - that is, to a community in which employees rather than businessmen are the strongest single influence."

So predicted Sumner H. Slichter of Harvard University as late as 1946. So much for prognostication.

However, all those who choose to play the numbers game have lost sight of the fundamental consideration which is that trade unions are not composed of anonymous stockholders but of human beings who are trying collectively to create a more just society not only for themselves but for all who share the common problems of unemployment, insecurity, lack of housing and adequate health care as well as poverty in old age. I can't believe that it really matters all that much if a call for reason and social justice is voiced by only 14 million members of a national trade union centre as opposed to 15 million, surely the message is just as strong and clear in either case.

Unions have been with us for over 100 years and certainly in their earliest days their primary objective was to improve the standards of their own membership, or as one prominent leader of the movement in North America was quoted as saying "put it in the pay envelope and we will look after ourselves". However, it was not long before they realised that individual progress could not be made in isolation from the society in which they lived. It was within this context that the ILO was born. And over the years, within our tripartite structure, workers, employers and governments have come to realise that true and lasting progress could only be made in a society which recognised the important contribution that all three social partners can make towards social justice, industrial peace and economic prosperity.

And it is within this context of consultation and co-operation that we will find a way out of the present crisis. To those who see the present situation as an opportunity to weaken, if not destroy, trade unions, I can only say that they are pursuing a very short-sighted solution. They perceive unions as an obstacle to dealing with the nation's problems in their own selfish and unimpeded way. They will replace a responsible, well-organised voice of reason with the sort of senseless uncontrolled violence which has blighted so many of our major cities in recent years.

I might also add that within modern-day industrial relations, employer organisations were established in order to provide management of enterprises with a cohesive approach to the solution of labour-management problems. If trade unions are neutralised as a positive force within society then, by inference, there will no longer be a need for employers' organisations. The question then arises: who will deal with whom to solve the problems which will always exist between workers and those who employ them?

This is surely not the time to try to weaken those organisations which desperately seek an opportunity to join with other segments of society in seeking solutions to the problems shared by all of us. We in the ILO have come to appreciate and understand the true value of consultation. It has been through this process of bringing together the social partners that we have developed those standards that have played such an important part in the development of the social structures within the countries represented here today.

As we examine the future role of trade unions we must accept the fact that the situation has indeed been evolving over recent years and perhaps we have failed to recognise those changes that have already taken place in trade union attitudes and priorities. The approach to technological change is one interesting example. Traditionally unions have sought guarantees that none of their existing membership within an enterprise would be dismissed as the result of technological change. This guarantee was pursued through demands, in the first instance, for full consultation at every stage and for comprehensive training and retraining schemes.

More recently these measures have been seen to be not enough and unions have now become concerned with the over-all levels of employment. They have come to the conclusion that merely to protect themselves at the expense of the continuing erosion of job opportunities will, in the long term, pose an even greater threat to their future employment. The overriding need to create new jobs at the national level and to maintain employment opportunities at the enterprise level has become a major issue in many countries. One of the most widely publicised examples of this concern was the recent year-long strike by the National Union of Mineworkers in the United Kingdom. It is not my intention to pass judgment on the merits or lack thereof of this dispute but simply to point out that this strike was basically centred around one issue - the preservation of jobs, not only for miners presently employed but for those who would seek employment

in the future within the mining communities. Another example was the dispute within the metal trades in the Federal Republic of Germany. A reduction in working time has of course certain social benefits for those who achieve it. However, the issue in this case had a much wider and, if I may say so, an unselfish motivation, that was the realisation by the workers of the overriding need to create additional jobs within the community. A recent study has indicated that employment within this industry since the strike has increased by some 200,000. Depending upon to whom you speak you will hear a variety of reasons for this increase in job opportunities - but can anyone really doubt the significance of the contribution made by the workers to the achievement of this goal.

Indeed the question of employment has been a major preoccupation for unions in recent years and I am sure that will continue to be their principal concern for some time to come.

The growing problems of unemployment are of course well known to the ILO. We have for many years tried to focus more and more attention on this monumental problem. We organised the World Employment Conference in 1976 and additionally have adopted a Convention, a Recommendation and a supplementary Recommendation, as well as numerous resolutions, dealing with this subject; and in each case, as we have considered the problem, our tripartite constituents agreed that in principle every person had a basic right to freely chosen productive employment.

Is it any wonder that workers, having participated in such discussions, along with representatives of governments and employers from their own country, find themselves frustrated when they discover that such policies adopted in Geneva seem to be merely posturing at international gatherings and ignored at home?

Should we be surprised when people behave in a desperate fashion in protest at the social and economic conditions under which they are forced to live? Faced with the need to create 300 million new jobs between now and the year 2000, shall we continue to ignore the problem in the hope that it will go away - will we continue to deny and frustrate the organisations of trade unions - those very organisations with which we must co-operate and develop new and imaginative programmes in search of a solution?

The answer I should hope would be an emphatic NO. Whether we live in an industrialised country with its collection of sophisticated social insurance and welfare programmes, most of which are, I might add, in difficulty, or we find ourselves in a developing country where every worker is required to look after himself, there is no hope of solving the problems confronting that society without the wholehearted co-operation and understanding of the workforce. And how can we expect to obtain the co-operation and seek the support of a workforce that has been denied the basic right of freedom of association? I would suggest, as a starting point, that legislation and practice should be such as to encourage the greatest possible development of a strong and independent trade union movement which would be welcomed by governments and

employers as a respected and responsible partner in the development of the social and economic structure of the country.

It seems ironic to me that when a union reacts in a positive way to adjust wages and conditions in the light of current economic conditions, it is mooted in the press as a major defeat for the union and consequentially undisputed proof of their diminishing influence, rather than being perceived for what it really is - a sacrifice of personal privilege in the interest of the enterprise in which they are employed and more often than not in the interest of the community in which they live. In actual fact in almost all such cases the original concessions have been recovered while the achievement by the union of having secured a significant role in the decision-making process within the enterprise has become a permanent fixture. In addition in many cases the timely contribution by the workers to the continued existence of the enterprise has won them a share in the future prosperity of the company. It is indeed unfortunate that some employers have discovered the value of consultation and the importance of the involvement of their workers in the decision-making process somewhat late.

Unlike many of today's critics, I see the current difficulties not as a period where the social partners are being driven further apart but rather as a time when there is a realisation of the necessity to come together in an atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation of each other's problems, which are indeed common problems.

While recognising that in some countries the traditional attitudes of class confrontation have given way to a realisation that we sink or swim together, so to speak, there can be no doubt that trade unions have become much more preoccupied with their potential role in this changing society. And there is good reason for this. While I have disagreed in my opening remarks with the fashionable voices of doom concerning the labour movement there is little doubt that changes in the labour market in industrialised market economies coupled with conservative political trends and vigorous attacks on trade unions present a number of choices and challenges to trade unions in "the coming decade".

Turning first to the labour market there has been significant shift from the so-called smokestack (or heavy) industries to the service sector and lighter high technology industries, with some shifts from bigger to smaller plants. The concomitant changes in the workforce have been obvious for some time - a relative decrease in industrial labour, predominantly male and bulwark of the labour movement and an increase in service workers, predominantly female and younger workers, as well as university educated entrants to the market. Naturally heavy industry and its unionised workers are not going to disappear, but their numbers have dwindled with the economic crisis and is one of the reasons that there has been a drop in union membership in some countries. The challenge for unions in these countries is to organise the new entrants to the labour market - women, young workers, the highly educated.

I do not think this is an impossible dream. Historically, there have been tremendous changes in the skill or industrial base of unions. One need only recall the names of some of the earlier unions in say Britain (Society of Shuttlemakers or Sheffield Wool Shearers Workers' Union) or the United States (Horse Collar Makers National Association and the Umbrella and Walking Stick Makers) to realise how unions have changed. Few predicted that heavy industry (steel, electrical, auto and rubber industries) would be organised in the United States in the late thirties. Few predicted the rapid growth of government employee unions in the past twenty years.

Organising is thus becoming a top priority. At the same time unions (and particularly those whose demise has been most widely touted in the press) must counter the recent offensives, either by certain governments or by certain management circles, to weaken the labour movement. And in its search for new approaches and initiatives, trade unions must also cope with new forms of work organisation and adequate means of bargaining in small-scale enterprises.

Many unions have embarked upon a serious process of self-examination. While the analyses and responses will vary from union to union or from country to country, some common ingredients reappear in many instances.

In most countries the record clearly indicates that while the focus of attention has been on the role of unions in their more traditional labour-management relationship (which from time to time resulted in confrontation), little if any exposure has been given to the substantial contribution that they have made to the general improvement of conditions for those outside the movement. Therefore there is a perceived need to devote more time and resources to explaining their greater role in society.

Unions in many countries will give more serious thought to their own internal organisation. The realisation that the proliferation of unions is not in the best interest of the membership has been obvious for years. However, in the light of continuing structural change, the development of new technologies and the switch from manufacturing to service industries, the need for mergers will become more apparent. In addition unions will be faced with the need to adapt their traditional collective bargaining strategies to meet the requirements of an evolving industrial relations environment.

Since the primary source of new jobs in most countries has been and will probably continue to be in the small and medium-sized enterprises, often in the service and high technology industries, new initiatives will be undertaken to bring those workers into the organised workforce. This process will in many countries be frustrated by antiquated legislation which impedes the right to organise in such establishments. Trade unions,

with considerable justification, feel that legislation dealing with the right to organise should be designed to promote the organisation of workers rather than hinder their opportunity to do so, which seems to be the case in some countries. In this regard we in the ILO will continue our efforts to promote the widest possible application of that basic right.

Legislation aside, new approaches will have to be found to attract a labour force that is highly mobile, highly educated and often white collar workers. Some unions, like the Communication Workers of America, have sponsored a number of seminars between union officials and organisers and industrial psychologists to understand what motivates the new generation of white collar workers. In addition to equitable wages, concerns of young educated workers focus on career advancement and upward mobility, flexible schedules, quality of life on the job, developing new skills and broad benefit coverage. Indeed some unions now believe that since the new generation of white collar workers will have a number of different jobs, services and benefits negotiated or provided for by the union will have to take this into account. Two examples of this are unions providing training in new skills (on such professional issues for teachers or nurses on personnel staffing, patient care or quality control) and unions providing portable pension plans that workers can "take" from job to job.

Similarly as different industries automate and introduce "high-tech" jobs, unions are increasingly negotiating funds for retraining (a landmark agreement reached recently in the United States between AT+T and the CWA for \$36 million) and are increasingly negotiating the modalities of introducing new technology, bearing in mind the need to protect jobs and to expand, rather than limit, skills.

Unions have also become more responsive to the demands of women workers. Protection of part-time workers, flexible schedules, day care and equal pay for comparable work have found their way to the bargaining table. More needs to be done and most unions recognise that the union structure itself has to be more representative of women.

As democratic institutions, trade unions will adapt their goals and strategies to reflect the interests of their constituents: the labour movement is broad enough to encompass all categories of workers; it is only wishful thinking on the part of some that would have us believe that there is no place in the labour movement for the highly educated, highly mobile workers in "high-tech" jobs. After all unions for professors, airline pilots, supervisors and technicians, journalists, and air traffic controllers have existed for some time. And perhaps more significant is that their unions have been key interlocuteurs in recent disputes thus disproving notions that unions are outdated in today's labour-management relations. In terms of today's labour market, unions may well be at a crossroads and in the throes of an adjustment, but that is a far cry from their demise.

Realising that the long-term guarantee of employment and improved conditions of work depend to a great extent on the health of the enterprises, unions will be revising their traditional role of "we versus them" and approach the future with a view to solving the problems facing "us". Many examples of this have been publicised recently whether it be changes in work rules and job classifications or wage concessions in exchange for job security, profit-sharing stock plans, access to the financial books or seats on the boards of directors. The jury is still out, so to speak, on the long-term impact of these innovative and imaginative forms of labour-management relations. One concern, among young workers in particular, is the apparent willingness of unions to bargain away wage levels of future workers in exchange for protection of existing union members - the so-called two-tier wage system. Despite these reservations the real point I would like to make is that there is an evolution in the making. But this evolution of attitude cannot and will not take place in an anti-union environment. Much will depend on the realisation by employers that the continued prosperity of an enterprise will increasingly depend on the active support and co-operation of its workforce; and may I respectfully suggest that such co-operation and support will only be forthcoming in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, where the workers are guaranteed the greatest possible degree of consultation and involvement in the decision-making process.

In a hostile environment - one which regrettably in certain countries has seen the growth of union busting consultancy firms, disrespect for labour laws and a frontal public relations attack on unions - unions have responded with new forms of campaigns to gain union recognition and collective agreements. Unions have placed new emphasis on public relations and the media; they have hired polling firms and consultants; they have developed data networks; and they have launched "corporate campaigns". These campaigns are aimed at dividing a company from its financiers and outside directors. An in-depth financial analysis of a company will enable a union to develop strategies that will pressure the financial sources of a company to put pressure in turn on the company itself. In effect it takes the battle out of the back yard of unions (e.g. in terms of strikes and pickets) and puts it in the front yard of companies.

Along these same lines unions are wielding their financial clout (through pension and other benefit funds) to influence company management, mergers or hostile take-overs. Indeed there is a whole new arena of action for unions in the "corporate world" and it would behove all of the social partners to realise that dialogue and consultation are going to be less costly and more beneficial to all than open warfare.

On the international scene, unions will continue to expand their activities and seek new means of exerting influence in those fora where they have previously been ignored.

Within the international trade union movement itself we can look forward to an expansion of activities designed to promote a greater understanding of the major issues such as new technologies, the transfer of technology, occupational health and safety, particularly within the context of the shared responsibility for the protection of workers between parent companies and their subsidiary operations as well as the evolution of new methods of organising work. This new awareness has already manifested itself through the expansion of specific industrial councils within international trade secretariats. We shall also no doubt witness a growth in the number of so-called "company councils" which bring together representatives of the workers employed by the same company from all those countries in which they operate in order to discuss problems of mutual concern and to seek common solutions.

Trade unions, both in their own right and through their international organisations, will seek to establish formal links with those United Nations organisations dealing with issues which have an important impact on their members. I am thinking particularly of organisations such as UNIDO, UNCTAD, FAO, UNDP and GATT. Admittedly in two of these organisations, UNIDO and FAO, there have been opportunities provided for informal consultations with representatives of international trade union organisations. These consultations have been considered as being worth-while. However they do not provide the trade unions with adequate access to the forum within which the major decisions are made. Therefore there will be increasing pressure to include representatives of

the trade unions on the national delegations participating in the work of these organisations. We in the ILO have benefitted greatly in our work from the involvement of our social partners and consequently I would not mind recommending to all governments that they give serious consideration to including in their delegations, representatives of those who are most likely to be affected by the decisions that they will take.

In yet another context workers in all parts of the world have come to realise how interdependent they have become. Within the so-called North-South dialogue workers will have to play a significant role in the pursuit of solutions that will improve employment possibilities in the North while at the same time providing increased opportunities for their colleagues in the South.

This issue could of course be the subject of a fascinating separate debate in itself, as indeed it has been on a number of occasions in the past, including within the ILO. The ILO tripartite symposium in 1980 and our recent Tripartite Symposium on Employment, Trade, Adjustment and North-South Co-operation held from 1 to 4 October this year provided an opportunity to examine the major problems facing industrialised and developing countries. What became immediately apparent in both of these meetings was the feeling of utter frustration on the part of the workers over their inability to make any significant contribution to the decisions which often affect them in a most dramatic way. I merely wish to echo the sentiments of a government representative at our recent meeting when he stated that "the best

precondition for growth in a changing world was tripartite consensus".

Mr. Chairman, none of us can really know what the future holds for trade unions, or for any other segment of society for that matter. But of one thing I am sure, unions will continue to be the voice of the non-rich, the young worker unable to find a job, the unemployed, the destitute and the aged. If that well reasoned voice is destroyed you may be sure that it will be replaced by other forces, forces which may bring chaos and destruction to our way of life, forces which are not committed to a free and democratic society and forces with which you will be unable to deal because they lack responsible leadership.

If I have any message to leave with you today it is that the economic and social problems facing most countries can only be solved through co-operation, dialogue, and a willingness to share in the major decisions which must be taken. Any such process can only succeed in a society of equality of influence; and the best assurance of success is the existence of a strong and democratic trade union movement. It is up to all of us to recognise that need and to vigorously promote its growth and influence. Certainly we at the ILO shall continue to do so.

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A european conference on

the role of trade unions in the coming decade

Maastricht, november 20-21-22, 1985

STRUCTURAL CHANGES AND THE NEW ROLE OF
TRADE UNIONS

Mr. Y. Brenner



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work and society
Maastricht**



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Paper presented at the conference on the role
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Old-style capitalism was internally coherent. Its consistency rested upon a self-supporting mechanism, a mechanism sustained by 'the love of gain' and the 'fear of starvation' - i.e. by a two-pronged mechanism of competition. Competition between entrepreneurs for their respective shares of the market, and competition between employers and workers for their share in the fruits of production. Fearful of being driven out of business by more efficient competitors, entrepreneurs were inexorably driven to search for and introduce technological and organisational improvements; and facing an increasingly well-organised and powerful labour force they were pressed to introduce improvements which could help them raise output per worker sufficiently to compensate for rising wages and to maintain a level of profit necessary to finance innovations. This dual mechanism was not only the dynamic but also the progressive element in old-style capitalism - the element which increased mankind's ascendancy over nature and gave it the power to produce the material affluence which it could, and in a considerable measure still does enjoy.

(*) I am grateful to Wheatsheaf Books Ltd. for permitting me to reproduce in this paper some of the arguments elaborated by me in Capitalism, Competition and Economic Crisis. Brighton & Washington, 1984.

In new-style capitalism, the operation of this mechanism has become erratic. As a result the promise of progress inherent in traditional capitalism is in jeopardy, in spite of the system's technological capability to provide higher living standards and greater social security than ever before. The threat comes from several sources: the growing power of oligopolies to reduce price competition; the decline of confidence and the spreading of corruption; and from the frustrations arising out of the concurrence of conflicting ethical and social paradigms.

Old-style capitalism's rational self-interest assured a degree of efficiency, confidence and honesty. In new-style capitalism this link is no longer as strong as it used to be. The increasing separation of control from the ownership of capital provides much greater opportunities for fraud and corruption, which influence the cultural climate, diminish efficiency and introduce socially risky and economically debilitating patterns of behaviour.

Economic progress is functionally related to the accumulation of real capital and technological innovation. Given a level of technology savings determine the upper limit of potential economic growth. The actual rate of growth is determined by the manner in which the savings are employed. In a free enterprise economy this depends on the expectation of profit. A unique feature of the era of classical capitalism was that it combined a climate of confidence in property rights with the mechanism of competition in a way that made the transformation of savings into productive investment almost unavoidable. Capitalists felt that their wealth was reasonably well protected both by and against the state. At the same time they also felt that their wealth was constantly threatened by business competitors. To protect his market share each capitalist was forced to innovate, accumulate and to invest. But this implied that he was also forced to keep wages as low as was practically

possible. Every successful effort of labour to obtain a greater share of the fruits of production reinforced the capitalist's need to innovate, particularly in labour-saving machinery, in order to compensate for his loss of profit. Paradoxically, however, it was precisely labour's successful struggle to obtain a greater share which kept the system going once exports no longer sufficed to clear the market of the growing volume of output. For it was labour's rising effective demand which kept the expansion of investment and production profitable.

Macroeconomic theory acknowledges the existence of this intricate relationship between investment, national income, expenditure on consumer goods and services, and savings. It indicates the critical values which each of these variables must obtain to sustain the system's stability and growth. It also recognises that a certain pattern of income distribution would be necessary to maintain the fine balance between investment and consumption. And it even suggests that in spite of the system's inherent tendency to fluctuate it can be kept on a fairly stable path by judicious fiscal or monetary management, or by both. What conventional macroeconomic theory ignores is that these remedies can correct only a certain type of fluctuation and that there may be other non-cyclical causes for depressions.

When competition transmits the benefits of innovation to consumers in the form of price reductions, new investment brings with it greater efficiency and employment and so engenders more investment. A rise in productivity is, however, not always the result of an increase in consumer demand. Labour cost-reducing innovations are attractive to investors even when markets are stagnating. They can increase profit margins by cost reductions. It follows that a rise in productivity without lively price competition may cause unemployment to become chronic. This is so because if prices do not fall, and therefore consumers' real incomes do not rise, they can neither buy more of the innovating firms' produce nor more of any other

goods. There is a contradiction here between the advantages for a firm resulting from lower labour costs and the disadvantages experienced by the economy as a whole from the deficiency in effective demand. Conventional economic theory simply ignores this contradiction by invoking Say's law in one form or another. But the fact remains that a firm cannot avoid trying to reduce costs in the face of diminishing profits, and it cannot invest in expansion without the prospect of demand and profit. So while effective demand is stagnating or declining firms are compelled to reduce costs by innovation or by wage reductions. Innovation will transform market competition into a scramble for funds and in the process will raise the rate of interest and inflation; and wage reductions will further reduce consumer demand and increase unemployment. The firms unable to raise funds to innovate and cut their labour costs will be forced into liquidation and the oligopolistic tendencies will increase. There is no self-correcting mechanism like the one which turns the tide of cyclical unemployment to revive employment in this kind of structural process. The rising cost of real capital keeps rates of interest and prices high and wages low. Government intervention to restrain inflation by a short money supply and by wage control under such conditions can only make things worse.

New investment is either induced by an experienced or expected rise in demand or by the wish to reduce production costs by innovation. In both events new investment will have a positive effect on aggregate income and employment as long as competition is lively. But when competition fails, when prices are prevented from falling in line with cost reductions, only the second type of incentive for investment will be present, for with the progress of technology less and less labour is required to produce a given volume of output, and so investment will raise the rate at which output is increasing in excess of the rate at which the demand for labour is growing.

Consequently, with few exceptions, only cost-reducing investments can be expected to be profitable - unless the wages of those who remain employed and transfer incomes rise sufficiently to offset the loss in purchasing power of those who become redundant as a result of technological innovation. If competition fails to bring down prices sufficiently to adjust the effective demand to the growing volume of supply, producers have little alternative but to reduce production targets in line with demand. Their profits will depend on the difference between the ruling market price and the measure by which they can cut production costs by innovation (i.e. by how much they can reduce their labour force).

As a result of this, investment in cost-reducing equipment will continue and employment in the production of cost-reducing equipment will remain stable or even rise slightly, while unemployment in all other sectors of the economy will progressively increase and become chronic. As only the financially most powerful business can invest in this manner monopolistic tendencies will accelerate in the affected sectors of the economy and influence the system as a whole. In the long run the survival of the free enterprise economy requires a specific distribution of the national product between investment and consumer demand (i.e. between savings and consumers' disposable income). It requires a distribution by which consumers' purchasing power is continually adjusting in line with the progress of technological innovation (i.e. in line with the long-term changes in the aggregate input-output ratio).

Until the late 1960s or early 1970s this equilibrium was maintained partly by price competition and partly by labour's success in raising wages more or less in line with productivity. But when these inherent mechanisms of traditional capitalism began to falter, when the share of the national product which went to capital became disproportionately larger than the share which went to labour, and consequently supply exceeded demand, production targets were scaled down, investment was mainly directed towards cost reduction, and unemployment increased.

Before long the fall in demand for labour became self-sustained and in several countries the cost of social security rose sharply. The urge to reduce this, made the disequilibrating distribution of the national product worse. In addition it also offended the notions of equity which had developed since the war and together with the increasing unemployment abated the consensus upon which the free enterprise system rested.

In spite of this, few governments attempted to restore the income distribution necessary for economic growth with full employment. Their economic advisers profess that a fall in interest rates, which is achieved by more saving and even less consumption, will usher in recovery - as indeed it often did in the course of the familiar trade cycle. They do not remember that low interest rates did not restore employment and prosperity in the 1930s, and ignore the difference between cyclical and structural economic crises.

In the past, a rise in productivity in one sector of the economy, say in agriculture, led to a fall in the price of that sector's output, and consequently led to a rise in consumers' real incomes and hence to a greater demand for output of other sectors (e.g. industrial products). With the growth of oligopolies increasing productivity is no longer followed by a commensurate fall in prices. The wish to maintain profit margins restrains expansion, prices do not fall sufficiently to have a real effect on consumers' incomes, and investment concentrates on labour-saving equipment. As a result interest rates remain high in spite of large-scale unemployment and depression.

Competition between firms for their relative market share and competition between capital and labour for their relative shares in the fruits of production had provided a reasonably well-functioning mechanism for the mutual adjustment of income, employment, investment and technological innovation along a long-term path of economic growth. Short-term oscillations were tempered after the war by fiscal and monetary measures and the sharpest edges of the capitalist system were mitigated by

progressive taxation and social security payments. The recent failure of these mechanisms to sustain the economic system on an upward course is the result of the rising power of oligopoly and the declining power of organised labour. The former prevents prices from adjusting demand to supply; the latter prevents a rise in real incomes which would induce competition by 'new entries' or the threat of 'new entries' where oligopolies tend to restrain production and output. The possibility of absorbing the redundant industrial labour force in the service sector, as industry absorbed redundant agricultural labour in the past, is ignored by governments, because, at least initially, it would imply a further extension of employment in the collective sector, (i.e. it would increase governments' share in national income, which since the 1970s is something governments have been reluctant to allow).

The failure of governments to maintain full employment by expanding the collective service sector cannot be attributed to ignorance alone. There are several more substantial reasons, for example, the development of industrial feudalism, the demise of democracy (at least of meaningful democracy), the lingering belief that services are not 'productive', and that all attainment, including social security and position, ought to be the product of individual effort. In fact the proliferation of services is inherent in the progress of technology, and a nation's economic product is the sum of all incomes in a determined period from work regardless of their source of origin. Economic growth therefore reflects both increases in productivity and the volume of employment. There can be technological advancement without economic growth when the volume of employment is diminishing. However, if economic growth is a prerequisite for full employment it makes no difference if it is induced by industry or education. This is particularly true when no real shortage of tangible goods can be expected.

From one point of view the refusal to expand services to restore full employment is not as irrational as it may seem. Unemployment discourages wage claims and reintroduces the fear which, in the past, had been the main source of good work discipline

Cuts in social security payments add to this effect. But this is a matter of ideological not economic rationality. Economically it can only be argued that (a) if extra work is created by monetary expansion it may accelerate inflation; (b) if it is created by greater public borrowing it will reduce the fund of savings, causing a further rise in interest rates, and reducing private investment; (c) if it is created by borrowing from abroad it may upset the balance of payments and put a burden on future generations. In fact none of this need happen if the expansion of employment is financed judiciously. Government funds can be allocated at low interest rates to support small businesses or enterprises which are likely to encourage competition and increase employment. In time this will reduce social security expenditure and raise tax revenues. It will undermine the price-fixing powers of oligopolies and increase real incomes and investment in product innovation. The reason why governments fail to implement such a policy is mainly political and not economic. To understand this successful opposition to expansionary policies it is essential to acknowledge that the traditional struggle between employers and employees has been replaced by new contradictory interests, namely between people who may and people who may not one day depend upon the resources of the welfare state. These contradictions have to date not found adequate political expression.

Modern economic theory assumes the existence of an inherent mechanism in the free enterprise system which draws it towards equilibrium. It assumes that any disturbance in one or more of the system's interrelated variables will give rise to compensatory equilibrating changes in some or all its other variables. There is a good deal of disagreement among economists about the causes of disequilibrating disturbances, and even more disagreement about the desirability of stimulating or restraining them. These differences of opinion produced a variety of theories concerning the role of the state and trade unions

with regard to the economy. They range from almost total rejection of state interference - laissez faire - to guarded approval, which is divided between preference for intervention from the supply or from the demand side of the system. What is usually ignored in these controversies are the fundamental changes which have taken place in society and which may have altered the essential premises upon which all these theories were and continue to be based.

In order to understand this failing or imperfection it is necessary to appreciate the role of theoretical paradigms in the evolution of a science and of a society. The substitution of the theoretical dominance of mercantilism by classical economics cannot be regarded as merely the result of a continual process of elimination of errors; neither can Keynesian economics and the neoclassical compromise be regarded as such; nor the struggle between supply-side and demand-side interventionists. It is also not a matter of correct or faulty analyses. Theoretical paradigms always reflect historical situations - the dynamic character of societies - and are constantly changing. An analysis may therefore be correct at one time and totally untenable at another.

Theoretical paradigms are sustained by people who have good reasons for supporting them. The paradigm which maintains that economics is a value-free science is therefore not only upholding a proposition which is wrong, but it also reflects the presence of an economic oligarchy which tends to benefit from this belief. Within this paradigm the social significance of Keynes is lost and Keynesian macroeconomics is 'internalised' by the system and reduced to insignificance.

One change which economists who are attuned to the ruling paradigm fail to acknowledge is the growing power of multinational corporations. Whatever other effects they may have on the economy, they certainly break the direct interdependence of domestic savings and investment, which is one of the fundamental

assumptions of the ruling view. The power of the multinationals to invest when and where it suits them destroys the mechanism which is believed to steer the economic system towards a full-employment equilibrium. This is so unless it can be accepted that wages in the industrial countries should be allowed to fall to the level of wages in, say, Taiwan. In addition to this the power of the multinationals undermines the regulating role of prices. They have the power to determine the 'floor' below which prices are not allowed to fall. They avoid price competition by share-swapping and other types of collusion with potential competitors; and their top functionaries cultivate personal links with each other and with top government officials which are detrimental to the proper functioning of the market system. But this presents them with a dilemma, because the survival of each individually depends upon a course of action which is injurious to the system as a whole and therefore in the long run also to themselves. Each is forced to keep prices high and reduce its labour force, while all together would be better served if prices were allowed to fall and full employment sustained.

The dilemma is often misconceived in terms of a threat originating from technological progress. Historically, the progress of technology reflects mankind's ingenuity in overcoming the material constraints on its way to freedom from want and arduous labour. The development of the natural sciences turned spontaneous ingenuity into systematic effort: technical problems related to the creation of material affluence received systematic analysis and solutions. In contrast to this social problems, like the persistence of poverty and unemployment, have not received a similarly systematic treatment. The possibility that poverty and unemployment may be the product of outdated social institutions and conceptions which do not fit the new material conditions is rarely considered by economists. The most essential problem is therefore neglected, namely the contradiction between society's objective freedom to determine how the extra labour time gained

by the progress of technology can best be used to everyone's advantage, and the apparent compulsion of individuals to accept a particular choice usually determined by no more than cultural inertia. If economics continues to ignore this contradiction and fails to adapt its theoretical framework accordingly the fears inspired by the new technologies may very well be justified. Society may slip back into preindustrial conditions or move into an era of abject industrial feudalism. In either event the positive aspirations of the capitalist era (such as the concern for individual freedom and human rights) will go by the board. There is no macroeconomic automatic mechanism left, if ever there was one, to affect the income distribution which would be necessary to sustain economic growth and full employment. Without political intervention the new Captains of Industry, are doomed to follow their prescribed path. They will cause the gulf to widen between the rich and the poor and between the employed and the unemployed, and lead society towards a degree of polarisation which is no longer consistent with the consensus required for the survival of democracy. A redistribution of the national income is therefore not merely a matter of compassion and humanity, but one of general self-interest - it is a legitimate and necessary concern of unions and governments.

Most members of the economics establishment simply ignore the point that present unemployment has, simultaneously, two unrelated causes. One is the downswing of the familiar trade cycle; and the other structural changes in both the economy and the society. The refusal to acknowledge the non-cyclical cause leads them to the false conclusion that a return to the pre-war market structure and the abolition of the welfare state are the solution. When structural changes are admitted at all, the admission is confined to the transfer of work to low wage countries in the Third World, and the displacement of human labour by robots and the new communications technology. Social changes are simply considered economically irrelevant. Regarding the transfer of work, the solution is presented in terms of the theory of the international division of labour, and the displacement of labour by robots etc. in terms of a normal case of frictional

unemployment. Neither of these solutions has substance in reality. The structural unemployment which exists cannot be removed by traditional means nor by the conventional instruments of Keynesian economics. Structural unemployment is not purely an economic problem. It is also the product of social changes and of changes in the mentality which accompanied the transformation of old-style, competitive capitalism into the new oligopolistic capitalism. The amelioration, and eventual removal, of structural unemployment therefore involves much more than the extension of regulative economic state intervention. It involves the pursuit of deliberate policies to employ more people permanently in the public sector. This, however, will unavoidably give rise to cultural developments which are inconsistent with the survival of the capitalist era's individualistic utilitarian mentality. It will deprive the economic system of its traditional instruments for enforcing work discipline the fear of unemployment - before new instruments, such as social pressure and responsibility, may have time to mature fully. This initial risk cannot be avoided because there is no other alternative. The maximisation principle of individuals' utility will still be there, but the present contradiction between its pursuit to meet immediate selfish needs as distinct from its pursuit for obtaining long-term social advantages will diminish.

There is nothing new in state intervention to promote greater economic equity and ameliorate the consequences of cyclical recessions. What is required is something different - a deliberate policy aimed at achieving a transformation of society by making full productive employment its first priority. The difference between this and the conventional approach is the reversal of order. Conventional theory stresses investment as the key to full employment; here it is proposed that employment is not only necessary in the public sector, it is also the key to socially responsible investment in the private sector.

The struggle for economic revival therefore is a political struggle with important cultural ramifications. Room for employment in the public sector is ample, (e.g. education, health care, housing, protection of the environment), and the technological capacity is also present to produce the goods

required to sustain the living standards in the industrialised countries and to improve them with less and less labour. What is missing is the political will to correct the distribution of the national product - the will to allow an increase in the share of income from work and in the share of government in the national product. Democracy can rectify this. It is for this reason that the struggle for economic revival may well be a struggle to make democracy meaningful once more. Trade unions must simply no longer shun direct political involvement.



A european conference on

the role of trade unions in the coming decade

Maastricht, november 20-21-22, 1985



THE GREEK TRADE UNIONS
PAST EXPERIENCE, PRESENT PROBLEMS, OUTLOOK

Mr. R. Fakiolas



European centre for
work and society
Maastricht



CONFERENCE ON THE ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS IN THE COMING DECADE

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THE GREEK TRADE UNIONS: Past experience, present problems, outlook

R. Fakiolas

The Greek Confederation of Trade Unions (GSEE), a founding member of the International TU Confederation, was established in 1918, long after the war of independence (1821), the founding of the first unions (1879), and the break out of many strikes, many of which ended up with violent clashes with the police. All legal rights concerning TU activity were guaranteed by the new constitution of 1911.

The intensive interwar activity of the TU for higher pay, better work conditions and protection against unemployment was terminated or forced to go underground during the Metaxas dictatorship (1936-1941) and the German occupation (1941-1944). It started after the end of the War (with the Greek communist party remaining illegal), to be suppressed once again during the military dictatorship (1967-74). Since 1974 GSEE, by far the greatest Confederation, has presented legally all political affiliations in its ranks.

The main problems facing the Greek TU include: a) the great, although waning, number of independent craft unions (2500), industrial unions (800), federations (88), local working centers (84) and confederations (5), b) the financing through compulsory contributions of all employees, administered by the state. c) the formulation and implementation of policies based principally on political affiliations, d) the use of strike activity without always exhausting first other legal procedures, e) the excessive wage claims at a time when the economy has stagnated for five consecutive years, f) the relatively small interest for the unemployed and j) the often misguided policy to preserve jobs, irrespective of productivity considerations.

The unions do not seem to have gained in influence or membership in the last eight years, despite the legalisation of the Communist Party (1974), the coming of the socialists to power (1981) and some improvement in their internal organisation. Membership has remained to about one third of the number of the employees (one sixth of the entire labour force).

The foreseen economic and technological developments in the years ahead indicate a balance of favourable and adverse factors for union developments. But to increase or even to maintain present influence, substantial change in attitudes seem to be indispensable.

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DIE GRIECHISCHEN GEWERKSCHAFTEN

Historische Entwicklungen, Probleme, Perspektiven. (1)

R. Fakiolas

1. Entstehung und Wachstum seit 1879.
2. Die organisatorische Struktur. 3. Die gegenwärtigen Probleme.
4. Der Beitrag der Gewerkschaften zur Verbesserung der Lage der Arbeitnehmer. 5. Ein Ausblick in die Zukunft.

1. Entstehung und Wachstum seit 1879 (2)

Die Entstehung und Entwicklung der griechischen Gewerkschaften ist vergleichbar mit der Entwicklung in anderen Ländern. Unterschiede und Besonderheiten ergeben sich dadurch, a) daß Griechenland seine Unabhängigkeit und demokratische Verfassung später als andere europäische Länder erlangt hat und b) daß die gewerkschaftlichen Freiheiten während der wiederholten und langen Diktaturperioden eingeschränkt waren. Ein kurzer historischer Umriss und die Darstellung der organisatorischen Struktur der griechischen Gewerkschaften sind deshalb für die Diskussion ihrer Probleme und für eine Prognose für ihre zukünftige Entwicklung notwendig.

Von der Entstehung der ersten Gewerkschaften bis zum Ende der Militärdiktatur (1967-74). Die ersten griechischen Gewerkschaften entstanden 1879 ohne rechtliche Absicherung da erst die Verfassung von 1864 zwar das Recht auf Versammlungs- und koalitionsfreiheit garantierte, eine verfassungsmässig anerkannte syndikalistische Freiheit jedoch erst seit 1911 gegeben ist. Trotzdem existierten bis zu dieser Zeit viele Gewerkschaften und imselben Zeitraum brachen zahlreiche Streiks aus, mit oder ohne gewerkschaftliche Unterstützung. Damals wie auch später führten viele Streiks zu gewalttätigen Zusammenstößen mit der Polizei, wobei Arbeitnehmer und Polizisten

1) Meinen Dank möchte ich Frau Stella Kalogeropoulos und Frau Efi Ioannou für ihren Beitrag zur Vorbereitung dieser Arbeit aussprechen

2) S. Wentouris (1983) Hering et al. (1982), Kordatos (1976), Fakiolas (1978), Ampelas (1874) Jecchinis (1967), Dimitriou (1985), Kukules (1984)

oder Soldaten verletzt oder getötet wurden.

Im Jahre 1918 wurde die Allgemeine Konföderation der Griechischen Arbeiter und Angestellten (GSEE) gegründet; Sie wurde eines der Gründungsglieder des Internationalen Gewerkschaftsbundes in Amsterdam (1919) und des Internationalen Bundes der Freien Gewerkschaften (1949). Seit 1976 ist sie zudem Mitglied des Europäischen Gewerkschaftsbundes. 1918 wurde ebenfalls die Kommunistische Partei Griechenlands (KKE) gegründet, die bei Massenbewegungen, Streiks und Protestaktionen vor allem in den Jahren 1925-1936 trotz geringer Mitgliederzahl Exemplarisches leistete.

Die stark politische Orientierung der meisten gewerkschaftlichen Tätigkeiten und das Vorherrschen des Typus der Richtungsgewerkschaft sind charakteristisch für die Zwischenkriegszeit. Am Anfang der 20er Jahre stand die Spaltung der ^{GSEE in} verschiedene politische Gruppen die 1929 bzw. 1930 zur Gründung von kommunistisch und sozialistisch orientierten Gewerkschaftsbünden führte. Während der großen Arbeitskämpfe der 30er Jahre wurde die Wiedervereinigung der drei Gewerkschaftsbünde beschlossen; *daraus entstand die GSEE.*

Die erbitterten Arbeitskämpfe in der ersten Hälfte des Jahres 1936 - 350 Streiks in 5 Monaten - gipfelten in blutigen Auseinandersetzungen während einer großen Demonstration von streikenden Tabakarbeitskräften in Thessaloniki, die die gewerkschaftlichen Organisationen aller Richtungen dazu veranlaßten, für den 5. August 1936 zum Generalstreik aufzurufen. Das war für Metaxas eine der Gründe, am 4. August eine faschistische Diktatur zu errichten.

Während der Diktatur (1936-1941) gab es natürlich keine freie politische oder gewerkschaftliche Tätigkeit, und Tausende von Gewerkschaftlern befanden sich in Gefängnissen, Konzentrationslagern oder im Exil. Dasselbe gilt auch für die Zeit der deutschen Besatzung (1941-1944), während der die Gewerkschaften jedoch eine große Rolle in der Untergrundbewegung spielten. Bemerkenswert ist der Kampf gegen die Rekrutierung von griechischen Arbeitskräften zur Arbeitsdienstpflicht in deutschen Fabriken, die hauptsächlich Waffen, Munition und Kriegesvorräte herstellten. *(Diktatur, 1984)*

Nach dem Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges tagte 1946 der 8. Gewerkschaftskongreß und mitten im Bürgerkrieg im März 1948 der 9. Kongreß, der von den Sozialisten und den Kommunisten boykottiert wurde. Seitdem organisiert der GSEE-Vorstand diese Kongresse regelmässig alle zwei bis vier Jahre. Bis 1974 konnte die

kommunistische Partei nur unmittelbar an diesen Kongressen teilnehmen, da sie illegal war.

Die Zahl der Mitglieder stieg in diesem Zeitraum weiter an, und zwar hauptsächlich durch die Massenorganisation der Bauarbeiter, die gut organisiert und sehr militant wurden, sowie auch der Angestellten der schnell wachsenden öffentlichen Unternehmen, Körperschaften und Dienstleistungsbetriebe

Die Entwicklung nach dem Sturz der Militärdiktatur. Die Militärdiktatur (1967-1974) bildete einen neuen Einschnitt in der Geschichte der griechischen Gewerkschaften, deren Freiheit während dieser Zeit stark begrenzt war. Wie in fast allen Ländern der Welt wies die Volkswirtschaft vor der Ölkrise im Jahre 1973 eine hohe Wachstumsrate auf. Dennoch wuchsen die Reallöhne langsam, während der letzten zwei Jahre der Diktatur gar nicht. Die Arbeitslosigkeit verringerte sich jedoch allmählich, und 1972/73 herrschte Vollbeschäftigung. (Fakiolas, 1974, S.36 ff, 136)

Nach dem Sturz der Diktatur strebten die demokratischen Regierungen drei Ziele an:

- a) Alle notwendigen Maßnahmen zu treffen, um nach der kurzen, aber tiefen Rezession in der ersten Hälfte des Jahres 1974 die hohe Wachstumsrate wiederzuerlangen;
- b) Die Löhne und Gehälter schneller zu erhöhen als die Wachstumsrate der Volkswirtschaft, um den Rückgang des Arbeitsanteils des Bruttosozialprodukts während der Diktatur auszugleichen.
- c) Die Vollbeschäftigung beizubehalten.

Während des Zeitraums von 1974-1979 wurden alle drei Ziele erreicht; gleichzeitig mit einer Verbesserung und Ausdehnung der Sozialpolitik des Staates. Die Wirtschaft wuchs 4,5% jährlich im Durchschnitt, die Mindestlöhne um 6,5%, der durchschnittliche Lohn um 6% und die Arbeitslosigkeit betrug ca. 2,5% der Arbeitskräfte (4-5% der Arbeitnehmer).

1979 ist die Wachstumsrate um 3% gefallen, 1980 um 1,5% und 1981-1983 um Null. Unter Druck (die Zahl der Streiks und die verlorenen Arbeitsstunden verdoppelten sich in den Jahren 1979/1980, und 1981 war ein Wahljahr) gab die Regierung großen Lohn-

forderungen nach. Reale Mindest- und Durchschnittslöhne stiegen 1980 und 1981 um 3,5% bzw. 2,5% an, und zwar zu Lasten der Preise (die Inflation stieg auf 25% im Jahre 1981 gegenüber 18% im Jahre 1978); das Defizit der Zahlungsbilanz erhöhte sich, und die Profitabilität der Investitionen fiel steil ab.

Die sozialistische Regierung, die 1981 an die Macht kam, erhöhte die Mindestlöhne bis zu 42% nominal und führte die ATA (automatische Lohnanpassung) ein, die aber für mittlere- und höhere Löhne nur einen beschränkten Inflationsausgleich erlaubte. Die Real-löhne stiegen jedoch um 4% im Durchschnitt an; aber viel weniger in den Jahren 1983 und 1984. Das pro Kopf BIP ist im Zeitraum 1980-1984 um ca. 1,5% (0,3% jährlich) angestiegen, und die Arbeitslosigkeit stieg steil zu einer Höhe von 6% der Erwerbstätigen (ca. 12% der Arbeitnehmer) an. (NSSG, 1984, 1985, OECD 1985).

Die neue Regierung ersetzte das für das Funktionieren der Gewerkschaften wichtige Gesetz 330 durch das Gesetz 1264/1982, und dadurch wurde die soziale Fürsorge und die Staatswohlfahrt ausgedehnt. Aber 1983 war sie gezwungen, neue Beschränkungen des Streikrechts einzuführen, und mehrmals ist sie in die Lage geraten, die MAT (Polizeieinheiten zur Bekämpfung von Terroristen) zu verwenden, um den normalen Produktionsprozeß zu gewährleisten. Der Jahresbericht der Bank von Griechenland ist der Auffassung, daß "wir lernen müssen, innerhalb unserer finanziellen Möglichkeiten zu leben," (Bank von Gr. 1985) und in seinen Erklärungen vom Anfang August 1985 behauptete der Direktor der Bank Griechenlands, daß eine Modifizierung der ATA sehr nützlich für die Drosselung der hohen Inflation (17% im Jahre 1985) wäre (Tageszeitungen vom 10.8.1985)

2. Die organisatorische Struktur

Aufbau. Der Aufbau der griechischen Gewerkschaften ist dreistufig: a) Die Einzelgewerkschaften (ungefähr 3.300), die überwiegend zum Typus der Berufsgewerkschaften gehören (2.500) und weniger häufig nach dem Prinzip der Betriebsgewerkschaften organisiert sind (800). b) Auf der zweiten Organisationsstufe gibt es

einerseits eine vertikale Organisationsform (den Zusammenschluß der Einzelgewerkschaften eines Berufszweigs zu einer nationalen Föderation), und andererseits einen lokalen oder regionalen Zusammenschluß von Einzelgewerkschaften zum Arbeiterzentrum (AZ) einer Stadt oder Region, unabhängig davon, welchem Berufszweig sie angehören. c) die Konföderation der einzelnen Föderationen, wobei es fünf solcher Konföderationen gibt, deren größte und mit Abstand wichtigste die bereits genannte GSEE ist. Ihr gehören heute 76 Föderationen und 68 Arbeiterzentren an, außerdem aber auch Einzelgewerkschaften - ein Tatbestand, der zu organisatorischer Unübersichtlichkeit und zu Doppelvertretungen führt. Höchstes Organ der Beamtenorganisationen ist seit 1974 die "Oberste Leitung der Beamtenvereinigungen" (ADEDY), deren Aufbau ebenfalls dreistufig ist. Die Beamten sind stärker nach ihrer Dienststellenzugehörigkeit organisiert und sind nicht Mitglieder der Arbeiterzentren. Ein Teil der Beamtenorganisationen hat 1976 ein anderes höheres Vertretungsorgan gegründet, und mehr als drei Dutzend anderer Vereinigungen sind unabhängig geblieben.

Organisationsdichte. Der Behauptung der GSEE nach (Phoni GSEE, 20.12.1983) sind 570.000 Arbeitnehmer Gewerkschaftsmitglieder - weniger als ein Drittel der 1,9 Mio. Arbeitnehmer, die ungefähr die Hälfte der Erwerbstätigen ausmachen. (NSSG, 1985). Landarbeiter und Angestellte in kleinen Betrieben sind nur zu 10-20% organisiert, Bau- und Transportarbeiter in wesentlich höherem Umfang, und die Beamten in den meisten öffentlichen Unternehmen - eingeschlossen die Banken, die zu mehr als 90% zum öffentlichen Sektor gehören - zu fast 100%. (Angaben des GSEE und der ADEDY vom Juli 1985). Das entspricht im wesentlichen der Lage in den meisten anderen Ländern Europas (Rühle/Veen, 1983).

Die Kollektivverträge. Grundsätzlich werden vier Kategorien von Kollektivverträgen abgeschlossen: a) der Allgemeine Nationale Kollektivvertrag zwischen der GSEE und dem "Verband der Griechischen Industrien" (SEB), in dem jährlich die allgemeinen Arbeitsbedingungen und die Mindestlöhne festgelegt werden. b) die Nationalen Kollektivverträge für die einzelnen Berufsgruppen. c) die Regionalen Kollektivverträge für die einzelnen Berufsgruppen in der Region und d) die Sonderabkommen, die zwischen den Beschäftigten eines Betriebes ohne Berufsvertretung und dem Ar-

beitgeber abgeschlossen werden.

Der Einfluß des Staates auf die Kollektivtarifverhandlungen ist stark. Erfolgt keine Einigung zwischen den Vertragsparteien, wird ein Zwangsschlichtungsverfahren eingeleitet, dessen Abschaffung die GSEE allerdings verlangt. (Phoni GSEE, 15.3.1985)

Die Gewerkschaftsorganisationen der Arbeitnehmer des Öffentlichen Dienstes führen zwar Kollektivverhandlungen mit der Regierung und haben das Recht zu streiken, können jedoch keine Tarifverträge unterzeichnen.

Finanzierung. Das Finanzierungssystem sieht vor, daß der Arbeitgeber jährlich einen Tageslohn von allen Arbeitnehmern, auch von den gewerkschaftlich nicht organisierten, einbehält und zusammen mit seinem Arbeitsbeitrag an eine dem Arbeitsministerium unterstehende Institution des öffentlichen Rechts überweist, die 20- 30% der ihr aus dieser Quelle zufließenden Einnahmen den Gewerkschaften direkt zuteilt.

3. Die gegenwärtigen Probleme

Die Probleme der griechischen Gewerkschaften, deren befriedigende Lösung ihre zukünftige Entwicklung bestimmen wird, lassen sich in drei Kategorien einteilen: a) Organisatorische Probleme, wie z.B.: die große Zahl der gewerkschaftlichen Organisationen, die Zwangsfinanzierung, die niedrige Ausbildung der Funktionäre und der Mangel an statistischen Unterlagen zur Schaffung einer realistischen Politik. Sie spiegeln die organisatorische Schwäche der griechischen Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft wider und können allmählich gelöst werden. Wesentliche Fortschritte sind schon in den letzten 11 Jahren gemacht worden. b) Probleme verschiedener Natur, wie z.B. parteipolitische Abhängigkeit und übertriebene Forderungen, c) Probleme, die mit der Tätigkeit des Staates und der Struktur der Unternehmen- wie auch mit der Aktivität verschiedener sozialer Gruppen und der Regierung zu tun haben. Die letzten zwei Kategorien von Problemen sind eher schwer zu bekämpfen und sind von entscheidendem Belang für die Zukunft der Gewerkschaften.

Die organisatorische Struktur. Wie bereits dargestellt, überwiegen die berufsständischen Organisationsformen gegenüber dem Industrieprinzip, was durch die sukzessive Entwicklung der Industrialisierung immer größere Nachteile mit sich bringt, und zwar aus folgenden Gründen: a) Aufgrund des Zuwachses der berufsbezogenen Spezialisierungen ist auch die Zahl der fachspezifischen Verbände erheblich gestiegen, so daß die Arbeitnehmer einer betrieblichen Einheit verschiedenen Gewerkschaftsbänden angehören. Diese Fragmentierung führt zu einer Entfremdung innerhalb des gleichen Arbeitsbereichs. b) Die gestiegene Zahl der Verbände erschwert die kommunikative und damit auch die koordinierende Verständigung zwischen den fachspezifischen Gewerkschaftsorganisationen, zumal ihre Mitglieder in mehreren Produktionseinheiten räumlich verstreut sind. c) Die organisatorische Vielfalt ist die Hauptursache für die Entstehung von Antagonismen zwischen den Verbänden mit verwandten Berufsspezialisierungen, die auf eine kontinuierliche und einheitliche Gewerkschaftspolitik hemmend wirken. Die Pluralität der Verbände zwingt jeden Arbeitgeber, mit verschiedenen Verbänden der zahlreichen Gewerkschaftsorganisationen zu verhandeln (Wenturis, 1983).

Die mangelnde Ausbildung. Die Ausbildung der Mitglieder bzw. der Funktionäre der Gewerkschaften war bis vor einigen Jahren fast inexistent. Sie beschränkte sich auf wenige Seminare, meist in Zusammenarbeit mit internationalen Organisationen und die Veröffentlichung weniger Bücher und Feuilletons. Von 2-3 Angestellten gesammelte statistische Daten waren für die Verhandlungen der GSEE mit dem Staat z.B. mit den Verbänden der Arbeitgeber unzureichend. Die Verbesserung der Situation seit dem Sturz der Militärdiktatur (1974) und der Gründung 1982 eines Statistischen und Forschungszentrums (KEMETE) im Rahmen der GSEE ist noch nicht zufriedenstellend. Ein Zeichen dafür ist, daß bis heute an den griechischen Hochschulen immer noch kein Fach für Ökonomie der Arbeit und Arbeitsverhältnisse gibt.

Die Zwangsfinanzierung. Dieses System wurde während der Diktatur von 1937 eingeführt und gilt, mit geringfügigen Änderungen, bis heute, trotz der starken Kritik und der systematischen Abschaffungsversuche. Die Tatsache ist ^{folgender}: bei einer Abschaffung der Zwangsfinanzierung ohne gründliche und langfristige Vorbereitung würden die Parteien an der Stelle des Staates einzutreten versuchen, und die Gewerkschaften würden weniger unabhängig als heute sein. Wie in allen Ländern sind in Griechenland die extremen Parteien (linke sowie rechte) am besten organisiert und ^{würden bei Abschaffung der Zwangsfinanzierung} versuchen, die Finanzierung der Gewerkschaften zu übernehmen.

Während der Militärdiktatur hat ILO die Regierung kritisiert weil sie die Politik der Gewerkschaften durch das System der Zwangsbeiträge beeinflusste. Und, wie jedes Jahr, verlangte sie Anfang 1985 die Abschaffung der Zwangsbeiträge. Die griechische Regierung musste noch einmal erklären, warum dieses Problem noch nicht gelöst war, obwohl die Veränderung des Systems seit 1982 in dem Kollektivvertrag zwischen GSEE und SEB vorgesehen war (Phoni GSEE, 20-12-1983).

Die Lohnpolitik. In jüngster Zeit herrscht in den Industrieländern unter den meisten Ökonomen, Politikern und auch Gewerkschaftlern die Auffassung, daß für die weitere Belebung der Investitionen und die Schaffung neuer Arbeitsstellen, die Gewinnsteigerung der Unternehmen durch die Steigerung der Produktivität und sogar durch Arbeitnehmeropfer unentbehrlich ist. Der OECD nach sollten Lohnerhöhungen nur bei Vorhandensein einer beträchtlichen Zunahme des Nationalen Einkommens vorgenommen werden (OECD 1985, vgl. Der Spiegel 16/1985).

In Griechenland ist das Gegenteil festzustellen: die Gewerkschaften unterstützen fast jede Lohnforderung ohne Rücksicht auf die Lage der Wirtschaft, die, wie schon erwähnt, sehr schlecht aussieht. Das pro Kopf Einkommen ist seit 1979 nur ca. um 2% gestiegen, die industrielle Produktion sowie die Sachinvestitionen sind um etwa 10% gefallen, die Schulden im Ausland betragen ca. $\frac{1}{2}$ des BIP, das externale Defizit ist 1984 um $6\frac{1}{2}$ des

BIP gestiegen und bei der Verarbeitungsindustrie sind große Verluste zu verzeichnen (NSSG, 1985, OECD 1985, ICAP 1985)

Tabelle 1

Gewinne (Verluste) der 100 größten Industriebetriebe 1979-1983
(Billiarden Drachmen)

<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>
9,0	10,5	7,3	-13,5	-13,1

Quelle: ICAP "Greece in figures", 1985

Die GSEE hat mehrmals erklärt, daß keine Rede von einer Veränderung der ^{MT}(automatischen Lohnanpassung) sein kann (Phoni GSEE, 31.7.1985). Und die Kollektivverträge bestimmen Erhöhung der Löhne und Erweiterung der staatlichen Wohlfahrt, die der Wachstumsrate der Wirtschaft nicht entsprechen. Deshalb bleibt die Inflationsrate sehr hoch (17% im Jahre 1985), dreimal höher als in den anderen Ländern Europas im Durchschnitt (OECD, 1985). Ein Drittel der Arbeitnehmer sind bei privaten Unternehmen, Körperschaften, Betrieben und Diensten des öffentlichen Sektors beschäftigt oder von ihm direkt abhängig. Das Defizit dieses Sektors schätzt man zwischen 20-30% des BIP.

Die langfristige Stagnierung der griechischen Volkswirtschaft hätte auf dem Gebiet der Lohnerhöhungen einschränkend wirken müssen¹⁾. In den letzten sechs Jahren ist jedoch das reale Einkommen der niedrigen Schichten zwischen 6% und 20% gestiegen, je nach Lohnniveau der jeweiligen Einkommensschicht. Dies passierte zu Lasten des Einkommens einiger (nicht aller) der obersten Qualifikationsstufen der Arbeitnehmer- bis zu 25% für die gut bezahlten Techniker, Wissenschaftler und Verwaltungsangestellten- der Gewinne, die in vielen Bereichen der Wirtschaft im Durchschnitt Null oder negativ sind. Die Vergrößerung des Defizits des öffentlichen Sektors, das nach verschiedenen Berechnungen 20% bis 30% des BIP ausmacht, und das steile Anwachsen der Schulden im Ausland, die heute ca. 50% der BIP betragen, sind ebenfalls eine Folge davon.

1. Schon im Jahre 1923 hatten viele griechischen Föderationen den Vorschlag gemacht, die Löhne um 25-30% zu kürzen, um auf diese Art und Weise die Inflation und die Arbeitslosigkeit zu bekämpfen (Wenturis 1983).

Ohne Zweifel entwickelt sich in allen Ländern langfristig die Tendenz zur Verringerung des Unterschieds zwischen hohen und niedrigen Löhnen, sowie zur Senkung des Anteils der Gewinne an BIP. Dies sollte ^{sich} jedoch auf keinen Fall auf Kosten der Anreize für zunehmende Bemühungen und unternehmerische Initiativen vollziehen.

Sowohl einfachen Gewerkschaftsmitgliedern als auch nicht organisierten Arbeitnehmern ist für den Fall, daß sie auf ihr Streikrecht zurückgreifen, um ihre Lage zu verbessern, kein Vorwurf zu machen. Die Regierungssprecher und die zuständigen Minister versichern schon seit drei Jahren, daß ausreichende Indizen für ein erneutes wirtschaftliches Wachstum existieren und daß man sich keine Sorgen um die Zukunft der Wirtschaft machen sollte. Manchmal wird die Forderung laut, daß die Arbeitsproduktivität gesteigert werden sollte, wie im Bericht der Bank Griechenlands (Bank of Greece 1985). Bald werden sich ^{jedoch} die optimistischen Stimmen durchsetzen ^{ge} ^t.

Die Streiks. Im letzten Jahrhundert streikten die Arbeitnehmer fast ausschließlich gegen die privaten Unternehmen, die die negativen Folgen eines für die Arbeitnehmer erfolgreichen Streiks zu tragen hatten, welche sich allerdings entweder nur geringfügig oder gar nicht auf das Funktionieren der Gesellschaft auswirkten. In den modernen Gesellschaften ist ca. ein Drittel der Arbeitnehmer direkt oder indirekt im Öffentlichen Dienst beschäftigt, und fast jeder Streik beeinträchtigt die Arbeit und das Leben von vielen Beschäftigten und Konsumenten, weil fast jeder Betrieb völlig abhängig von vielen anderen ist. Deshalb sollten die Arbeitnehmer erst alle anderen

Möglichkeiten für die Befriedigung ihrer Ansprüche ausschöpfen, bevor sie sich für einen Streik entscheiden.

Viele von den Funktionären des GSSE, das Arbeitsministeriums und auch viele Forscher der griechischen Gewerkschaftsbewegung vertreten die Ansicht, daß eine große Zahl von Streiks, die seit 1974 ausgerufen wurden, zu vermeiden gewesen wären; die aufgestellten Forderungen hätten erfüllt werden können, wenn die Gewerkschaften mit mehr Einsicht und Flexibilität in ihrer Verhandlungstaktik statt nur mit ideologisch motivierter Radikalität vorgegangen wären. (Wenduris, 1983, Fakiolas, 1978, Phoni GSEE, 28/1/1985)

Die Organisatorische Struktur der Gewerkschaften hat viel mit der Streikaktivität zu tun, denn die Organisationen der ersten Stufe bedürfen beim Beschluß von Streiks nicht der Zustimmung der Föderationen und der Arbeitszentren. Dasselbe gilt auch für die Organisationen der zweiten Stufe, die unabhängig von den ^{Gewerk-}schaftsbünden Streiks ausrufen können. Im Gegensatz zu den politischen Parteien können deshalb die Gewerkschaften der ersten Stufe ebenso oder sogar mehr Macht ausüben als die Organisationen der höheren Stufen. Unter dem gegenwärtigen organisatorischen System ist allerdings unter den Mitgliedern sehr schwer Disziplin zu schaffen.

Selbst die Mehrheit des Exekutivkomitees der GSSE, die seit 1982 auf der politischen Linie der PASOK liegt, ist nicht in der Lage, Streiks zu vermeiden, für die sich die Minderheit ausgesprochen hat. Ein solcher Streik brach z.B. im Januar 1985 aus, drei Tage nach dem Abschluß eines Kollektivvertrages zwischen GSEE und SEB, der Lohnerhöhungen und institutionelle Veränderungen vorsah. Den Beschluß für diesen "Gemeinsamen Streik" hatten 11 Föderationen und 16 Arbeitszentren gefaßt. (Phoni GSEE, 28/1/1985)

Streiks brechen sogar auch am 1. Mai jedes Jahres zur Feier dieses Arbeitertages aus, obwohl er seit Jahrzehnten ein bezahlter Feiertag ist, (mit doppelter Bezahlung aller Beschäftigten, die an diesem Tag arbeiten müssen); die meisten Streiks brechen in den Betrieben des öffentlichen Sektors aus.

Die Zahl der verlorenen Arbeitsstunden ist zwar nicht sehr hoch (Tabelle 2); die Niederlegung der Arbeit schadet jedoch der Volkswirtschaft, besonders dann, wenn Schlüsselbetriebe davon getroffen werden.

Tabelle 2

Zahl der Streikenden und der verlorenen Arbeitsstunden

Jahre	Streiks	Streikende	Verlorene Arbeitsstunden
1975	142	46374	1.743.353
1976	947	300.753	6.145.245
1977	569	559.858	9.643.823
1978	616	471.305	7.406.087
1979	588	1.262.403	12.255.273
1980	726	1.407.821	20.933.500
1981	466	401.757	5.690.988
1982	888	348.881	9.218.614
1983	675	224.315	3.881.829
1984	462	155.321	3.350.331

Quelle: Arbeitsministerium (Phoni GSEE, 12-2-1985)

Anmerkung: Der GSEE nach sind nicht alle Streiks in der Tabelle aufgeführt (Phoni GSEE, 15-2-1985)

Die meisten Streiks, die seit 1974 ausbrachen, sind ohne reale Rechtfertigung, weil, wie schon erwähnt, alle Regierungen nach dem Sturz der Militärdiktatur im Jahre 1974 die Umverteilung des Einkommens zugunsten der Arbeitnehmer vorgenommen und sich den

Ärger der Arbeitgeber zugezogen haben. Bereits in den Jahren 1975-1976 sprachen die Arbeitgeber von der "Sozial-mania" der damals rechtsgerichteten Regierung.

Die Einstellung zur Arbeitslosigkeit. Da die Gewerkschaften dazu neigen, die vorhandenen Arbeitsbedingungen erhalten zu wollen, erwecken sie heute den Verdacht, sich zu einer konservativen Macht entwickelt zu haben.

Unter dem derzeitigen Druck durch Verhältnisse auf dem Arbeitsmarkt sieht sich auch der Staat gezwungen die Rolle der Fürsorgeinstitution zu übernehmen und stellt möglichst viele Beamte ein, um der Arbeitslosigkeit entgegenzuwirken, obwohl der Staatshaushalt große und zunehmende Defizite aufweist und die marginale Produktivität der zusätzlichen Arbeit sehr niedrig oder gleich Null ist.

Dem OECD nach sind Anpassungsprozesse hinsichtlich den neuentstandenen Verhältnissen auf dem Arbeitsmarkt zu fördern. Maßnahmen die zur Erhaltung von bestehenden Arbeitsplätzen getroffen werden, vermindern allerdings die Schaffung von neuen Arbeitsplätzen bei Tätigkeiten mit hohem Risiko, während hohe Mindestlöhne die Steigerung der Beschäftigtenzahl und die Ausbildung und Qualifizierung besonders Jungendlicher einschränkt. (OECD, 1985)

Die Gewerkschaften schlagen zwar verschiedene Maßnahmen zur Bekämpfung der Arbeitslosigkeit vor meistens Arbeitszeitverkürzung und zahlreiche Restriktionen zur Erschwerung von Entlassungen. Es gibt aber wenig Einigung darüber, auf welche Art und Weise die Kosten dieser Politik verteilt werden sollen. Unter Druck hat die Regierung in den letzten drei Jahren Duzende von überschuldeten Großunternehmen vergesellschaftet um die Arbeitsstellen sicher zustellen. Vor einigen Jahren waren alle diese Unternehmen noch sehr effektiv. Jedoch wegen steigender Kapital Energie- und Arbeitskosten sowie der abnehmenden Nachfrage und der sinkenden Preise der Exportprodukte sind sie allmählich "problematische" geworden und ihr Fortbestehen erfordert bereits immer größere Subventionen. Aber es gibt kein Indiz dafür daß die Gewerkschaften genügend Einsicht für die Wichtigkeit der Produktivitätssteigerung dieser Unternehmen aufbringen werden.

Das gleiche gilt auch für die Arbeitszeitverkürzung. Die Bauarbeiter z.B. haben beschlossen die 35 Stunden Woche einzuführen, obwohl diesbezüglich kein Kollektivvertrag existiert. Das Arbeitsministerium hat diesen Beschluß für illegal erklärt; die Baufirmen akzeptieren ihn, allerdings nur im Zusammenhang mit dem Lohnausgleich. (Phoni GSSE, 5/7/1985)

Parteilpolitische Abhängigkeit. Jeder der drei

wichtigsten Flügel der GSEE, die den großen politischen Parteien verbunden sind, beurteilt die jeweilige Politik der Regierung entsprechend der Einstellung zu der Partei, die gerade an der Macht ist, und nicht nach sachlichen Kriterien. Bei jedem Regierungswechsel ändert sich deshalb auch die Politik jeder gewerkschaftlichen Gruppierung, und dem nicht organisierten Arbeitnehmer oder den einfachen Mitgliedern der Gewerkschaften die nicht militant oder fanatisch sind, fällt es schwer zu verstehen, daß sich die gewerkschaftliche Politik ändert ohne eine entsprechende Änderung der Regierungspolitik.

Kürzlich lauteten die Mitteilungen der GSEE, die - anders als in den romanischen Ländern Europas, wo es Richtungsgewerkschaftsbünde gibt - gesetzlich berechtigt ist, für alle Arbeitnehmer des privaten Sektors zu sprechen: "Wir befinden uns in einer entscheidenden Zeit auf dem Weg, den unser Volk und die Arbeiterklasse seit Oktober 1981 eingeschlagen hat. ^{Und weiter:} Das Exekutivkomitee begrüßt den Sieg der Kräfte des Wandels bei den Wahlen vom 2. Juni 1985, der den Willen der Arbeiterklasse und des ganzen Volks zu Legalität, Fortschritt, Frieden und sozialen Wandel zeigt." (Phoni GSEE 15.2.1985 und 15.6.1985) Aber bei den Parlamentswahlen vom 2. Juni 1985 bekamen die rechte Partei der ND 41% der Stimmen, die kommunistischen Parteien 12% und Pasok 46%. Die Erklärungen im Namen "des ganzen Volkes" erhöhen natürlich das Ansehen der Gewerkschaften nicht.

Die Verbindung zwischen Partei und Gewerkschaft stellt die Frage welcher Politik die Gewerkschaften folgen werden. Die folgende zwei Faktoren sind relevant:

d.) Trotz gelegentlicher verbaler klassenkämpferischer Profilierung und Ideologisierung eigener Interessen ist die PASOK keine Klassenpartei, sondern eine Volkspartei.

Die staatliche Aktivität in sozioökonomischen Belangen und die Teilnahme von Gewerkschaften an politischen Entscheidungsprozessen sind angewachsen. Die PASOK sieht sich als Partei in Regierungsverantwortung nicht in der Lage, alle an sie herangetragenen Forderungen, auch der ihnen besonders nahestehenden Interessengruppen, zu befriedigen.

e.) Die kommunistische Fraktion der GSEE stützt zwar die sozioökonomische Reformpolitik, glaubt aber, daß eine begrenzte Anzahl von kapitalistischen Monopolen das wirtschaftliche und politische Leben des Landes dominiert, indem sie ihre Aktionsinstrumente mit denen des Staates verbinden. Ihre gewerkschaftlichen Aktivisten sind überzeugt, daß sie die Interessen der Arbeitnehmer grundsätzlich besser durch eine Demonstration der eigenen, häufig spontan mobilisierten Kampfkraft in den Betrieben durchsetzen können als durch langwierige Verhandlungen ihrer Spitzenfunktionäre mit Vertretern von Unternehmerverbänden, politischen Parteien oder der Regierung. (S. Vein ..., 1983, -)

Die zunehmende Aktivität des Staates und der Unternehmer. Die staatlichen Aktivitäten in Griechenland haben eine Anzahl syndikalistischer Funktionen ersetzt, insbesondere nach 1974.

Sozialpolitische Ziele und/oder Tätigkeitsfelder, wie z.B. soziale Fürsorge, Ausbildung, ärztliche und Krankenversorgung, die sich vor wenigen Dekaden noch in einem primitiven Zustand befanden und die Hauptziele und Funktionen der syndikalistischen Tätigkeit in Griechenland bildeten, sind heute ausschließlich in den staatlichen Bereich verlagert worden.

Die Arbeitslosenunterstützung liegt im Kompetenzbereich der "Anstalt für die Beschäftigung des Arbeiterpotentials" (OAED), die der Rechts- und Fachaufsicht des Arbeitsministeriums unterliegt. Ähnliche juristische Formen weisen auch die "Sozialversicherungsanstalt" (IKA) mit 3 Millionen Mitgliedern, die Anstalt für Arbeiterwohnungsbau" und das "Haus des Arbeiters" auf.

Ein weiterer, wesentlicher Bereich staatlicher Sozialpolitik schließlich ist der gesetzlich verankerte Kündigungsschutz der Arbeitnehmer, der den Arbeitgebern nach eine "quasi Dauerbeschäftigung" der Arbeitnehmer garantieren und eine rationelle Organisation der Produktionsstätten erheblich erschweren.

Unter diesen Gesichtspunkten betrachtet, hat der Beitrag der griechischen Gewerkschaften innerhalb dieser Bereiche syndikalistischer Politik im Vergleich zu früheren Epochen merklich nachgelassen. Mehr noch: Durch die Entwicklung einer entsprechenden staatlichen Aktivität, auf die oben verwiesen wurde, sind die syndikalistischen Aktionen in diesen Bereichen reduziert worden. (Wenturis, N. 1983)

Eine gewerkschaftsfreundliche Regierungspolitik kann die Stellung der Gewerkschaften schwächen und ihr Prestige beeinträchtigen, auch wenn das Gegenteil beabsichtigt ist. Gesetze, die einseitig die Gewerkschaften und ihre Mitglieder begünstigen, können sich in dieser Weise auswirken. Dazu gehören gewiß die gewerkschaftlichen Immunitätsgesetze, die auch in vielen anderen Ländern gelten und die viele Debatten hervorgerufen haben. Die Substanz dieser Gesetze ist, daß die Arbeitgeber keinen Verlust vermeiden können, wenn der Arbeitsvertrag die Bedingung umfaßt, daß die Arbeitnehmer für bestimmte Zeit und Löhne arbeiten sollen. (Grut, 1984).

Die großen Unternehmen haben auch besondere Abteilungen geschaffen, deren Aufgabe es ist, sich mit Problemen und Klagen der Arbeiter zu beschäftigen. Eine Umfrage von Daniel Milward in Großbritannien hat gezeigt, daß die Gewerkschaften sich meistens für Lohnerhöhung und die Verkürzung der Wochenarbeitszeit einsetzen, während die Beschäftigten steigenden Druck ausüben, um unabhängig von den Kollektivverträgen mehr Beratung und Information zu erhalten. Die Arbeitgeber reagieren auf diese Bedürfnisse: Informationsgruppen, Abteilungsbesprechungen, Arbeitsgruppen und "quality/circles" sind inzwischen weithin eingeführte Verfahren zur Mitwirkung der Angestellten und dem Austausch von Informationen zwischen Managern und Arbeitnehmern. (Roberts, 1984)

In Griechenland ist, einer der aktivsten Verbände in den letzten 10 Jahren der Verband der Vorstände der Personalabteilungen, die es in allen großen Unternehmen gibt. Alle Mitglieder dieser Verbände sind Angestellte, deren Aufgabe es ist, die Probleme zwischen Management und Personal zu lösen.

Konflikte mit der Regierung und verschiedenen sozialen Gruppen.

Die griechischen Gewerkschaften haben ähnliche Probleme mit der Regierung und anderen sozialen Gruppen wie die Gewerkschaften in anderen Ländern. (Otto/Leminsky, 1975, Ruhle/Veen 1983, Roberts, 1984). Die traditionelle Einstellung der griechischen Gewerkschaften in Bezug auf die Produktion entfremdet sie von anderen sozialen Gruppen, für die die ökologischen Probleme und Fragen der Lebensqualität im Mittelpunkt stehen, wenn aber die Gewerkschaften sich mit diesen Themen befassen, setzen sie sich dem Vorwurf aus, daß sie die Regierung zu ersetzen versuchen.

Wie in allen südeuropäischen Ländern vertreten die griechischen kommunistisch dominierten Gewerkschaften eine klassenkämpferische Gleichsetzung der gewerkschaftlich repräsentierten Interessen des "arbeitenden Volkes" mit denen der Gesamtbevölkerung und geraten auf diese Weise in einen grundsätzlichen Konflikt mit den parlamentarisch-demokratischen Institutionen. (Vgl. Veen H.J. 1983).

Die Beschäftigten in fast allen öffentlichen Dienstleistungsbetrieben (Elektrizitätswerke, Banken, Post- und Telefongesellschaft u.s.w.) sind besonders einflußreich und mächtig, und ihre Löhne und Gehälter sind in vielen Fällen höher als das Einkommen anderer Arbeitnehmer, die über die gleichen Qualifikationen verfügen. Die Gewerkschaften unterstützen die Lohnforderungen dieser privilegierten Gruppe, was ihrer Forderung nach Gleichberechtigung widerspricht,

Häufig ist die Politik der Gewerkschaften inkonsequent, während sie einerseits die Planung für die Erlangung oder Erhaltung der Vollbeschäftigung und die Entwicklung der humanen Ressourcen begünstigen, sind sie andererseits gegen die Planung für Lohnerhöhung und Verbesserung der Arbeitsbedingungen seitens der Regierungen, Sie sind für Gesetzen, die die Tätigkeit der Monopole beschränken und für eine Politik, die die Schwankungen der Volkswirtschaft einzudämmen versucht, aber sie kämpfen gegen derartige Maßnahmen, wenn sie den Arbeitnehmern schaden (z.B. Steuererhöhungen, Beschränkung von Wohnungsdarlehen). Sie sind gegen Maßnahmen, die die Tätigkeit aller Monopole einengen, sofern davon auch die Gewerkschaften betroffen sind. (Vgl. Lester R.1964, S. 602, 606) Aus welchen Gründen, so ist zu fragen, sollen die Gewerkschaften von Beschränkungen, denen die Monopole unterliegen, ausgeschlossen werden? (Robbins, 1974).

4. Der Beitrag der Gewerkschaften zur Verbesserung der Lage der Arbeitnehmer.

Um die Zukunft der Gewerkschaften voraussehen zu können, ist es nützlich, ihre Leistungen zu überprüfen. Auch hier gibt es Gemeinsamkeiten mit der Situation in anderen Ländern.

Positive Einflüsse. Ungefähr ein Drittel der Arbeitnehmer Griechenlands sind überzeugt, dass die Erhöhung ihrer Löhne und Gehälter und die Verbesserung der Arbeitsbedingungen das Resultat der gewerkschaftlichen Kämpfe ist und dass die Gewerkschaften ihre Interessen vertreten und eine Schutzfunktion ausüben, was ihnen ein Gefühl von Identität, Zusammengehörigkeit und Macht vermittelt. Durch ihre Gewerkschaft nehmen sie an wichtigen betrieblichen Entscheidungsprozessen teil und beeinflussen auch die allgemeine Politik der Regierung.

Da die Arbeitgeber und der Staat durch ihre Organisationen über großen Einfluß verfügen, müssen die Arbeitnehmer entsprechend gut organisiert sein, damit die wichtige Frage geklärt wird, wie eine Steigerung (oder Abnahme) der Produktion unter Arbeitslöhnen, Gewinnen und Staatlichen Einkommen verteilt wird.

Wie in anderen Ländern Westeuropas haben sich die griechisch Gewerkschaften nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg zu wichtigen, mächtigen und machtbewussten Faktoren des politischen Gesamtsystems entwickelt. Ihre Funktionsfähigkeit ist heute eine wesentliche Voraussetzung für die Stabilität der wirtschaftlichen, sozialen und politischen Zielvorstellungen (vgl. Veen 1983)

Die Verteilung des Einkommens zwischen Löhnen und Gewinnen.

In allen demokratischen Ländern wird die Höhe der realen Löhne grosso modo und im Durchschnitt von dem nationalen pro Kopf Einkommen bestimmt. Keine Partei kann Wahlen gewinnen oder lange an der Regierung bleiben, ohne eine "gerechte" Verteilung des Einkommens zwischen den verschiedenen sozialen Schichten-wirtschaftlichen Gruppen zu gewährleisten. Aus rein wirtschaftlichen Gründen gibt es Tendenzen zu Lohnerhöhungen der Arbeitnehmer, die in modernen Produktionsprozessen teure und empfindliche Werkzeuge benutzen, über hohe Qualifikationen verfügen oder deren Kategorie der beruflichen Arbeit knapp ist. Reale Löhne in Portugal oder Griechenland z.B. betragen nur die Hälfte der Löhne in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland oder in Schweden, weil das pro Kopf Einkommen in den letzteren Ländern doppelt so hoch ist.

Der Arbeitsteil des Einkommens zeigt natürlich einige Unterschiede zwischen den einzelnen Ländern und in manchen konnte es in Folge einer Umverteilung steigen zu Lasten jener Gewinne, die keine wichtige Rolle für die Ermutigung der Sachinvestitionen und die Einführung neuer Technologien spielen. Für beträchtliche Erhöhungen der realen Löhne ist jedoch die Steigerung des National-einkommens unentbehrlich. Und in den Ländern des freien Marktes ist diese Steigerung größtenteils von vernünftigen Profitanreizen abhängig. Wie schon erwähnt, gab es im Laufe der letzten drei Jahre der Militärdiktatur in Griechenland eine Umverteilung des Einkommens zu Lasten der Arbeitnehmer, da keine Erhöhungen der Reallöhne vorgenommen wurden, obwohl die Wachstumsrate der Volkswirtschaft sehr hoch war. Der Kampf der Gewerkschaften zur Erhöhung des Anteils des Arbeitnehmereinkommens war dem nach gerechtfertigt und stimmte mit der Politik der nachfolgenden demokratischen Regierungen überein.

Einfluß auf die Löhne der verschiedenen Arbeitnehmergruppen.

Der Einfluß (λ)⁴ der Gewerkschaften auf die Entlohnung der abhängig Beschäftigten ist schwer einzuschätzen, weil es häufig ein Überschwappen (spill over) von den Löhnen der Gewerkschaftsmitglieder auf diejenigen der Nicht-mitglieder gibt. Die Ergebnisse für λ variieren von -12 % (negative Auswirkung) bis 66 % (stark positive Auswirkung), je nach Gruppe der Arbeitnehmer, der Höhe der Arbeitslosigkeit, dem Land und dem Industriezweig.

1. $\lambda = \frac{L^g - L^n}{L^n}$; L^g = Lohn der Gewerkschaftsmitglieder
nach dem Einsatz der Gewerkschaften und L^n = Lohn der Nicht-
Gewerkschaftsmitglieder vor Einsatz der Gewerkschaften.

Jedoch die meisten Untersuchungsergebnisse zeigen folgendes:
a) Die Gewerkschaften haben die Macht, Lohnunterschiede herbeizuführen. b) Die Lohnunterschiede zwischen Gewerkschafts- und Nicht-Gewerkschaftsmitgliedern scheinen um so größer zu sein, je höher die herrschende Arbeitslosigkeit ist und je stärker konzentriert ein Wirtschaftszweig ist. Sie scheinen auch bei Facharbeitern und Arbeitern höher zu sein als bei den Angestellten. (Brinkmann, 1984, Blanchflower, 1984.)

Große Lohnunterschiede bei den Gewerkschaftsmitgliedern können auf die Dauer nur beibehalten werden, wenn sie von Arbeitsproduktivitätserhöhungen begleitet sind. Sonst schaffen die hohen Löhne häufig Gegeneffekte, wie z.B. Betriebsschließung oder Umsiedlung in andere Gebiete oder Länder. Kurzfristig können Arbeitnehmer in einigen Betrieben höhere Löhne als ihre in anderen Unternehmen beschäftigten Kollegen bekommen, wenn diese Betriebe keine Möglichkeit haben, ihr investiertes Kapital anderweitig zu verwenden.

Es gibt in Griechenland Anzeichen dafür, daß Marktgesetze und Entscheidungen der Regierung, die unabhängig von Forderungen und Aktionen der Gewerkschaften getroffen werden, in vielen Fällen eine größere Durchsetzungskraft haben als der gewerkschaftliche Kampf um Lohnerhöhungen und Verbesserung der Arbeitsbedingungen. Betroffen davon sind u.a.: a) Die Bauarbeiter; sie haben während des wirtschaftlichen Aufschwungs (1950-1979) eine starke Erhöhung ihrer Löhne erreicht. In den letzten sechs Jahren der wirtschaftlichen Stagnation haben ihre starken Streikaktionen jedoch nicht dazu beitragen können, die Kaufkraft ihrer Löhne zu erhalten und eine hohe Arbeitslosigkeit in ihrer Branche zu verhindern. Diese Aktionen haben aber zur Erlangung einer höheren Sicherheit vor Unfallgefahr am Arbeitsplatz und allgemein günstigerer Arbeitsbedingungen geführt. b) Verschiedene Fachleute mit attraktiver Qualifikation, insbesondere im Bereich der Einführung neuer Technologien (Mechaniker, Ingenieure, Verwaltungsexperten, sogar erfahrene Kaufleute): Die normalerweise hohen Gehälter dieser Arbeitnehmer werden vom Verhältnis zwischen Angebot und Nachfrage bestimmt. c) Haushaltshelfer: obwohl sie nicht gewerkschaftlich organisiert sind, haben ihre Löhne seit den 50er Jahren aufgrund der Veränderung der wirtschaftlichen Lage und der sozialen Verhältnisse einen mehr als zehnfachen Anstieg erfahren.

Andererseits liegt im Vergleich dazu auch das Einkommen der Angestellten vieler öffentlicher Unternehmen wesentlich über dem Durchschnitt, was aber zum großen Teil durch gewerkschaftliche Kampfaktionen erreicht werden konnte.

Einfluß auf die Einführung neuer Technologien. Wie in anderen Ländern (Breit, 6.1985) so sprechen sie auch in Griechenland die Gewerkschaften für die Notwendigkeit aus, neue Technologien einzuführen. Der Koordinationsminister suchte ausländische Investoren mit den Worten zu ermuntern: "Obstruktive Gewerkschaftsmilitants und Widerstand gegen die Einführung technologischer Verbesserungen ist dem Geist der griechischen Arbeiter oder Gewerkschaften völlig fremd." (Buck, 1978, s.193.)

Jedoch bestehen die griechischen Gewerkschaften, wie die Gewerkschaften in fast allen Ländern, darauf, daß bei Einführung arbeitssparender Technologien keine Entlassungen vorgenommen werden sollen. Das Gesetz, das die Entlassungen von mehr als 3 % der Belegschaft zu Massenentlassungen erklärt und verbietet, wird von ihnen nicht als ausreichend angesehen. Diese Einstellung verhindert zwar kurzfristig eine Menge von Entlassungen, beeinflußt aber die Produktivitätssteigerung negativ. Die niedrige Arbeitsproduktivität in der UdSSr z.B. (ca. 45-50 % der Arbeitsproduktivität in den entwickelten westlichen Ländern) ist größtenteils dem Unwillen der Sovietischen Behörden zuzuschreiben Entlassungen zu befürworten. (Goldman, 1985)

Auswirkung auf das wirtschaftliche Wachstum. Wie Rosenstein-Rodan (1966) argumentiert hat, ist es notwendig, eine Wahl zu treffen, ob man mehr oder weniger von den ökonomischen oder den sozialen Zielsetzungen schnell oder langsamer erreichen will. Auf einer niedrigeren Stufe der Entwicklung mag man gezwungen sein zunächst der Vergrößerung des Kuchens eine höhere Priorität einzuräumen, als den kleineren Kuchen in gleichere Teile zu zerlegen. Die Lösung dieses Problems erfordert ein Werturteil über die relative Wichtigkeit der Einkommensverteilung und der Bildung des Einkommens in kurz- und langfristiger Sicht.

Bei aller Vorsicht, die Berechnungen über die Verteilungsstruktur im allgemeinen, aber besonders für Entwicklungsländer, entgegengebracht werden muß, läßt sich aus den vorliegenden Unterlagen doch eindeutig ein Trend zu einer Nivellierung der ursprünglichen Unterschiede im Laufe des Entwicklungsprozesses beobachten. (Uhlig 1975, s.352)

5. Ein Ausblick in die Zukunft

Die zukünftige Zahl der Mitgliedschaft und der Einfluß der griechischen Gewerkschaftsbewegung wird von den Entwicklungen der Beschäftigungs- und Unternehmensstruktur und auch von den Einstellungen der Gewerkschaften beeinflusst.

Veränderung der Struktur der Beschäftigung und der Unternehmen

Die Stagnierung der Volkswirtschaft macht einige Arbeitnehmer militant weil sie nur unzureichende Lohnerhöhungen erhalten können. Sie hat jedoch einen Drosselungseffekt auf die gewerkschaftliche Tätigkeit, weil sie die Arbeitslosigkeit vergrößert bzw. auf einem hohen Niveau erhält (Breit 1985).

Wie schon erwähnt machen die Arbeitnehmer in Griechenland nur 49 % der Erwerbstätigen aus (NSSG, 1984, Volkszählung 1981), gegen 90 % in den entwickelten Ländern. Dieser relativ kleine Anteil wird zunehmend und ceteris Paribus wird auch die Anzahl der Gewerkschaftler größer und ihr Einfluß auf die wirtschaftliche und politische Entwicklungen stärker.

Auf der anderen Seite wird die Beschäftigung von mehr Jugendlichen, Teilzeitbeschäftigten, Frauen und Leuten, die über eine akademische oder halbakademische Vorbildung verfügen zu keiner wesentlichen Zunahme der gewerkschaftlichen Mitgliedschaft führen.

Die Veränderung des Beschäftigungsschwerpunktes vom industriellen zum Dienstleistungssektor kann nicht sehr stark sein - 56% der Beschäftigten sind im Dienstleistungssektor. Vielmehr ist die Organisationsdichte gemischt: Hoch unter den Arbeitern der großen Industriebetriebe, den Beamten und den Angestellten der öffentlichen Unternehmen; schwach aber unter den Angestellten der Industrie, sowie den Beschäftigten in kleinen privaten Unternehmen.

Die Einführung neuer Technologien stärkt die Gewerkschaften, weil sie meistens arbeitssparend sind und demnach viele Arbeitsplätze bedrohen und viele Qualifikationen entwerten. Aber sie schaffen auch neue Stellen und erlauben die Entwicklung neuer Typen von qualifizierten Arbeitern, die überzeugt sind, dass die Anpassung an die neuen Technologien eine neue Einstellung verlangt.

Das Management ist auch bewusst für die Notwendigkeit der Schaffung von Arbeitsbedingungen, die ähnlich denen sind, die die "white-collar" Angestellten genießen (Roberts, 1984, Econ. Tach. 27-7-1985, Mroczkowski 1984).

Im verborgenen finden zahllose Kontroversen um die Gestattung der Bildschirm-Teil-und Heimarbeit statt. Diese hat die traditionellen Trennungslinien zwischen Freizeit und Arbeitswelt aufgehoben, die Arbeitsplätze verlagert und noch dazu sind dadurch die Arbeitnehmer isolierter worden. (Zerdick 1983).

Sogar in den hoch entwickelten Ländern ist jedoch die Bildschirmarbeit noch geringfügig und nimmt sehr langsam zu. (Ballerstedt 1983). Dementsprechend ist die Kontroversen über ihren Einfluß auf die Gewerkschaften von geringen Belang für Griechenland, das sich in seiner Entwicklung weitgehend hinter den Ländern Westeuropas befindet.

Andere Entwicklungen der Technologie scheinen auch einen bezogenen Einfluß auf die Struktur der Unternehmen zu haben. Die Möglichkeit der kleinen Firmen zu überleben und sogar ihre Anzahl zu vergrößern durch Spezialisierung und Sub-contracting der großen Betriebe ist in Griechenland, wo der kleine betrieb herrscht, von keiner großen Bedeutung. Die griechische Industrie und das Handwerk bestehen (1978) aus 128.988 Firmen, in denen 671.500 Personen beschäftigt sind. Ca 120.000 von diesen Firmen haben eine Beschäftigungsgröße von weniger als 10 Personen (NSIG, 1984). Der Trend von heute und wahrscheinlich auch der folgenden Jahre ist die Zunahme der Beschäftigungsgröße.

Politische Entwicklungen und die Einstellung der Gewerkschaften.
Trotzt Mitgliederstagnierung bzw. dem Mitsliederrückgang, bleiben die Gewerkschaften in Griechenland, wie in allen Ländern (Wunter, 1985) die größte und schlagkräftigste Organisation des Landes, für ihre Zukunft ist es logisch zu vermuten, daß sie allmählich ihre Lösung von Problemen die in anderen Ländern schon gelöst sind. Das wird jedoch nicht ausreichen. Die niedrige Organisationsdichte (ca. 30% der Arbeitnehmer) zeigt, daß viele Arbeitnehmer an den Gewerkschaften kein Vertrauen haben. Um dieses zu erlangen, sollten die Gewerkschaften ihre Politik verändern, und dazu hätten Sie von der Erfahrung der Gewerkschaften anderer Länder viel zu erlernen.

Zum ersten Mal in seiner Lange, Geschichte hat Griechenland seit 1981 eine sozialistische Regierung, die dieses Jahr für eine zweite vierjährige Periode gewählt wurde, Im Jahre 1981 erhielt PASOK 48% der Stimme und alle kommunistischen und linksgerichteten Parteien weitere 15%. Im Jahre 1985 waren es 46% für PASOK und 13% für die anderen Fortschrittlichen Parteien.

Während der ersten vier Jahre waren die Beziehungen zwischen

der Regierung und den zwei "offiziellen" kommunistischen Parteien ziemlich gut, allmählich aber hat sich das Verhältniss zu einer scharfen Konkurrenz entwickelt. Im Jahre 1985 hat die "orthodoxe" und mit großem Abstand stärkste kommunistische Partei einen großen Verlust erlitten und zwar eine Verminderung der Stimmen vom 12% auf 10%. Dies kann als Zeichen dafür angesehen werden, daß PASOK ihre Existenz bedroht.

Die Gewinne der PASOK unter den Gewerkschaftern waren auch sehr überzeugend. Ihre Anhänger kontrollieren mehr als zwei Drittel aller Gewerkschaften, darunter GSSE, ADEDY und die anderen Dachorganisationen, während die niedrigen und mittleren Schichten der Arbeitnehmer zufrieden zusein scheinen aufgrund der wesentlichen Lohnerhöhungen (trotz der Stagnation der Wirtschaft), der Verbesserung der Arbeitsbedingungen und der Ausdehnung der staatlichen Wohlfahrt. Trotz allen diesen günstigen Entwicklungen gibt es kein Indiz dafür, daß der Anteil der organisierten Arbeitnehmer gestiegen ist oder der Einfluss der Gewerkschaften zugenommen hat.

Für die zukünftigen Beziehungen zwischen Regierung und Gewerkschaften ist es nicht wichtig, ob die Sozialisten lange oder kurz an der Macht bleiben. Aus historischer und in gegenwärtiger Sicht sind die Beziehungen zwischen Linkspartei(en) und Gewerkschaft(en) höchst unterschiedlich. Sie schwanken zwischen Konkurrenz und Kooperation und sind gelegentlich auch dort nicht von Spannungen frei, wo Gewerkschaft und Partei eng verflochten in dieselbe Richtung marschieren (Veen, 1983).

Unter dem heutigen System der "gemischten" Wirtschaft, womit ca. 85% der Wähler bei den letzten vier Parlamentswahlen einverstanden waren, sollten die Gewerkschaftsführer den anderen Gewerkschaftlern und den übrigen Arbeitnehmern erklären, daß

ihre realen Löhne nicht wesentlich erhöht werden könnten, wenn nicht auch das Nationale Einkommen keine Erhöhung erfahren würde. Und für diese Erhöhung ist die Zusammenarbeit zwischen Arbeitnehmern, dem Staat und den Arbeitgebern notwendig. Eine solche Erklärung würde viele Arbeitnehmer zu den Gewerkschaften ziehen, andere jedoch abstoßen.

Es ist also klar, daß die Gewerkschaften ein doppeltes Ziel haben müssen; Für eine Einkommensverteilung zu kämpfen und zur Steigerung des Nationaleinkommens beizutragen. Obwohl es viele Beispiele dafür gibt, daß sie Bereitschaft zeigen, die Steigerung des Einkommens zu erlangen, ist ihre hauptsächliche Tätigkeit auf die Umverteilung des Einkommens gerichtet.

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UNION FORCE AND LABOUR POWER

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Mr. Hans Slomp
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**european centre for
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Summary

The literature on union power uses the rate of organization as its sole indicator. Section 1 of the paper distinguishes between the concepts of union force, union influence and union power. Union force is defined as a combination of factors concerning the union movement itself, union influence as a combination of union force and economic and political conditions union power as the factual performance of unions. In order to determine the usefulness of the concepts and the degree of union power in the Netherlands and Belgium changes in union influence are analyzed in combination with changes in the part of Dutch and Belgian national product allotted to labour, a rough indicator of union power (sections 2 and 3). In Holland economic conditions seem to be most important as an ingredient of union influence; in Belgium political conditions. Their working is described in section 4, both separately and in combination with union force. In section 5 conclusions are drawn for the use of the concepts involved and for Dutch and Belgian union power in the 90's.

Content:

1. Introduction
 - a. The general use of the concept of union power
 - b. Union power versus union force
 - c. The research
2. Operationalization of union force
3. Analysis
 - a. Introductory remarks
 - b. The Netherlands
 - c. Belgium
4. Two interpretations
 - a. The first interpretation
 - b. The second interpretation
5. Conclusions
 - a. The concept reviewed
 - b. Union force and labour power in Holland and Belgium in the 90's

1. Introduction

a. The general use of the concept of union power

The increasing amount of literature on the European welfare state - and its crisis - has given rise to a number of comparative studies in the field of social and economic policy making. From another angle the literature on European corporatism has studied the same field, focusing on union-employer relations at the national level. In both approaches the role of the trade union has been a central topic and has encouraged efforts to measure the power of trade unions.

In some comparative research the power of the whole labour movement has been studied, including both trade unions and social democratic or all left wing parties. Wherever union power has been the main subject, however, most authors have agreed on a single indicator of that power, the rate of unionization. Valuable though it might be for comparative research, to consider the rate of unionization as an indicator of union power is at variance with the accepted - or at least the general - use of the concept of power. This forms a weak spot, not to say a weak conceptual base of comparative surveys and could well undermine their conclusions, even if the extensive use of quantitative data lends them an appearance of methodological sophistication.

This paper is an attempt to clarify conceptual ambiguities in the concept of union power by making a distinction between union force and union power. Both concepts are applied to Belgium and Netherlands in order to test the sense of the distinction.

b. Union power versus union force

- the concept of power

The rate of unionization is an expression of the relative numerical strength of the trade unions. This relative strength, however, offers no direct indication of the power of these unions. In political science, power is generally considered to be a relational concept, confined to power vis-a-vis a specific person, group or nation. Ideally it is measured by the degree of adaption of that person's (group's or country's) behavior in the direction desired by the person or group that exercises power. So, union power can be measured only with reference to what the unions get accomplished in their contacts with employers, employers' organizations or government.

This use of the concept of power requires a distinction between the force of trade unions, of which their relative numerical strength is just one dimension, and the concept of power which tells us whether that force has been applied and whether the application has been successful. Union force can be a base for such union power, but it is no more than that.

- Union force

The relative numerical strength of the trade unions as indicated by the rate of unionization is a dimension of the overall force of the unions. Not only these members count, but other factors as well. A more adequate measure of the force of the national union movement in a specific country should include at least the following dimensions:

- numerical strength
- degree of cohesion and
- organizational strength

All of these can be subdivided into some subdimensions (see scheme 1).

The rate of unionization is a rather formal indication of relative numerical strength. Small organizations with a high mobilization potential might be just as forceful, if only because they face smaller risks in case of a lost strike. This is a significant difference between the French and the German union system, for instance, to be taken into consideration by any definition of union force. As wildcat strikes can endanger the unions' position, the number of strikers involved should also be included. The degree of cohesion at the central level can pass without further explanation. Suffice is to say that divisions are the more destructive where there is a strong competition for members, for instance as exists in France, but much less so in Holland and Belgium, where religious ties for long prevented competition. Whereas one strong federation amidst some smaller ones contributes to the force of the union, within federal organizations the predominance of one sector detracts from union power. The small ones and the federation itself more easily act as a countervailing power to that union. A large number of small unions within a federation may pose problems of coordination, but that point is treated under the heading organizational strength. Public sector unions also might diminish union power, as they are not able to join in some kinds of private sector action.

Centralization is another characteristic of union force, as it allows coordinated action. Yet it should be measured only in combination with the range of union activities, as that gives some indication of the union grass-roots, and no organization can hold out for long without them.

Scheme 1: Union force of the national union system

dimension	subdimension
numerical strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rate of organization - rate of the organized participation in union action - rate of unorganized participating in union action - rate of organized non-participating in wildcat action - rate of the unorganized participating in wildcat action
degree of cohesion federal level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - degree of monopolization among the organized by one union federation - degree of monopolization among the mobilized by one union federation - relative lack of mutual competition for members among different federations - degree of cooperation between federations
organizational strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - degree of extension of activities over various levels (central, sectoral, enterprise, workfloor) - degree of centralization

- Union influence

Union force probably is a major determinant of union power. Without a strong power base the national union system would find it difficult to make a fist in its contacts with employers and the state. Indeed, union force is the union's fist, a base for, but not an indication of good performance in such a power relation. External factors also influence the power the unions can wield with its union force. One of them is the force of the other parties in the power relation. As this cannot be taken into account in a short paper, the concept of power should be replaced by that of union influence, or union's potential power. This concept can be defined as the union's force in combination with those conditions from outside the power relation that have an effect on the position of the unions in that relation.

Two types of such outside conditions seem to be of primordial importance, economic conditions and political conditions. For the sake of simplicity the economic conditions can be summarized, like they generally are, as the degree of economic growth and the rate of unemployment. Until the early 80's the latter might have been treated as the sole indicator of all economic conditions, but since then the two develop less simultaneously. As both of them have diverging effects on union influence they should be taken into account separately.

If politics matters, a major political condition seems to be the composition of government, either with or without "union-friendly" political parties. Contrary to the economic conditions, however, this political condition only has a direct effect. It does not influence union force which would also give it an indirect effect on union influence. The indirect effects are not part of the research, however. The economic conditions do have such an effect, for instance on the numerical strength of the trade unions (Scheme 1)

Scheme 1: Union force, outside conditions and union influence

economic growth

unemployment

union force

union influence

union power

government
composition

- Union power

Union power can only be measured by looking at the factual performance of the unions in their relation with employers and the state. If union force does make any sense it is because it is a basis for union influence, but union influence does make sense only if it leads to a factual improvement in the labour conditions of the union members. As a shorthand for such improvement will be considered the percentage of national income allotted to labour.

So, the research in this paper will consist of

- a survey of yearly changes in union force
- a survey of yearly changes in economic and political conditions

- affecting union influence
- a survey of yearly changes in the percentage of national income allotted to labour, as a measure of union power
- relating union force and union influence, each independently, with union power.

c. The research

Chief aim of that research is to improve the notions of union force and union influence and to test their reliability and validity. The research will be confined to Belgium and the Netherlands between 1960 and 1980. Some conclusion will be drawn for the years until 1995.

Two questions have to be answered:

- Is there any analogous change in union influence and in the percentage of national income allotted to labour?
- Is the change in the distribution of income to be attributed to the change in union influence?

Changes in union influence are defined as changes in union force, in economic growth and unemployment, and in cabinet composition. Economic growth is indicated by yearly change in GNP, unemployment by yearly change in the rate of unemployment and cabinet composition by the presence or absence of social democrats in the cabinet which is in power in a given year. The economic indicators are from UN- data. The UN handbook defines the percentage of national income allotted to labour as the payments to employees, i.e. a) wages and salaries, b) employers' contributions to social security provisions, and c) employers' contributions to private pension, insurance and similar schemes (UN 1982: XV). In this paper this percentage is referred to as Employees' Income Share (EIS).

In accordance with what has been stated about union influence the following research outcomes might be expected: Changes in union force and in economic growth lead to EIS-changes in the same direction. Changes in unemployment lead to EIS-change in the inverse direction. Cabinets with socialists lead to an increase in EIS, other cabinets to a decrease. But of course the developments might not only reinforce, but also oppose each other.

2. Operationalization of union force.

A first glance at the dimensions in scheme 1 makes clear why in most comparative research the rate of organization is used as the sole indicator of union force. Most of the other dimensions and subdimensions are very hard to operationalize and even defining them already seems a difficult task. The simplest way to include the variables of the table in an operationalization of union force seems to treat them as qualifications which diminish or enhance union force as measured by the rate of organization only. That rate differs considerably for the countries under survey. In the Netherlands it never passed the 40%, in Belgium it reaches over 70%.

Of the first dimension, numerical strength, the rate of organized and unorganized workers participating in organized strikes is more difficult to estimate than the rate of organized and unorganized participating in wildcat action. The number of participants in such action possibly could be divided over the organized and the unorganized in proportion to the rate of organization. For the Netherlands and Flanders these subdimensions do not seem very important, for Wallonia with its

more regular unorganized action they certainly are, and diminish the union force accordingly, at least to some extent.

The degree of cohesion at the federal level is easier to indicate. In both countries there are two or even more union federations and until the fusion of socialist and catholic unions in the Netherlands in 1976, the degree of monopolization was low. In Belgium it is still low, in the Netherlands the FNV since 1976 has occupied a more monopolistic position in Dutch unionism, which strenghtens the position of unions vis-a-vis employers and the state. The lack of mutual competition reinforced the position of Dutch unions, since then monopolization has increased but cooperation diminished. Belgian union federations have more mutual competition and less cooperation. This makes their overall score on the dimension "degree of cohesion, federal level" less favourable than that of Dutch unions, which offers some compensation for the difference in the rate of organization.

The degree of cohesion at the sectoral level is decisive for the unity within each of the national federations. In this dimension there is not much difference between the two countries. The industrial unions during most of the post war period have been the largest constituent union in the federations, but they never acquired a quasi-monopolistic position like that of the German IG-Metall within the DGB.

In organizational strength there is a crucial difference between Belgian and Dutch unions. In both countries unions are very centralized, though in Holland to a larger extent than in Belgium. Yet, the centralization in the Netherlands is one without a strong base within enterprise, while in Belgium that level, and, less so that of the workforce, have been developed very well. To the Belgian "syndicale gedelegeerde" there is no Dutch counterpart, the Dutch "bedrijvenwerk" started in the 60's but never developed to such an extent as Belgian shop-floor and enterprise unionism. This is a weakness which makes Dutch unionism much more an affair of the union apparatus than unionism in Belgium, which is more active at the grass-roots level.

Without going into detail for all dimensions as to their operationalization and their working in Dutch and Belgian unionism, a conclusion might be that the position of Dutch unions is feeble in rate of organization, but it is reinforced by the rather high - though far from complete - degree of cohesion at the federal level. Belgian unionism has by far more force when the rate of organization is taken into account. That force is enfeebled by the attractiveness of wild cat actions, especially in Wallonia and by the higher degree of division at the federal level. Yet, Belgian unionism has a much stronger base than Dutch unionism, in its enterprise- and workforce activities.

3. Analysis.

a. Introduction remarks

Figures 1 and 2 show the data discussed in section 2 in a graphical way. These graphics are the basis for further analysis which looks for concomitances in yearly changes in developments of the variables. I.e. the relative growth or decrease of EIS in comparison to the like of union force, cabinet composition, unemployment and economic growth.

In the analysis a one-year time lag is assumed between developments in the parameters of union force and of economic conditions and developments in EIS. The "power game", of unions,

employers' associations and sometimes also government is generally played in the months November till March. The parties concerned enter the game with knowledge of the relevant socioeconomic and political facts per November 1st ultimately. Their decisions, however, become effective only after March, and thus will be reflected in the data of that particular year. Therefore data on union force and economic conditions of year (t-1) are related to EIS data of year (t). No time-lag is assumed in case of cabinet composition. The colour of cabinet is only relevant during the months that the power game on EIS actually takes place. So the analysis is based upon cabinet composition per January 1st of the same year as to which EIS data are reported, allowing for a few weeks in which a casual change of cabinet composition might affect decisions on EIS.

b. The Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the rate of union organization is rather stable, it oscillates around the 38%-mark, (cf figure 1b). Its stability greatly differs from the yearly development in EIS (cf. figure 1a), which steadily rises during most of the period (until 1975 in particular), but also shows some intervals of decline (especially in the last years under consideration). The two seem to be unrelated, which leads to the conclusion that the degree of union power, reflected in the growth of EIS, cannot be explained by a concomitant development in union force, as reflected in the rate of unionization.

During most of the period, centre-right coalitions ruled the Netherlands, social democrats being in office only in 1965-6, 1973-7 and 1981-2 (cf. figure 1c). The largest increases in EIS occurred under the rule of the centre-right (1960-3, 1968-71) and centre-left (1973-5) alike. The largest decreases occurred under both political colours as well (1980-1 and 1975-6 respectively). So cabinet composition seems to be unrelated to EIS in the Netherlands.

Average economic growth rates have declined, from 5% roughly in the years before the oil crisis of 1973-4, to an equally rough 2% in the years since (cf. figure 1d). In the former years of fast growth, EIS development is one of a steady rise, which turns into decline in the latter half of the 1970's. So, in general EIS reacted to changes in economic growth in the expected way. Strictly spoken, there are three exceptions to this. The increases of EIS following upon the decline in economic growth in 1971-2, 1973-4 and 1976-7 respectively. Yet, they might be considered minor exceptions, for which the rather unique circumstances of the immediate aftermath of the oil crisis are responsible.

A first glance at the graphics of figure 1e and 1a seems to show that there is no evidence for our stated relationship between the development of unemployment and EIS. Even the reverse seems to be true on the long term, unemployment seems to follow EIS instead of preceding it. The rise of EIS until 1975 seems to be followed by an increase in unemployment and the decrease of EIS after 1975 by a stabilization of unemployment.

The picture changes if one takes into account the general level of unemployment. Until 1973 the Netherlands show unemployment rates of 3% or less, that is upon or below the generally accepted mark of "full employment". In 1974-5 the rate of unemployment jumps to a level of 5%, which is more or less maintained in the latter half of the 1970's. On the whole, EIS development shows a remarkable sensibility for unemployment:
- under conditions of full employment EIS generally rises, under

conditions of less than full employment EIS generally falls;
- The turning point in EIS development is more or less exact in the expected year: 1975-6, one year after unemployment rose away from the 3% mark (1973-4 is a border case) with a rise of the unemployment rate from 2.8 to 3.5).

From these findings we conclude that there is a relationship as expected between rate of unemployment and EIS in the Netherlands, except for situations in which unemployment lies in the border zone between full and less than full employment, say: between 2.5% and 3.5%.

These findings suggest, that in the Netherlands only economic growth and unemployment are important determinants for EIS. Organization rate and cabinet composition have no substantial effect.

c. Belgium

As for Belgium the unionization rate (cf. figure 2b) on the whole shows the expected parallelity to EIS development. In respect to the expected directions, however, as well as to the expected extent, there are some exceptions. The rises of unionization in 1966-8 were followed by decreases of EIS in the next years. The extent of increase in EIS in 1976-9 lag behind the increases of the unionization rate, particularly in comparison to the five-year period before. These exceptions make the unionization rate a weak determinant of EIS.

Cabinet composition seems a more promising explanation for EIS development (cf. figure 2c). Under cabinets with social democrats EIS did not only increase, but it rose sharply (1968-9, 1976-7 and 1977-8 being rather marginal exceptions). During the interim periods of centre-right rule EIS clearly stabilized or even decreased, with EIS increases of 1975 and 1976 as the only important exceptions. Except for these two years, EIS rise in Belgium between 1961 and 1981 is completely explained by cabinet colour. We may consider cabinet composition as a rather strong determinant for Belgian EIS.

One could easily get the impression that there is an inverse relationship between unemployment and EIS development in Belgium. Instead of preceding with an one-year interval, the unemployment rate follows EIS development with a one-year time-lag, since 1963. This finding suggests that unemployment can hardly explain EIS. Contrary to the Netherlands, this picture does not change if one takes into account the general unemployment level. Even after unemployment has risen beyond 5%, in 1975, EIS continues to increase. Only a slight reaction of EIS then becomes visible. Economic growth rates can hardly explain EIS development in Belgium either (cf. figure 2d). On the whole, economic growth declines after 1974, and once again EIS reacts only slightly.

Comparing the findings on Holland and Belgium, a remarkable outcome is that in both countries different (sets of) factors determine EIS, and therefore union power (cf. section 2). Economic factors in Holland, political in Belgium. However we could not disentangle the separate effects of the economic factors in Holland and the political in Belgium.

4. Two interpretations

a. The first interpretation

The conclusions, which differ so greatly for the two countries suggest two diverging patterns of union influence, the concept which denotes the potential power of the unions and which depends on union force. The differences are in line with the existing literature on industrial relations in Belgium and the Netherlands (cf. Windmuller, Slomp/van Mierlo). The conclusions give rise to two alternative interpretations. One in which union force is not considered to be a factor of general importance for union influence, and one in which union force acts as an important factor for the potential union power but in the background only.

In the Netherlands the system of industrial relations has been centralized. The central federations of employers organizations and unions decide on labour conditions either under direct supervision of government or in direct contact with government. Until the end of the 60's there was some form of guided wage policy in which government was advised by the employers' and workers' federations about the desirable increase in wages. In the 70's that system has been subsisted by collective bargaining at the sectoral level, but heavily coordinated at the central level within the organizations. Central level contacts between the unions and employers' associations became less important and less frequent. The outcomes of sectoral negotiations have been closely watched by government, which was ready to interfere in case it thought wage increase would endanger the national economy. Both under the guided wage policy of the 50's and 60's and during the period of guided free bargaining in the 70's technocrat reports on the economic situation, including some forecasting, have exercised a remarkable degree of influence. The findings affirm this picture. Changes in EIS seem to be dependent on changes in economic growth and unemployment which suggests that the outcomes of collective bargaining are dependent on economic conditions, or better that all parties involved -government, unions and employers- are completely guided by economic conditions.

This gives a considerable amount of influence to the governmental institutions that report on the economic situation. Their findings have the force of law for government, independent of its composition and, as a law, frequently are imposed upon employers and unions. This readiness to use economic data as a motive to interfere in collective bargaining, and the relative lack of opposition to the frequent government interventions have been explained by the position of coalition cabinets in a pillarized society. Government already had learned from pillarization, that technocrat devices are suited to solve political problems in case of societal dividedness, and allowed government to act as an independent agent.

The Dutch situation offers a remarkable contrast to that in Belgium, countries that are rather similar in many respects. The absence of a third pillar in Belgium (in Holland the protestants) has turned pillarization into polarization, between catholics and socialists. Because of the higher conflict potential of any government interference in such a situation until 1975 government only interefered in collective bargaining if it was asked to do so. Its involvement was not technocratic but "pragmatic", i.e. not taking into account the economic conditions but the relative positions of unions and employers and its own preferences and accounting the avarage out of them. In this much more politicized pattern of collective bargaining unions use all force they have

and the "partners" they have in government to get favourable outcomes in the process of collective bargaining. Not economic conditions but political conditions are crucial for union behaviour. Unions are right in evaluating political conditions as crucial, the political color of the coalition pattern a more politicized one, in contrast to the de-politicized and economy-based model of wage bargaining in the Netherlands.

Labelling the Netherlands an "economic model" and Belgium a "political model" gives rise to a paradox. For in Holland there has been large government interference, and in Belgium almost none, at least until 1975. The solution is that Dutch cabinets acted taking into account solely the economic situation. So the economy rules, partly through non-partisan government interference. In Belgium cabinets more or less supported one of the labour market parties without directly interfering in favour of this particular labour market party. Apparently government gave a back-up to the bargaining position of one or the other.

b. The second interpretation.

This first interpretation, on the whole, does not consider union force to be a precondition of union influence. Only for Belgium it assigns a possible effect to union force, although cabinet composition may be regarded the major factor. The second interpretation focuses on the possibility of a structural effect of the unionization rate, but only of its general level. It would offer some other explanation for the diverging role of cabinets. The low level of the unionization rate in the Netherlands allows government to make a rather sharp distinction, between objectives of labour unions and interests of employees. It even provided cabinets with the opportunity to define those interests themselves. That condition makes it possible for cabinets to take an active stand in decision making on labour conditions. It allows them the active accomodation of the objectives of employees' and employers' organizations, defending the interests of one labour market group against the other. Especially when the overall labour market situation gives one group advantages above the other, governments tend to soften the effects of the labour market imbalance upon the defensive group.

In Belgium the level of unionization has been far above that of the Netherlands since the Second World War. If this level is taken as a measure of structural union force, and if a larger union force tends to diminish the room left for autonomous government policy making in the field of labour conditions, Belgian governments should have less such room. Indeed, until 1975 Belgian cabinets abstained from interfering in collective bargaining. Its role was confined to playing that of a referee, it interfered only at the common request of both the parties concerned. For the rest, it had to choose sides, for or against the demands that unions and employers' federations brought forward. The option of a wholly autonomous position did not exist in Belgium, in contrast to the Netherlands, because the distinction between employees in general and union members in particular is not politically relevant. In this respect in Belgium the only that matters is whether the christian democratic and the social democratic unions strife for common purposes or not, at a certain point of time. If not, cabinets tended to promote the objectives of the catholic unions only (against employers as well as against the socialist unions). If the unions showed a considerable degree of unity, cabinets had to choose from two alternative options: to support the unions or to support

the employers' federations. The outcome depended on the composition of the cabinet. Belgian cabinets have been partisans in central bargaining and in conflicts on the labour market, indeed. In short, not only characteristics of the political system but also the existing structural union force might be part of an explanation of government behaviour.

The two alternative interpretations lead to diverging theoretical evaluations of union force as a precondition of union influence and union power. They also lead to diverging predictions regarding the effective role of unions in the nearby future.

5. Conclusions

a. The concepts reviewed

The findings of section 3 throw some light on the value of the concepts union force and union influence. About the third concept, union power, no conclusion can be reached. Possibly its operationalization is open to criticism as it is too narrow or fails to include a more direct knowledge of collective bargaining and decision making in industrial relations. The method applied does not allow that kind of conclusion.

The concept of union force was defined as a combination of 4 dimensions and several subdimensions. Its operationalization, for practical purposes, was limited to one subdimension only, the rate of organization. The other subdimensions were included only as far as they were quantifiable and also would have any effect in Belgium and the Netherlands. Such a narrow use of the concept of union force probably diminishes its value. As argued, at least the degree of division among union organizations should be taken in consideration as it might have effect on union force. In the case of Belgium the concept, operationalized that way, offered some clue to the degree of union power, operationalized as the direction of change in EIS. In the Dutch case union force did not offer any indication whatsoever of the degree of union power. For both countries the concept seemed less important than the combination of union force and the political or economic conditions, which was labeled union influence. In the Netherlands economic conditions, the rate of economic growth and that of unemployment were related to the degree of union power. In Belgium the political conditions, the participation of social democrats in government were more important. For other countries possibly a combination of such conditions should be taken into consideration in comparative research of union power.

The importance of the political or economic conditions, one of the outcomes of the research, makes the concept of union influence preferable to that of union force. One of the reasons for this preference is that the operationalization of the concept of union force will always be a narrow one, without some of the subdimensions distinguished in section I. Of course, a more including operationalization should be tried, but is hard to reach. This is due both to problems of quantification and to the problems that arise when non-quantified subdimensions have to be related to the rate of organization, which is quantified by definition. The second reason to prefer the concept of union influence is the importance of the political and economic conditions in our research on union power. At least for Holland and Belgium the concept of union influence - in contrast to that of union force - was a reasonable or even a good indicator of the power unions can wield. That union influence tells us more than

union force should not surprise. Economic and social conditions have most effects on these subdimensions of union force that were hardest to quantify, such as the rate of mobilization. Only if such dimensions could be better quantified and be included not only in a wider definition of union force than is applied in most of the existing literature, but also in a wider operationalization than we have used, the concept of union force would have autonomous value.

b. Union force and labour power in Holland and Belgium in the 90's

Forecasting the role of labour unions in the near future could be based on the two interpretations discussed in section 4. Implicit assumption is that the basic features of the Belgian and Dutch fields of social forces remain unaltered. That is, the rates of unionization remain more or less the same, in the Netherlands economic factors continue to preponderate, as in Belgium the factors of a political character. This set of assumptions does not seem unrealistic. Since 1980 the rate of unionization is stabilized (as in Belgium) or slightly decreasing (as in the Netherlands, though to the lowest level since 1945). This particular assumption will come under tension only if the unity between private and public sector unions is broken. In that case, the growth of the latter no longer can compensate for the decline in rank and file of the former, as actually did happen in the Netherlands. However, such a situation is not likely at this moment. As to the preponderance of the specific set of factors, this belongs to the traditions of politics in both countries, not likely to disappear on a short term.

In the first interpretation union influence in the Netherlands and Belgium is considered to be the product of economic and political conditions respectively. In the Netherlands the general level of unemployment and the rate of economic growth are most relevant. Economic experts generally expect a continuation of the high unemployment level for the next ten years. As to economic growth the general expectation is that it has lastingly recovered from the depths of the early 1980's. As to the union influence a contradictory picture arises from these expectations. A high level of unemployment contributes to the stabilization on the present low level of the labour union influence, whereas continuing economic growth contributes to the increase of union influence, as reflected in EIS. The solution, most probably, lies in government behaviour. If its first aim will be the reduction of unemployment, as might be the case when social democrats re-enter, and if it leads to the restauration of a situation of "full employment" (less than 3% unemployment), an increase of union influence is to be expected at the end of the next ten years.

However, if its first concern lies in maintaining economic growth rates, as might be the case with liberals in office, and reduction of the unemployment levels is not reached in a "market conform" way, union influence will not recover from its present low. In both cases government behaviour is steered by economic considerations, but a more or less non-partisan technocratic option is not open anymore. The coexistence of economic growth and high unemployment, never seen before since 1945, will compell Dutch cabinets to give priority to one economic desirability above the other. The traditional economic model of the Netherlands will thus become more politicized, without becoming as politicized as the Belgian tradition. The end of technocracy

gives rise to what might be dubbed a politico-economic model. More than before union influence will become dependent on cabinet composition. Next to this general prediction, a more specific one might be added. If the prediction is correct that the Netherlands will be ruled by centre-right coalitions in the years after 1986 (as is argued in Geul/Nobelen/Slomp 1985), the then given constellation of economic and political conditions gives rise to the expectation that union influence, as reflected a.o. in EIS, will stay low. The influence of Belgian unions, in the first interpretation, is considered to be mainly dependent on political conditions ("political model"). Projecting this finding into the future one may expect a restoration of union influence under cabinets with social democrats, and a stabilization on its present low level in case of centre-right cabinets. As latter is to be expected (cf. *ibid.*) union influence in Belgium will not increase either.

In the second interpretation union influence is dependent on the combination of the general level of unionization and the composition of cabinets. A low level of unionization gives room to cabinets to decide on its own in matters of union concern (Netherlands), whereas a high level of unionization forces cabinets to choose sides in distributional conflicts, and to become partisan in the struggles (Belgium). In both countries unions are dependent on cabinet composition for their influence, thus, albeit in a different way. With social democrats in office, the Belgian unions have won a decisive lead in their confrontation with employers, for the time being. Whereas in the Netherlands the unions still have to wait the cabinet's evaluations of the economic situation and prospects before they can be certain to have won an important supporter. In case of centre-right cabinets Belgian unions automatically are put into the defensive, whereas Dutch unions might be surprised by the support from the side of government authorities, especially those belonging to the left wing of christian democracy. Again, if our expectations as to cabinet composition in both countries are correct, i.e. rule of centre-right coalitions, the unions better do not hope for a more influential role in the time ahead. In Belgium, because the composition of cabinet alone forbids it, in the Netherlands, because a centre-right coalition will not contain left-wing christian democrats (as they seem to have left the political stage in the last years almost completely).

Different arguments, different lines of reasoning. But they lead to only one conclusion. Starting from an empirical analysis of Belgian and Dutch union power since 1960. Most probably, union influence will remain low, in a comparative historical perspective, in the Benelux area during the decade ahead.

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Figure 1a: Netherlands, development of employees' income share, 1960-1985

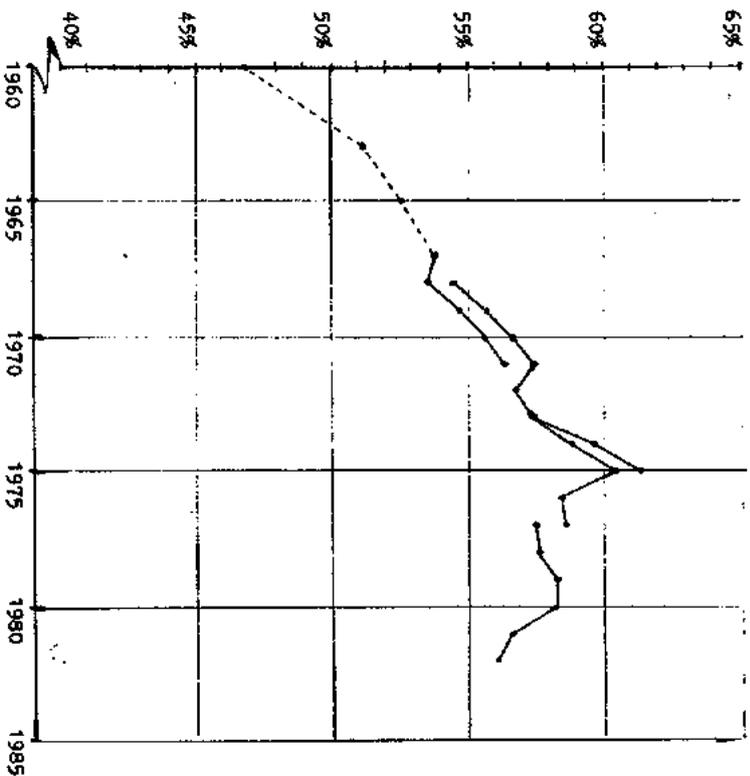
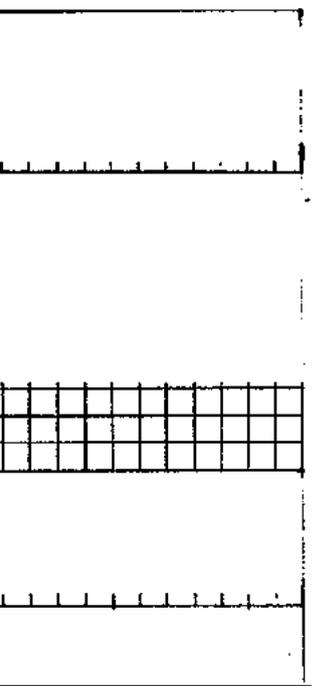


Figure 1b: Netherlands, cabinet composition, 1960-1985



 with Social Democrat.
 without Soc.D.

Figure 1b: Netherlands, rate of structural unemployment, 1960-1985

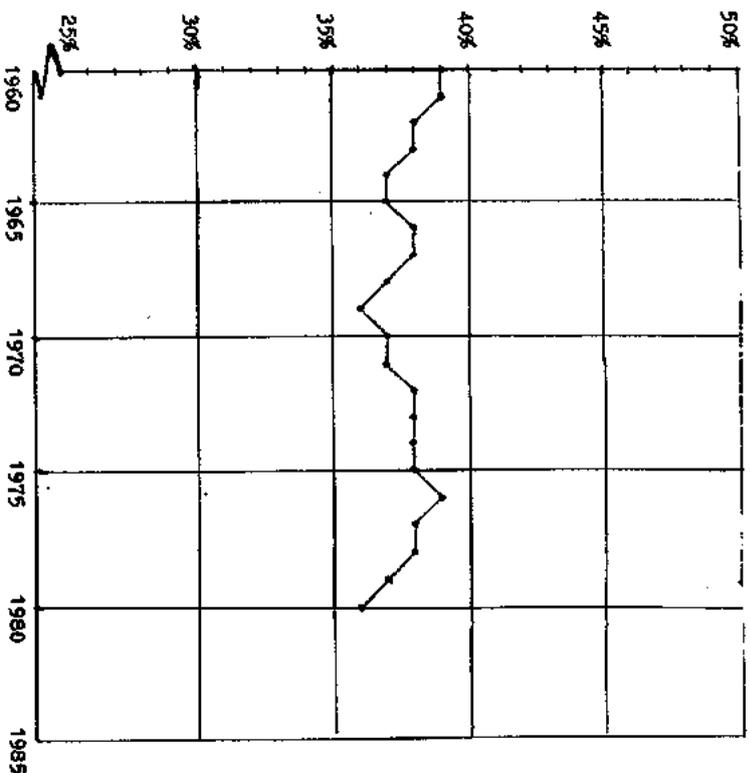


Figure 1c: Netherlands, rate of economic growth, 1961-1981

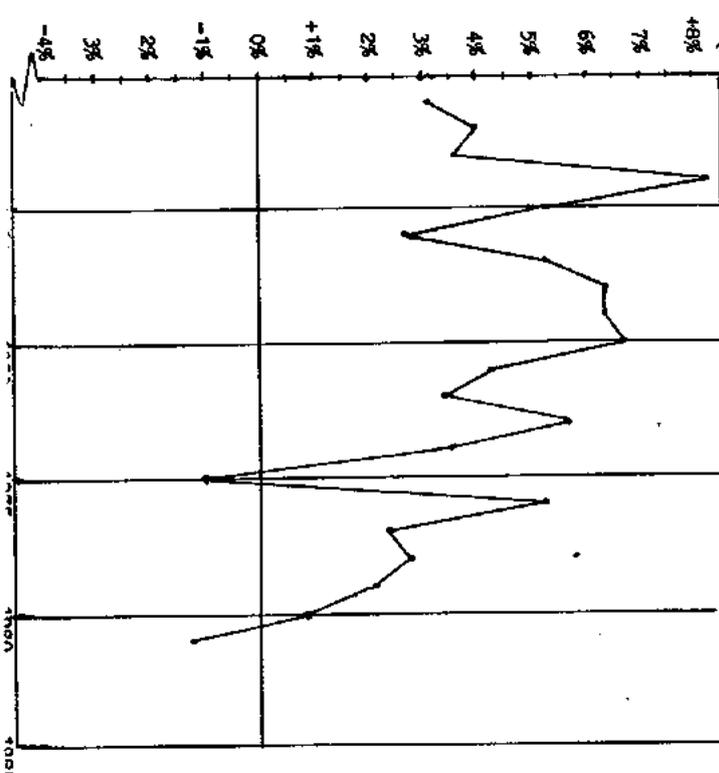


Figure 1a: Netherlands, rate of unemployment, 1960-1980

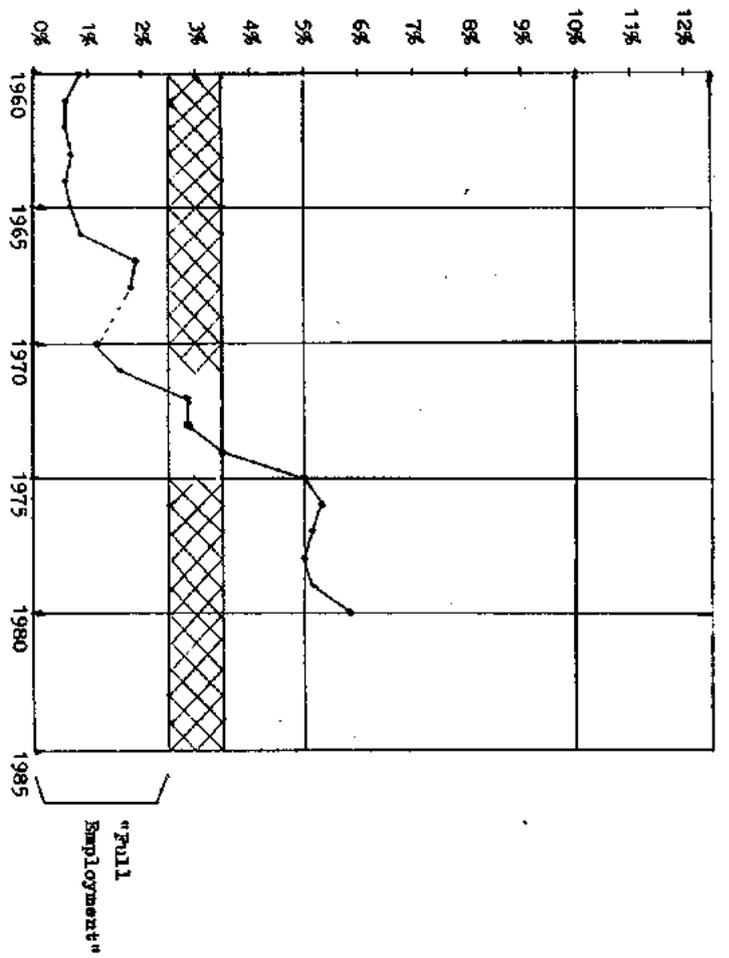


Figure 2a: Belgium, development of employees, various years, 1960-1980

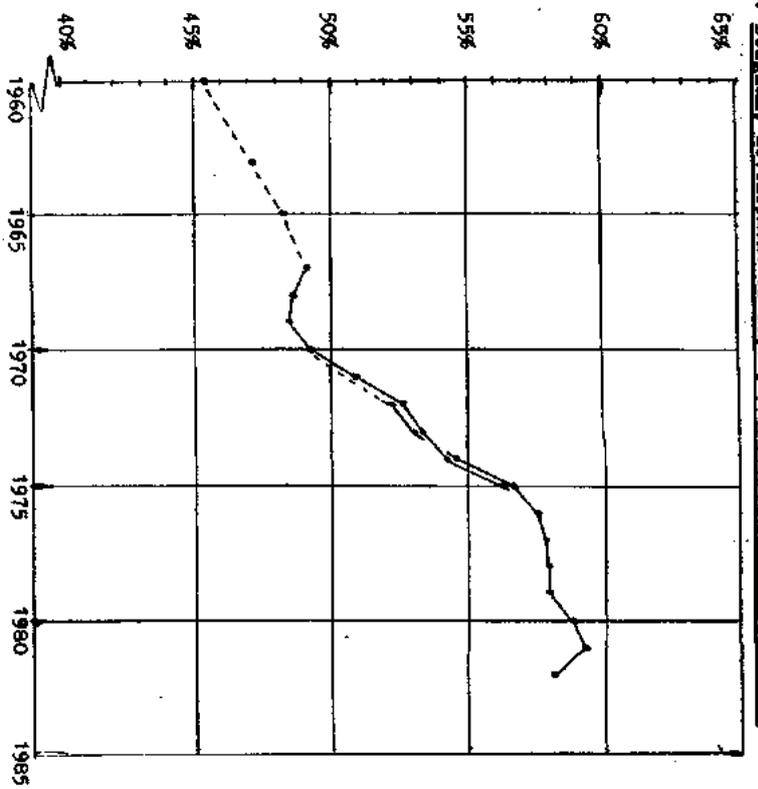


Figure 2b: Belgium, rate of organization, 1960-1980

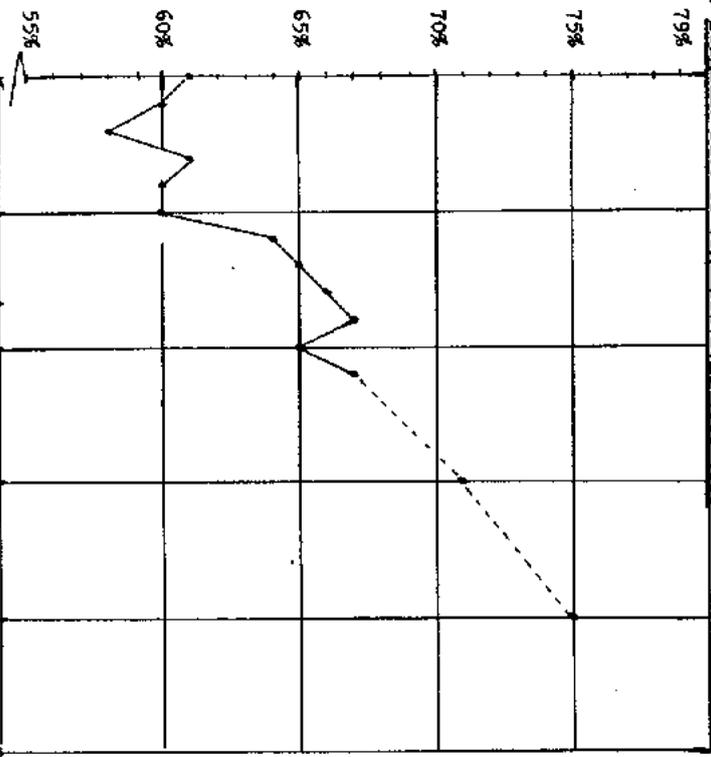
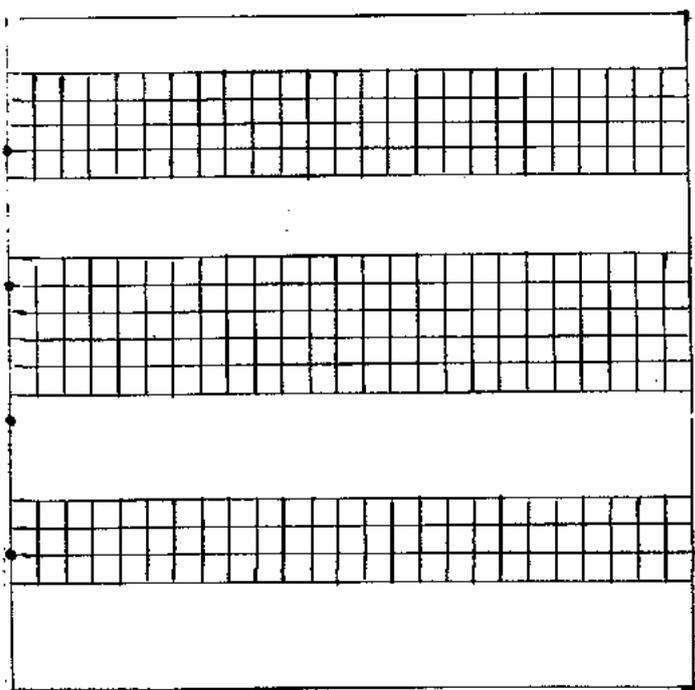


Figure 2c: Belgium, cabinet composition, 1960-1985



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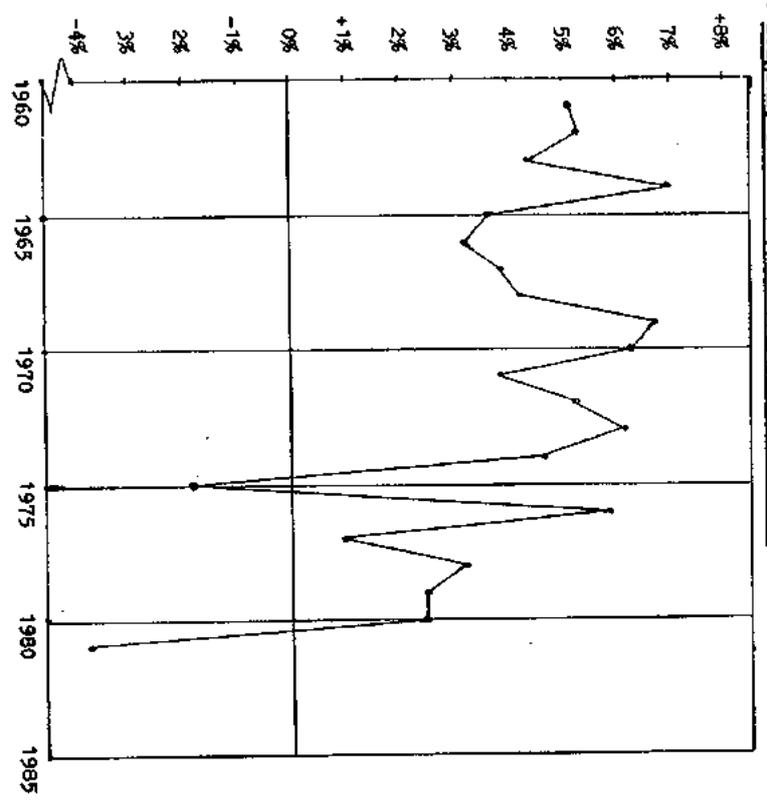
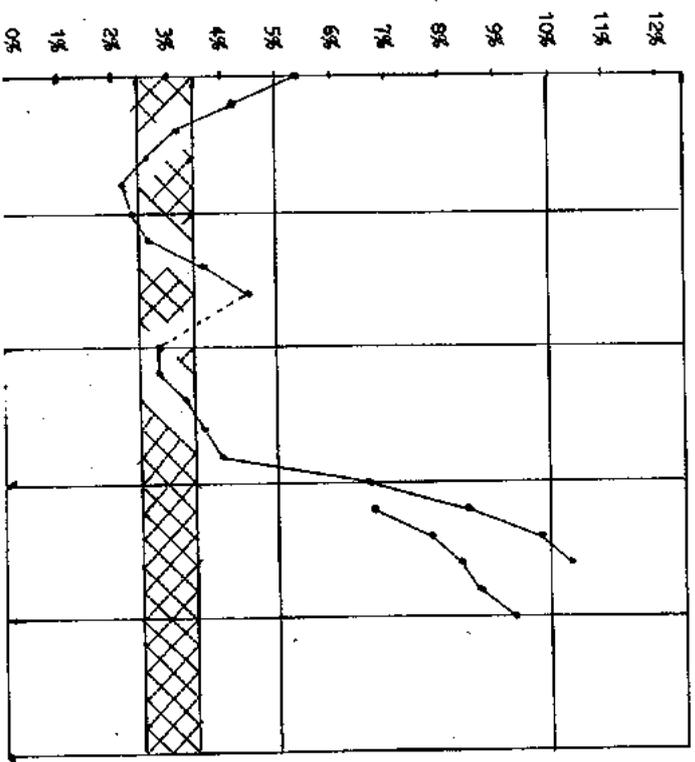


Figure 2: Belgium, rate of unemployment, 1960-1980



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the role of trade unions in the coming decade

Maastricht, november 20-21-22, 1985

TRADE UNIONISM IN THE NETHERLANDS:
FROM MEMBER TO CLIENT
"A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION"

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**european centre to
work and society
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**Adapting to change: the case of the trade unions²
in the Netherlands**

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paper to be presented at the European Conference
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organized by:

European centre for work and society

Adapting to change: the case of the trade unions
in the Netherlands ¹

By: - Drs. J.C. van Ham *

Drs. J. Paauwe **

Prof.Dr. A.R.T. Williams ***

1. Introduction

Since 1980, we have been observing the decline of trade union membership. This phenomenon is not restricted to the Netherlands but can also be seen in France, West-Germany, Italy, Great Britain and the United States of America.

It is said that trade unions have had their hey-day and they will increasingly lose their attraction for members and would-be members. Already there have been predictions telling us that, around the year 2000, membership rates in the US will only be about 10%. At the moment this is 19%, in 1980 it was 23%.² As far as the Dutch situation is concerned a confidential study of the Industrial Workers Union FNV, is said to predict that if the present policies should be continued then today's membership of 220.000 will drop to 127.000 by 1990.³

What is remarkable is that some have maintained that as membership declines, so will the power and influence of trade unions.

Remarkable because in our social system trade unions fulfil functions which cannot adequately be performed by any other bodies and which furthermore are in few ways directly dependent on the

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number of their members.

In this paper, we will elaborate this argument by pointing out that these functions can be described as falling into two categories.

Firstly, those concerned with the protection of individuals against companies, employers' organizations, government bodies and other institutions (section 2).

Secondly, the role that trade unions fulfil in the general functioning of our economic system (section 3).

Naturally the decline of membership has an effect on trade union finances. That is why, after a short investigation into the causes of the loss of members (section 4), we shall put forward some possible solutions to such monetary problems.⁴ These solutions involve adaptation of the organizational structure and working methods (section 5).

Finally we make some tentative concluding comments (section 6).

2. Protection of members interests

One of the most important original tasks of a trade union was the protection of the interests of members against those of other possibly conflicting groups. Generally the individual is not sufficiently able to defend himself against or to resist organizations and institutions far more powerful than he. Only by bringing together many such individuals, can workers form a real countervailing power.⁵

We do not believe that any of the other possible alternatives - legislation, personnel management and works councils - can be said to form a real countervailing power on behalf of employees.

Legislation

Only those laws which are simple and comprehensible, whose breakage is accompanied by meaningful penalties and which have an adequate inspection machinery, can be considered powerful. The majority of the laws in the Netherlands aimed at the protection of individuals against large organizations, lack one or more of these essential

properties. Examples are the 'Works Council Constitution Act', the 'Working Conditions Act', working environment legislation, and others. Furthermore it appears from research that when individuals litigate with large companies and institutions their chances are against winning such a lawsuit. This is a consequence of the fact that large organizations have more resources, they can engage superior lawyers and they have more staying-power as well.⁶

The personnel management function

Although there is some vagueness about the actual functions of personnel management⁷ we maintain that they cannot be expected to protect the interests of employees because their primary concern is with the styling and maintenance of an exchange relationship between the individual and the organization. The individual contributes his labour to the organization and the organization gives him in return a variety of benefits, both in a material and an immaterial sense such as pay, job security, a safe and sociable workplace, career development etc.

We see the personnel managers major pre-occupation as being with advising management with regard to the development and if necessary adjustment of this delegate exchange balance. As such it will be impossible for him solely to protect employee's interests. In addition of course, even if this were to be possible, few personnel managers possess the necessary authority to form a realistic countervailing power to management.

Works council

A similar lack of power results in works councils not being able to offer enough counterweight for the optimal protection of the employees interests. This lack of influence is not so much caused by insufficient legal powers as by the 'temporal' nature of the works council in that council members are only elected for a restricted term, by a lack of expertise when compared to management and by the difficulties of maintaining good contacts with their electorate. A recent study showed that the works council only acts effectively in formal and procedural matters, and unfortunately such subjects are seldom of any interest to the ordinary employee. On all matters

of major importance to him, for example hours of work, workplace automation etc., the trade unions will be called in.⁸

3. The contribution of trade unions to the general functioning of our social-economic system

Evidence from some international research shows how trade unions have contributed to the efficiency and effectiveness of the social-economic system.

Freeman and Medoff⁹, Harvard political economists, conclude the following, based on research in the US: "On balance unionization appears to improve rather than to harm the social and economic system ... Unions are associated with greater efficiency in most settings, reduce over all earnings inequality, and contribute to rather than detract from economic and political freedom".

It has been shown that even Japanese unions, although sometimes thought to be weaker than the unions of the West, have managed to reduce over all earnings inequality between blue-collar and white-collar workers and are able to offer their members effective protection against any sharp management practices.

They also play an important role in decision making at company level through their membership of consultative committees. In fact, researchers suggest that they have made a major contribution to the efficiency of the large Japanese companies thanks to their use of countervailing power.¹⁰

Although comparable studies of the Dutch situation are unknown to us, we may assume - also because of the frequent participation of trade unions in the various branches and institutions of our macro social-economic system - that their contribution is very important.¹¹

Furthermore, we may point to their function in the realization of consensus without having to involve a complex variety of smaller groups, and through their disciplined presentation of the elicited opinions and interests. On the level of specific industries and individual businesses they also contribute to the realization of

social consensus through the institutionalized system of consultation and bargaining.

We can thus conclude that trade unions fulfil a critical function in current society which no other body, or legislation, is equipped to do. It is time now therefore to consider why, given their importance to society, they are currently losing members.

4. Causes of the decline of membership

The (possible) causes of the decline of membership are the following:¹²

High unemployment. Large-scale unemployment results in a lower rate of unionization. We should like to point out here that whereas the threat of unemployment may result in a higher rate of unionization, actual unemployment results in a decline in membership rate. This is confirmed by statistical data bearing on the British situation while data related to the Netherlands also show a time-lag between the mutations in the amount of unemployment and the rate of unionization.¹³

A shift in the sectors of employment. Membership rates have been influenced by a decline in numbers employed in the more traditional trade union orientated industries such as shipbuilding and mining coupled with a growth of employment in new sectors (such as 'high-technology' businesses) where until now it has been difficult for unionism to get a firm footing. Closely connected with this development is a shift in employment opportunities from blue-collar to white-collar jobs and a shift from large to smaller-scale organizations. Again, both areas where unions have yet to organize effectively.

Changing working patterns. Until recently the greater part of trade union membership consisted of workers with 40-hour weeks and permanent employment. A strong bond and identification with the job could thus come into existence, which - together with the concentration of large numbers workers in large organizations - resulted in high membership rates.

Today, however, we see far more differentiated working patterns,

part-time jobs, mini-max contracts, the use of temporary employment agencies and the temporary engagement of workers, as and when necessary, are all becoming more common. These patterns result in work taking a less central place in life and the increasing reduction of working hours may also result in a decline in personal involvement with the job and its environment, so that the demand for unionization will be even less.

The regulation of unemployment benefits. In countries such as Belgium, Sweden and Denmark, unemployment benefits are provided through institutions which are considered actually to be a part of the trade union. This has led to the stabilisation (Belgium) or even increase (Denmark, Sweden) in union membership. In the Netherlands, such involvement of unions with the provision of unemployment benefits occurs only in the building industry and accordingly that sector has a higher rate of unionization than others in the Netherlands.

Internal factors. A number of internal factors could also be responsible for the decrease in the attraction of unionism to members and potential members. For example, in the Netherlands there have been several mergers through which smaller and more professionally focussed unions merged into a larger whole. These mergers make it harder for members with a specific professional background to identify with or to be involved in the new larger union. The more the membership decreases, the harder it is to find enough active members at any one workplace to keep the union point of view in front of their colleagues and thus the less opportunities there are for recruitment.

Changes in values. We believe there has been a decline in the numbers joining the trade unions for ideological reasons or because of a desire for solidarity with a particular social group. In contrast individuals now seem to join for more materialistic and pragmatic reasons. This means for the union officials that members can no longer be addressed as a group or collectivity and that they can no longer be convinced on the basis of moral arguments alone. It also implies that the group of permanent members who have joined the union because of moral or ideological convictions (who also remain members regardless of the actual policy of the union) is becoming smaller and smaller.

5. Changes in the organization

To sum up the above mentioned causes, we may conclude that the possible target-groups of trade unions have undergone considerable change. There are fewer people employed in easily unionizable sectors (such as industry) and fewer people have full-time jobs and long-term contracts. There are more people entitled to unemployment benefits, there are also fewer individuals who join trade unions for primarily ideological reasons and there are also more part-time workers and more highly qualified people employed in new sectors which are often branches of industry in which the distinction between employer and employee is becoming increasingly blurred. It is these growing groups of workers and otherwise active individuals who, on the basis of a calculated weighing of the pros and cons, might opt for a benefit-package attuned to their personal needs and interests. Here, membership of a union is not so much central as is the price to be paid and the services to be received. There is a world of difference between members and clients of trade unions and we believe the opportunity for growth lies primarily within the latter category. It is in order to serve the interests of this group that trade unions must change their structure and methods. Our recommendations, which follow below, for changes in the organization structure and procedures are based partly on that distinction between members and clients.

From a functional to a customer focussed organization. At the moment, many trade unions have a functional structure of tasks. There are separate departments or policy groups for pay and conditions, labour market problems, participation issues, social policy affairs, education, etc.¹⁴ This functional division of tasks is not related to the specific interests of any particular potential member target group. Therefore, we argue for an organization structure which focusses on the customer in the sense that every target-group (eg., part-time workers, old-age pensioners, unemployed, disability beneficiaries, highly qualified, etc.) will have its own project team looking after its specific needs within

the trade unions. Our aim is to create a project based structure, in which every project team will aim at serving the interest of a specific target-group and at developing a package of benefits and facilities aimed specifically at the needs of this group. Every project team will also be responsible for financing part of its own activities.

Exposure in the mass media. At the moment in the Netherlands trade unions are associated in the public mind with matters like rising unemployment, declining social security, strikes, failed wage demands, etc.; gloomy news, not because the media thus presents such matters, but because they are very complicated. Trade unions are seldom presented in a clear positive context.

Furthermore, trade unions are mentioned in the news too often. They seem to hold views on almost any subject; and so can easily be seen to resemble a political party. Such exposure meets with similar interest as a weather forecast, which appears every day and which may be read but which does not personally concern the average reader. It would be preferable not to be in the news so often, and then only in connection with issues which are close to the interests of members or of groups targetted for membership and ideally of course, where trade unions can be seen in a positive light. Of course it is important for trade unions to be concerned with matters like the reduction of unemployment and the continuation of adequate social security, members would expect nothing else. But, the chances of achieving major success are small in these areas. That is why, besides these, trade unions should be heard publicly on other matters of concern to members or potential members where clear gains can be made.

For example: automation agreements, provision of retraining facilities, maintenance of purchasing power, obtaining additions to sickness benefits and the realization of pension improvements. In addition extra positive publicity can be gained from the introduction of additional services for members such as rapid answering of questions and problems, legal assistance, cheap travel, holiday arrangements, insurances, pension benefits, etc.

From member to client. As was said before, because of the new target-groups it is important to distinguish between union members and union clients. On the one hand, there are the members who join the union (and remain) prompted by moral and ideological motives, for whom the present functional union structure is especially suited because they want wide participation. On the other hand, there are those who consider membership from a more pragmatic point of view, who will only become "clients" when they actually need the union. For example in cases of disagreement with employers about pay and conditions, threat of dismissal, amalgamation, closure, reorganization, etc. And as soon as the difficulty in question is resolved satisfactorily, they are likely to resign their membership. The union will have to prepare itself for such temporary members.¹⁵ For example the structure of subscriptions must be adapted. Permanent members contribute year after year, while clients are likely to contribute only for a short period but during that short time are also likely to make use of specific and often expensive union services.

In order to recompense the more or less permanent members for their loyalty there are various possibilities:

- Exemption from subscription after five years or the return of part of the annual contribution via a system of bonuses.¹⁶
- Free access to individual advice and help. For example mediation in working conflicts, legal assistance, etc.).
- Large reductions in the price of the general benefits like cheap holidays, travel, insurances, pensions, etc.).

Clients could contribute like normal members when they join but have to pay a further contribution if they use the individual advice and help service within one or two years. They too will have immediate access to the general benefits-package but really large price reductions here will take place only after five years membership.

Financing. Hopefully making a financial distinction between long and short service members in this manner will go some way to solving trade unions income problems.

Other ways to improve the income situation would be to increase the

efficiency and speed of member service through automation, and ceasing to provide some specialist services in-house. In this context, many organizations have found it cheaper to hire in external experts as and when needed and often have noted that this also provides service of a better quality. Hopefully, again such improvements would make a union more attractive to new members.

However, even after all such savings have been made and potential members attracted, there may still be a deficit. In such circumstances we feel that a strong case should be made for government subsidizing the union. In the same way as every individual experiences the educational system, so every individual sometime during his life will be in receipt of income, be it wages or benefits. And as our society spends a lot on the educational system, so should it also collectively pay for the smooth running of the wages and benefits allocation system. This can only be guaranteed by strong trade unions through their contribution to an active pay and conditions policy and implementation, and their participation in the tripartite meetings which ensures the smooth running of the general social economic system.

Unions have a right to be subsidized by society because they help produce "collective goods". They do this at two levels. Firstly at the national level through their contribution to general societal well-being as we have just outlined. And secondly at local level through reaching agreements on wages and working conditions from which all subsequently benefit, irrespective of whether they have actually paid their union dues or not.¹⁷

Thus trade unions incur extra costs for the benefit of society in general, collective goods - for which they receive no income. Thus they cannot be expected to compete on a cost basis with normal profit-making organizations in respect of their provision of member services without some government subsidy.

Therefore we maintain government has no choice but to accept their responsibility for the common well-being and to ensure the continuation of our social-economic system. If unionism were to lose its countervailing power, it would mean a serious undermining of our

social-economic structure, since the three sided negotiating - and bargaining structure is an essential component of it. If one of the partners contracts out of it, the system and therefore also the structure will stop functioning. Another kind of society will come into existence and another kind of social-economic structure. The question is, of course, whether we want this to happen and whether indeed we can afford it.

6. Conclusion

After a survey of the various functions of unionism in our society and a short outline of the factors causing the present loss of members, we have offered several suggestions for adapting unions' organization structure and procedures. An adaptation which, in our opinion, is necessary because of the changes in the environment of trade unions.

Looking back, we realize that we may have given our opinions rather too bluntly, but as a contribution to the discussion, we hope this is permissible. Because of our emphasis on, on the one hand specific benefits for specific target groups and, on the other hand the provision of an attractive general benefits package, we can imagine that questions may have been raised in some of your minds concerning where we would place the concept of solidarity. Solidarity is, of course a very important element in the policy of the Dutch trade union movement. We do not believe solidarity should mean that a union has to reduce the differences between all its different target-groups to the same denominator by means of laborious compromises. We do believe that in the future, the concept 'solidarity' will chiefly derive its contents from the principles underlying the union's actions, and from how each individual's point of view is respected and shown understanding.

Finally, we would point out that some of our suggestions have already been realized. For example, there are separate secretarial departments for foreign workers and for women in some Dutch trade unions. Why could not a comparable procedure be applied to other categories of members? Furthermore, there are unions (such as the

Dutch ACOM and the british ASTMS and EETPU) which have asked themselves, painstakingly, what the needs of their (potential) members would be, and which then have adapted their general and specific benefits packages accordingly and have thus managed to hold on to and in some cases even increase their membership.

Trade unions will be able to perform their functions (as described in sections 2 and 3), only if firstly they can adapt themselves to the changing circumstances and secondly if they are given sufficient room by employers' organizations and the government. If not, new (splinter) groups will emerge probably less professional and less conscientious than trade unions today. Should trade unions lose ground still more, then there will be danger of our society becoming increasingly splintered and anarchic and our social-economic system becoming harder to control.

Jan van Ham
Jaap Paauwe
Roger Williams

September 1985

Notes

- 1 Some parts of this paper have previously appeared in an internal working paper of the National Federation of Christian Trade Unions in the Netherlands (CNV) and in an article in Economisch Statistische Berichten, 05-15-1985, pp. 468-473.
- 2 Financieel Dagblad, 02-13-1985.
- 3 Trouw, 01-26-1985.
- 4 For one or two unions, the loss of members does not immediately result in financial problems. This because of a strong financial position and its proceeds.
- 5 The concept 'countervailing power' was first used by Galbraith in his development of a Countervailing Power Theory.
See: J.K. Galbraith. American Capitalism. Boston, 1956.
- 6 See: D. Black. The Behaviour of Law. Academic Press, New York, 1976.
- 7 See: G. Ritzer and H.M. Trice. An occupation in conflict, a study of the personnel manager. New York, 1969, p. 11.
And see: W.A. Arts, J. Paauwe, A.R.T. Williams,
"Ontwikkelingen in de personeelsfunctie" Economisch Statistische Berichten. 08-13-1980, pp. 900-904
- 8 Samenvatting Kiezersonderzoek. Centrale Sociale Sector/afdeling Onderzoek. Philips-uitgave, November 1984, Eindhoven.
- 9 R.B. Freeman, J.l. Nedoff. What do unions do? New York, Basic Books, 1984.

- 10 Taishiro Shirai (editor). Contemporary Industrial Relations in Japan. Madison, 1983.
- 11 See: Prof. Dr. A.W.M. Teulings. "Ontwikkelingen binnen werknemersorganisaties, een organisatie-sociologische benadering". Sociaal Maandblad Arbeid. November 1984.
- 12 The term 'possible' is used deliberately. There is some international comparative research which has been done into the complex number and type of variables involved in explaining the development of trade union membership. But here we are concerned with the causes of the loss of members in the Netherlands during the period of 1980 till now. A period about which scarcely any empirical data are available. This with exception of some research (by A. Teulings) into the losses of members and the relationship between members and trade union (for the Dutch Voedingsbond FNV), titled: Strijd en Zekerheid. Amsterdam, 1983.

For international comparative research we used:

G. Bain, R. Price. Profiles of Union Growth. Oxford, 1980.

R. Price, G. Bain. "Union Growth Revisited: 1948-1974" in Perspective, British Journal of Industrial Relations. vol. XIV, no. 3, 1976, pp. 46-48.

The list of factors is partially based on: Steen Scheur. "The impact of unemployment on union density in Denmark - draft version presented at the EGOS-Colloquium". Amersfoort, October 1984, Utrecht. And see: J. Paauwe. "Ledenverlies en ledenbinding van de vakbeweging in internationaal perspectief". In E+M, CNV, no. 3, March 1985.

- 13 See: VNO-Studienotitie 1984/3. "Ontwikkeling ledental vakbeweging 1977-1983", p. 23.

Furthermore, we should like to point out that the relationship between unemployment and the rate of unionization depends not only on the volume of unemployment, but also on the duration of it as well. The higher the proportion of long term (more than

one year) unemployed of the total, then the higher the loss of trade union members will be. A comparable analysis of the statistical data concerning Denmark and Great Britain supports this argument.

See:

- Steen Scheur, 1984, p. 8.
- R. Price, G. Bain. "Union Growth in Britain: Retrospect and Prospect". British Journal of Industrial Relations. Vol. XXI, no. 1, 1983.
- J. Visser. "Union Growth and the present employment crisis in Western Europe, paper presented at the EGOS-Colloquium". Amersfoort, October 1985.

- 14 See: Teulings, November 1984, pp. 732-733.
- 15 The fact, of course, that members may join trade unions primarily for moral and ideological reasons, thus not exclude them from also having some more pragmatic motives as well. A tendency which can only grow. Hence our argument for an approach based on target-groups, in which a service-package has to be developed for every target-group.
- 16 In Belgium this system has already functioned for many years. Annually trade union members receive back about two thirds of their original dues from their trade union. The union in turn can claim this amount from the employers.
- 17 W.A. Arts. "Vakbonds democratie en ledenverlies". In Economisch Statistische Berichten. July 1983, p. 607 and
W.A. Arts. "Vakbeweging, conjunctuur en ledenbinding". In Economisch Statistische Berichten. August 1985, p. 859.

DISCOURS DE MATHIAS HINTERSCHIED, SECRÉTAIRE GÉNÉRAL
DE LA CONFÉDÉRATION EUROPÉENNE DES SYNDICATS, LORS DE LA
CONFÉRENCE EUROPÉENNE ORGANISÉE PAR LE CENTRE EUROPÉEN
"TRAVAIL ET SOCIÉTÉ"

MAASTRICHT, LES 20, 21 ET 22 NOVEMBRE 1985



LE RÔLE DES SYNDICATS DANS LA DÉCENNIE À VENIR

2.

L'HISTOIRE DU MOUVEMENT SYNDICAL EST SEMÉE DE VICTOIRES ET DE DÉFAITES, DE PAS EN AVANT ET EN ARRIÈRE, D'AVANCÉES ET DE RECULS, HEUREUSEMENT PLUS D'AVANCÉES QUE DE RECULS, SINON NOUS SERIONS ENCORE DANS LA SITUATION SOCIALE DU SIÈCLE PASSÉ. L'HISTOIRE NE MANQUE PAS DE MONTRER QUE, LORSQUE LES OUVRIERS ONT VOULU ASSURER LA PROMOTION DE LEUR INTÉRÊTS, ILS SE SONT TRÈS SOUVENT HEURTÉS À UNE RÉPRESSION FÉROCE. FAUT-IL RAPPELER CE QUE SIGNIFIE, POUR LA CLASSE OUVRIÈRE, LA DATE DU 1ER MAI ? LES 1ERS MAI DES ANNÉES 1890, 1891, 1892 ET 1893 FURENT TRÈS TUMULTUEUX ET PARFOIS SANGLANTS. D'UNE MANIÈRE GÉNÉRALE ON PEUT AFFIRMER QUE LES GRANDES CONQUÊTES OUVRIÈRES SE RATTACHENT TOUJOURS À DES LUTTES SOCIALES D'UNE AMPLEUR CONSIDÉRABLE : RIEN NE NOUS A ÉTÉ DONNÉ EN CADEAU, TOUT A DÛ ÊTRE CONQUIS : LES RÉFORMES OBTENUES NE SONT POUR LES SYNDICATS PAS DES ABOUTISSEMENTS, MAIS DOIVENT ÊTRE CONSIDÉRÉES COMME DES INSTRUMENTS MENANT À DE NOUVELLES CONQUÊTES.

L'ACTION OUVRIÈRE S'EST DONNÉE COMME BUT L'ÉMANCIPATION OUVRIÈRE; ELLE S'EST DONNÉE COMME OUTIL LE SYNDICAT ET COMME MOYENS LA REVENDICATION, LA NÉGOCIATION, LA DÉMONSTRATION ET SI NÉCESSAIRE LA GRÈVE. LE SYNDICAT CONSTITUE LE PORTE-PAROLE ET LE REPRÉSENTANT DES INTÉRÊTS COLLECTIFS DES TRAVAILLEURS ET LE MOYEN D'ACTION PERMETTANT AUX MASSES LABORIEUSES D'ASSURER À TOUS LES NIVEAUX, SOIT LA DÉFENSE DES ACQUIS, SOIT L'AMÉLIORATION DE SA SITUATION. LE SYNDICALISME A LONGTEMPS EXISTÉ AVANT D'ÊTRE RECONNU ET SI NATUREL QUE CELA PUISSE NOUS PARAÎTRE DE NOS JOURS, L'IDÉE DE REPRÉSENTATION DES INTÉRÊTS NE S'EST IMPOSÉE, DANS LE DOMAINE PROFESSIONNEL, QU'AU TERME DE LONGUES LUTTES. AJOUTONS QUE LA RECONNAISSANCE LÉGALE DES SYNDICATS, COMME REPRÉSENTANTS DES TRAVAILLEURS DANS L'ENTREPRISE, NE DATE QUE D'IL Y A QUELQUES ANNÉES AUX MIEUX DE QUELQUES DECENNIES.

A CET ENDROIT ET AVANT DE VOUS DONNER UN APERÇU DE LA SITUATION TELLE QUE NOUS LA VOYONS AU SEIN DE LA C.E.S., JE DOIS VOUS FAIRE UN AVEU. AU MOMENT OÙ LA PROPOSITION FUT FAITE D'ORGANISER CETTE CONFÉRENCE, J'ÉTAIS ASSEZ SCEPTIQUE PUISQUE JE ME DEMANDAIS SI QUELQU'UN QUI VOIT LE MOUVEMENT SYNDICAL DE L'EXTÉRIEUR POUVAIT EFFECTIVEMENT COMPRENDRE TOUTE LA DYNAMIQUE, LA VITALITÉ, LA DIVERSITÉ D'OPINION ET DE RÉACTION D'ENVIRONNEMENT CULTUREL, SOCIAL ET ÉCONOMIQUE INHÉRENT À CE MOUVEMENT.

POUR BIEN M'EXPLIQUER, JE VEUX VOUS DONNER DEUX EXEMPLES.

PREMIER EXEMPLE : AU SEIN DU MOUVEMENT SYNDICAL QUI SE COMPOSE DE MILLIONS ET MÊME DE DIZAINES DE MILLIONS D'ÊTRES INDIVIDUELS,

NOUS SOMMES D'UNE FAÇON PERMANENTE OBLIGÉS DE RECHERCHER, À LA FOIS LE MAXIMUM DE DÉMOCRATIE INTERNE ET D'EFFICACITÉ VERS L'EXTÉRIEUR. EN D'AUTRES TERMES, IL EST PARFOIS DIFFICILE DE CONSULTER LA BASE - DONC LES MEMBRES INDIVIDUELS - SUR TOUS LES DÉTAILS D'UNE QUESTION SI ON NE VEUT PAS RISQUER DE RÉAGIR TROP TARD, C'EST-À-DIRE : APRÈS QUE LES DÉCISIONS SOIENT PRISES. D'UN AUTRE CÔTÉ, SI ON EST OBLIGÉS DE RÉAGIR AVANT QUE LE PROCESSUS DE PRISE DE DÉCISION NE SOIT TERMINÉ, ON RISQUE QUE LES DIVERGENCES DE VUES SOIENT PORTÉES DEVANT LE GRAND PUBLIC ET CECI RÉDUIT BIEN ENTENDU L'EFFICACITÉ ET LA CRÉDIBILITÉ DU MOUVEMENT SYNDICAL. EN EFFET, TROP SOUVENT, L'OPINION PUBLIQUE

N'ARRIVE PAS À FAIRE LA DIFFÉRENCE ENTRE DISCUSSION DÉMOCRATIQUE ET DIVERGENCE DE VUE PROFONDE METTANT EN CAUSE L'UNITÉ D'ACTION ET L'UNITÉ D'ORGANISATION ÉVENTUELLEMENT.

DEUXIÈME EXEMPLE : EN TANT QU'ORGANISME DÉMOCRATIQUE, NOUS DEVONS DONC RECHERCHER LES RÉPONSES AUX ASPIRATIONS DE LA GRANDE MAJORITÉ SI PAS LA TOTALITÉ DE NOS MEMBRES. CECI SIGNIFIE QUE NOUS DEVONS, À LA FOIS, OPÉRER AVEC UN MAXIMUM D'OBJECTIVITÉ ET DE TOLÉRANCE PUISQUE DANS TOUT CE PROCESSUS DE FORMATION DE VOLONTÉ DÉMOCRATIQUE NOUS DEVONS BIEN ENTENDU - DANS TOUTE LA MESURE DU POSSIBLE - RESPECTER LES DIFFÉRENTES AFFINITÉS POLITIQUE ET IDÉOLOGIQUES. CECI, ENCORE UNE FOIS, AFIN DE NOUS PRÉSENTER DE LA MANIÈRE LA PLUS UNIE POSSIBLE VIS-À-VIS DE L'OPINION PUBLIQUE ET BIEN SÛR AUSSI VIS-À-VIS DE CEUX AUXQUELS S'ADRESSENT NOS

REVENDEICATIONS ET NOS PROPOSITIONS. TOUT CECI EST PARFOIS COMPRIS COMME UNE VOLONTÉ DES DIRIGEANTS SYNDICAUX D'UNIFORMISER ET DE COLLECTIVISER À TOUT PRIX. OR, SI NOUS NE RÉUSSISSONS PAS DANS CETTE PROCÉDURE, NOUS SOMMES ACCUSÉS DE NE PAS ÊTRE CAPABLES DE NOUS METTRE D'ACCORD ENTRE NOUS.

SI ON CONSIDÈRE EN PLUS QUE CES RÉALITÉS SONT PARFOIS INCONSCIEMMENT OU INTENTIONNELLEMENT REFLÉTÉES D'UNE MANIÈRE TOTALEMENT FAUSSE PAR LA PRESSE ET LES MÉDIAS, ON PEUT S'IMAGINER LA DIFFICULTÉ QUE NOUS AVONS DE NOUS PRÉSENTER EFFECTIVEMENT TELS QUE NOUS SOMMES ET TELS QUE D'AUTRES VEULENT BIEN NOUS VOIR.

CECI DIT, JE VAIS DONC MAINTENANT VOUS EXPLIQUER CE QUE NOUS PENSONS DE LA CRISE ACTUELLE ET COMMENT NOUS POURRONS LA SURMONTER.

LA CES RELEVE LE DEFI DU NOUVEAU

LA CONFÉDÉRATION EUROPÉENNE DES SYNDICATS (CES), REGROUPANT 44 MILLIONS DE MEMBRES DES 35 CONFÉDÉRATIONS AFFILIÉES DANS 21 PAYS DE L'EUROPE DE L'OUEST A TENU SON DERNIER CONGRÈS AU MOIS DE MAI DERNIER À MILAN EN ITALIE. LORS D'UN CONGRÈS IL EST NÉCESSAIRE DE PROCÉDER À UNE VÉRIFICATION NON SEULEMENT DES POLITIQUES, MAIS AUSSI DE L'ÉTAT DE L'ORGANISATION. C'EST CE QUE LES DÉLÉGUÉS DE LA CES ONT FAIT EN DISCUTANT LE RAPPORT D'ACTIVITÉS, EN ANALYSANT LE DOCUMENT PRÉSENTÉ SUR "LE RÔLE DU TRAVAIL, DES TRAVAILLEURS ET DE LEURS SYNDICATS DANS LA SOCIÉTÉ DE DEMAIN" ET EN ADOPTANT LA RÉSOLUTION GÉNÉRALE ET DES RÉSOLUTIONS SPÉCIFIQUES QUI SERVIRONT DE GUIDE D'ACTION POUR LES TROIS ANNÉES À VENIR.

CHÔMAGE, CRISE ÉCONOMIQUE, CRISE DES INSTITUTIONS POLITIQUES SE REFLÈTENT DRAMATIQUEMENT SUR LE MOUVEMENT SYNDICAL. LE MOUVEMENT SYNDICAL N'EST PAS UN CORPS SÉPARÉ DE LA SOCIÉTÉ, IL EN EST, AU CONTRAIRE, L'UN DES ORGANISMES ESSENTIELS. TOUTES LES DIFFICULTÉS SE RÉPERCUTENT SUR LUI ET PROVOQUENT UN MAL-ÊTRE DIFFUS : QUELQUES CONFÉDÉRATIONS AFFILIÉES À LA CÉS ONT PERDU DES MEMBRES; IL Y EN A D'AUTRES QUI ONT VU LE NOMBRE DE LEURS MEMBRES AUGMENTER. EN BREF, ON PEUT AFFIRMER QUE LE TAUX DE SYNDICALISATION EST RESTÉ STABLE, C'EST-À-DIRE QUE LE NOMBRE DES AFFILIÉS SYNDICAUX PAR RAPPORT AU TOTAL DES TRAVAILLEURS ACTIFS N'A PAS VARIÉ. ON ASSISTE À UNE CERTAINE DÉSORIENTATION, MÊME SI ELLE N'EST QUE MOMENTANÉE, FACE À CE QUI CHANGE AVEC UNE RAPIDITÉ INCONNUE JUSQU'ICI DANS L'HISTOIRE DE L'HUMANITÉ. BREF, NOUS VIVONS UNE CRISE DE TRANSITION, COMME IL Y EN A EUES D'AUTRES, QUI TOUCHE TOUT UN CHACUN ET N'ÉPARGNE PERSONNE.

DEVANT CES FAITS, ON PEUT PRENDRE DEUX ATTITUDES TRÈS DIVERSES :

- OU SE REFERMER SUR SOI, POUR DÉFENDRE CE QU'ON A OBTENU AU PRIX DE DURS EFFORTS ET LUTTES : C'EST UN COMPORTEMENT COMPRÉHENSIBLE, HUMAIN , MAIS DICTÉ PLUS PAR LE SENTIMENT QUE PAR LE RAISONNEMENT,
- OU ACCEPTER LE DÉFI DES DIFFICULTÉS ACTUELLES : IL FAUT ALORS UTILISER L'IMAGINATION POUR RECHERCHER DE NOUVELLES RÉPONSES ET STRATÉGIES À OPPOSER AUX PROBLÈMES QUI SE POSENT À NOUS, D'AUTANT PLUS QUE LES SOLUTIONS CORRECTES DANS PAS MAL DE DOMAINES ET SOUS BEAUCOUP D'ASPECTS SONT ENCORE INCONNUES POUR LE MOMENT. (PENSEZ AUX ÉNORMES POSSIBILITÉS, MAIS AUSSI AUX GRANDS DANGERS QUE REPRÉSENTENT LES BIOTECHNOLOGIES),

LORS DE SON CONGRÈS, LA CÉS A FERMEMENT OPTÉ POUR LA SECONDE VOIE.

J'EN ARRIVE À

LA SITUATION ECONOMIQUE ET SOCIALE

DANS LAQUELLE DOIVENT AGIR LES SYNDICATS. ACTUELLEMENT, LES IDÉES DOMINANTES SONT CELLES DU LIBÉRALISME DÉFENDUES PAR LES EMPLOYEURS ET LES PARTIS DE DROITE. LA POLITIQUE POURSUIVIE AUX ÉTATS-UNIS SERT DE MODÈLE À PAS MAL DE RESPONSABLES POLITIQUES ET D'EMPLOYEURS EN EUROPE ET TOUT EST FAIT PAR LES FORCES DOMINANTES POUR QUE LES POLITIQUES MISES EN OEUVRE SOIENT DU TYPE AMÉRICAIN. POUR CEUX-LÀ, LA CONFIANCE ET LA CROYANCE AVEUGLE DANS LES LOIS DU MARCHÉ PRIMENT TOUT. PEU IMPORTE LES COÛTS SOCIAUX, L'ABANDON DE RÉGIONS ENTIÈRES OU LE CHÔMAGE CROISSANT, L'ESSENTIEL EST D'IMPOSER UN AUTRE MODÈLE DE SOCIÉTÉ, UNE CONCEPTION PRODUCTIVISTE ET TECHNOCRATIQUE DE LA RESTRUCTURATION.

12.

LES ACQUIS DE LA PROTECTION SOCIALE SONT REMIS EN CAUSE, DE MÊME QUE LES GARANTIES COLLECTIVES DES TRAVAILLEURS : AU NOM DE LA COMPÉTITIVITÉ DES ENTREPRISES EUROPÉENNES SUR LES MARCHÉS EXTÉRIEURS, TOUTES LES ENTRAVES QUI NUIRAIENT À LA PROFITABILITÉ DES ENTREPRISES DOIVENT ÊTRE ÉLIMINÉES. ON S'EFFORCE DE FRAPPER LE POUVOIR D'ACHAT DES SALAIRES, D'AFFAIBLIR LE POUVOIR CONTRACTUEL DES SYNDICATS. TOUT CELA FAIT PARTIE D'UNE STRATÉGIE QUI VEUT FAIRE CROIRE QU'UNE LIBÉRALISATION TOTALE DU COMMERCE ET UNE UTILISATION EFFRÉNÉE DES NT NOUS AMÈNERA UNE SOCIÉTÉ GARANTISSANT UNE DISTRIBUTION JUSTE D'UNE ABONDANCE TELLE QUE NOUS N'AURIONS PLUS BESOIN D'ORGANISMES COLLECTIFS POUR GARANTIR LES DROITS ET NIVEAUX DE VIE INDIVIDUELLE.

NOTRE SYNDICALISME D'AUJOURD'HUI S'EST DÉVELOPPÉ DEPUIS LA 2^E GUERRE MONDIALE DANS UNE PÉRIODE ÉCONOMIQUE DE FORTE CROISSANCE DE $\pm 6\%$ ET DE GAINS DE PRODUCTIVITÉ IMPORTANTS, QUI ONT PERMIS D'OBTENIR DES AVANTAGES APPRÉCIABLES POUR LES SALARIÉS : POUVOIR D'ACHAT ÉLEVÉ, PROTECTION SOCIALE ASSURÉE, CONGÉS PAYÉS ALLONGÉS, ETC.,.

LES INÉGALITÉS ÉTAIENT PLUS FAIBLEMENT RESENTIES, CAR LE PLUS GRAND NOMBRE BÉNÉFICIAIT DE LA CROISSANCE QUI, PLUS EST, GARANTISSAIT LE PLEIN EMPLOI DANS LA PLUPART DES PAYS ET DES TAUX DE CHÔMAGE FAIBLES. DANS D'AUTRES, PENDANT DES ANNÉES, L'ACCENT A ÉTÉ PLUS AXÉ SUR LA LUTTE POUR LA DISTRIBUTION ET LA REDISTRIBUTION DES RICHESSES CRÉÉES ET MOINS SUR LA PRODUCTION DE NOUVELLES RICHESSES. AUJOURD'HUI, NOUS VIVONS DANS UNE PÉRIODE DE CROISSANCE RALENTIE, OÙ IL Y A MOINS À DISTRIBUER ET OÙ LA LUTTE POUR LA DISTRIBUTION DEVIENT PLUS DURE ET PLUS DIFFICILE. IL DEVIENT INDISPENSABLE DE DÉVELOPPER PLUS DE PROPOSITIONS QUI TOUCHENT À LA PRODUCTION ELLE-MÊME ET AUX MÉCANISMES DE LA RÉPARTITION.

SI LES SYNDICATS VEULENT OBTENIR UNE VÉRITABLE INFLUENCE SUR L'ÉCONOMIE ET LA POLITIQUE INDUSTRIELLE,

NOUS NOUS TROUVONS DANS UNE PHASE DE RESTRUCTURATIONS INDUSTRIELLES QUI INFLUENCENT CONSIDÉRABLEMENT LA COMPOSITION SOCIOLOGIQUE DES SYNDICATS. LES SECTEURS DE LA SIDÉRURGIE, DU CHARBON, DES MINES, DU TEXTILE ET DE LA CONSTRUCTION NAVALE, POUR N'EN CITER QUE QUELQUES UNS, ONT SUBI DES RESTRUCTURATIONS CARACTÉRISÉES PAR DES DIMINUTIONS DRASTIQUES DES EFFECTIFS. CES SECTEURS CONSTITUAIENT JADIS ET CONSTITUENT LA FORCE ET LE FER DE LANCE DU MOUVEMENT SYNDICAL. PARALLÈLEMENT AU DÉCLIN DES SECTEURS TRADITIONNELS, ON ASSISTE À UN DÉVELOPPEMENT SANS PRÉCÉDENT DU SECTEUR DES SERVICES; ET C'EST LÀ DANS LE SECTEUR TERTIAIRE PRIVÉ QU'É LE SYNDICALISME EST BIEN PLUS FAIBLE ET CONNAÎT DES DIFFICULTÉS POUR S'IMPLANTER.

CERTES, IL NE FAUT PAS GÉNÉRALISER, MAIS ON PEUT AFFIRMER QUE LE SYNDICALISME SE TRANSFORME QUANT À LA SOCIOLOGIE DE SES ADHÉRENTS ET DE SES MILITANTS : LE PLUS SOUVENT TRÈS INDUSTRIEL, FONCTIONNAIRE ET MASCULIN, RAREMENT FÉMININ, ENCORE TROP FAIBLE DANS LE SECTEUR TERTIAIRE ET AVEC UNE FAIBLE PERCÉE DANS LES PETITES ET MOYENNES ENTREPRISES (PME), IL EST OBLIGÉ DE RÉORIENTER SES EFFORTS DE RECRUTEMENTS. NOTRE PRATIQUE SYNDICALE D'AUJOURD'HUI EST L'HÉRITIÈRE DES ACTIVITÉS SYNDICALES D'HIER ET D'AVANT D'HIER : ELLE EST TROP SOUVENT ENCORE COPIÉE SUR LE MODÈLE DES GRANDES ENTREPRISES DE L'INDUSTRIE. CECI APPELLE DES ACTIONS SYNDICALES FORTEMENT DIFFÉRENCIÉES PUISQU'ELLES SE TROUVENT CONFRONTÉES À UN TOUT AUTRE PATRONAT. CÉPENDANT, LA TENDANCE À L'ADAPTATION SE FAIT JOUR : LORS DE NOS CONGRÈS ON CONSTATE UN RAJEUNISSEMENT RAPIDE DES CADRES, LA PRÉSENCE DE FEMMES AUGMENTE DANS LES ORGANISMES DIRIGEANTS, LES APPROCHES SONT BEAUCOUP PLUS VARIÉES, PLUS RÉFLÉCHIES.

LES SYNDICATS DÉMONTRENT PAR LÀ QU'ILS SONT CAPABLES DE RENOUVELER PROFONDÉMENT LEURS CADRES ET LEURS PRATIQUES POUR RESTER À LA HAUTEUR DU DÉVELOPPEMENT.

PUISQUE : SI LES QUALITÉS DES CADRES D'AUJOURD'HUI ONT CHANGÉ EN VUE D'AFFRONTER AVEC SUCCÈS LES NOUVEAUTÉS ENVAHISSANTES DU CHANGEMENT DANS LES PROCESSUS PRODUCTIFS ET ORGANISATIONNELS DE L'ENTREPRISE, IL RESTE NÉANMOINS QUE LE DÉVOUEMENT AUX EXIGENCES DE L'ORGANISATION ET DES TRAVAILLEURS RESTE LE MÊME.

CÉPENDANT : LE RÔLE DES SYNDICATS DANS LA DÉCENNIE À VENIR EST NON SEULEMENT DÉTERMINÉ PAR LES RESTRUCTURATIONS INDUSTRIELLES, MAIS AUSSI PAR L'INFLUENCE DES CHANGEMENTS TECHNOLOGIQUES SUR LA COMPOSITION DE LA CLASSE OUVRIÈRE ET SUR LES MODIFICATIONS DES COMPORTEMENTS OUVRIERS.

LA SITUATION DE LA CLASSE OUVRIÈRE N'EST PAS DEMEURÉE IDENTIQUE ET UNIFORME AU COURS DU TEMPS ET LES SYNDICATS ONT TOUJOURS SU S'Y ADAPTER. CE QUI EST NOUVEAU, CE N'EST PAS LE DÉVELOPPEMENT TECHNOLOGIQUE, MAIS SON VOLUME ET SA RAPIDITÉ JAMAIS CONNU DANS L'HISTOIRE. LE DÉFI N'EST DONC PAS DE S'ADAPTER, MAIS DE S'ADAPTER DE LA BONNE MANIÈRE ET ASSEZ VITE.

SI LES DIVERSES CATÉGORIES QUI COMPOSENT LE MONDE OUVRIER DANS LES ORGANISATIONS TRADITIONNELLES DU TRAVAIL SE SENTENT LIÉES PAR LE SENTIMENT D'ÊTRE EXPLOITÉES, IL EN EST DIFFÉREMMENT AUJOURD'HUI DANS LES NOUVEAUX SECTEURS DES TECHNOLOGIES DE POINTE : L'EXPLOITATION EST MOINS RESENTIE, CAR ELLE DEVIENT MOINS VISIBLE ET PLUS SOPHISTIQUEE. LA DIVISION ET LA PARCELLISATION DES TÂCHES ÉTANT PLUS POUSSÉES, LE TRAVAIL CONSISTE SOUVENT DANS L'EXÉCUTION DE TÂCHES QUI DEMANDENT CHEZ UN GRAND NOMBRE DE TRAVAILLEURS PEU DE QUALIFICATION ET UNE HAUTE QUALIFICATION CHEZ UN PETIT NOMBRE.

AINSI , LA CLASSE OUVRIÈRE SE RECOMPOSE EN DEUX CATÉGORIES DE SALARIÉS : AUX OUVRIERS DE PRODUCTION AYANT UNE TÂCHE ESSENTIELLEMENT D'EXÉCUTION, S'AJOUTENT LES OUVRIERS D'ENTRETIEN HAUTEMENT QUALIFIÉS. EN CONSÉQUENCE, LE SENTIMENT D'APPARTENANCE À UNE MÊME CLASSE PEUT S'AFFAIBLIR.

LE HAUT NIVEAU TECHNIQUE DES OUVRIERS D'ENTRETIEN ET DES TECHNICIENS LES FAIT ACCÉDER À DES RÉMUNÉRATIONS PLUS ÉLEVÉES ET SOUVENT DES INTÉRÊTS CATÉGORIELS CÈDENT AUX INTÉRÊTS DE SOLIDARITÉ ENTRE TOUS LES TRAVAILLEURS. DE PAR LES CONDITIONS DE TRAVAIL DIFFÉRENTES, ON ASSISTE À UN ÉCLATEMENT DU SALARIAT OÙ LA SOLIDARITÉ EST SOUVENT MOINS BIEN VÉCUE ET ENTRAÎNE DES COMPORTEMENTS DIFFÉRENTS.

LES MUTATIONS INDUSTRIELLES ET TECHNOLOGIQUES ONT DIVERSIFIÉ LES CONDITIONS SALARIALES ET ONT FAIT APPARAÎTRE UNE PLUS GRANDE AFFIRMATION À L'IDENTITÉ INDIVIDUELLE. LA VIE DU TRAVAILLEUR SE VOIT AINSI SÉPARÉE EN DEUX COMPORTEMENTS BIEN DISTINCTS :

LE TEMPS DE LA PRODUCTION OÙ DOMINENT LES MOTIVATIONS SYNDICALES ET LA VIE PRIVÉE OÙ LES MOTIVATIONS PRINCIPALES SONT CELLES DE LA SOCIÉTÉ DE CONSOMMATION.

MAIS IL N'EST PAS DIFFICILE DE DÉMONTRER QU'AU FOND LA DÉPENDANCE DES TRAVAILLEURS DE DÉCISIONS PRISES PAR D'AUTRES N'A PAS FONDAMENTALEMENT CHANGÉ. ET ILS S'APERCEVRONT RAPIDEMENT QU'AUSI BIEN EN DEHORS QUE DANS L'ENTREPRISE, IL Y A DES INTÉRÊTS COLLECTIFS QU'AUCUN AUTRE ORGANISME NE PRENDRA EN CHARGE SI LES SYNDICATS NE S'EN OCCUPENT PAS.

LES SYNDICATS DOIVENT, À CETTE FIN, RECHERCHER DAVANTAGE LE CONTACT AVEC LES TRAVAILLEURS AUSSI EN DEHORS DE L'ENTREPRISE.

EN DÉPIT DE TOUS CES DÉVELOPPEMENTS, À NOTRE AVIS, LE PROBLÈME N°1 DU MOMENT EST CELUI DE L'EMPLOI ET IL EST À CRAINDRE QU'IL NOUS OCCUPERA ENCORE PENDANT TOUTE LA DÉCENNIE QUI VIENT.

NOUS SOMMES CONVAINCUS QUE LONGTEMPS ENCORE LE TRAVAIL, DANS LE SENS TRADITIONNEL DU TERME, RESTERA LA BASE DE LA PRODUCTION NÉCESSAIRE POUR SATISFAIRE LES BESOINS DE NOTRE SOCIÉTÉ. ET POURTANT, LE TRAVAIL SERA ENCORE LONGTEMPS LE PARAMÈTRE DES REVENUS DIRECTS ET DIFFÉRÉS DES TRAVAILLEURS ET DE LEUR FAMILLE.

FACE À UN CHÔMAGE SANS CESSER CROISSANT, LES CHOIX DES SYNDICATS DANS LA BATAILLE POUR LE REDRESSEMENT ÉCONOMIQUE ET LES RESTRUCTURATIONS INDUSTRIELLES SONT DONC CLAIRS : L'AMÉLIORATION DE LA QUALITÉ ET L'AUGMENTATION DU VOLUME DES PRODUITS ET DES SERVICES EN MÊME TEMPS QUE L'AMÉLIORATION DES CONDITIONS DE VIE ET DE TRAVAIL DES HABITANTS DE L'EUROPE, CONSTITUENT LE FACTEUR PRINCIPAL POUR LE RÉTABLISSEMENT DE LA COMPÉTITIVITÉ DES ENTREPRISES EUROPÉENNES. EN AGISSANT AINSI, ON RÉDUIT LES GASPILLAGES AINSI QUE LES DESTRUCTIONS INUTILES ET ON PREND COMME POINT DE DÉPART LES BESOINS, COMBIEN GRANDS, DES EUROPÉENS POUR LA RELANCE DE L'ÉCONOMIE.

LES BESOINS DE 30 MILLIONS DE NOUVEAUX PAUVRES EN EUROPE NE DEVRAIENT LAISSER PERSONNE INDIFFÉRENT !

EN AGISSANT POUR AMÉLIORER LES CONDITIONS DE TRAVAIL, L'ORGANISATION DU TRAVAIL, LES SYNDICATS RÉDUISENT L'INSATISFACTION, LE FREINAGE DE LA PRODUCTION ET L'ABSENTÉISME.

C'EST UN FACTEUR DE PROGRÈS DE LA QUALITÉ DE LA PRODUCTION ET DE LA PRODUCTIVITÉ.

MAIS SI LES SYNDICATS SE PRONONCENT POUR UNE MODERNISATION DE L'ÉCONOMIE ET POUR LES RESTRUCTURATIONS INDUSTRIELLES, RAPPELONS QUE CELA NE DOIT PAS SE RÉALISER SUR UN MODÈLE TECHNOCRATIQUE ET AUTORITAIRE. L'OPTION EN FAVEUR DE LA MODERNISATION DOIT ÊTRE CONÇUE SUR LA BASE D'UN TYPE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT AUTHENTIQUEMENT EUROPÉEN FAVORISANT L'EMPLOI POUR TOUS, LA QUALITÉ DES EMPLOIS, DES PRODUITS ET

DES SERVICES ET PRENANT EN CONSIDÉRATION LES SPÉCIFICITÉS AINSI QUE LES ACQUIS SOCIAUX DE L'EUROPE.

NOUS VOULONS ET NOUS DEVONS MAÎTRISER LE CHANGEMENT TECHNOLOGIQUE

LA RÉVOLUTION TECHNOLOGIQUE EN COURS, ACCOMPAGNANT LES RESTRUCTURATIONS INDUSTRIELLES POSSÈDE LES POTENTIALITÉS NÉCESSAIRES POUR LE PROGRÈS RAPIDE DU BIEN-ÊTRE COLLECTIF ET INDIVIDUEL DE TOUTE UNE SOCIÉTÉ. LES TECHNOLOGIES AVANCÉES PEUVENT ÊTRE UTILISÉES POUR DIMINUER LES TRAVAUX PÉNIBLES, AMÉLIORER LES CONDITIONS DE VIE ET DE TRAVAIL, AUGMENTER LA PRODUCTIVITÉ ET AINSI RÉDUIRE LE TEMPS DE TRAVAIL ET AUGMENTER LE TEMPS DES LOISIRS.

SI ON PEUT AFFIRMER QUE LES NOUVELLES TECHNOLOGIES ONT DES EFFETS CONTRADICTOIRES SUR L'EMPLOI, IL FAUT DIRE QUE JUSQU'À PRÉSENT ELLES ONT ÉTÉ UTILISÉES PRINCIPALEMENT POUR DES RATIONALISATIONS ET DONC

À LA DESTRUCTION D'EMPLOIS. UNE POLITIQUE DE RELANCE ÉCONOMIQUE QUI SE BASE SUR LES BESOINS ÉNORMES EXISTANT EN EUROPE UTILISERA LES NOUVELLES TECHNOLOGIES POUR LA SATISFACTION DES BESOINS, PORTANT SUR LA CRÉATION D'EMPLOIS. AJOUTONS QUE LES TECHNOLOGIES NON CONTRÔLÉES PEUVENT DEVENIR DES INSTRUMENTS DE SURVEILLANCE, ET AINSI DE LIMITATION DES ESPACES DE LIBERTÉ ET DE DÉMOCRATIE.

L'ENJEU EST ÉNORME :

LES TECHNOLOGIES PEUVENT ÊTRE CRÉATRICES OU DESTRUCTRICES D'EMPLOIS. ELLES PEUVENT DÉQUALIFIER OU AMÉLIORER LES QUALIFICATIONS, CRÉER DE NOUVELLES CONTRAINTES SUR LES CONDITIONS DE TRAVAIL, LES CONDITIONS DE VIE, ELLES PEUVENT AUSSI ÉLARGIR LES ESPACES D'AUTONOMIE ET D'INNOVATION. LES MUTATIONS TECHNOLOGIQUES AFFECTENT TOUS LES DOMAINES: ÉCONOMIQUE, TECHNOLOGIQUE, CULTUREL, ORGANISATION DU TRAVAIL.

TOUS LES ACTEURS SONT TOUCHÉS : L'ÉTAT, LES ENTREPRISES, LES SYNDICATS.. UN FORT SENTIMENT D'IMPUISSANCE SE DÉVELOPPE DANS NOTRE SOCIÉTÉ : IL EST VRAI QUE NOUS SOMMES FRAPPÉS PAR LA MULTIPLICITÉ DES DÉCOUVERTES TECHNIQUES ET PAR LA CRÉATION D'UN MILIEU TECHNIQUE QUI ÉCHAPPE À NOS SENS. DE LÀ VIENT LE SENTIMENT SI RÉPANDU QUE LE MONDE TECHNIQUE NOUS DÉPASSE ET NOUS IMPOSE SES LOIS. CEPENDANT, SI NOUS NE FAISONS RIEN, C'EST LA SEULE LOGIQUE DU MARCHÉ, CE SONT LES ENTREPRENEURS, LES GRANDS DÉCIDEURS QUI EXERCERONT LA PERCÉE ESSENTIELLE. SI, AU CONTRAIRE, NOUS SOMMES CAPABLES DE MANIFESTER NOTRE VOLONTÉ COLLECTIVE, EN L'ARTICULANT AVEC LES DÉSIRS INDIVIDUELS EXPRIMÉS PAR LES SALARIÉS, ALORS UN AUTRE AVENIR SERA POSSIBLE. UN AVENIR QUI SATISFAIRA AU MIEUX LES ASPIRATIONS DE CHACUN DANS UNE ORGANISATION COLLECTIVE.

NOUS NE VOULONS ET NOUS NE POUVONS PAS IGNORER LA VOLONTÉ D'IDENTITÉ PERSONNELLE DE PLUS EN PLUS FORTE DES SALARIÉS. CETTE VOLONTÉ SE TRADUIT DANS L'ENTREPRISE, PAR DES DEMANDES D'HORAIRE DE TRAVAIL DIFFÉRENCIÉS, D'AUTONOMIE DANS LA GESTION DE LEUR TRAVAIL, DE FORMATION INDIVIDUELLE, DE CARRIÈRE PROFESSIONNELLE, DE CODÉCISION SUR LES PROCÉDÉS DE TRAVAIL, ETC. CECI CORRESPOND D'AILLEURS À UNE VIEILLE REVENDICATION SYNDICALE.

MAIS LES ASPIRATIONS DE CHACUN APPELÉNT DES SYNDICATS UNE DÉMARCHE COLLECTIVE FAISANT TOUTE LA PLACE AUX PROJETS INDIVIDUELS. CERTES, CES PROJETS INDIVIDUELS PEUVENT RENDRE LA RECHERCHE DE COMPROMIS COLLECTIFS PLUS DIFFICILE, CAR NOTRE PRATIQUE SYNDICALE ACCORDE LA PRIORITÉ AUX DEMANDES COLLECTIVES QU'IL EST POSSIBLE D'UNIFIER DANS DES REVENDICATIONS SIMPLES, VALABLES POUR TOUS.

LES ASPIRATIONS INDIVIDUELLES (ET NON INDIVIDUALISTES) DE CHACUN DOIVENT ÊTRE PRISES EN CONSIDÉRATION DANS UNE DÉMARCHE COLLECTIVE, CAR NOUS NOUS SOMMES PRONONCÉS POUR UNE ADAPTATION PERMANENTE DE L'ORGANISATION DE TRAVAIL ET DE LA GESTION DES ENTREPRISES.

MAIS, N'OUBLIONS PAS QUE L'INTRODUCTION DE CERTAINES FLEXIBILITÉS DANS L'ORGANISATION DU TRAVAIL PEUT ENTRAÎNER AUSSI DES CONTRAINTES NOUVELLES : PLUS DE TRAVAIL DE NUIT ET DE DIMANCHE, HORAIRE DÉCALÉS DÉTRUISANT TOUTE VIE FAMILIALE, ETC...

VOILÀ POURQUOI LES SYNDICATS PENSENT QUE L'ÉLABORATION D'INSTRUMENTS CADRES FIXANT LES LIMITES POUR LES DROITS ET OBLIGATIONS DE CHACUN SERAIENT CERTAINEMENT D'UNE GRANDE UTILITÉ, AFIN D'ÉVITER L'UTILISATION DE LA DISCUSSION SUR LA FLEXIBILITÉ POUR AFFAIBLIR LA PROTECTION SOCIALE DES TRAVAILLEURS. ET CE SONT JUSTEMENT CES GARANTIES COLLECTIVES DE PROTECTION SOCIALE, CONQUISES GRÂCE À LA SOLIDARITÉ ENTRE SALARIÉS ET AU MOYEN DE LONGUES LUTTES,

QUI CONSTITUENT AUJOURD'HUI LA COLONNE VERTÉBRALE DU MOUVEMENT SYNDICAL. ET ELLES CONSTITUENT LA BASE MATÉRIELLE RENDANT POSSIBLE L'ASPIRATION À PLUS D'INDIVIDUALITÉ.

ENFIN, LA DIMENSION INTERNATIONALE QUI FAISAIT TOUJOURS PARTIE DE L'ACTION SYNDICALE GAGNE EN IMPORTANCE PAR LA CONCENTRATION ECONOMIQUE. AINSI, LES ENTREPRISES MULTINATIONALES METTENT LES SYNDICATS DEVANT DE NOUVEAUX PROBLÈMES : EN UTILISANT AU MAXIMUM LES LÉGISLATIONS NATIONALES ELLES RÉUSSISSENT À CONTOURNER TRÈS SOUVENT LES PROTECTIONS ÉTABLIES ET EN CAS DE CONFLIT, TRANSFÈRENT LA PRODUCTION D'UN PAYS À L'AUTRE. LES SYNDICATS SE SONT DOTÉS DE MOYENS COMMUNS POUR UNE CONFRONTATION EUROPÉENNE AVEC LES EMPLOYEURS, MAIS CELA PRÉSENTE DES LACUNES. CES MOYENS SE SITUENT ESSENTIELLEMENT À UN HAUT NIVEAU AVEC UNE STRUCTURE D'INFORMATION, DE CONSULTATION ET DE REPRÉSENTATION DES CONFÉDÉRATIONS AFFILIÉES ENVERS LES PARTENAIRES RESPECTIFS : GOUVERNEMENTS, INSTITUTIONS EUROPÉENNES, EMPLOYEURS.

CEPENDANT, IL EN VA DE L'ACTION SYNDICALE EUROPÉENNE COMME DE L'ACTION SYNDICALE NATIONALE CAR UNE VÉRITABLE CONFRONTATION N'A PAS LIEU ET L'ACTION RESTE À UNE JUXTAPOSITION DE POSITIONS OU D'INTENTIONS SOUVENT FAUTE D'INTERLOCUTEURS VALABLES. SANS INTERLOCUTEUR COMMUN DANS LES ENTREPRISES EUROPÉENNES, L'ACTION SYNDICALE DE LA CÉS NE TROUVE PAS DE DÉBOUCHÉ. L'UNICE, L'ORGANISATION DES EMPLOYEURS, REFUSE SYSTÉMATIQUEMENT TOUTE NÉGOCIATION. EN FAIT, ELLE SE PRÉSENTE COMME UNE ORGANISATION "BOÎTE AUX LETTRES" SANS MANDAT QUI RENVOIE TOUT AUX ORGANISATIONS NATIONALES. LE PATRONAT, ENSEMBLE AVEC LES PARTIS CONSERVATEURS, FREINENT L'ADOPTION DE LA DIRECTIVE VREDELING SUR L'INFORMATION ET LA CONSULTATION DES TRAVAILLEURS DANS LES SOCIÉTÉS MULTINATIONALES. MAIS AU DELÀ DE CETTE PROPOSITION DE DIRECTIVE, POUR SE RÉALISER EN PROFONDEUR, LA SOLIDARITÉ EUROPÉENNE A BESOIN DE POUVOIR SE CONSTRUIRE ET S'EXERCER À UN NIVEAU TRÈS CONCRET QUI EST CELUI DES ENTREPRISES.

4) IL FAUT DÉFENDRE CES REVENDICATIONS VIS-À-VIS DE CEUX QUI ONT À DÉCIDER.

5) IL FAUT ORGANISER LES ACTIONS NÉCESSAIRES AFIN D'ARRIVER À LA MEILLEURE SOLUTION DES PROBLÈMES.

QUE CES TÂCHES SOIENT COMPLIQUÉES PAR UNE CRISE ÉCONOMIQUE ET SOCIALE QUI :

- FAIT CROÎTRE LES ÉGOÏSMES DE TOUT GENRE,
- RÉDUIT DONC LE REFLEXE À LA SOLIDARITÉ
- INFLUENCE NÉGATIVEMENT L'OBJECTIVITÉ DES DÉBATS

SEMBLE ÉVIDENT.

SI ALORS CETTE CONFÉRENCE PEUT CONTRIBUER, PAR DES ANALYSES ET DES ÉTUDES OBJECTIVES ET SÉRIEUSES, À FACILITER CES TÂCHES, ELLE AURA OUVERT UNE VOIE À UNE COLLABORATION UTILE QUI FAIT ENCORE TROP DÉFAUT ENTRE LES ACADÉMICIENS ET LA MASSE DES TRAVAILLEURS.

SI LA VOLONTÉ EXISTE, CETTE COOPÉRATION PEUT ÊTRE FRUCTUEUSE POUR TOUS. JE LE SOUHAITE ET JE REMERCIE WORK + SOCIETY DE L'AVOIR ORGANISÉE.

A european conference on



the role of trade unions in the coming decade

Maastricht, november 20-21-22, 1985

PACTE SOCIAL ET ACTION SYNDICALE
UNE COMPARAISON INTERNATIONALE

Mr P. d'Iribarne

Mr. Paul d'Iribarne.

Maastricht 21 Novembre 1985



European centre for
work and society
Maastricht



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Pacte social et action syndicale
une comparaison internationale

Juillet 1985

Ph. d'IRIBARNE.

Communication à la Conférence "The role of Trade Union in the coming decade"
Maastricht, Novembre 1985.

On sait combien le rôle des syndicats varie considérablement d'un pays à un autre, aussi bien dans leur poids que dans leur mode d'action (1). Mais les racines de ces différences ne sont pas claires. Et, corrélativement, les possibilités pour les syndicats des divers pays de s'inspirer de l'exemple de leurs homologues étrangers restent un objet de doute.

On se propose, dans le présent texte, d'apporter des éléments d'éclaircissement à cette question, à propos de trois pays : la France, les Etats-Unis et les Pays-Bas. On cherchera à montrer que les différences d'actions syndicales dépendent étroitement de différences nationales beaucoup plus générales en matière de régulation sociale. Les principes directeurs qui régissent la gestion des conflits et la coopération, aussi bien entre pairs qu'entre dirigeants et dirigés, aussi bien dans le système politique que dans la marche des entreprises, aussi bien dans les rapports "techniques" que dans les rapports "sociaux", varient fortement d'un pays à un autre. On a diverses formes de "pacte social", qui se traduisent dans tous les aspects de la vie sociale.

La recherche empirique sur laquelle on s'appuiera n'avait pas pour objet d'expliquer les différences nationales d'action syndicale. Il s'agissait d'éclaircir les processus qui régissent les différences nationales de fonctionnement des organisations, de gestion des entreprises et de productivité. Cette recherche s'est appuyée sur une comparaison fouillée de quatre usines techniquement très voisines, situées dans quatre pays différents (2). Ces diverses questions

(1) cf. P. ex. G. Martinet, Sept Syndicalismes, Seuil 1979.

(2) Il s'agit de 4 usines métallurgiques appartenant ou ayant appartenu à un même groupe industriel et situées respectivement en France, aux Etats-Unis, aux Pays-Bas et au Cameroun. Cette recherche, à laquelle ont participé A. d'IRIBARNE et JP SEGAL, a été menée avec le concours du Ministère de la Recherche et de la Technologie (Programme : vie sociale dans l'entreprise) ainsi que de l'entreprise concernée.

ont pu être éclaircies en partant d'une analyse des différences de mode de régulation entre les pays concernés (1). Il est apparu après coup, que les interprétations ainsi obtenues paraissaient susceptibles d'être étendues aux différences nationales d'action syndicale.

Nous commencerons par synthétiser les données que nous avons obtenues sur les différences entre formes de régulation sociale dans les trois pays. Puis nous examinerons les types d'articulations qui s'établissent dans chacun d'eux entre la pression de la hiérarchie et la résistance de la base. Et nous verrons enfin comment l'action des syndicats s'inscrit dans chacune de ces logiques, en utilisant les données de notre enquête, et plus encore des données plus générales sur les modes d'action syndicale dans les pays concernés.

I La variété des modes de régulation sociale :

1. Une société ne peut survivre que grâce à un ensemble de processus qui permettent à ses membres de vivre ensemble. Il s'agit à la fois de gérer les conflits, parfois sévères, qui opposent les individus et les groupes, de manière à limiter les dommages qu'ils font subir aux protagonistes et d'organiser une certaine coopération. Pareille régulation s'effectue, dans une certaine mesure, à de multiples niveaux, de micro sociétés (famille, équipe de travail, etc...) à la société internationale. La collectivité nationale représente en la matière un niveau privilégié, marqué par l'existence d'un certain "pacte social".

(1) Les résultats obtenus sont en cours de publication. Divers textes sont actuellement parus ou à paraître ; dans une perspective de gestion: Ph. d'IRIBARNE "La gestion à la française" Revue Française de Gestion, n° 50, Février 1985 ; dans une perspective économique : Ph. d'IRIBARNE, "Régulation sociale, vie des entreprises, et performances économiques", à paraître dans la Revue Economique ; dans une perspective de sociologie comparative des organisations : Ph. d'IRIBARNE, "National culture and the way organizations run, a French-Dutch plant", Communication à la conférence de Lund "organizational symbolism and corporate culture" June 1984.

Les modes de régulation privilégiés varient d'une société à une autre (1). Les contraintes imposées aux individus et les libertés dont ils disposent ne sont pas partout identiques. Parfois l'accent est mis sur la ritualisation d'affrontements qui demeurent ouverts, tout en voyant leurs effets destructeurs limités. Une place plus ou moins large est alors laissée à la violence directe physique ou verbale, ou encore à des sortes de jeux compétitifs qui prohibent cette violence. Parfois les affrontements sont plus radicalement étouffés, soit en séparant les combattants (grâce à l'attribution à chacun de territoires sûrs, matériels ou immatériels), soit en les fondant dans un groupe où les sorts des uns et des autres sont totalement liés. De son côté, le respect des contraintes fait plus ou moins appel, suivant les sociétés, à la révérence partagée pour des principes ou pour des hommes, complétée par la pression informelle des pairs et par l'action d'une autorité organisée.

Les caractéristiques du pacte social influencent l'ensemble des relations entre les individus et les groupes internes à une même collectivité nationale. Cette influence passe par la spécificité des lois comme par celle des mœurs. Les unes et les autres établissent une frontière à la fois spécifique et fortement sacralisée entre le légitime et l'illégitime. Elles influencent la manière même dont l'identité des individus se structure et ce qu'ils attendent de l'existence. Ainsi peut-on penser, plus les affrontements restent largement ouverts (tout en étant ritualisés), plus les catégories du supérieur et de l'inférieur tiennent une place fondamentale dans l'identité des individus. Plus au contraire, la séparation des territoires compte, plus l'identité repose sur la différence et l'autonomie. Tout cet ensemble, qui affecte les divers aspects de la vie sociale, de la socialisation primaire au fonctionnement des institutions publiques (2), pèse d'un grand poids pour borner le champ des relations possibles à l'intérieur d'une société.

(1) Ce fait a été au centre de l'oeuvre des pères fondateurs de la sociologie (Montesquieu, Durkheim, Weber). Il a suscité d'innombrables travaux d'anthropologie politique (cf. G. BALANDIER, Anthropologie Politique, PUF, 1984) et culturelle.

(2) formant un ensemble à la fois "social" et "culturel" sans que l'on puisse séparer les influences de l'un et de l'autre aspect, ni considérer que l'un détermine l'autre de façon unilatérale. On est devant des phénomènes "systémiques".

Le fonctionnement des entreprises s'en trouve en particulier affecté, à tous les niveaux (de l'équipe de travail élémentaire aux rapports entre une holding et ses filiales). Les stratégies des divers acteurs, aussi bien dans leurs rapports de coopération horizontale que dans les rapports hiérarchiques, les types de compromis qu'ils élaborent, dépendent en effet des voies dans lesquelles ils cherchent à s'affirmer, et de ce qui est à leurs yeux légitime. Certes, le mode de régulation propre à la collectivité nationale à laquelle ils appartiennent ne détermine pas strictement tout cela. Mais, sans les spécifier complètement, il tend à limiter les plages de variation ouvertes à certains paramètres. Ainsi, il pourra mettre l'accent sur l'organisation de jeux compétitifs prohibant la violence directe, même s'il ne spécifie pas les règles utilisées pour désigner les vainqueurs dans chaque jeu particulier. Ou encore, il pourra faire jouer un rôle décisif à la révérence envers les chefs même s'il ne spécifie pas totalement la manière dont ceux-ci sont choisis. Des spécifications différentes pourront conduire à des fonctionnements d'entreprises différents (marqués par des "cultures d'entreprises" différentes). Et les stratégies des acteurs et en particulier des gestionnaires auront ainsi diverses marges de liberté (elles pourront par exemple se montrer plus ou moins coopératives). Mais, à l'intérieur d'une même collectivité nationale, la manière commune dont les caractéristiques du pacte social borne le champ des relations possibles, sera à la source de certaines ressemblances entre les divers fonctionnements d'entreprises, engendrant par là un effet "sociétal" (1).

(1) Un tel effet sera plus ou moins prononcé suivant qu'on a affaire à une société dont la culture laisse plus ou moins la place à des "sous-cultures" diversifiées régissant des groupes entre lesquels le lien social peut être relativement lâche (cf. l'opposition classique en la matière entre l'Inde et la Chine).

2. On peut chercher à caractériser les différences qui apparaissent la matière entre la France, les Pays-Bas et les Etats-Unis. Dans chacun des ces lieux, le type de régulation des rapports sociaux marquant l'usine que nous avons étudiée a semblé remarquablement en harmonie avec les données concernant les institutions et la culture des pays dont nous disposons par ailleurs. Et il a paru possible de schématiser les spécificités de chaque type de régulation en s'appuyant sur cet ensemble d'éléments (1).

Lorsqu'on compare la France aux Etats-Unis et aux Pays-Bas, certaines caractéristiques prennent, par contraste, un relief particulier dans chacun de ces pays.

En France comme aux Etats-Unis, l'accent est mis sur une ritualisation des affrontements qui laissent une large place au plaisir de la lutte, mais les styles de ritualisation diffèrent. Ce ne sont pas les mêmes types de règles du jeu qui séparent le licite de l'illicite. Aux Etats-Unis, on tend à utiliser des règles dans le sens strict du terme, définies de manière précise et prises à la lettre. Celles-ci, en même temps qu'elles bornent rigoureusement les conduites légitimes, laissent le champ libre à ce qu'elles n'interdisent pas ; on peut défendre ses intérêts jusqu'au bout, dès lors qu'on le fait dans les règles. Un autre type de séparation entre le licite et l'illicite prévaut en France. On s'y contente plus facilement d'un respect plutôt approximatif des règles explicites, et chacun interprète celles-ci à sa façon. Mais on ne peut aller "au bout de ses droits". Il faut user de ceux-ci avec modération, en ménageant autrui d'une manière qui n'est pas précisément codifiable, mais relève d'un certain esprit.

(1) Ces schémas constituent des modèles théoriques permettant de rendre compte d'un grand nombre d'observations ayant porté tant sur le fonctionnement des diverses usines que sur les valeurs exprimées par les membres de leur personnel. Ils sont indirectement validés par la manière dont ils permettent d'interpréter ces observations. Un nombre limité de ces dernières seront présentées dans la suite de ce texte. D'autres sont présentées par ailleurs dans divers textes parus ou à paraître (cf. les textes déjà cités "National cultures and the way organizations run : a french-dutch plant" et "La gestion à la française", ainsi que "le système d'action français").

Aux Pays-Bas l'accent est moins mis sur la ritualisation des affrontements que sur la recherche de consensus et d'harmonie. L'agression directe, même verbale, est fortement réprouvée, et les situations compétitives à enjeu fort sont évitées. La défense des positions particulières ne doit pas être poussée au point de compromettre la réalisation d'accords au sein du groupe de pairs. En contre-partie, le groupe se doit de prendre en compte l'avis et les intérêts de chacun, même de ceux qui sont très minoritaires.

II Trois types d'articulation entre la pression de la hiérarchie et la résistance de la base :

Ces diverses formes de régulation marquent l'ensemble des relations entre individus et entregroupes, les relations horizontales comme les relations hiérarchiques, les relations qui se nouent autour d'enjeux "techniques" (1) comme celles qui se nouent autour d'enjeux "sociaux". Elles marquent en particulier les formes d'équilibre qui s'établissent entre les pressions de la hiérarchie et les résistances de la base. Partout celle-ci se soumet pour une part et se défend pour une autre, mais suivant des logiques distinctes.

L'usine américaine est marquée par la règle et le contrat aussi bien dans les pressions subies par la base que dans la résistance qu'elle oppose.

Les rapports entre l'encadrement et les ouvriers sont minutieusement réglés par un accord d'entreprise passé entre la direction et le syndicat. Cet accord ménage à la direction de grandes prérogatives en matière d'organisation de la production et de sanctions. Elle peut notamment exiger des heures supplémentaires, licencier en cas de réduction de production, sanctionner en cas de faute. Mais simultanément l'accord enferme strictement l'action des responsables dans

(1) Que l'on a analysés par ailleurs dans "Régulation sociale, vie des entreprises et performances économiques".

des règles visant à éviter l'arbitraire. A ce titre une "seniority", définie avec un luxe de détails permettant de tout prévoir, tient une place centrale dans les questions d'affectation, de licenciements économiques, de congés, de répartition des heures supplémentaires, pendant que les sanctions associées aux diverses fautes possibles sont aussi minutieusement définies que les circonstances qui les justifient. Les parties veillent jalousement au respect à la lettre de cet accord. La direction utilise effectivement les prérogatives qu'il lui reconnaît (allant par exemple jusqu'à procéder à des licenciements disciplinaires pour des motifs qui vus de France paraissent bien minces). Le personnel ouvrier fait pour sa part respecter ses droits en ayant recours à des "grievances procedures" mises en oeuvre de manière quotidienne (2 à 3 fois par jour en moyenne pour le poste principal : les contestations liées aux questions d'"overtime") et qui débouchent avec une fréquence non négligeable sur des actions en justice. Aucune grève n'est permise pendant la durée de la validité du contrat. Pareil événement, où les parties s'affrontent sans la médiation d'une règle définissant ce que chacun peut exiger et attendre, ne se produit que lors de la négociation triennale de l'accord d'entreprise ; on sort alors brièvement de la régulation par la règle pour établir les bases qui permettent d'y revenir.

Le rôle de la règle n'apparaît pas de manière aussi spectaculaire pour les "salaried people" (personnel d'encadrement et employés) qui ne sont ni syndiqués, ni couverts par un tel contrat. Mais on retrouve, en ce qui les concerne, le même effort pour délimiter précisément les droits et les devoirs des divers échelons de la hiérarchie. Le supérieur dispose d'une très grande marge de liberté pour fixer les attributions et les objectifs de ses subordonnés, et les sanctionner (y compris par des mesures de rétrogradation et de licenciement). Mais pour être perçues comme légitimes, ces sanctions doivent être strictement liées à la manière dont les objectifs préalablement fixés ont été atteints. Il n'est pas légitime (et les supérieurs américains évitent de le faire) de demander des comptes sur des points vagues, discutables, ou non prévus à l'avance. Par ailleurs les subordonnés ont une grande marge de liberté dans le choix des moyens utilisés pour atteindre les objectifs qui leur ont été fixés. Eux aussi sont sous la pression et bénéficient de la protection de la règle et du contrat, au moins moral.

Dans l'usine française la règle est loin de fournir le même instrument de pression et de protection. La codification des conduites est moins poussée ; ainsi on ne trouve ni définition écrite des fonctions, ni règles équivalentes à celles de l'usine américaine en matière d'attribution des postes, d'heures supplémentaires etc... De plus, même quand la règle existe sur le papier, elle est appliquée de façon beaucoup moins rigoureuse que dans l'usine américaine. Les sanctions officielles ne sont guère appliquées, mais il existe des sanctions occultes. L'opposition aux règles en vigueur tend à prendre beaucoup plus que dans l'usine américaine, la forme d'"arrangements" avec les règles qui sontournées sans être remises ouvertement en cause. Les rapports de force ne se concentrent pas dans les moments où celles des règles qui ont un caractère contractuel sont établies. Ils sont présents de manière plus continue dans une série d'ajustements locaux et précaires à côté des règles, dérogeant à celles-ci, ou les interprétant avec des compromis provisoires entre des personnes particulières.

L'équilibre qui tend à s'établir entre la pression de la hiérarchie et la résistance des subordonnés est un équilibre subtil largement informel (1). D'un côté l'autorité des responsables doit beaucoup à la révérence qui s'attache à leur personne, et cette révérence est à la mesure de la distance symbolique qui les sépare de ceux qu'il dirige. Ils possèdent un pouvoir discrétionnaire considérable. Mais d'un autre côté leur statut même leur interdit de trop "descendre" dans ce qui relève des affaires de leurs subordonnés et donc de contrôler ceux-ci de près. Et le devoir général de modération fait que leur capacité à remettre en cause la situation de leurs subordonnés (sanctions, changements d'affectation) reste très limitée en dehors des périodes de crise mettant en jeu des intérêts supérieurs essentiels.

De son côté l'usine des Pays-Bas se singularise par la place qu'y tient la recherche de consensus. Non seulement les procédures de concertation son-

(1) Déjà bien mis en évidence par Michel Crozier dans Le Phénomène Bureaucratique, Seuil 1963.

très développées mais, à l'étonnement des cadres français, "il est très rare qu'une réunion se termine sans qu'on ait un accord et qu'on s'y tienne". Cette logique de consensus ne tend pas seulement à éliminer les marques les plus ouvertes d'agressivité qui sont courantes en France ("gueuler", "se facher", manier l'ironie). Elle a également pour effet de limiter fortement l'application brutale des règles qui est en faveur aux Etats-Unis ; la solidarité du groupe tend à l'emporter sur l'évaluation fine des mérites propres à chacun et sur la responsabilité personnelle.

Les rapports hiérarchiques s'inscrivent dans un tel fonctionnement. La hiérarchie ne peut que modérément s'appuyer sur la règle (ainsi il est pratiquement impossible de sanctionner un ouvrier, et il n'est pas question de contrôler l'authenticité des absences pour "maladie"). Et elle ne peut compter non plus sur quelque révérence étayant un pouvoir discrétionnaire. Il lui faut sans relâche consulter, expliquer et convaincre. Mais elle ne rencontre guère d'opposition active. Elle n'a pas à affronter de grèves. L'acceptation des consignes, des ordres, des mutations à l'intérieur de l'usine, des contrôles, ou du chômage partiel, paraît étonnante aux yeux de cadres français. Et on ne retrouve pas non plus l'activité procédurière qui marque l'usine américaine. Les échecs de la recherche de consensus se traduisent par diverses formes de démobilisation et de retrait (qui constituent un moyen d'échapper aux tensions sans se battre). Le turnover et l'absentéisme, très variables, suivant le "climat" qui règne dans les divers services et équipes, peuvent atteindre des niveaux très élevés (dans le service principal de fabrication, l'absentéisme maladie est cinq fois plus élevé que dans le service équivalent de l'usine française (1)).

III La diversité de la présence et de l'action syndicale :

Chaque type d'articulation entre les pressions de la hiérarchie et les défenses de la base conduit à un mode particulier de présence et d'action syndicale. L'importance globale de l'action des syndicats, leurs orientations idéolo-

(1) De l'ordre de 15 % contre 5 %.

giques, et leurs modes d'action concrets, s'en trouvent profondément affectés.

Des syndicats inégalement présents

La lutte collective et organisée des travailleurs constitue la raison d'être de l'action des syndicats. Suivant que la manière dont les travailleurs promeuvent leurs intérêts relève plus ou moins de la lutte (1) et suivant que cette lutte est plus ou moins collective plutôt qu'individuelle, organisée plutôt qu'informelle, les syndicats tendront à occuper des places très variables. A cet égard les situations de la France, des Etats-Unis et des Pays-Bas, se présentent de manières bien différentes.

Si par opposition aux Pays-Bas, pays de recherche de consensus, la France et les Etats-Unis paraissent des pays de luttes, les différences entre les terrains où celles-ci sont menées ne peuvent qu'avoir de grandes répercussions sur le rôle des syndicats.

En France les règles, les accords, n'ont qu'une importance limitée. De toute manière leur respect est très relatif. Et les efforts faits individuellement par chacun pour améliorer sa position à côté des règles ou en les tournant, tiennent une grande place par rapport aux efforts faits collectivement pour rendre leur contenu plus favorable. Ce caractère très général de la société française se retrouve en particulier dans les relations professionnelles, et limite le rôle joué par les syndicats .

Ainsi en matière de salaires il existe certes des négociations collectives, conduisant à l'établissement de règles, et ces négociations font intervenir les syndicats. Mais leur fruit n'a qu'un rôle très limité. Ainsi que l'analyse J.D. Reynaud (2). "A proprement parler, la négociation ne détermine pas les salaires en France. Elle fixe les minima, enregistre et régularise les poussées économiques, encadre la discussion d'entreprise. Mais elle n'a rien de comparable au contrat par lequel les salariés américains fixent de manière formelle le prix de leur travail

(1) Nous avons parlé dans la 2e partie de "défense" et non de "promotion" des intérêts des travailleurs. Il y a là sans doute un ethnocentrisme français, lié au rôle des luttes dans la manière dont cette promotion se fait en France.

(2) J.D. Reynaud Les syndicats en France, Seuil 1975, PP 206.207.

(et sans lequel ils refusent de travailler). En règle générale le salaire effectif n'est pas négocié. "Cette situation, est liée à la place des stratégies individuelles. "En bonne période (...) les salariés veulent gagner davantage et la voie courte de la guérilla est beaucoup plus immédiatement prometteuse à cet égard que la voie longue d'un renforcement des négociations..."(1). Et "les syndicats voient ainsi se perpétuer les raisons principales de leur faiblesse" (2).

Ce qui est vrai pour les salaires l'est également dans de nombreux domaines touchant à l'organisation du travail, et aux conditions de travail. Ce qui en la matière est en général fixé aux Etats-Unis par des règles établies par négociation avec les organisations syndicales et dont celles-ci contrôlent quotidiennement l'application fait l'objet en France d'"arrangements" individuels auxquels les syndicats ne sont pas partie prenante. Aussi les syndicats y sont très absents de la vie quotidienne des ateliers. Cette situation, qui est apparue de manière frappante dans notre enquête, se retrouve beaucoup plus largement (3).

De plus la manière dont les actions collectives elles mêmes s'inscrivent dans le jeu français de pressions et de contre pressions ne favorise pas le rôle des syndicats. Ainsi les grèves françaises sont souvent moins des moyens d'obtenir des accords formels que des manifestations d'un sentiment qu'on a "dépassé les bornes".

"De tous ces pays, la France est celui où la grève est la plus diffuse, la plus liée sans doute, à une protestation éphémère, la moins articulée à un processus de négociation" (4). G. Martinet évoque à ce titre "un facteur typiquement français (...) qui est celui des énormes variations de la combativité ouvrière (...). La France reste sur le plan social comme sur le plan politique, le

(1) Ibid P. 215.216

(2) Ibid P. 215

(3) Ibid P. 245.246, J.D. Reynaud souligne qu'en France le droit qui intervient en cas de rupture de contrat de travail, ne règle guère la manière de vivre en ensemble.

(4) cf. . Adam et J.D. Reynaud, Conflits du travail et changement social, PUF 1978. P. 22.

pays des "émotions" et des "journées" (1). Ceci se traduit en particulier par le fait que la durée moyenne des grèves est beaucoup plus courte que dans la plupart des autres pays et en particulier qu'aux Etats-Unis (2). Si le nombre de journées de grève par salarié est du même ordre de grandeur qu'outre Atlantique (3), leur différence de rôle fait qu'elles ne supposent pas du tout la même organisation. Aussi elles ne font pas intervenir les syndicats de la même façon. Ainsi pour J.D. Reynaud si la France ignore le problème des "grèves sauvages", ce n'est pas "parce qu'il y a davantage de discipline, mais parce qu'il n'y en a pas du tout" (4).

Dans ces conditions on ne peut s'étonner que le syndicalisme français apparaisse comme "le plus faible des syndicalismes européens" (5).

Aux pays-Bas l'action syndicale s'inscrit dans un contexte très différent, marqué de manière très générale et pas seulement dans les relations professionnelles, par la recherche de consensus.

Le rôle des syndicats tend à se concentrer sur les points qui relèvent le moins facilement du consensus, parce que les rapports entre employeur et salariés sont en ce qui les concerne "de somme nulle". "Les syndicats ont comme rôle de défendre l'individu et les défenses primaires comme la rémunération" (6). Les salaires sont concernés au premier chef.

On a en matière de salaires des négociations entre employeurs et or

(1) G. Martinet Sept syndicalismes, op. cit P. 137.

(2) J.D. Reynaud op. cit P. 164.

(3) Sur la période 1962-1974 205 journées pour 1000 salariés, sans compter 1968 où 931 en le comptant contre 516 aux Etats-Unis, cf. Adam et Reynaud p. 22.

(4) cf. J.D. Reynaud op. cit p. 167.

(5) cf. P. Marinet op. cit p. 125.

(6) Entretien avec les responsables des affaires sociales de l'usine néerlandaise où nous avons enquêté .

ganisations syndicales, à l'échelon national (négociation des conventions collectives de branche) et à l'échelon local qui conduisent à des décisions effectivement suivies d'effet. Le rôle de "défense" des syndicats apparaît bien à cet égard comme très important.

Par contre dans les multiples domaines où plutôt que de "défense" au sens strict des intérêts des travailleurs, il s'agit d'une recherche de consensus sur des intérêts communs, le rôle des syndicats paraît très limité. Ce sont alors par d'autres organes que la voix des salariés se fait entendre.

Le conseil d'entreprise prévu par la loi joue à cet égard un grand rôle. "On discute sur des sujets sur lesquels il n'y a pas de conflit" (1). Ce conseil intervient par exemple en cas de grosse réorganisation, et dans la nomination des membres du conseil de surveillance. Ses liens avec les syndicats sont limités. Dans l'usine où nous avons enquêté ses membres, désignés à bulletin secret, appartiennent traditionnellement à l'encadrement. Et "il y a une fraction (des syndicats) au conseil d'établissement, il y a une section avec un petit comité, mais qui n'a aucune valeur juridique (...) le représentant n'a pas de protection particulière, ni de décharges de service" (2).

De plus dans cette usine, (et on peut penser que ce n'est pas un cas singulier) un très grand nombre de commissions, de comités, etc...non légalement obligatoires rassemblent des représentants des divers niveaux de la hiérarchie. Ils n'ont à prendre aucune décision ou délibération ayant une valeur juridique, mais constituent des instruments de l'élaboration du consensus. Ces commissions, où les syndicats n'interviennent pas, traitent aussi bien des questions d'organisation technique, que de classification des postes, des conditions de travail, etc...De son côté la concertation informelle entre niveaux hiérarchiques, individu à individu ou

(1) Déclaration du président de l'usine néerlandaise où nous avons enquêté (cf. Le Monde dossiers et documents n° 102 Juin 1983).

(2) Entretien avec le responsable des affaires sociales.

en groupes) est très poussée .

Par ailleurs les défaillances de ce mode d'ajustement par consensus conduisant pour l'essentiel à des modes d'expression des tensions qui, relevant du retrait et non de la lutte, ne font pas intervenir les syndicats. Dans l'usine où nous avons enquêté, il n'y a jamais eu de grève, pendant que l'absentéisme et le turnover sont très forts. Et cette situation reflète des caractéristiques nationales. Ainsi le nombre de journées de grève par salarié n'atteint pas pour l'ensemble du pays le 1/10 du chiffre américain (1).

Au total le rôle à la fois important à certains égards, et en même temps limité, des syndicats néerlandais s'inscrit bien dans un mode national de régulation sociale.

On a déjà évoqué le rôle des syndicats américains en contrepoint de celui des syndicats français. Ce rôle est intimement lié à la place des contrats d'entreprise et du "bargaining system", lui même lié à la place générale de la règle et du contrat dans le mode de régulation américain. Les syndicats constituent l'instance qui négocie le contrat et veille à son application. Ils paraissent largement vus par les salariés comme correspondant à des sortes de "lawyers" travaillant à leur service de manière fort utile, même s'ils sont coûteux (2).

Une diversité d'idéologies et de modes d'action

Les tendances idéologiques des divers syndicalismes nationaux s'inscrivent elles aussi dans chacun des types de régulation.

Les aspects anarchistes et révolutionnaires de l'idéologie des syndicats français (3), leur répugnance à la "collaboration de classe", se concilient

(1) Pour la période 1962-1974 26 journées pour 1000 salariés contre 516 aux Etats-Unis.

(2) Nous avons eu des remarques d'ouvriers en ce sens dans l'usine américaine où nous avons enquêté, cf. aussi G.Martinet op. cit. p. 176.

(3) cf. P Martinet op. cit .

bien avec le rôle en tout état de cause limité et précaire, des accords qu'ils ont à passer avec le patronat. L'idéal de "l'usine aux travailleurs" (1) s'inscrit parfaitement dans un mode de régulation qui met l'accent sur l'autonomie de chacun. De plus le rôle de l'autorité comme instance de régulation séparée et révérée dans une société néanmoins marquée par des valeurs égalitaires, tend à créer à son égard des relations extrêmement ambivalentes. L'idéologie révolutionnaire, jointe à un discours souvent critique et à des explosions sporadiques de mécontentement sert à ce titre de compensation aux marques de respect (impensables aux Etats-Unis et plus encore aux Pays-Bas) dont bénéficient les représentants de l'autorité.

Aux Pays-Bas au contraire, ce qui vu de France, apparaît comme une "coopération de classe", s'inscrit dans un mode de régulation où la recherche du consensus a un caractère beaucoup plus général, et où l'inégalité des fonctions va de pair avec une égalité fondamentale des personnes (l'autorité n'y bénéficie pas de marques de révérence).

L'idéologie américaine de lutte au sein du système s'inscrit de son côté dans un mode de régulation mettant de manière générale l'accent sur la confrontation régie par des règles que tous respectent. Et elle est permise par le fait que là encore, il n'y a pas d'inégalité foncière entre personnes (et pas seulement entre fonctions) séparant les dirigeants des dirigés.

On peut de même analyser les différences entre les modes d'action syndicale que l'on observe dans les trois pays (2).

Il n'est sans doute pas nécessaire d'insister plus sur le rôle central du contrat d'entreprise dans la stratégie des syndicats américains. Les grèves sont des grèves de longue durée, liées pour l'essentiel au renouvellement des contrats. Les syndicats se livrent au jour le jour à une activité procédurière

(1) Ibid p. 128-131.

(2) On pourrait également analyser les rapports entre les systèmes nationaux de régulation et les objectifs de l'action syndicale (stabilité de l'emploi, niveaux des salaires, etc...). Il faudrait pour cela analyser les rapports entre le système de régulation et l'importance des divers types d'enjeux dans la vie des individus. Pareille analyse déborderait le cadre du présent texte.

intense ("grievance procedures") liée à l'application des contrats. Cette activité fait intervenir des experts syndicaux qui "font carrière" dans le syndicat (1). Dans ce mode d'intervention il est essentiel que les salariés soient représentés par un interlocuteur pouvant s'engager au nom de ses troupes, et donc à la fois unique et faisant régner une forte discipline.

Dans la perspective néerlandaise de recherche de consensus, le pluralisme syndical n'a pas d'inconvénients. Au contraire il permet la confrontation d'un large ensemble de points de vue, et la prise en compte, essentielle dans un système de recherche de consensus, des points de vue des minorités. Par ailleurs la recherche de consensus par la discussion détourne d'un usage de la grève comme moyen d'action. Un climat d'information réciproque et objective marque les relations entre le patronat et les syndicats. Ainsi, dans l'usine où nous avons enquêté, "chaque trois mois il y a une réunion de la direction avec les représentants de chacun des quatre syndicats. Là on commence toujours par une petite explication de la situation économique même s'il n'y a pas de problèmes majeurs. Cette réunion a pour but de maintenir des contacts structurés" (2).

En France on a, pour revenir aux analyses de J.D Reynaud, une "négociation permanente", où "il faut voir non une approximation des formules contractuelles, mais une formule différente" (3), la rencontre des parties crée moins la législation détaillée de leurs rapports que "les principes constitutionnels de leur convivance" (4). Il s'agit bien sur de créer une sorte de *modus vivendi* conflictuel, où chaque partie garde les mains libres (5), mais où, dans la droite ligne du système de régulation française, chacun évite d'aller "trop loin". On a des négociations morcelées, traitant les problèmes à chaud avec des résultats dont le statut juridique est souvent vague et la pérennité douteuse (6) mais qui évitent aux conflits

(1) cf. G. Martinet, op. cit p. 176 sur "l'union business".

(2) Entretien avec le responsable des affaires sociales.

(3) Ibid 177-178.

(4) J.D. Reynaud op. cit p 229.

(5) Ibid.

(6) cf. Christian Morel La grève froide, stratégies syndicales et pouvoir patronal. Les éditions d'organisation 1981.

de dégénérer.

Par ailleurs les rapports des syndicats à l'Etat, reflètent bien les rapports ambivalents à l'autorité que l'on trouve dans la société française. La difficulté à se mettre d'accord par des négociations entre partenaires rend son intervention indispensable (1). Il bénéficie d'une référence qui permet d'agir par son autorité propre, et non en simple serviteur de la loi. Et simultanément il est brocardé et on s'en méfie (2).

Conclusion

Les particularismes nationaux en matière de rôle d'idéologie et de mode d'action des syndicats ne relèvent pas seulement de traditions se limitant au champ propre des rapports entre patrons et travailleurs. Ils reflètent des caractéristiques beaucoup plus générales des formes de régulation (de "pacte social") propres aux diverses sociétés. Si l'on prend l'exemple de la France des Pays-Bas et des Etats-Unis, les modes de régulation que l'on a pu mettre à jour en étudiant d'autres catégories de phénomènes, et en particulier la coopération horizontale entre divers services d'une même entreprise, se retrouve remarquablement dans les différences de présence et d'action syndicales. Aussi dans chaque pays il paraît illusoire, dans ce domaine comme dans d'autres, de vouloir imiter directement ce qui paraît séduisant ailleurs. Chaque action syndicale ne peut se développer sans tenir soigneusement compte des spécificités de la société où elle s'insère.

(1) cf. J.D. Reynaud op. cit. p 195-197 "cf. aussi p 180-181 sur le déroulement des négociations.

(2) cf. G. Martinet op. cit. p 160.

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THE BRITISH MINER'S STRIKES OF 1974 AND 1984
A COMPARISON OF THE ROLE AND STRATEGY OF THE MINER'S UNION

Mr. M. Jackson



**european centre for
work and society
Maastricht**



The British Miners' Strikes of 1974 and 1984:

A Comparison of the Role and Strategy of the Miners' Union

M. Jackson

Introduction

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) has a unique place in the history of industrial relations in Britain. It had a central role in the General Strike of 1926 and in the 1930s the militancy of the miners appeared to overshadow all other groups: in some years miners alone accounted for more than 40 percent of all strikes in Britain. In 1974 the miners' strike triggered a general election and the defeat of the Government. In the popular image the miners were the key group in the labour movement. They not only had a history of militancy but they had defeated a government. They seemed to have enormous industrial strength and the capacity to withstand pressures that would make other groups capitulate. In the context of the early 1980s, then, with the background of the defeat of a number of major groups in public and private sector strikes, the miners appeared to be the last major point of resistance to both Government policy and the growing strength of employers. The 1984/5 miners' strike, thus, was of real significance, not simply to the miners but also to the whole labour movement and arguably to the whole of industrial relations in Britain. This paper seeks to examine the reasons for the result of the 1984/5 strike and to compare it with the very different outcome in 1974. The aim of such a comparison, in part, is to enable the events of 1984/5 to be better understood: the aim is also to be able to point to more general lessons for the distribution of power in industrial relations.

The 1974 and 1984/5 strikes: an outline

The 1974 British miners' strike was a relatively short affair, lasting for only a matter of weeks. However, it was part of a longer period of industrial action which started in November 1983 and that action itself needs to be seen in the context of earlier disputes in the industry. In practice, the most logical starting point for a narrative is probably November 1971 when following a breakdown of negotiations over wage levels the NUM called first an overtime ban and then a ballot over strike action. The ballot resulted in a narrow majority (59%) in favour of a strike which started in January of the following year. The strike led to considerable industrial disruption (by the middle of February over 1.2 million workers had been laid off because of disruption to power supplies) and eventually a Committee of Inquiry was set up (the Wilberforce Inquiry) which recommended wage rises significantly above those previously on offer. The strike ended on 28 February 1972, essentially on the terms recommended by the Wilberforce Inquiry.

The miners apparent success in 1972 was followed by demands for further significant rises in the 1972 and 1973 wage rounds. In July 1973 the Union's annual conference approved a call for wage increases of between £8.50 and £13. Such increases were well above those allowed under the Government's existing pay policy (by this time Phase Three of the Counter Inflation Programme was being discussed and eventually approved). The total cost of the wage demand in a year was put at about £138 million. The response of the employers, the National Coal Board (NCB) was to offer a package of wage increase which would have cost about £42 million. The Coal Board's offer was rejected and in November 1973 the NUM's national executive committee called for an overtime ban.

At the start of the overtime ban coal stocks stood at 35 million tonnes (2 millions more than at the start of the 1972 strike) but the Government swiftly introduced a State of Emergency which brought in a whole range of regulations designed to save power (display advertising and floodlighting were banned, government buildings were ordered to cut fuel consumption by a tenth and the general public were urged to make voluntary reductions in their use of power). These restrictions were followed in December by the announcement that industry was only to be allowed to work a "three day week" from the end of the year.

The 1974 strike itself did not start until more than a month of the new year, and the 'three day week', had passed. A strike ballot was held on 31 January and 1 February which resulted in an 81% vote in favour of strike action (86% of members voted). The strike was called from 10 February. In the meantime, the Government announced (on 7 February) that it was calling a General Election (on 28 February): in the announcement of the election it was made clear that the coal strike was one of the main issues.

The miners refused to call off their action and the General Election took place not simply under the shadow of the strike but also with the strike (and the issue of 'who governs the country') as uppermost. In the event the Conservative Government was defeated and replaced by a Labour administration. The new Government quickly settled the strike. The total cost of the settlement was estimated at £103 million. In so far as one can ever say who has won or lost a strike, the miners were seen by most to have won.

The 1984/5 strike also fits into a background of earlier developments, but ones of a very different kind. Whereas the 1974 strike was preceded by a growth in industrial militancy buoyed by

increasing demand for coal, the 1984/5 strike was preceded by an apparent reluctance to take industrial action in many coalfields and a decline in the demand for coal. The decline in the demand for coal led the Coal Board to look for ways of reducing capacity and concentrating production in 'more economic pits'. When Norman Siddall succeeded Dereck Ezra as chairman of the NCB in 1982 he encouraged managers to put marginal pits forward for closure through the 'review procedure' and in his year as chairman Siddall saw twenty pits closed and about 4 million tonnes of capacity lost.

Such developments brought alarm within the NUM and in October 1982 a special delegate conference decided to call a national ballot on strike action: the ballot linked two issues, the latest pay offer and pit closures. The ballot resulted in a defeat for the strike move: 87 percent of miners voted but there was a 61 percent vote against strike action. Six months later, in March 1983, the issue was revived. The South Wales area of the union was on strike over the closure of the Ty Mawr Lewis Merthyr colliery but a national ballot on strike action again resulted in a defeat for the move with, once more, 61 percent voting against strike action.

The issue of pit closures, though, remained high on the agenda. It was discussed at the union's annual conference in July 1983 when a resolution was passed instructing the national executive to begin campaigning against pit closures and to hold another strike ballot at an appropriate juncture. In September 1983 Ian MacGregor took over as chairman of the NCB and his reputation from his stewardship of the British steel industry only served to increase anxiety over the issue.

In November 1983 a special delegate conference of the miners' union agreed on an overtime ban in protest against a 5.2 percent pay offer.

Pit closures continued, though, to be the dominant issue, and the announcement of the closure of Cortonwood colliery in South Yorkshire and a further 4 million tonne cut in capacity for 1984/5 (with the loss of 20 pits and 20,000 jobs) led to strike action in Scotland, Yorkshire, South Wales and Kent. This action (under rule 41 of the union) did not require a national ballot but had to be endorsed by the National Executive. Such endorsement quickly followed and the strike spread into national action.

Throughout the strike a number of attempts were made to negotiate a settlement. At the centre of these negotiations was the issue of 'uneconomic pits'. It was often portrayed simply as a dispute between the NCB which wanted to be able to close down pits which were not profitable and the NUM which only wanted pits to be closed down when their reserves became exhausted. In practice, neither position was as simple as that: the NCB recognised that the profitability of a pit, at least in the short term, was not the only factor to be taken into account, while the NUM recognised that the notion of 'exhaustion' in practice implied an economic element. Yet neither side was willing to go far enough to meet the other's requirements, perhaps because of the atmosphere of mutual mistrust.

In the discussion on 'uneconomic pits' reference was frequently made to the strategy agreed for the industry in 'Plan for Coal'. The union placed considerable emphasis on this agreement believing that it justified their opposition to pit closures. The Coal Board for their part saw the need to negotiate a new agreement for the future of the industry which reflected changed market conditions. In fact, the Plan for Coal, over which so many of the exchanges between the two sides during the strike centred, is not just one but a series of documents

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which date back to 1974 but extend to include 'Coal for the Future' published in 1977. In these documents, the expansion of capacity is assured and the question of pit closures is touched on but the issue of 'uneconomic pits' was never really fully dealt with.

The strike itself was both bitter and violent. The mass picketing at a number of pits was the centre of attention by the police and the media. The failure of some miners, particularly in Nottinghamshire, to support the strike, meant that the 'rights of working miners' became a major public issue. The striking miners were accused of intimidation and the police were accused, amongst other things, of using unnecessary force and provoking violence.

As the strike progressed into 1985 the main tactic of the Board and the Government came to be seen to be to try to widen the gap between the working and striking miners and to persuade more men to return to work. For a period the major centre of attention became the numbers giving up the strike: both sides recognised the propaganda importance of such figures and the effect that they could have on the morale of those remaining on strike. At the end of the day the 'drift back to work' became the critical factor. The NUM executive was forced to recognise that strikers were returning to work even if they disputed the NCB's figures and in March 1985 ordered a return to work. However, it is significant, and an indication of the bitterness that surrounded the strike, that the return to work was not based on a negotiated settlement.

The 1974 and 1984/5 strikes compared

The 1974 and 1984/5 strikes clearly ended with very different results. In the former the miners, and their union, apparently defeated

not simply their employers, the NCB, but also the Government; in the latter the miners were apparently defeated after one of the bitterest and longest national strikes in Britain's history. There are obviously many points of comparison between the strikes but all of them could not be covered in the space allowed in this paper. The points of comparison that will be referred to will be those that are seen as being of particular value in helping to explain the different conclusions to the two strikes.

1. Personalities

Reporting of industrial relations in the media, and particularly reporting of strikes, often dwells on individuals. Frequently such a concentration on individual personalities leads to a gross oversimplification of issues. Nevertheless, it is difficult to resist the view that personalities, and differences in personality (and style), played at least some role in the strikes under consideration. As far as the NUM is concerned the dominant personality is usually the President (and the General Secretary as in many other British unions). In the 1974 strike the union was led by Joe Gormley, seen as a 'centre-right' candidate when he took over the leadership. In the 1984/5 strike the union was led by Arthur Scargill, popularly seen as on the 'left' of the labour movement. The different political stances of the leaders is important for the political views of Arthur Scargill were used by his opponents as a way of attacking his policy and questioning his motives. More importantly, however, it was not only the political opinions of the two men that differed but also their leadership styles. Arthur Scargill was much more clearly leading the union's policy and the strike in 1984/5 than Joe Gormley had been in 1974. Gormley has been portrayed, probably correctly, as being reluctantly drawn into strike action: many have

argued that Scargill saw strike action as inevitable and the only way to halt what he believed to be the destruction of the industry.

In the case of the NCB there were also differences in leadership style between the 1974 and 1984/5 strikes. In 1974 Dereck Ezra was the chairman of the NCB while in 1984/5 that position was held by Ian MacGregor. The latter was seen publicly as much more aggressive (in some eyes determined): his personality for a while dominated the presentation of the Coal Board case. In 1974, of course, the chairman of the NCB played an important role but in the public perception it was overshadowed by Government ministers: the Coal Board was more clearly seen to be acting under Government policy and therefore the personality of the Coal Board chairman seemed less crucial.

The simple presentation of the personality differences sees the main protagonists in 1974 as being much less strident and dogmatic than those in 1984/5. Such stereotypes can be dangerous for they inevitably present an over-simple picture. Yet this perception of personalities was important. Not simply was each side's leader held up as a 'bogyman' by the other much more in 1984/5 than in 1974 but part of the object of the 1984/5 strike on the Government's part seemed to be determined by the need to ensure that Arthur Scargill did not win and could not be seen to have won. The creation of the public perception of the personalities made compromise more difficult on both sides. Of course, this does not explain the different outcomes of the strikes, nor does it entirely explain differences in their conduct, for the 1974 strike was bitter and keenly fought. Nevertheless, the personalities and differences in this area between 1974 and 1984/5 are an important factor in understanding events.

One specific aspect of the two strikes, which can be linked to the personalities on the union side, though it has a broader scope, is the way union policy developed in relation to consultation with members. The 1974 strike was based on a ballot of the whole membership in favour of the strike whereas in 1984/5 no such national ballot was held. The rationale for not holding a ballot in 1984/5 was based on two factors. First, it was claimed that a national ballot was unnecessary, as the strike could proceed under rule 41 which permitted individual areas to reach their own decisions (subject to approval by the national executive) and then seek support from others. Second, it was claimed that certain union members, particularly those in 'safe' areas, should not be allowed to vote other members out of their jobs. The strategy adopted over the ballot in 1984/5 was not simply a reflection of the personality and stance of the leader Arthur Scargill: however, it clearly was less in tune with the personality of the 1974 union leader, Joe Gormley, and it is difficult to envisage him having supported such a strategy.

Some would see the decision over the ballot as having particular significance for the outcome of the strike. Indications from opinion polls and the like all suggest that had a ballot been held there would have been a majority in favour of strike action. Such a ballot result early in the strike might have avoided the splits in the miners' ranks, particularly the decision of many Nottinghamshire miners to continue working, and while it is difficult to determine whether this would have led to a different outcome, it clearly would have strengthened the impact of the strike considerably. Explanations for the failure of the 1984/5 miners' leaders to hold a strike ballot vary but a popular one is that defeat of calls for strike action in three earlier ballots meant that the

leaders did not want to trust future action to such a device. However, the miners' leaders were defeated in a strike ballot in the early 1970s before the 1974 strike: a ballot in 1970 only showed 55 percent in favour of strike action and at that time such a majority was insufficient to allow a strike to be called (later the rules were changed to enable a strike to be called if a ballot produced 55 percent in favour). The question, then, of the approach of union leaders, and their views, particularly about the right of union members to vote others out of a job, still needs to be considered as an explanation alongside the suggestion that the miners' leaders simply miscalculated the views of their members because of their previous defeat.

2. Economic environment

The 1974 strike was less influenced by the general economic environment than by the specific circumstances facing the coal mining industry. The dramatic rise in oil prices which was to spark off a major economic crisis significantly improved the market position of coal. Earlier trends which saw a reduction in coal output were reversed as the British government, like others, sought ways of reducing dependency on oil. Coal was now seen to have a price advantage: in 1974 it was estimated that the Central Electricity Generating Board was paying about 6p or 7p a therm for oil whereas the average cost of coal was only about 3p a therm.

The 1974 strike was not simply concerned with changed market conditions, but these developments were critical in persuading the miners and maybe more importantly public opinion, that they were bargaining from strength. This view was reinforced by the Government's reaction, in particular the 'three day week'. If the miners could have this kind of impact (and it should be remembered that two years earlier a miners'

strike had led to mass lay-offs in British industry) then it was difficult to see them being defeated.

A great deal had changed by 1984. Unemployment had risen to over 12 percent and while it is difficult to quantify the impact of the worsening economic conditions on the willingness to strike most commentators have suggested that it reduced the willingness of workers to accept the costs and risks associated with such action. Fear of redundancy and unemployment in the mining industry led some to militancy but led to defeat in earlier national ballots on strike action. It is also arguable that worsening economic conditions were one of the reasons why the miners received relatively little practical support from the rest of the union movement. Of course, the Trade Union Congress and individual unions passed resolutions supporting the miners, and some gave donations to support the strike action. Some unions also gave more direct support; for example the rail unions sought to halt the movement of coal. The bulk of the union movement, though, expressed their support verbally rather than through direct action.

The changed general economic conditions, however, were possibly less crucial than the more specific changes in the fortunes of the British coal mining industry. UK coal consumption reached a peak (129.4 million tonnes) in 1979 and production fell from 130.1 million tonnes in 1980 to 119.3 million tonnes in 1983. Coal stocks stood at 58 million tonnes in 1983. The level of stocks was important in its own right for it meant that it was going to take much longer for the miners to recreate the impact of the 1974 strike. Allied to the decision of some miners to defy the strike call and continue producing coal the high level of stocks provided the basis for the Government's complacency about the industrial consequences of the miners' strike. More generally, the level of coal

stocks, along with other indicators, suggested that the fortunes of the industry were declining. The attempts to increase coal production of the 1970s had been replaced by measures to reduce capacity.

One possible explanation for the 1984 miners' strike uses the changed economic circumstances of the industry as a central factor. It could be argued that the strike, in part at least, was the result of the failure of the miners' leaders to realise that changed market circumstances had significantly weakened their bargaining position. This would suggest that the miners, encouraged by memories of the 1974 strike, and the public perception of the miners as the one group that the Government could not defeat, conducted negotiations and the strike itself with an inadequate appreciation of the reduction in their effective power. Of course, these changed conditions, so this view would argue, were recognised by the opponents of the miners who were convinced that on this occasion the miners could be defeated. These different views on the balance of power could help to explain both why miners and the Coal Board/Government were willing to engage in strike action in the first instance, and why the strike in the event lasted so long.

3. The legal environment

The Conservative Government of 1970-1974 started its administration with a commitment to 'reform industrial relations', which meant the introduction of more legal controls, particularly on the activities of trade unions and the conduct of strikes. The Industrial Relations Act of 1971 was an important break with previous policy and was seen at the time by many as a turning point in British industrial relations, reversing what until then had been the dominant 'voluntary' tradition. The 1971 Act, though, was less effective than many had forecast. Trade unions were able to avoid some of the worst penalties by disowning the

actions of their members and the imprisonment of a number of dockers' leaders led to a public outcry and the virtual abandonment of the legislation. The 1974 strike, then, took place against a background in which the trade union movement was seen to have defeated a major attempt to curb their powers. The picketing which was so effective during the strike took place, to all intents and purposes, unhindered by the law.

The experience of the 1974 strike, particularly the picketing, incensed many on the 'right' of the political spectrum in Britain: it increased their determination to have more 'effective' industrial relations laws and was an important part of the background to the industrial relations legislation of the 1980s. The moves made by the Thatcher Government in industrial relations were designed both to avoid the mistakes of the earlier era and to more effectively curb trade union power. They had some public support (the 'winter of discontent' has been seen as one of the reasons for the defeat of the Labour administration in 1970) though there is a debate over the detail of this matter. In practice they were far more effective than the 1971 legislation had been. They attacked union funds, rather than individuals, and they made it difficult for unions to escape the consequences of their actions, say by disowning the actions of their members. Two events during the strike serve to emphasise these points. The first was the move which for a while looked like resulting in the miners' leader Arthur Scargill being committed to gaol. Such a prospect had some attractions for some supporting the miners for they drew parallels with gaoling of the 'Pentonville five' (the dockers' leaders) that led to the effective defeat of the 1971 Industrial Relations Act. Scargill, however, was not gaoled as an anonymous donor paid his fine. The other event is the sequestrating of the miners'

funds. The NUM, like other unions, went to considerable efforts to anticipate and frustrate any moves to sequester their funds but the problems of doing so, and of continuing to finance the union organisation, were enormous. Donations to support the miners' strike, for example, which were an important part (probably the most important part) of the general labour movement's support of the strike had to be channelled into special accounts to try to avoid the legal restrictions on the miners' funds.

The industrial relations legislation, and the way it was operated, formed an important part of the background to the 1984/5 strike. It led to the South Wales area of the union being deprived of control of its funds and then similar action being taken against the national union (the South Wales action was taken under the secondary picketing provisions of the 1980 Employment Act while the action against the national union was taken by 'working miners' on the basis of the law of contract). The industrial relations legislation was an indication as well of the reduction in the power of the union movement in Britain (the threat to destroy the 1980s legislation in the fashion of the early 1970s action had failed), an indication which had its effect on morale and therefore the willingness of the movement to directly support the miners' case. In practical terms, though, industrial relations legislation was possibly less important than the operations of the police to control picketing. The highly centralised operation (which is unusual in Britain given the emphasis on local police forces) frustrated many attempts at picketing. The important point is that this operation was conducted for the main under the general legal code, not under the industrial relations legislation.

4. The socio-economic position of the miners

In most countries coal miners, historically, have been amongst the most strike prone groups. Some of the classic studies of strike action, like those of Kerr and Siegal, have noted and sought to explain this phenomenon. Included in such explanations have been references to the nature of the occupational community and the solidarity this engenders. Certainly no examination of the position of the coal miners can ignore such factors: there is no doubt, for instance, that 'community solidarity' and the support of mining areas played a part in the successful outcome of the 1974 strike compared to the more difficult progress of the earlier strike by power workers (in theory power workers could have an even more direct effect on industrial production than the miners).

In fact, there have always been variations in degrees of militancy between different parts of the British coal mining industry. Areas like Scotland, South Wales and Yorkshire have always been more militant than the Midlands, and frequently than Durham and Northumberland. This suggests that discussions of the 'mining community' need to be approached carefully for mining communities differ and there are other factors to be taken into account than simply matters like geographical isolation.

One of the other factors that is often raised is the extent to which the nature of some traditional occupational communities has changed. This discussion could include questions about the extent to which they have been affected by changes in economic standards and aspirations. In such a discussion it is relevant to refer, for example, to the increasing propensity of 'home ownership' amongst many groups. One must assume, and there is detailed evidence to support the contention, that many miners have taken advantage of the opportunities afforded by recent

legislation in Britain to enable them to purchase the house they were renting from a local authority. Such changes in residential status can be linked to other matters like the impact that long term commitments of this kind have on, say, the willingness to take strike action.

It would be foolish to discount such developments, though it is difficult to measure the extent to which they have had an effect on the particular outcomes of the 1974 and 1984/5 strikes. The areas which refused to support the strike in 1984/5 stood by the general decision in 1974: but they have always been amongst the less militant areas (in 1974 the votes in favour of strike action varied from Yorkshire's 90 percent to 77 percent in Nottinghamshire, 73 percent in the Midlands, 70 percent in South Derbyshire and 61 percent in Leicestershire). Further, in the areas that supported the strike in 1984/5 there was ample evidence of community support. Significant funds were raised by local efforts and there is little doubt that without them the strike could not have been sustained for as long. One of the actions of the current Government has been to remove the ability of strikers to claim social security payments from the state. They can still claim some help if they have dependents but this change of policy undoubtedly created financial pressure particularly though not exclusively on single men. There is anecdotal evidence that pressure of financial commitments forced some miners to abandon the strike: moves by the Coal Board, like the offer of a 'Christmas bonus' were designed to tempt some men who were in financial difficulties back to work. There is other evidence, though, that in the areas that supported the strike most miners simply accepted that commitments could not be met, and creditors, often reluctantly, accepted that this was the case.

Conclusions and General Implications

There is a view that one of the crucial factors determining the outcome of the strike in 1984/5 was the failure of the NUM leadership to hold a ballot. The argument is put that if they had held a ballot and been successful then the problem of 'working miners' would not have arisen. Miners in areas like Nottinghamshire would have respected the national vote. If this had been the case then, to continue the same line of argument, the union would have had a real opportunity of repeating their 1974 success because they would have been able to have put far more pressure on the Coal Board, and crucially the Government.

There are a number of assumptions in this position. Two might be mentioned. The first is that the 'working miners' would have obeyed a strike call if it had been supported by a national vote. It is obviously impossible to be sure about this point: on balance it seems likely that the assumption is correct and such statements were certainly made by miners in Nottinghamshire. There must, though, be a chance that had some areas voted against a strike, despite a national vote in favour, they would have tried to remain at work. The idea cannot be tested on the 1974 evidence for then all geographical areas voted in favour of strike action.

The second assumption is that the miners could have had the same impact in 1984/5 as they had in 1974 with a well supported strike. There is no doubt that the impact would have been greater but it is not clear that it would have been the same as in 1974. Coal stocks gave more of a cushion in 1984/5 and oil was not in short supply in the way it had been in 1974. The way in which the Electricity Generating Board switched from burning coal to oil showed that the miners could not control energy supplies to the same extent in 1984/5 as they had in 1974.

If the question of the ballot is crucial then the general lessons to be learnt from the 1984/5 strike are limited: they are really ones of tactics and approach. However, if the other factors that have been mentioned are more important then the general lessons are more extensive. The change in the economic and the legal environments between 1974 and 1984 suggest a weakening of union power that is by no means restricted to the miners. The evidence of British industrial relations in the last five or so years offers plenty of examples to support such a contention. In a number of cases union leaders have had their calls for strike action turned down by their members: in other cases major national strikes have ended in defeat for the union concerned (particularly, though by no means exclusively, in the public sector). In both types of instance the deteriorating economic position, and the changed legal environment, can be seen to have played a role.

If, however, the problems of trade unions are restricted to such matters then it is by no means clear what implications they have for the long as opposed to the short/medium term. Economic conditions change and while it is difficult at the moment to envisage a return say to the levels of unemployment of the 1960s, such an eventuality cannot be discounted. In a similar fashion, legal conditions can change: in Britain there is little doubt that they would with the return of a Labour Government. If, then, the problem is one of the current economic and legal conditions then one cannot necessarily predict an enduring change in the power of trade unions.

The other factor that was mentioned in comparing the 1974 and 1984/5 strike of course has longer term implications. If, for example, the attitudes of union members and their willingness to take strike action is altering, say because of changes in their social and economic position,

then the implications for trade union power could be enduring. In practice, it is difficult to show that this was the critical factor affecting the relative failure of the 1984/5 miners' strike: changed economic and legal conditions seem a much more convincing explanation. It may be, though, that as yet the miners are not the best example to test such a thesis and that other groups, where more significant changes have taken place, need to be used for such a purpose.



A european conference on

the role of trade unions in the coming decade

Maastricht, november 20-21-22, 1985



CRISIS AND CONFLICTS BETWEEN STATE AND TRADE UNION MOVEMENT
THE DANISH EXPERIENCE

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**Crisis and Conflicts between State
and Trade Union Movement.**

The Danish Experience.

Contribution to the Conference
on the role of trade unions in
the coming decade,
Maastricht, November 20-22, 1985.

1. Introduction.

During the period between the second world war and the outbreak of the crisis in the first half of the 1970s the relationship between the state and the labour market organisations in Denmark was mainly characterised by the fact that the increasing state intervention in the reproduction process of the society was followed by an extension of the relations between state and organisations. Dependent on political point of view either the state was accused of interfering in the interest sphere of the organisations and deprive them of their power and influence in the society or the organisations were accused of a too strong influence on government policies which caused an undermining of democracy because the parliamentary decision making processes lost in importance in favour of corporative decision making structures.

My evaluation of how relations between state and trade union movement have developed during the crisis contains an investigation of three important areas in the political debate since the beginning of the 1970s, i.e. unemployment policy, incomes policy and attempts to implement structural reforms which limits the employers' right to manage: the trade union movement's demand for economic democracy (ED).

Although relations between state and trade union movement take place in a very complex and flexible manner, I shall try to draw up some general trends to see to what extend "quangos" have influenced the political decision making process within the state. Further, I shall point out some general reasons for the development of the relationship between state and trade union movement.

2. Unemployment policy.¹

An important part of the welfare-consensus since the second world war has been the fight against unemployment. By means of macroeconomic measures the state was supposed to stimulate effective demand in case of rising unemployment figures. As a supplement to this, an "active labour market policy" was implemented to

avoid lacks of balance within and between the labour market segments. The selective labour market policies in the 1960s were mainly aimed to further the geographical and qualificalional mobility.

Labour market organisations were deeply involved in the reforms of the 1960s consisting of the creation of a number of new labour market educations, a state organised labour exchange system, and a reformation of unemployment insurance (in the last part of the decade). The administration and supplementing of the legislation was handed over to tripartite bodies which got an extended authority.

State interventions in the labour market were built on recognized common interests between capital and labour to further labour market mobility or on an achieved compromise between labour market parties.

General economic-political interventions.

The outbreak of the crisis meant changed conditions for this relative consensus about economic and labour market policies. In 1975 the social democratic government tried an expansive finance policy but in 1976 it had to make a U-turn because the deficit on the balance of payments had grown from D.Kr. 3.2 milliards in 1975 to 13.1 milliards in 1976. The fight against unemployment got a second priority and this has been the case ever since. Shifting social democratic governments, on the other hand, have not been committed to an extremely tight finance policy: the deficit of the public finances has been steadily growing which might have caused a reduction in unemployment growth - not least because the increasing supply of labour found employment in an expanding public sector until 1983.²

Scepticism to the social democratic finance policy was especially widespread among conservative and liberal parties and in 1982 the social democratic minority government was not able to find a majority in parliament for next year's budget. The government re-

signed and a coalition government of conservative and liberal parties took office with a finance policy which contained plans of cuts in public expenditure of 6-8% a year.

Because of the crisis, the gap between the macroeconomic objectives became too big: the balance of payment could not be considered simultaneously with a stimulation of effective demand to reduce unemployment effectively. This gross negligence of workers' interests was followed by growing tensions between the governments and the trade union movement and polarization within the labour market because of the high unemployment. The impotence of the state to manage the crisis in an effective and consensual way became the most serious defeat for social democracy after the second world war and fertilized the soil for the blooming of a neo-liberal strategy which became the new fashion among conservative and liberal parties in Denmark though they did not commit themselves to all the facets of Thatcherism.³

The formation of the conservative-liberal government in 1982 was the logical result of the lack of ability among social democrats to cope with the crisis. With social democratic governments the trade union movement had rich opportunities to influence on the governments' policies, but the change of government in 1982 portended new relations between trade union movement and the state. Tripartite consultations have only taken place when the government has been forced to it and the National Economic Board (DØR), which is a consultative tripartite body in the creation of the economic policy, has lost a great part of its influence to the benefit of the civil servants of the Treasury who have a neo-liberal orientation.

Special policies to reduce unemployment and its social consequences.

Abandonment of an effective fight against unemployment via general economic-political means has been followed up by various special measures aiming at a limitation of the most serious social consequences of higher unemployment. The measures have been di-

rected towards the most vulnerable groups among the unemployed.

The special measures for young people began in 1975 where both local authorities and the government started community projects and training initiatives. A legislation was passed in 1977, and the tendency has been that employment projects have lost in priority and short term training and subsidies for employment of young people in the private sector have gained in priority.

Table 1. Unemployment in Denmark.

year	registered unemployed	registered unemployed under 25 years	long term unemployed
	1000 persons	1000 persons	1000 persons
1973	21,8	5,1	
1974	50,5	6,0	
1975	125,6	26,2	
1976	133,2	30,2	
1977	163,6	34,5	
1978	190,7	42,9	
1979	161,8	45,1	18,4
1980	183,8	55,0	14,7
1981	243,0	69,7	30,6
1982	262,8	73,1	51,0
1983	283,0	76,4	64,1
1984	276,3	70,4	61,9

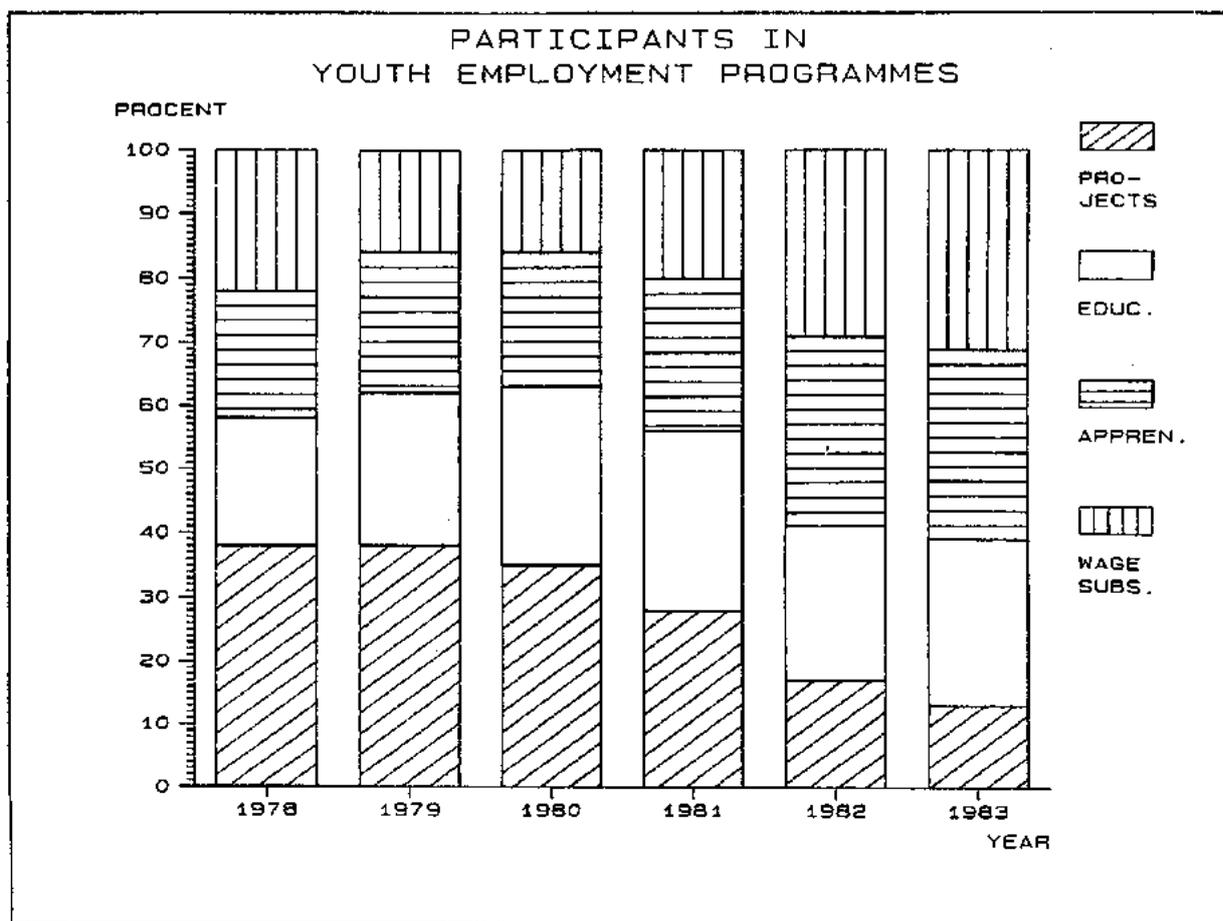
Remarks: The figures including 1978 are full time unemployment insured. From 1979 the figures show all unemployed calculated into full time unemployed.

Long term unemployed shows persons entitled to a job offer at the long term unemployment job offer scheme.

Source: Statistiske meddelelser and AD's årsberetninger, various years.

Until 1982 the special measures for young people were mainly organised and financed by local government, but the introduction of the job creation scheme in 1982 meant that the state via regional labour market boards took over the dominant role.

Figure 1.



Source: Arbejdsministeriet m.fl.: Indsatsen mod ungdomsarbejdsløsheden, various years.

The schemes are characterized by being more in the field of social policy than in labour market policy, a fact which is underlined of the labour market organisations' absence from the decision making processes at the creation and administration of the schemes in the 1970s. So, the organisations have criticised the activities of the local governments very sharply. Especially the Danish Employers' Organisation (DA) scepticism to local government employment projects is clear and although the organisations got a firm hold of the administration of the job creation scheme, DA's scepticism did not diminish. On the contrary it might be said that it was DA's "merit" that the job creation scheme was abolished by the conservative-liberal government in 1985. On the other side, however, LO's interest in a reduction of youth unemployment has been growing significantly and its support for the job creation scheme has been quite unambiguous - apart from a

wish that job creation not only was an opportunity for young unemployed but instead an attempt to create more "normal" jobs.⁴

The disagreements between LO and DA is most explicit in the case of the early retirement scheme from 1978, which gives elderly members of an unemployment fund a possibility to withdraw from the labour market on the basis of a benefit which initially correspond to the level of UB and later scaled down. The early retirement scheme was initiated by the trade union movement, but because of opposition from DA the legislation had to await a political compromise in parliament.

The job offer scheme for long term unemployed from 1978, which gives long term unemployed, who are about to loose entitlement to UB after 2½ years of unemployment, a right to a job offer (state granted) of 9 months duration (in 1982 limited to 7 months if employed in the public sector) was established almost without cooperation from the labour market organisations. The scheme was designed in the Ministry of Labour and was approved by DA while LO was far more sceptical because it was believed that the scheme might undermine the unemployment insurance system.

However, the organisations got a certain influence on administration of the scheme and concurrently with the escalation of the problem of high unemployment - and because LO's fear of an abolition of the unemployment funds (see later) has diminished - LO has become a dedicated defender of the scheme, which especially is obvious during the attacks on the scheme from the conservative-liberal government. On the other hand the cuts in the scheme are massively supported by DA's argumentation that it does not result in a satisfactory training to secure the long term unemployed a job without grant.⁵

Ever since 1907 when the unemployment insurance system was made, it has been a thorn in the side of DA. The system with voluntary membership of unemployment funds with close connections to the trade unions - the leadership in u-funds is identical with that of the trade unions and they are often localised in trade union

offices - and financed by means of contributions from members and employers supplemented by public grants, supports trade union organisation. DA's acceptance in the 1960s of the fact that the system not only was maintained - DA wanted an abolition of u-funds and that unemployment insurance joined other social benefits - but the level of UB increased and made universal with a heavy granting from the state, is only due to a simultaneous reform where the right to run a job exchange was taken from the u-funds and given to job centres.

DA's criticism of the high level of UB and the relatively (compared to other countries) easy terms for entitlement to UB has since the beginning of the 1970s characterized the debate on unemployment policy, and LO has been forced to swallow much bitter medicine to keep up with the attacks from DA. Until 1979, however, the level of UB was defended successfully and the access to UB was made easier, but since then things have been deteriorating.

Table 2. Level of UB compared to wages.

	1974	1976	1978	1980	1982	1984
Skilled male workers	59,1	63,4	64,3	60,6	60,7	57,7
Unskilled male workers	68,2	72,3	72,9	68,9	68,3	64,5
Unskilled female workers	77,4	79,9	80,4	76,2	76,3	71,8
Average maximum UB a day. D.Kr. not deflated.	131	184	225	264	317	335

Source: Own calculations from DA's statistik for arbejderløn og Arbejdsdirektoratets årsberetninger, various years.

It is significant that the changes in unemployment insurance during the 1970s and 1980s have taken place without engaging the tripartite bodies. They were certainly consulted under social democratic governments, but this happened always after a political compromise between the government and other parties. Nevertheless, the trade union movement has had relatively big influence on the legislation which often has been designed to consider the interests of the trade union movement. After the conservati-

ve-liberal government took office in 1982, the influence of the quangos has been further diminished and it is not the trade unions but DA who are considered.

Through its influence on u-funds the trade union movement has excellent possibilities to influence the administration of the unemployment insurance, but the intensified interest conflict about the insurance system has meant a serious limitation of the liberty of action for the u-funds and an increasingly restrictive administration which weakens the unemployment insurance as an instrument for recruitment of trade union members. The criticism of the system has involved a debate about its financing, and the present government plans a reform to diminish the high degree of state grants and to put a heavier burden upon the members of the u-funds.⁶

A general evaluation of the selective unemployment policy might conclude that the state via political processes in parliament has been crucial to the formation of the policies while the labour market organisations and the quangos have played a minor role. However, the organisations and the quangos have got a certain influence on the administration of the selective unemployment policy until 1982.

The legislation has been designed considering the existing distribution of power in industrial relations. The state has not introduced anything which might act as a limitation on the employers' right to manage, to hire and fire. The state has not undertaken powers which go beyond the labour market organisations' mutual agreements on fundamental relations. Instead, the market mechanisms have been manipulated marginally to further the incentives to make the employers to take some more on the payroll.

Unemployment policy during the crisis does not show any fundamental changes in the relationship between state and organisations. However, it might be stated that state intervention in the labour market has increased and that this has not taken place through

decisions in corporative bodies.

I shall venture to assert that the increase in significance of the parliamentary processes during the period is caused by the absence of recognized common interests and escalating conflicts between labour and capital in the field of unemployment policy. The precondition to a higher influence for corporative decision making processes is an achievable agreement between labour market organisations either as a consensus or the creation of a compromise. Escalating antagonisms have not made this possible.

This is underlined by the survival of a high organisational influence on directing job centre activities. A flexible market for labour power is still in the interest of both LO and DA. The class compromise of the 1960s on an active labour market policy is still alive, which can be seen from the fact that the crucial influence on the legislation about job centre activities in the 1970s and 1980s has come from the quangos. The only major modification of this is the conservative-liberal government's cuts in job centre budgets which hollowed DA's and LO's aim of a better service to improve the conditions for better adjustment within the labour market.

3. Incomes policy.

Unemployment policy in Denmark has not intruded upon the basic industrial relations, but you might be tempted to conclude that this is the case with the incomes policy during the 1970s and 1980s. Let us start with a few words about the institutional background.

The organisation of labour and capital in Denmark took place during the last two decades of the 19th century. After a period of escalating conflicts, the decisive tug-of-war in 1899 ended up in a compromise between LO and DA who mutually recognised each other as legitimate representatives of opposed interests and the trade unions recognised formally the employers' right to ma-

nage. The most important relations between the two parties became to enter into collective agreements about the conditions of exchange of labour power.

Collective agreements are normally biannual and they are legally enforceable. Disputes and conflicts during a period of agreement are settled by a special court, the legitimacy of which is built upon the existence of "free" collective bargaining. Governmental regulations and institutions connected with collective bargaining and observance of the agreement are based upon main agreements between LO and DA.

So, the governments have been very careful with interventions in collective bargaining: since the second world war until the beginning of the 1970s governments have only intervened in collective bargaining 3 times, namely in 1946, 1956 and 1963.⁷

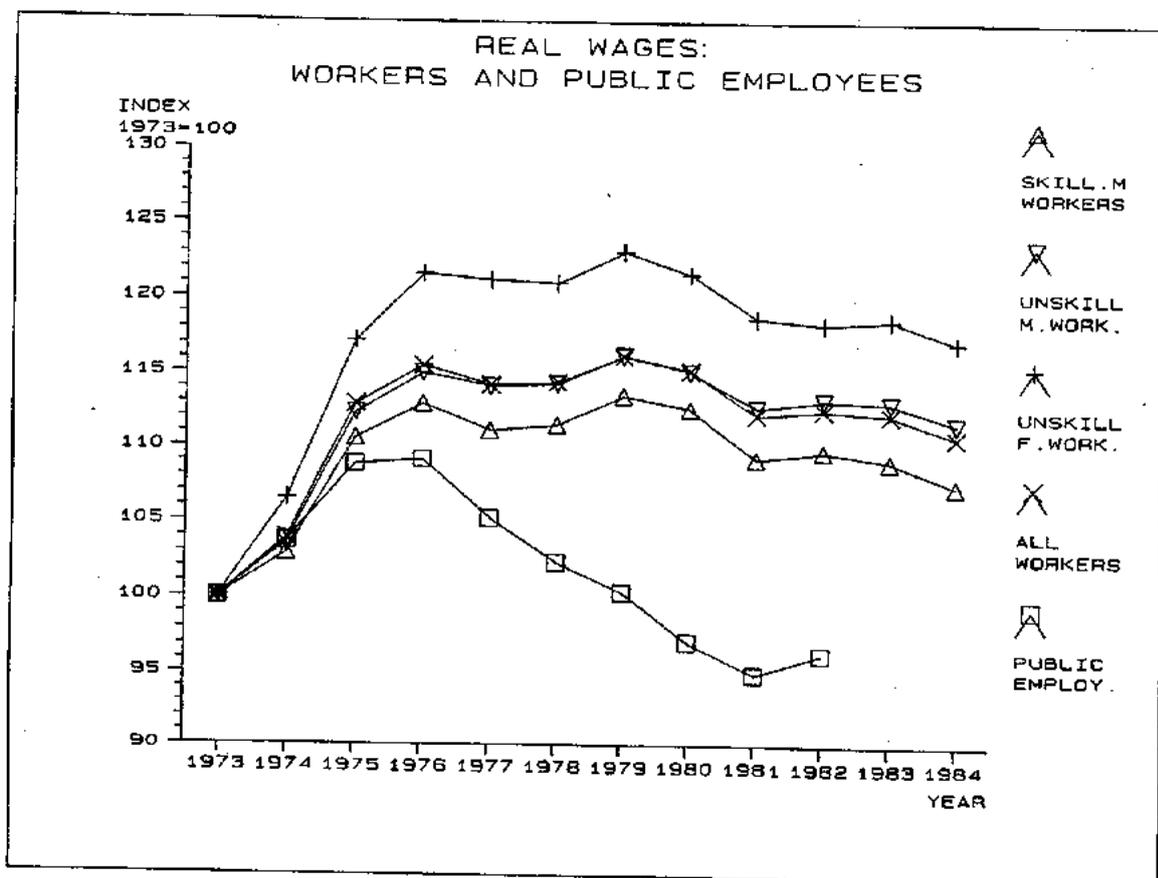
In the labour market organisations, government interference in the bargaining process traditionally is looked upon as a serious attack on the autonomy of the labour market. Nevertheless, governments have dictated the contents of the agreements in 1975, 1977, 1979 and 1985, and stipulated the limits of wage increases in 1981 and 1983 (where the government abolished the cost-of-living adjustment, too). These state interventions have taken place after a breakdown in negotiations between LO and DA or because the negotiated agreement has been rejected among DA's members (1977).

The many state interventions in the collective bargaining has had the consequence **firstly** that the organisations have lost some of their status, because the question might be put what organisations are worth when they cannot cope with their most important task. **Secondly**, the legal system of conciliation and arbitration has been threatened because the respect for the dictated agreements both among the organisations and the members is much smaller than it would be if they were the result of a "free" collective bargaining process.⁸ In short, the state interventions have caused a loss of legitimacy for the organisations and an undermining of the industrial relations system.⁹

Such a dogmatic interpretation has to be modified a little bit because the relationship between state and organisations is very flexible and pragmatic. Thus, in the tactical game in these bargaining processes, expectations of the governmental interventions have been involved, and the interventions of the social democratic governments have not taken place without some sort of acceptance from LO just as DA in 1985 played on an interference from the conservative-liberal government to the benefit of DA.¹⁰

Thirdly, the many interventions in collective bargaining during the crisis have forced the organisations to realize that the autonomy of the labour market is very limited. The governments' crisis management is interfering deeply into the interest sphere of the organisations. Even in 1981 and 1983, where LO and DA succeeded in making an agreement, this happened under threat of a tightened finance policy if wages turned out to be too high to improve the competitiveness of Danish products. Under pressure from the governments, the declining attitude of DA and the need to get back the lost legitimacy, LO has accepted very low wages - real wages fell seriously after the 1981-agreement.

Figure 2.



LO's loss of legitimacy up till 1981 was to some extent compensated because social democratic governments succeeded in quite acceptable general agreements from the workers' point of view. On the other hand the collective agreement from 1983 was a dubious victory for the trade union movement because it generally spoken was a dictate from the conservative-liberal government - a 4% limit for increases in wages and abolition of the cost-of-living adjustment. The ability of the conservative-liberal government to implement an effective income policy was confirmed in 1985, where the intervention resulted in the lowest wages during the crisis (2% annually with an expected inflation of 5%), and where the trade union movement chose to yield to the government's dictate to avoid chaos in industrial relations - despite the highest indignation among trade union members for many years. ¹¹

4. The missing link: structural reforms.

Even if LO at the compromise in 1899 recognized employers' right to manage, it has not been in the minds of the reformist labour movement that the last word was said in this matter. The trade union movement has tried to limit or undermine the power and authority of the employers with the intention of raising the workers' influence in their workplace. A number of measures with this purpose have been established: the shop steward system, which gradually has been extended,¹² boards for collaboration (from 1947), agreements and legislation for job security, and workers' representatives in the board of directors.¹³

These agreements and legislations have not in reality modified the employers' right to manage. In the late 1960s the trade union movement started a new attempt to get influence on the development of the society: Economic Democracy was proposed as a way of reaching democratic socialism some time in the future. The political sphere in society was democratised long ago in Denmark. The economic sphere was now in concern.

During the first years of the 1970s the trade union movement's proposal about ED was designed, and in 1973 the social democrats introduced it in parliament as a bill about the establishment of a fund into which the employers should contribute in proportion

to the amount of money they paid in wages. Opposition from other parties and some other political circumstances resulted in the fact that ED never became law. Since then it has been included a number of times in social democratic minority governments' negotiations with other parties, but has always slipped out at an early stage. In 1978 LO tried to negotiate ED as part of the collective agreements, but DA simply refused to negotiate before ED was removed from LO's introduction - what LO did in December 1978.

To further the climate of negotiations, the proposal of ED has been changed since: among other things the contribution to the fund is changed to be in proportion to the employers' profits and the central fund has got a lower priority, but the bourgeois parties and DA are firmly committed that eventual ED-experiments must be voluntary and attached to the single firm.¹⁴

It is obvious that intentions of a democratization of the economy will not be realised by means of a closer relationship between the company and single employees via a distribution of part of the profits among the employed. The trade union movement has still wishes of establishment of a central fund, but because of changed issues during the crisis, LO has altered its argumentation for ED. In the beginning of the 1970s it was motivated with a general demand for democratizing the economy, but after 1975 ED was presented as a precondition for a continued acceptance of incomes policy. The high unemployment and falling investments were used as another motivation for ED, which were supposed to support the necessary structural changes through creation of new jobs and productions.

If the trade union movement had succeeded in carrying through ED, the loss of legitimacy because of incomes policy, the loss of influence in unemployment policy, and the increasing undermining of trade union interests would be compensated for. So, the absence of an ED-reform throws the trade union fight for its interests in relief: the massive state interference into trade union inte-

rest sphere has increasingly weakened the trade union movement in their relations to the employers and its own members, and even if the ED-reform might be considered as a very moderate demand, it has nevertheless showed up to be too ambitious.

5. Changing relations between state and trade union movement.

Undoubtedly, the feeling in the Danish trade union movement is widespread that pressures from both the employers directly and the conservative-liberal government are very strong, and that the dialogue between the organisations directly and to the state during the last 3 years has been seriously reduced. At first sight the isolation of the trade union movement is due to the change of government in 1982. Although this change in political powers is important, there must lie something behind.

If the period from the late 1950s until the beginning of the 1970s is a phase in the relationship between state and organisations, where cooperation were extended without major conflicts,¹⁵ the period from 1974 till 1982 might be characterized as inflicted with growing tensions and conflicts between state and organisations, but where the trade union movement after all managed to influence government policies because of close relations to the social democratic governments. After 1982, however, the conservative-liberal government has phased down the influence of the quangos and avoided further consultations with the trade union movement, but the trade union movement itself has also shown a lack of interest in dealing with the government to avoid an integration in the legitimation of the policies.

Without doubt the parliamentary decision making processes have had bigger importance in the areas of unemployment and incomes policies during the crisis compared to the intensions and the traditions from the 1960s, where a strengthened network of quangos were built and where DA and LO had an opportunity to regulate wages autonomously. The reason why an increasing state intervention took place (and the diminishing influence from the quangos) is that the crisis has led to a significant increase of the con-

flicts in society. So, it is only in quite few areas that LO and DA do agree and in these areas is their influence on the legislation visible.

The incomes policy has been a serious intervention in the interest sphere of the organisations because the dictation of limits for increase of wages and undermining or abolition of the cost-of-living adjustment has taken place before the break-down of the negotiations between LO and DA. These state interventions do not make it easier for the organisations to compromise.

The only recognized common interests between capital and labour which have survived the crisis, are the aim of active labour market policy: to improve the geographical and qualificational mobility of labour. In all other areas an agreement between LO and DA has been built upon a compromise despite conflicting interests. During the crisis, the gap between the points of view of LO and DA has been growing and the compromise has not been within range. This is what gives room for more parliamentary state intervention within the labour market.

During the crisis state intervention has not in any sense moved beyond traditional limits. Employers' right to manage has not been modified. On the contrary, state intervention has respected the existing relations of power and to a great extent acted parallel to existing conventions and rationalities.

The respect for the employers' right to manage is the main cause that an effective unemployment policy has not taken place in Denmark. It is the employers who decide if the schemes to reduce unemployment shall be reasonably successful. If the power of the employers' is not reduced, the only chance for a successful labour market policy is that the employers' interests are respected, their organisations sworn in and accept the interventions.

In relation to this, the power of the trade union movement is much more modest. The trade union movement's possibilities for influence are biggest under governments sympathetic to the uni-

ons' interests, and in cases where an agreement with the employers is obtainable. The conservative-liberal government's suspicion of the trade union movement has resulted in diminished possibilities for the trade union movement to get access to the decision making processes, and it has shown itself as powerless to the provocations from the government. The confrontations between trade union movement and the state have during the last years been comprehensive, but after the bursts of anger, things have quickly turned back to normal.

With above mentioned limitations, trade unions in Denmark will still be a considerable force in future: with an industrial structure of mainly small enterprises, "no union companies" will play a marginal role in the reproduction process of the society. The relationship between state and trade union movement will probably not change very much, unless a government takes power which desists from incomes policy and instead fight the trade unions actively and directly (as in GB).

With the low wages, which probably also will be a reality in future, and the rapidly growing conflicts, the demand for ED will be stronger, and it will probably be a reality in Denmark in the foreseeable future (with or without a central fund). This will strengthen the trade union movement, which, considering its strong commitment to the ideology of collaboration, will not restrict the flexibility and prosperity of capital.

Notes:

1. A more detailed analysis can be seen in Jens Lind: Arbejdsløshed og velfærdsstat, Aalborg 1985.
2. From 1973 to 1983 employment in the private sector fell by about 200.000 persons, while employment in the public sector (mainly local government) has been expanding with 200.000 persons during the period.
3. The political and economic strategy of the conservative-liberal government is compared to that of the Thatcher-government in Jens Lind and Lone Krogh Petersen: Storbritannien: et lærestykke i privatisering, pp. 48-70 i Grus no. 13, 1984.
4. See Lene Dalsgaard: Jobskabelse - brikken, der mangler, Aalborg 1985.
5. This general experience with the job offer scheme is due to the fact that employers right from the start have not been interested in employing long term unemployed: it is DA's own members who have undermined the possibilities for a success of the scheme.
6. Despite recurrent increases in members' and employers' contribution, in 1983 the government financed 3/4 of the expenses for UB.
7. See Flemming Ibsen and Henning Jørgensen: Fagbevægelse og stat, Kbh. 1979.
8. The many unofficial strikes are significant signs of this, see Margit Groth: Arbejdskonflikter, pp. 63-80 in Margit Groth a.o.: Arbejdsmarkedet, hvad sker der?, Kbh. 1981.
9. See Jesper Due and Jørgen Steen Madsen: Overenskomstsystemets sammenbrud, København 1980.
10. In Erling Juul Rasmussen: Socialdemokratiet og indkomspolitik, pp. 174-236 in Tage Bild and Henning Jørgensen: Fagbevægelsen og krisen, København 1981, the relations between incomes policy and the general strategy of the labour movement is analysed.

11. The legislation resulted in massive strikes and demonstrations, which among other things included picketing at the Danish parliament (the MP's could not get in).
12. After the change of the main agreement in 1981 there is a possibility to enforce an employer to re-employ an unfairly dismissed shop steward, but this is not likely to happen in practice, see Hanne Petersen: Tillidsrepræsentanternes beskyttelse, København 1984.
13. See the analysis of the various measures in Ann Westenholz: Industrielt demokrati, pp. 100-116 in Margit Groth a.o., op. cit.
14. See Kirsten Bregm and Torben Grønnebæk Hansen (eds.): Økonomisk Demokrati, SØF 1984.
15. See Henning Jørgensen: Arbejdsmarkedets parter og staten, pp. 169-189 in Margit Groth a.o., op. cit.



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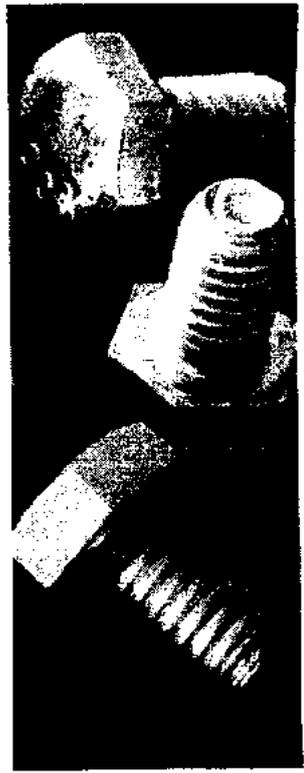
the role of trade unions in the coming decade

Maastricht, november 20-21-22, 1985



LES SYNDICATS FACE AU POUVOIR:
L'EXPERIENCE FRANCAISE DE L'APRES 1981

Mr. Denis Segrestin



**european centre for
work and society
Maastricht**



LES SYNDICATS FACE AU POUVOIR : L'EXPERIENCE FRANCAISE DE L'APRES 1981.

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Avec l'arrivée de la gauche au pouvoir en mai 1981, le mouvement syndical français a vu son horizon politique bouleversé. Globalement favorables aux partis engagés dans la nouvelle majorité présidentielle et parlementaire, les grandes confédérations ouvrières faisaient une expérience sans précédent, tout au moins depuis les origines de la Cinquième République : non seulement le nouveau pouvoir s'affirmait porteur des aspirations de la classe ouvrière, mais en plus, les syndicats de gauche se retrouvaient dans une situation de proximité objective et inattendue avec l'appareil d'Etat, en mesure de peser directement sur l'initiative gouvernementale et parlementaire.

Pour être radical, ce changement ne faisait pourtant à certains égards que cristalliser des tendances qui sont à l'oeuvre dans toutes les autres démocraties de l'Europe de l'Ouest. Ainsi, si l'on remonte aux origines de la crise économique, on peut observer que partout, depuis dix ans, les syndicats ont fait expérience d'une certaine prise de conscience de la responsabilité gestionnaire qui leur incombe, par delà l'apreté des combats sociaux et les règles obligées de la pratique revendicative. Dans toute l'Europe, la "pédagogie de la crise" a en quelque sorte préfiguré le processus d'implication politique dans lequel se sont trouvés plongés -bon gré, mal gré- les syndicats français en 1981.

D'une autre manière et plus fondamentalement encore, ces événements allaient de pair avec un phénomène général, hérité de la période de croissance continue de l'après-guerre et des formes contemporaines de la démocratie économique : phénomène judicieusement désigné comme celui de "l'expansion politique du syndicalisme" (1) pour rendre compte de l'imbrication progressive

(1) Cf. A. PIZZORNO, "les syndicats et l'action politique", Sociologie du travail, avril-juin 1971.

que le message était reçu à la base : de 1982 à 1984, il révéla la progression constante de FO et de la CGC (l'organisation des cadres) au détriment de la CGT et de la CFDT.

En ce qui concerne la CGT et la CFDT, la leçon fut d'autant plus sévère que les évènements de 1981 avaient pris l'une et l'autre à contrepied. Deux évènements majeurs, antérieurs aux élections présidentielles, les avaient mises en effet en état de "vacuité stratégique" : d'abord la rupture de l'Union de la gauche en 1977, ensuite la mise en oeuvre de la nouvelle ligne, dite de "resyndicalisation", de la CFDT, après l'échec de la gauche aux élections législatives de 1978. Ces évènements furent en 1981 à l'origine d'un chassé-croisé suffisamment paradoxal pour désorienter les salariés, et vraisemblablement une partie des militants syndicaux eux-mêmes : engagée de longue date du côté du Parti communiste pour l'application d'un programme politique de gauche, la CGT est en mai 1981 dans la position ambivalente d'une organisation qui exprime naturellement sa satisfaction, mais qui est déliée de tout engagement politique réel et tentée de servir de "voix critique" à un Parti communiste momentanément neutralisé. La CFDT, au contraire, est prise au piège du pragmatisme réformiste affiché après 1978 comme manifestation d'indifférence relative aux enjeux électoraux : elle se retrouve sans l'avoir voulu dans la situation de "syndicat du pouvoir"... Situation dont elle se défendra très vite et très vigoureusement, mais qui contribuera encore longtemps à ce flottement général des repères d'une vie sociale naguère réglée par un tout autre modèle de division du travail entre les syndicats.

Mais l'héritage le plus sérieux de la situation qui s'est ainsi trouvée créée par les évènements de 1981 n'a peut-être pas encore été évoqué. Il consiste dans la disparition de toute dynamique d'alliance entre les organisations, a fortiori de toute perspective d'unité intersyndicale, près de vingt ans après l'accord historique "d'unité d'action" scellé entre la CGT et la CFDT (en 1966). Tout se passe comme si la situation nouvelle d'ambivalence à l'égard du pouvoir avait contraint chaque syndicat à un retour aux sources de sa propre indépendance organisationnelle, qui vaudrait aussi réaffirmation de son identité dans un horizon perturbé.

Evidente du côté des confédérations associées aux combats historiques de la gauche, cette quête d'indépendance n'en est pas moins manifeste du côté des syndicats "réformistes", attachés à ne pas donner prise au soupçon perpétuel de constitution d'un "front syndical d'opposition" au pouvoir en place. Le résultat est particulièrement saisissant : objectivement encouragés en cela par le rééquilibrage de leur représentativité (FO peut désormais prétendre à une sorte de parité avec la CGT et la CFDT), les syndicats français unanimes ont maintenant complètement renoncé à toute forme d'action nationale qui supposerait l'addition de leurs potentiels militants. Quand des alliances tactiques s'imposent dans la négociation (elles ont été nombreuses en 1984-85, même si elles ont continuellement laissé à l'écart la CGT), chacun s'emploie aussitôt à annuler leur signification stratégique.

Le risque assumé n'échappe à personne. Il y a là un danger grave d'émiettement de la représentation syndicale et un facteur de plus de décomposition des solidarités dans un mouvement ouvrier resté par ailleurs fortement imprégné de la thématique unitaire. Néanmoins, la tentation est forte d'analyser cette évolution comme un processus irréversible, dont chaque partenaire aurait pris son parti. Le syndicalisme français est maintenant, depuis 1981-82, entré pour de bon en pluralisme. Tous les tabous qui le retenaient encore sur ce plan ont brutalement sauté, le dernier en date étant celui de la syndicalisation des enseignants, enjeu massif s'il en est : FO d'abord, la CGT ensuite, ont annoncé leur intention de rompre le modus-vivendi ménagé autour de la FEN (autonome depuis 1947), et de prendre leur part de la représentation syndicale dans ce secteur. Ainsi, c'est l'ensemble de l'échiquier syndical qui est en voie de recomposition.

L'effet en retour du "mirage politique"

Au delà du prix payé pour leur implication initiale dans le changement politique, les syndicats français savaient aussi dès le début qu'il leur faudrait faire face d'une manière ou d'une autre aux incertitudes du combat politique engagé par la gauche. Tous étaient conscients des difficultés

et préparés à d'inévitables déconvenues. Avec des nuances, il y avait une pédagogie commune à toutes les organisations qui affirmait haut que "le pouvoir politique n'était pas tout" et que "rien ne se ferait sans l'action des travailleurs". La confiance placée dans les "partis de la classe ouvrière" s'accompagnaient naturellement d'une grande vigilance, encore accrue par les rigueurs de la crise et le poids du chômage.

Mais là encore, l'expérience a sans doute été plus rude qu'il n'était prévisible. On sait que "l'état de grâce" fut de courte durée. Le premier plan de rigueur mis en place dès 1982 s'accompagnait presque immédiatement d'un blocage des salaires et d'un appel à la solidarité collective, qui devait se traduire par exemple par la remise en cause des acquis en matière de Sécurité sociale et d'indemnisation du chômage. Deux années plus tard, les conséquences politiques de cette inflexion se trouvaient consacrées par le départ des communistes du gouvernement, le PCF ne tardant pas à dénoncer un retour rampant à la logique capitaliste de la droite et à ses errements : dégradation du pouvoir d'achat, désindustrialisation, chômage, répression, amplification de la campagne idéologique visant à faire croire à la "fatalité de la crise".

Fatalité ou non, force est de connaître qu'en la circonstance, le défi imposé par la désillusion politique a été durement ressenti, et sans doute plus durement encore dans les syndicats que dans les partis, quel que fut au départ le degré de scepticisme opposé par le mouvement syndical au discours sur le changement. Du côté syndical, on pourrait dire que l'effet en retour de l'espoir politique associé aux événements de 1981 a été d'ordre à la fois pratique et intellectuel.

L'effet pratique s'est mesuré à l'incapacité des syndicats à intervenir de façon réellement significative dans le cours du changement. Sommairement, et en cumulant tous les niveaux de l'intervention syndicale dans la vie économique et sociale, il apparaîtrait à l'analyse que les syndicats ont objectivement de moins en moins pesé sur les grands choix nationaux au cours des quatre années écoulées : après la grande période de réformes, ils ont progressivement donné l'impression d'une action menée "au fil de l'eau", ballotée par la conjoncture et par les décisions imposées de l'extérieur

par le patronat et les pouvoirs publics, sans que l'initiative économique et politique apparaisse jamais sérieusement mise en balance par la capacité d'action collective des travailleurs.

L'action revendicative a bien sûr continué, mais elle n'a pas réellement influencé la décision politique. Les épreuves de portée politique tentées par les syndicats contre le gouvernement pour atténuer les effets de la crise n'ont pas passé le cap du deuxième plan de rigueur, au printemps 1983. Par la suite, le mouvement social a semblé se réduire à des actions sectorielles sur les salaires, à une grande journée unitaire d'action des fonctionnaires pour le pouvoir d'achat (mars 1984). Les initiatives significatives de mobilisation prises en 1984-85 - presque exclusivement du fait de la CGT - ont été des échecs. En matière de négociation, l'activité a été considérable, comme on le reverra plus loin. Mais cette activité a été beaucoup plus dominée par les contraintes de la crise qu'elle n'a cherché à les dominer. En 1984-85, le débat proprement politique entre les syndicats et le gouvernement a pratiquement perdu la totalité de sa substance, abandonné à la seule CGT et à des appels incantatoires à une "grève générale" - toujours différée- pour un authentique changement.

L'effet intellectuel est, à terme, le plus important, car pour être concomitant de cette régression de la mobilisation et du débat, il n'est pas sûr qu'il ne survivra pas aux difficultés du moment. Il consiste dans le reflux accéléré de la confiance dans l'Etat et dans la valeur des interventions macro-économiques pour résoudre les problèmes sociaux. En abandonnant le débat politique, ou -ce qui revient à certains égards au même- en le caricaturant à l'extrême, les syndicats tendent aujourd'hui en France à faire l'aveu d'une démobilisation politique générale, atteignant même la frange militante la mieux fidélisée. Conscients des limites d'impact de mesures aussi importantes que les nationalisations de 1982, et dans l'incapacité où ils se trouvent de transformer vraiment l'expérience, les syndicalistes de terrain baissent les bras et donnent priorité à ce qu'ils peuvent réellement maîtriser.

Au sommet, presque tous les dirigeants veillent au risque de "démonétisation" du débat syndical en luttant contre les relents d'idéologie étatique. "Ceux qui laissaient croire qu'il suffisait de changer de gouvernement pour

résoudre les problèmes sont en train de le payer cher", explique le secrétaire général de la CFTC, J. Bornard. En écho, E. Maire (CFDT), au congrès de juin 1985, accuse le courant minoritaire de la Centrale de "céder au mirage de la voie royale des changements politiques". Même à la CGT, restée pourtant accrochée à l'idée qu'une alternative politique de gauche est possible, les documents préparatoires au prochain congrès indiquent que le syndicat "ne s'engagera plus comme il s'est engagé dans le passé", étant apparu "trop politisé".

De tout cela ressort l'impression générale que là encore, le choc de 1981 et les difficultés qui ont suivi ont engagé un processus sans retour. La "déprime" politique du syndicalisme n'est pas qu'un effet secondaire de la crise de confiance qui affecte le pays. Elle annonce sans doute la mise à jour d'une culture politique artificiellement retardée par les effets de polarisation idéologique induites par le régime. De façon plus soudaine, plus conflictuelle, plus cruelle qu'ailleurs, la France accomplit le parcours des pays européens qui ont déjà fait l'expérience de la singulière impuissance des Etats face à la crise. Ebranlé par le nouveau rapport des syndicats au pouvoir, l'espace de respiration idéologique du syndicalisme en restera sans doute durablement affecté.

2 - LA CONVERSION A LA RESPONSABILITE ECONOMIQUE : EFFORTS ET DEBOIRES.

Au niveau micro-économique, et pour tout ce qui concerne le champ de la négociation collective, l'expérience d'implication politique du syndicalisme consécutive aux événements de 1981 n'avait pas le caractère radicalement nouveau qu'on vient de voir. Car elle ne faisait à certains égards que renforcer et précipiter des tendances qui étaient apparues dès les origines de la crise économique, en France comme ailleurs.

Dès cette époque en effet, les pratiques de classe traditionnelles s'étaient trouvées en butte au ralentissement de la croissance et au chômage, imposant aux syndicats des attitudes plus constructives, plus soucieuses

de cohérence et de prise en compte des contraintes conjoncturelles. Tout en s'en défendant parfois au niveau des principes, les syndicats en étaient arrivés à assurer jusqu'à un certain point la crise de l'emploi, à se préoccuper concrètement du devenir des entreprises ou des branches d'activité menacées, à avancer des propositions ou "contre-propositions" industrielles.

Cette expérience de la responsabilité économique conduite tout au long des années 70 n'était pas allée sans déconvenues. Partout, y compris dans les branches placées dans les positions les plus critiques comme la sidérurgie par exemple, la mobilisation sur les thèmes gestionnaires avait en réalité posé d'énormes difficultés. Loin d'intégrer spontanément la problématique de la reconversion, de la formation, du changement, les luttes avaient manifestement continué de procéder d'un repli sur la défense "en l'état" des usines et des sites industriels. L'enjeu était déjà celui d'une véritable conversion de la culture ouvrière et du ressort de l'action collective, et assez naturellement, il avait fait apparaître la distance séparant des appareils syndicaux confrontés à la gestion du changement et une base condamnée à les subir.

Un pari politique

Après 1981, c'est d'un certain point de vue cette même expérience qui s'est renouvelée, à une autre échelle. Le risque était d'autant plus grand que dans le nouveau contexte politique, le pari engagé par les organisations sur ce terrain de la responsabilité économique allait rapidement s'identifier à l'enjeu central et officiel de la période pour les instances nationales des organisations. Du moins est-ce ce qui est apparu dans la conduite de la négociation interprofessionnelle : poussés dans leurs retranchements par le poids de la crise de l'emploi, par leur nouveau rapport au pouvoir et par les insuffisances manifestes de l'intervention publique en matière économique, les syndicats ont entrepris d'explorer par eux-mêmes une nouvelle voie du changement.

Le modèle le plus accompli de cet engagement nouveau a été la tentative menée au travers de la négociation sur la flexibilité des conditions de l'emploi (juin-décembre 1984). Logique avec elle-même, la CGT

avait pris dès le départ ses distances : liée par ses prises de position officielles sur la viabilité d'un autre type de politique industrielle de nature à restaurer le niveau de l'emploi, elle allait se cantonner dans une attitude de stricte défense des acquis. Indiscutablement au contraire, les autres organisations posaient un acte politique. Délaissant les exercices de pure et simple solidarité (la renégociation en baisse des modalités d'indemnisation du chômage par exemple, de manière à garantir à tous des prestations minima), les syndicats prenaient au mot le discours patronal sur la nécessité d'un assouplissement des conditions de l'embauche et du licenciement et s'efforçaient de définir le cadre de négociation intégrée au sein duquel l'objectif patronal de déréglementation pourrait redevenir socialement acceptable, et réellement partie prenante d'un projet global de modernisation économique et sociale.

A la lettre, il est paradoxalement exact qu'au fil des discussions de l'année 1984, le contenu du projet soit devenu relativement insignifiant, bien plus modeste en tout cas que ne l'ont été d'autres expériences ou projets de "dérégulation sociale" en Europe ou aux U.S.A.. Rapidement, le patronat abandonnait l'idée des "emplois à contraintes allégées". Les gains sociaux, surtout, apparaissaient singulièrement limités : face aux ouvertures concédées au pouvoir économique (sur les conditions de l'innovation technique, sur la durée du travail, sur le travail à statut précaire, sur les seuils d'application du droit social dans l'entreprise), les organisations ouvrières n'obtenaient que des avantages aléatoires (une certaine capacité à anticiper les décisions patronales d'équipement technique et de licenciement collectif, notamment). D'où, pour une part, l'échec final sous la pression de la base.

Mais, fondamentalement, l'enjeu était ailleurs. Plutôt qu'une opération classique de troc, la négociation sur la flexibilité consistait à placer le syndicat en position de responsabilité directe sur le terrain économique, face aux directions et aux pouvoirs publics. L'engagement en question, privilégiant "l'obsession du chômage" contre les détours d'une alternative macro-économique, tendait symboliquement à légitimer une forme d'intervention syndicale nouvelle et sans préalable en matière d'emploi, de restructurations, de changement technique. Selon une formule d'E. Maire (CFDT),

il s'agissait, une fois reconnu aux entreprises "le droit de s'adapter aux évolutions", de "mettre les forces sociales au centre du changement et du règlement des modifications sociales".

Dynamique politique par excellence, alternative d'une autre dynamique, et qu'on est pas surpris, sur toute cette période, de retrouver au coeur de la stratégie de la CFDT en particulier (même lorsqu'il s'agit de discuter du pouvoir d'achat des fonctionnaires, par exemple !). Plus remarquable, peut-être, est le fait que Force Ouvrière s'y soit associée, au motif de la sauvegarde "à tout prix" de la politique contractuelle. Sauvegarde qui, en vérité, valait pour la circonstance le prix d'une véritable transformation du statut politique du syndicalisme.

Un phénomène de rejet

Quoiqu'il en soit, les obstacles ont été les plus forts face à ce changement-là. Ils étaient, ils est vrai, fort nombreux, et pas tous étrangers au contexte de l'après-81.

Parmi eux figure évidemment le déficit de la "matière première de la négociation", caractéristique d'une période de montée du chômage et de disparition des surplus de la croissance. Durant toute la période considérée et pas seulement à propos de la flexibilité, le patronat français a pu ainsi se permettre de mettre la barre très haut, au point de contraindre les syndicats à signer des "accords blancs" pour lui (sur l'indemnisation du chômage, notamment).

On peut cependant observer que la difficulté d'une opération comme celle de la flexibilité s'est trouvée globalement accrue par le mode d'intervention choisi par les nouveaux pouvoirs de gauche dans les relations professionnelles. Par un de ces effets pervers caractéristiques des sociétés complexes, le simple fait que le pouvoir d'Etat se soit initialement, en matière sociale, octroyé à lui-même un droit d'initiative légale, de même qu'il s'est donné par la suite une légitimité autonome d'intervention dans les

affaires des entreprises nationales par exemple, condamnait la stratégie de négociation intégrée qu'on a décrite. L'ordonnance de 1982 sur la réduction de la durée du travail -suite à une négociation avortée- n'a-t-elle pas inculqué aux partenaires le soupçon que l'Etat pourrait toujours venir fausser la règle du jeu contractuel ? (1). Et les lois Auroux qui ont immédiatement suivi n'ont-elles pas, par leur importance-même, oté d'entrée de jeu du champ du négociable la véritable monnaie d'échange potentielle de la flexibilité ? (2)

De même, quand il s'est agi de prendre le virage des restructurations industrielles (dans la sidérurgie, les charbonnages, la construction navale, mais aussi dans l'automobile), le gouvernement socialiste n'a pas su ou voulu jouer le jeu d'une véritable responsabilisation syndicale. En tranchant par lui-même par dessus les syndicats (dès le départ chez Talbot, après un long processus de maturation chez Renault), il a donné l'impression soit de prétendre assumer par lui-même la légitimité sociale, soit de couper court à la négociation pour des raisons d'efficacité. Il a pu ainsi renforcer le patronat dans son intransigeance et, plus encore, susciter ses doutes sur l'opportunité qu'il y avait pour lui d'accompagner un subtil processus de "pédagogie de crise" à quelques mois d'une échéance électorale pour le moins incertaine.

Mais, par dessus tout, on le sait, le phénomène de rejet est venu de la base, des travailleurs eux-mêmes. D'abord parce que la faiblesse du mouvement social faisait défaut à l'autorité syndicale. Une faiblesse singulièrement alimentée en l'occurrence par la défection et l'hostilité proclamée de la CGT ; et aussi par l'absence, plus manifeste que jamais, d'une quelconque forme de relai entre ce qui s'élaborait au niveau des centrales et ce qu'en percevaient les militants : dysfonction énorme qui permit de laisser entrevoir que les confédérations signeraient bien l'accord conclu, avant qu'on se fut aperçu que la grande majorité des syndicats de base n'en voulaient pas.

(1) L'ordonnance en question constituait une intervention étatique d'autant plus remarquable qu'elle inaugurait à sa manière la pratique de la flexibilité : elle autorisait en effet des modalités de dérogation à la loi en matière d'heures supplémentaires, de travail de nuit pour les femmes, etc.

(2) Remarque due à François Sellier, qui en a fait le thème d'une contribution au journal Le Monde en date du 1er mars 1985.

Il reste que le problème n'a pas été seulement, et de loin, qu'un problème institutionnel. Sans doute les militants n'ont-ils pas vu et pas voulu voir l'enjeu proprement politique de l'expérience d'implication gestionnaire menée par leurs organisations. De même que les contre-propositions industrielles n'avaient pas mobilisé avant 1981, de même les travailleurs sont-ils volontairement restés sur le seuil de la conversion engagée ainsi aujourd'hui par le haut. La désillusion politique leur a pour ainsi dire suffi : une désillusion qu'ils entérinent par une attitude générale de retrait et de scepticisme, et qui n'est pas prête de se transformer en contribution volontaire à la solidarité et au changement.

A l'évidence, le parcours implique bien plus qu'une "pédagogie de la négociation". Les dirigeants syndicaux affirment volontiers que "la priorité à l'emploi n'est pas encore reçue par un grand nombre de salariés", phénomène amplifié par la place qu'occupent dans les structures syndicales les travailleurs les plus qualifiés et les mieux protégés. Mais même cela n'y suffirait pas : c'est tout un itinéraire culturel qui est en cause, pour lequel les conditions ne sont pas, aujourd'hui, réunies.

3 - LE RENFORCEMENT INSTITUTIONNEL DU SYNDICALISME : LA CHANCE ET LE RISQUE.

Depuis 40 ans, tous les pays européens se sont de plus ou moins bon gré accomodé d'une "expansion politique" de leur syndicalisme, c'est-à-dire d'un enrichissement progressif des formes d'échange entre les syndicats et la puissance publique, corrélatif de l'accroissement des responsabilités de l'Etat en matière économique et sociale. La participation des syndicats à la chose publique et à la négociation des régulations professionnelles a eu pour contrepartie l'affirmation de la légitimité du syndicalisme à tous les niveaux de la vie économique. Le syndicat s'est "institutionnalisé". En France, cette évolution a eu ses caractères propres. Les inclinations révolutionnaires du mouvement ouvrier, le conservatisme du patronat, la faible représentativité des organisations ont freiné le processus, au point qu'il a fallu attendre 1968 pour que le syndicat ait officiellement droit de cité dans l'entreprise. Mais ces mêmes facteurs ont fait aussi que les progrès du droit syndical sont venus par à-coups, au moment des grandes avancées du mouvement social, et qu'il a été d'autant plus difficile de les remettre en cause.

Le bon créneau de l'expansion politique ?

Il était tout naturel que la victoire de la gauche en 1981 marque sur ce plan une nouvelle avancée, surtout si l'on se souvient que sous le septennat antérieur, la nécessité d'un développement des prérogatives syndicales avait déjà été mise à l'ordre du jour, sans que les réalisations soient à la hauteur des projets (en particulier sur la question du pouvoir dans l'entreprise). Pour l'essentiel, deux types de mesures ont été menées à bien. Les premières ont consisté à consacrer la place de la représentation syndicale dans une série d'instances très diversifiées dans leurs attributions, mais ayant en commun de ne pas être de caractère revendicatif : les juridictions du travail, la Sécurité sociale, les Conseils d'administration des entreprises nationalisées. Les secondes, plus proches du terrain et plus conformes à la vocation initiale des syndicats, ont visé à renforcer les droits collectifs dans l'entreprise : renforcement des prérogatives des Comités d'entreprise et des Comités d'hygiène et de sécurité, obligation annuelle de négocier les salaires et les conditions de travail dans l'entreprise, création de Conseils d'atelier.

A côté de leurs fonctions directes -souvent mal connues, voire dédaignées par la base-, les premières mesures ont surtout frappé par leur fonction indirecte. En conduisant à l'organisation de procédures électorales coordonnées au plan national, elles ont engendré en effet de nouvelles formes publiques de validation de la représentativité des syndicats dans le pays, et par conséquent une nouvelle définition de la légitimité syndicale, plus liée au vote qu'à l'effectif des adhérents, à la mesure de la présence institutionnelle du syndicat plutôt qu'à celle de sa capacité de mobilisation à la base.

La Confédération Force Ouvrière, relativement défavorisée au plan de la présence militante dans les entreprises mais portée par un courant favorable dans les élections, est l'organisation qui a pour le moment le plus profité de cette transformation tendancielle de la légitimité syndicale. Elle s'en est d'autant mieux accommodée que le primat qu'elle a toujours entendu donner à la "politique contractuelle" au sommet y trouve évidemment son compte : au renforcement institutionnel par la voie électorale répond un renforcement de la capacité à jouer sur le registre de la concertation et de la négociation au sommet pour le traitement des grands dossiers économiques et sociaux. S'agissant d'une organisation peu encline à la com-

promission idéologique avec le pouvoir -quel qu'il soit- et restée officiellement allergique au partage de la responsabilité économique directe, c'est en quelque sorte cette voie-ci qui constitue l'axe véritable du développement politique du syndicalisme, la seule qui soit susceptible de renforcer valablement sa position de partenaire de la régulation économique et sociale.

Des risques spécifiquement français

Pour aucune organisation, il n'y a pourtant de voie royale de l'institutionnalisation. Tous les syndicats ont objectivement profité de la multiplication des occasions de concertation qui a suivi l'évolution de la réglementation. Aucun ne saurait néanmoins aujourd'hui en faire un bilan clair ni assurer qu'il va forcément dans le bon sens. Renforcement de la capacité à négocier au plan national, dans l'entreprise ? On en a déjà dit la fragilité, compte tenu de la pression de la conjoncture et de la modestie de la marge de manoeuvre qui est laissée aux acteurs sociaux. Accroissement du pouvoir syndical ? Sans doute, mais si on le rapporte à la crise d'identité que traverse le mouvement ouvrier et au courant de désyndicalisation engagé depuis maintenant dix ans, on est fondé à penser que cette tendance pourrait devenir redoutable.

Les avatars de la négociation nationale en France depuis 1981 montrent à quel point est mise en veilleuse aujourd'hui la logique du "rapport des forces" -si centrale dans le discours et l'action des syndicats il y a seulement dix ou quinze ans- et combien pourrait être préjudiciable une situation où le droit à intervenir dans les affaires économiques et sociales n'irait plus de pair avec une quelconque prise directe sur les mouvements collectifs. L'échec des initiatives centralisées (pas seulement à propos de la flexibilité, mais aussi au sujet de la durée du travail, des restructurations...) tend à faire la preuve que les directions syndicales ne gagnent rien à apparaître comme de simples instances de régulation accolées aux instances gouvernementales et patronales : l'optimisation stratégique et organisationnelle ne compense pas la défection militante.

Franchissant le stade de l'énoncé des risques, des thèses récentes ont présenté ces tendances comme l'amorce d'une véritable perversion oligarchique de la démocratie (1). C'est sans doute aller trop loin, car

(1) Cf. Gérard Adam, le pouvoir syndical, Paris, Dunod, 1983. L'allusion à l'oeuvre de Roberto Michels n'est pas imputable à cet auteur, mais à nous-même.

cela suggère que le renforcement des prérogatives institutionnelles du syndicalisme serait en soi la cause du mal. Or le mal est plutôt dans la faiblesse chronique de la syndicalisation, doublée du reflux de l'activisme militant et de la difficulté où se trouvent les organisations de saisir les réalités de la classe ouvrière d'aujourd'hui. De plus, et à considérer le processus d'institutionnalisation dans toutes ses composantes, il nous semble que la discussion vaudrait d'être déplacée en tenant compte de la spécificité du cas français.

Dans ses aspects généraux, il se pourrait d'abord que le problème posé aujourd'hui ne fasse que rendre compte d'une dysfonction très ancienne du système français des relations professionnelles, mais qui avait été masquée par un certain état du discours militant et des pratiques d'action. Depuis toujours en effet, les syndicats français, notoirement divisés et peu représentatifs, se sont caractérisés par la faiblesse de leur emprise sur la collectivité des travailleurs et, corrélativement, par leur incapacité relative à s'engager dans la négociation. Dans le passé, néanmoins, cette incapacité était voilée par le principe du "refus de l'engagement contractuel" opposé au nom de l'idéologie révolutionnaire du mouvement ouvrier (1).

Or, maintenant que l'espace de respiration idéologique du syndicalisme s'est réduit, et affirmée la responsabilité économique des dirigeants, la dissimulation est simplement devenue interdite ; avec elle, plus impérative est devenue la nécessité pour les organisations de faire la preuve non seulement de leur représentativité, mais aussi de leur capacité à fédérer et à engager de véritables acteurs sociaux.

Au niveau de l'entreprise d'autre part, le problème est peut-être plus simplement celui du statut du syndicat par rapport à la base. Le syndicat a-t-il ou non vocation à être en position d'intériorité par rapport aux collectivités de salariés ? Pourrait-il se satisfaire d'être un relai externe aux groupes sociaux qui sont censés le mandater ? Peut-on ou non admettre que le lieu où se posent les problèmes n'est pas forcément celui où ces problèmes sont le mieux résolus ? Sur ces points, la situation française

(1) D'autres pays européens ont bien entendu rencontré des problèmes comparables. Voir par exemple le cas des syndicats britanniques confrontés, dans les années 70, à la volonté gouvernementale de leur imposer leur participation officielle à la régulation des relations professionnelles (Cf. Henri Hatefeld, "Quelques ouvrages récents sur le syndicalisme en Europe et aux USA, Revue française de sociologie, 1-85).

est vraisemblablement moins claire que dans la plupart des pays voisins. D'un côté en effet, les syndicalistes continuent en général de professer une doctrine intangible de "l'endogénéité" du syndicat par rapport aux communautés de base ("le syndicat, c'est les travailleurs") ; mais d'un autre, tout le système de représentation pousse -et de plus en plus ?- à mettre les élus en position d'extériorité par rapport à la base.

Il est frappant en particulier que les récentes lois Auroux puissent assurer la présence syndicale dans l'entreprise sans pour autant garantir la capacité de ses représentants à avoir prise sur la situation et les problèmes réels des salariés. D'où à cet égard la nécessité d'une prise de conscience et d'une mise à jour des stratégies, comme celle qui affleure par exemple aujourd'hui à la CFDT au travers d'un effort -incertain- de réhabilitation du statut de l'adhérent par rapport aux élus et aux instances intermédiaires du syndicat.

Au niveau de l'entreprise également et pour finir, relevons que le processus d'institutionnalisation du syndicalisme fait problème d'un tout autre point de vue : il risque d'entériner et d'aggraver la situation foncière d'inégalité dans laquelle se trouvent les salariés au regard du droit social et des relations professionnelles.

Selon qu'ils se trouvent dans une entreprise où les syndicats sont ou ne sont pas implantés, où la totalité des "droits nouveaux des travailleurs" est ou non applicable et appliquée, les salariés ne tireront pas, à l'évidence, la même profit des changements en cours. Les nationalisations ont, entre autres facteurs, renforcé les sources de l'inégalité, la plus importante restant toutefois, et de très loin, le clivage entre les petites entreprises et les grandes. En France, un salarié sur deux travaille désormais dans une entreprise de moins de cinquante salariés : en dessous de ce seuil, le fait syndical ne signifie souvent plus rien. Dans ces conditions, et à un moment où la négociation nationale marque le pas, le danger est bien que le renforcement des prérogatives syndicales ne cristallise cette dualité au lieu de la réduire. Il est des syndicalistes pour estimer que c'est là que réside le problème majeur pour des organisations qui ne sont pas seulement en quête de représentativité, mais aussi d'une véritable solidarité au sein du corps social.

4 - LES ENJEUX DE L'AVENIR.

Quoiqu'il arrive maintenant au plan politique, les quatres années qui viennent de s'écouler n'auront pas été qu'une simple péripétie dans la vie du mouvement ouvrier français. Tout ce qui précède montre plutôt que cette expérience de face à face entre le pouvoir d'Etat et le syndicalisme aura été l'occasion d'une épreuve de vérité irréversible et qui, en dernier ressort, ne concerne pas que ce pays.

En plus des options et des prises de conscience qui ne pourront pas être annulées par d'éventuels bouleversements électoraux, ce que nous avons observé est que la situation créée par le pouvoir socialiste a, pour le syndicalisme, accéléré des mutations qui étaient en fait déjà en question auparavant (notamment du fait de la crise), et mis à jour des problèmes qui se posent aussi ailleurs.

Globalement, le poids des problèmes qui ont surgi semblent avoir été bien plus marquant que les progrès réalisés. Mais en même temps, les enjeux de l'avenir se sont clarifiés. Pour l'essentiel, et au vu de ce qui précède, il nous paraissent être de deux ordres, sur chacun desquels nous ne ferons qu'esquisser ici quelques commentaires : d'abord, la prétention du syndicalisme à accompagner, voire à conduire le mouvement social, ne doit pas être abandonnée, mais au contraire confirmée et réellement mise en pratique. D'autre part, et si telle est bien l'ambition du mouvement syndical, il faudra que celui-ci s'attache à trouver de réels moyens d'un ressourcement de l'action collective à la base. L'avenir politique du mouvement ouvrier, nous semble-t-il, en dépend lui-même beaucoup plus directement que de l'énoncé de projets généraux sur l'avenir de la société.

Un syndicalisme de mouvement social

Pour trouver sa place dans le débat politique national, pour assumer efficacement ses responsabilités économiques, pour éviter les pièges de l'institutionnalisation, le syndicalisme dont nous avons rendu compte ici n'a pas d'autre perspective que d'affirmer sa vocation à avoir réellement prise sur la société, sur les mouvements et sur les acteurs collectifs qui l'orientent et qui font le changement.

Pour paraître évidente, cette proposition n'en est pas moins soumise à débat, chez les sociologues notamment. Ainsi Alain Touraine, dans un livre récent (1), en est plutôt à considérer que -constat étant dressé de la mort d'un mouvement ouvrier véritablement porteur de sens dans la société-, l'issue naturelle et positive pour le syndicalisme est désormais de rentrer dans le rang de la régulation socio-économique ; de renoncer à être acteur de l'histoire pour s'accepter comme agent de plein exercice dans le système politique. Pour Touraine, les signes s'accumulent selon lesquels l'essor du syndicalisme se mesurerait désormais à sa capacité d'affranchissement à l'égard de l'ancienne conscience de classe ouvrière, pour lui permettre de jouer pleinement son rôle institutionnel.

Cette thèse ne nous paraît pas pouvoir être retenue. Car à en juger par l'exposé présenté ici, on ne peut à notre avis qu'être sensible aux errements que se préparerait un syndicalisme délesté pour de bon des forces et des pesanteurs qui sont à l'oeuvre dans la société. Ce que révèle l'expérience décrite, ce sont précisément les coûts et les risques d'une irruption en politique non suffisamment asservie à l'état réel du mouvement social. Certes, il est juste d'observer que l'épreuve s'est déroulée dans un contexte qui privait les appareils de toute véritable marge d'initiative au sommet, face aux pouvoirs politiques et économiques. Mais à supposer que la conjoncture autorise un jour à la restauration du pouvoir syndical dans la négociation, on ne voit toujours pas quel destin pourrait subsister pour un syndicalisme désaisi de toute référence au mouvement ouvrier.

Au delà de l'expérience décrite, ceci est pour nous une leçon de l'histoire. Etudiant la part prise en France par les professions fermées (les "corporations") dans l'histoire syndicale du pays (2), nous avons pu vérifier qu'il faut toujours compter avec cette loi universelle de la dynamique du mouvement ouvrier qui lie intimement développement des acteurs sociaux et développement des mécanismes de régulation. Dans un contexte de conscience et d'action "de classe", trois composantes sont même toujours en présence : la définition d'espaces de négociation où chaque partenaire ait sa place (c'est la perspective des systèmes) ; la promotion des intérêts

(1) Le mouvement ouvrier, Paris, Fayard, 1984.

(2) Denis Segrestin, Le phénomène corporatiste, Paris, Fayard, 1985.

spécifiques des travailleurs (c'est la perspective des acteurs) ; la reproduction, enfin, des identités collectives qui forment le tissu de la solidarité (c'est, si l'on veut, la perspective des représentations sociales).

Aucune voie n'est ouverte pour un syndicalisme qui serait exclusivement rapporté à la perspective des systèmes. Et même, si devait être isolée la perspective des acteurs par rapport à la perspective des représentations sociales, le risque serait grand d'une désagrégation rapide du mouvement, d'un éclatement centrifuge du syndicalisme. D'où notre hypothèse que la dérive des l'institutionnalisation politique du syndicalisme à l'écart du mouvement social n'a pas à proprement parler de signification historique : elle ne peut être traitée que comme la manifestation d'une crise, comme un état de désadaptation momentanée appelant en dernier ressort le retour à la dynamique initiale du mouvement ouvrier.

Ainsi, par delà les effets de crise, le renforcement du "pouvoir syndical" suppose bien le renforcement de l'assise socio-politique des syndicats, plutôt qu'il n'est susceptible de s'y substituer. Le syndicat doit, pour survivre et se développer, rester un organe "fondateur de vie sociale" (1). Il lui reviendra demain encore de contribuer à la production de véritables acteurs sociaux, c'est-à-dire à l'affirmation d'agents de changement dotés non seulement d'intérêts à défendre ou d'aliénations à surmonter, mais encore d'une "scène sociale" qui les rende visibles et opérants, et d'une certaine capacité à apparaître signifiants de l'avenir de la société toute entière.

Le nécessaire ressourcement de l'action collective

Dans les conditions qu'on vient de voir et pour assurer leur légitimité politique, les organisations syndicales doivent prioritairement s'attacher au ressourcement de l'action collective à la base. L'urgence n'est pas en effet de reconstruire des projets généraux crédibles pour la société à venir, mais plutôt de faire que les pratiques concrètes d'action et de négociation retrouvent autant que possible le contact avec les mécanismes de régulation qui déterminent effectivement la vie des salariés et avec les problèmes qu'ils posent, compte tenu des changements qui affectent la vie des entreprises et les conditions de travail.

(1) Jean-Daniel Reynaud, Préface à Gérard Adam, Le pouvoir syndical, 1983.

Il y a lieu de penser que souvent, cette exigence obligera les syndicats à rompre avec la mémoire collective et avec les tendances traditionnelles de la pratique de classe pour privilégier les nouveaux enjeux et les nouveaux lieux au travers desquels se perpétuera, demain, une dynamique vraie pour l'action collective.

Parmi les nouveaux enjeux, celui de la formation par exemple, dont François Sellier explique à quel point elle se trouve actuellement en France insupportablement subordonnée aux problèmes de salaires et de classifications, par comparaison avec l'Allemagne fédérale notamment (1), et bien que les évolutions techniques en cours autant que les aspirations profondes des salariés la mette de toute évidence en avant.

Enjeu aussi que celui de la banalisation, à la base, de formes de "négociations intégrées" similaires à ce qui s'est joué au sommet sous le couvert de la flexibilité. Les conditions économiques de la crise obligent aujourd'hui, dans les entreprises, à lier les salaires, le niveau de l'emploi, la productivité et la durée du travail. Mais de plus en plus aussi, le changement technique obligera demain de la même manière au croisement des discussions sur la technologie, l'organisation du travail, la formation, et la participation collective à la gestion.

En ce qui concerne les lieux, si l'entreprise est amenée à jouer un rôle déterminant, ce n'est pas seulement parce qu'elle rapproche l'action syndicale des salariés. C'est aussi parce qu'aujourd'hui, avec les problèmes de l'emploi, des restructurations, mais aussi avec les pratiques patronales de segmentation de la main d'oeuvre, elle est devenue le lieu d'une demande effective et forte de régulation nouvelle, et en même temps un des lieux où peuvent concrètement se reconstruire les collectivités de travail et les solidarités du monde du travail. L'entreprise n'est pas forcément seule dans ce cas : parfois, au niveau des secteurs professionnels, et notamment telle ou telle branche relativement étrangère à l'histoire du syndicalisme ouvrier (comme les branches du secteur tertiaire : l'assurance, la banque, les services), on voit réunies les conditions de l'invention de formes d'action et de négociation nouvelles, directement rapportées à la vie des salariés, et qui rappellent la dynamique initiale du mouvement ouvrier.

(1) "Du mouvement ouvrier au syndicalisme réel", Esprit, juin 1984, pp. 29 à 41.

De façon hautement caractéristique, les lois Auroux françaises ont même montré récemment, avec l'introduction du Droit d'expression des salariés, que le ressourcement du mouvement syndical pouvait même partir de la cellule élémentaire de travail, de l'atelier ou du bureau pris chacun dans leur singularité. En dépit des limites et des difficultés inévitables de l'expérience, l'intérêt de celle-ci réside bien dans le fait qu'elle restitue tous les éléments du spectre de l'action collective : participation efficace à la régulation économique et construction de véritables "acteurs sociaux" en situation, en relation d'interdépendance avec la hiérarchie et l'environnement de travail...

L'hypothèse que nous faisons est celle-ci : un tel ressourcement de l'action collective à la base ne peut évidemment pas prétendre à résoudre par lui-même les problèmes du devenir du syndicalisme dans la société. Pourtant, c'est bien à ces niveaux-là que s'opéreront -ou que ne s'opéreront pas- les mutations nécessaires à une clarification des rapports du syndicalisme à la politique et à la société. En initiant de nouvelles formes de relations entre les délégués et la base, en concourant peut-être à corriger progressivement les inégalités des travailleurs à l'égard du fait syndical, voire à résorber les facteurs de la division intersyndicale, ils referont la trame du "syndicalisme de mouvement social".

Cette exigence du ressourcement du syndicalisme à la base a-t-elle quelque rapport avec les débats qui ont agité le mouvement ouvrier italien depuis 15 ans ? Est-elle une exigence qui concerne d'autres nations européennes ? Jusqu'à quel point contredit-elle la norme classique des relations professionnelles qui tend à réserver l'intervention syndicale pour les formes spécifiquement macro-économiques de la régulation, et à la placer du même coup en dehors du droit de l'entreprise (1) ? Autant de questions qui pourraient alimenter la discussion et en fonction desquelles l'on pourrait vérifier si l'expérience française des années passées ne fait que mettre en lumière les symptômes d'une crise générale du syndicalisme, ou si au contraire, elle préfigure en quelque ce soit les mutations qui s'imposeront en Europe dans la décennie à venir.

(1) Voir les implications de la "codétermination" en Allemagne fédérale (A. Sturmthal, Left of Center : European Labor since World War II, Illinois University Press, 1983).

LE ROLE DES SYNDICATS DANS UN MONDE EN MUTATION:
TENDANCES ACTUELLES ET PERSPECTIVES
D'AVENIR

par

Georges Spyropoulos



Les syndicats comptent parmi les institutions essentielles de la société industrielle. Or, depuis quelques années, on assiste à une véritable remise en question de la conception traditionnelle du syndicalisme et de son rôle dans les sociétés industrielles. "Malaise syndical", "crise du syndicalisme", "déclin ou régression des syndicats": tant la littérature spécialisée que les mass-media (presse, radio, télévision) abondent d'analyses et de commentaires qui vont dans ce sens. Même si ceux qui prétendent que le syndicalisme serait en train de perdre sa raison d'être sont peu nombreux, les analyses de l'évolution du phénomène syndical dont on dispose insistent, en règle générale, sur les difficultés croissantes que rencontre actuellement le syndicalisme, s'interrogent sur son champ d'intervention et soulignent la nécessité de repenser les objectifs des syndicats, les modalités de leur organisation et de leur fonctionnement, ainsi que le cadre de l'action syndicale. Cependant, les avis divergent en ce qui concerne la gravité, les causes et les manifestations de la crise actuelle et les futurs - possibles ou souhaitables - esquissés vont du maintien, voire du renforcement, du syndicalisme jusqu'à son dépérissement progressif.

Bien que les analyses sereines et fortement documentées ne manquent pas, ce qui caractérise le débat en cours - notamment au niveau des mass-media - c'est son caractère souvent passionné, polémique, quelque peu confus et, surtout, tendant à des généralisations basées sur des extrapolations abusives. Vue l'importance de l'enjeu, on est en droit d'espérer que les passions et les polémiques apaiseront et qu'une plus grande sérénité caractérisera, dans les années à venir, le débat sur le rôle des syndicats. L'objet - et l'ambition - de cette conférence organisée par le Centre européen "Travail et Société" est précisément de contribuer à la dépassionalisation du débat en favorisant les échanges de vues entre acteurs sociaux -syndicalistes, employeurs, fonctionnaires publics nationaux et internationaux - et observateurs sociaux - universitaires, spécialistes des questions du travail, journalistes - dans un climat de sérénité et de confiance mutuelle.

Les orateurs qui m'ont précédé dans cette tribune ont montré la voie à suivre si l'on veut qu'un véritable dialogue s'instaure sur la question qui fait l'objet de nos délibérations. Les débats de demain, au sein des quatre sessions parallèles, nous permettront d'approfondir ce dialogue en le structurant autour de quatre grands thèmes: répartition du pouvoir au niveau national, changements intervenus dans les relations sociales sur les lieux de travail, implications pour les syndicats des changements intervenus dans la composition de la main-d'oeuvre, enfin, rôle des syndicats dans l'internationalisation de l'économie. Mon exposé liminaire n'a pas pour ambition de faire la synthèse des communications présentées sous chacun de ces quatre thèmes. Ce sera le rôle de nos quatre modérateurs de le faire demain matin. Mon ambition est plus modeste: c'est de vous proposer, en guise d'introduction, un cadre de référence dans lequel pourraient venir s'inscrire les débats de la conférence.

Mon analyse portera essentiellement sur l'évolution du rôle des syndicats dans les sociétés industrielles à l'économie de marché et, plus particulièrement, celles d'Europe occidentale. Dans une première partie, je rappellerai brièvement les changements intervenus dans le contexte économique, technologique, politique, social et culturel dans lequel évolue le syndicalisme. Les répercussions que ces mutations multiples ont eu - ou peuvent avoir - sur les syndicats seront analysées dans la deuxième partie de mon exposé, consacré à une présentation, à grands traits, de ce qu'on appelle communément la "crise" du syndicalisme. Enfin, dans une troisième - et dernière - partie j'évoquerai brièvement le rôle futur des syndicats dans la société industrielle et post-industrielle.

I. Les mutations en cours

Institution essentielle de la société industrielle, le syndicalisme est le reflet de la société dans laquelle il évolue et dont il fait partie intégrante. Pour mieux comprendre les problèmes auxquels les syndicats sont confrontés, il faudrait donc placer leur étude dans le contexte économique, technologique et socio-culturel dans lequel les organisations de travailleurs prennent leurs racines. Le syndicalisme est en crise - tout comme tant d'autres institutions de nos sociétés contemporaines: l'Etat, l'église, l'entreprise, entre autres - dans la

mesure où le changement économique, technologique et social plus général l'oblige à changer à son tour. Avant donc de passer en revue les principales manifestations de cette crise, il importe de s'arrêter brièvement aux mutations qui, dans un passé assez récent, ont influé sur l'action syndicale. Ce faisant, je distinguerai, pour la clarté de l'exposé, entre mutations économiques, techniques et sociales, tout en restant conscient du caractère artificiel de cette distinction. En effet, ces mutations influent les unes sur les autres et leur influence sur le mouvement syndical s'exerce souvent conjointement et simultanément. Je ne ferai qu'effleurer ici cette relation de cause à effet en mettant l'accent sur les facteurs extérieurs au syndicalisme qui influent, par contrecoup, sur le fonctionnement des syndicats. C'est dans la deuxième partie de mon exposé que j'examinerai plus à fond l'influence exercée par ces facteurs -isolément ou simultanément -sur l'évolution du syndicalisme.

Parmi les mutations en cours, j'évoquerai celles ayant trait aux changements intervenus dans cinq domaines: les structures et les techniques de la production, la crise économique, la composition de la population salariée, et, enfin, les attitudes et comportements individuels.

Structures et techniques de la production

Les lieux de travail dans lesquels le syndicalisme trouve sa base et pousse ses racines ne sont plus ce qu'ils étaient. Sous la pression de la crise économique et de l'accélération du progrès technique, les branches industrielles qui constituaient traditionnellement le fer de lance des syndicats - en particulier les industries manufacturières: entreprises sidérurgiques, automobile, textile, par exemple - traversent une crise plus ou moins profonde et sont souvent en régression. Fermetures d'usines, restructurations, licenciements collectifs, chômage technique: les syndicats sont conscients de l'effritement de leur base; leur pouvoir de négociation tend à s'affaiblir. Par ailleurs, la décentralisation industrielle et le développement des petites et moyennes entreprises industrielles travaillant en sous-traitance ajoutent de nouveaux défis au mouvement syndical habitué à agir au sein de grandes unités de production occupant plusieurs centaines ou milliers de salariés.

Parallèlement, les secteurs de l'activité économique où l'implantation syndicale était généralement faible ou, dans certains cas, inexistante - les administrations et les services, les banques, les assurances, les supermarchés, l'hôtellerie et la restauration, etc. - connaissent un essor sans précédent. Malgré les progrès de la syndicalisation dans ces secteurs, le pari est loin d'être gagné car les pertes d'effectif enregistrées dans les industries manufacturières ne sont pas entièrement compensées par les progrès de la syndicalisation dans le secteur des services.

Souvent, la croissance rapide du secteur tertiaire est imputable au développement du secteur public: administration centrale et collectivités locales, sécurité sociale, services publics de l'éducation et de la santé, etc. Si l'on prend en considération le secteur public industriel et commercial, il est permis d'affirmer que, presque partout, l'Etat est devenu de loin le principal employeur (1). Si les progrès de la syndicalisation dans ce secteur sont considérables, les modalités d'organisation et d'action syndicales présentent de nettes différences avec celles du secteur privé, ce qui demande de la part des syndicats, un effort d'adaptation et rend plus difficile la recherche de l'unité syndicale.

Enfin, ainsi qu'on le verra dans la suite de cet exposé, le développement des entreprises multinationales - qui est à l'origine de profonds changements dans les structures traditionnelles de la production - représente un autre facteur important qui influe sur l'organisation et l'action syndicales.

Qu'il s'agisse du secteur industriel ou du secteur tertiaire, l'accélération du progrès technique bouleverse les conceptions traditionnelles d'organisation de la production et du travail. Après la vague de l'automatisation des années soixante, des innovations technologiques spectaculaires, notamment dans le domaine de la micro-électronique, de la biotechnologie, des matériaux nouveaux - céramiques et fibres en particulier - représentent des transformations des techniques de la production véritablement révolutionnaires. De ce fait, l'adaptation au changement technologique a pris, au cours des dernières années, une importance croissante. Occasion privilégiée d'améliorer la productivité, l'introduction de nouvelles technologies influe directement sur

le niveau et la nature de l'emploi. La maîtrise sociale du changement technologique constitue sans aucun doute un nouveau défi pour le syndicalisme. Il suffit, pour s'en convaincre, de consulter la volumineuse littérature consacrée aux implications des mutations technologiques pour le syndicalisme et la négociation collective (2). Surpris par la profondeur et la rapidité du changement technologique, les syndicats ont, dans un premier temps, adopté une attitude défensive et ont souvent eu tendance à opposer un refus systématique au changement. Plus récemment, ils ont nuancé leur position et évolué dans le sens du dialogue et de la négociation, sans parvenir cependant à reprendre l'initiative dans ce domaine.

Crise économique

Sans nul doute, la mutation la plus importante dans le domaine économique aura été la détérioration de la situation économique. La crise actuelle, vieille de plus de dix ans et qui est sûrement plus structurelle que conjonctuelle, oblige à considérer les problèmes du travail en rapport avec ceux qui sont liés à l'emploi et en termes de compétitivité et d'efficacité de l'appareil productif. Baisse des taux de croissance, flambée du chômage, inflation pèsent aujourd'hui lourdement sur l'économie de la plupart des pays industriels à économie de marché; elles ont d'ailleurs progressivement gagné, par le jeu de l'interdépendance internationale, les pays en développement et les pays à économie planifiée.

Étroitement liée aux changements intervenus récemment en matière de structures et de techniques de la production, la crise économique a frappé de plein fouet le syndicalisme. De toute évidence, la montée du chômage a affaibli le pouvoir de négociation des syndicats et a ramené l'attention sur la sécurité de l'emploi et le maintien du pouvoir d'achat. La réduction de la durée du travail - revendication centrale et permanente des syndicats - est de plus en plus envisagée - y compris par les syndicats - en fonction de ses répercussions sur l'emploi. Le relatif optimisme de la fin des années soixante et du début des années soixante-dix qui avait permis aux syndicats d'occuper le devant de la scène en élevant la question de l'humanisation du travail au rang d'enjeu politique, fait actuellement place à une préoccupation plus immédiate du coût des améliorations et de son incidence sur la compétitivité des entreprises (3).

Un autre facteur qui influe encore plus directement sur l'évolution des syndicats mérite mention: c'est l'opinion - très répandue dans les milieux employeurs et dans certains milieux gouvernementaux - suivant laquelle les effets de la crise actuelle auraient été beaucoup moins marqués si les coûts du travail étaient moins élevés et si les systèmes de protection sociale européens étaient moins généreux et moins rigides. C'est le grand débat sur la "flexibilité" de l'emploi et du travail et sur la "déréglementation" - ce nouveau remède en vogue - dont on trouve des échos, presque quotidiennement, dans la presse, la radio et la télévision (4). On sait que ce désir d'assouplissement a inspiré les politiques adoptées par plusieurs pays, notamment européens, au cours des dernières années. De plus, face à un syndicalisme sur la défensive, on assiste à une offensive patronale. Sans aller jusqu'à parler "d'effondrement du droit du travail", comme certains observateurs n'ont pas hésité à l'affirmer (5), on assiste à une véritable mise en cause des institutions et des mécanismes sur lesquels reposaient jusqu'à présent les systèmes sociaux des sociétés industrielles. La législation du travail et les systèmes nationaux de sécurité sociale et de protection sociale - qui connaissent des difficultés financières grandissantes (6) - subissent les assauts de ceux - et ils sont nombreux et influents - qui considèrent que ces systèmes sont trop généreux, trop coûteux et constituent un facteur de rigidité et de bureaucratisation. L'enjeu, on le voit, est fondamental pour l'avenir de nos sociétés en général, et pour les syndicats en particulier. Il restera selon toute vraisemblance, et pendant longtemps, au centre du débat social, débat dont l'issue est pour le moins incertaine, mais qui sera, à n'en pas douter, déterminant pour l'avenir du syndicalisme.

Composition de la population salariée

L'évolution de la population salariée est un troisième facteur qui influe sur le mouvement syndical. Les mutations intervenues dans l'ordre économique et dans les structures et les techniques de la production que je viens d'évoquer ont entraîné des changements profonds dans la composition et la nature de la main-d'oeuvre. En l'espace d'une dizaine d'années, la physionomie du monde du travail a été profondément modifiée.

Traditionnellement, le travailleur affilié à un syndicat évoquait l'image de l'ouvrier manuel de l'industrie, du col bleu et de l'homme adulte. Il en est tout autrement aujourd'hui, notamment en Europe, où le secteur manufacturier ne contribue plus que pour un cinquième ou tout au plus pour un quart du volume total de l'emploi. La partie de la population active occupée dans l'agriculture a également fortement diminué tandis qu'on assiste - ainsi que je l'ai déjà fait observer - à un accroissement considérable du secteur des services.

Parallèlement, de "nouveaux acteurs" (7) apparaissent. Certaines catégories de travailleurs qui n'ont pas, par le passé, montré une grande propension à l'activité syndicale représentent désormais une portion croissante de la population salariée. Il en est ainsi de l'entrée massive des femmes sur le marché du travail (8). D'autres catégories de salariés se trouvent, dans une situation analogue à celle des travailleuses: ce sont les travailleurs âgés, les travailleurs migrants, les minorités ethniques et parfois les jeunes travailleurs.

Enfin, un troisième phénomène est venu s'ajouter aux deux précédents en modifiant profondément la base du recrutement des syndicats: il s'agit du développement, à côté d'un marché organisé du travail, d'un marché parallèle de main-d'oeuvre "périphérique" et de travailleurs marginaux, appelés parfois "les nouveaux prolétaires" (9). Comme on sait, la caractéristique commune des travailleurs temporaires, des travailleurs au noir ou clandestins, des travailleurs à temps partiel, des travailleurs à domicile est la précarité et l'insécurité de leur emploi ainsi que le faible taux de syndicalisation. L'accroissement du nombre de ces travailleurs de "seconde zone" constitue à l'évidence une menace sérieuse pour la sécurité de l'emploi et des revenus des autres salariés représentés par les syndicats.

Les changements dans la composition et la nature de la main-d'oeuvre que je viens d'évoquer seront-ils durables? Certaines études récentes font allusion à un possible renversement des tendances actuelles d'ici à la fin du siècle, qu'il s'agisse du secteur de la production ou du travail des femmes (10). En attendant que l'évolution actuelle se confirme ou se renverse, les syndicats devraient, me semble-t-il, considérer les données actuelles comme acquises et s'efforcer de s'y adapter.

Attitudes et comportements individuels

Un dernier facteur qui influe sur l'évolution du syndicalisme a trait aux changements intervenus au cours des années récentes dans les attitudes et les comportements des travailleurs. En effet, le poids du syndicalisme dans la vie économique et sociale ne dépend pas uniquement du nombre, plus ou moins grand, de ses adhérents; il est également fonction de la capacité des syndicats de s'adapter à l'évolution des mentalités, aux nouvelles attitudes et comportements face au travail et à la vie du travail. Or, même si on n'est pas d'accord - et c'est mon cas- avec les alarmistes qui parlent de "crise du travail", de "perte de l'éthique du travail" ou encore d'"allergie au travail" (11), force est de constater que nos sociétés contemporaines s'interrogent sur le travail et sa finalité. Les conditions matérielles et psychologiques du travail -ce qu'on appelle parfois la qualité de la vie de travail- acquièrent une importance accrue à une époque de mutations structurelles et technologiques rapides. "Un degré d'instruction plus élevé, une meilleure éducation, une société plus tolérante, l'influence des grands moyens d'information et la possibilité pour tous de communiquer à tout instant sont parmi d'autres des facteurs qui, dans tous les pays, ... sont aujourd'hui en passe de changer la mentalité des travailleurs "(12). Pour certaines catégories de travailleurs (par exemple, les techniciens qualifiés), les objectifs classiques des syndicats -assurer la sécurité de l'emploi et défendre les intérêts collectifs- peuvent parfois avoir moins d'attrait que les possibilités d'épanouissement personnel liées à la réussite professionnelle individuelle. Par ailleurs, de plus en plus nombreux sont ceux qui -notamment parmi les femmes et les jeunes- se contenteraient, dans certaines conditions, d'un revenu plus modeste -par exemple, d'un travail à temps partiel-, en vue d'élargir l'espace du "non-travail", c'est-à-dire le temps de la libre activité et du loisir.

La mesure dans laquelle les syndicats -mais ceci est également valable pour les chefs d'entreprise- tiendront compte de ce qui a changé dans les attentes et les comportements des travailleurs en revisant leurs stratégies pourra être décisive pour l'avenir du syndicalisme. Les dirigeants syndicaux en sont de plus en plus conscients. Pour ne citer qu'un exemple, aux dires d'Edmond Maire, secrétaire général de la CFDT, qui se référait récemment à l'"éclatement du

salariat" et à la coupure sociale entre les groupes d'âge, "il n'y a plus de revendication unifiante qui réponde à la diversité de ces conditions salariales ... La conception traditionnelle, qui réduit le combat syndical à la seule lutte pour le pouvoir d'achat, reste encore vivace dans bien des têtes. Et c'est un obstacle majeur pour un syndicalisme de transformation" (13).

Cette esquisse rapide du contexte économique, technique et social constitue le point de départ de mon analyse de l'évolution du syndicalisme. C'est à cette analyse qu'est consacrée la deuxième partie de mon exposé.

II. Les implications pour les syndicats

Secoué par les changements intervenus dans l'environnement externe, le syndicalisme se trouve ainsi dans une sorte de croisée de chemins. Aux facteurs externes, déjà évoqués, il faudrait d'ailleurs ajouter les facteurs de changement internes aux syndicats: attitude des affiliés, nature de l'action syndicale, rôle déterminant des dirigeants, etc. (14).

Il est évident que les manifestations de la crise du syndicalisme -ainsi que les remèdes à lui apporter - varient énormément d'un mouvement syndical à l'autre, d'un syndicat à l'autre. La typologie syndicale est très diversifiée et plusieurs critères doivent être gardés constamment à l'esprit lorsqu'on s'efforce d'esquisser à grands traits l'évolution du syndicalisme: principes régissant l'organisation et le fonctionnement des syndicats, formes de l'action syndicale, relations entre syndicats et partis politiques, degré d'intervention de l'Etat, système national de relations professionnelles, etc.

Compte tenu du peu de temps dont je dispose, je suis obligé d'être sélectif, je choisirai donc, à titre d'exemple, trois manifestations des mutations du phénomène syndical ayant trait, dans l'ordre, à la représentativité des syndicats, aux orientations idéologiques du syndicalisme et à l'évolution de l'action syndicale.

Représentativité des syndicats

Tout d'abord, la représentativité des syndicats. Y-a-t-il, comme certains l'affirment, crise de représentativité? C'est impossible de répondre à cette question par un oui ou par un non. Un premier facteur de représentativité a trait au taux de syndicalisation. En Europe occidentale, ce taux varie du simple au triple, voire au quadruple (15). C'est dans les pays scandinaves et en Belgique que ce taux est le plus élevé: plus de 70 pour cent de la population active. A l'inverse, on trouve les taux les plus bas - 15 à 25 pour cent - dans le sud de l'Europe: Espagne, France, Grèce, Portugal. Les autres pays de la Communauté européenne se situent entre ces deux extrêmes avec des taux de syndicalisation allant de 30 à 60 pour cent. Ce qui est significatif pour mon propos, c'est que le taux de syndicalisation est, depuis quelque temps, soit stationnaire, soit même dans certains cas en baisse de plusieurs points: c'est le cas, par exemple, en Espagne, en France, en Irlande et au Royaume-Uni où des pertes sensibles ont été enregistrées au cours des cinq dernières années. Les effectifs des syndicats ont également quelque peu reculé en République fédérale d'Allemagne, en Belgique, en Italie, aux Pays-Bas et en Suède. Aux Etats-Unis, l'AFL-CIO reconnaît que, en comparaison avec les années soixante et soixante-dix, le syndicalisme a reculé de 15 pourcent et ne représente actuellement que 19 pour cent de la population active (16). Dans quelques autres pays, en revanche, comme l'Autriche et la Suisse, les effectifs syndicaux sont restés stables; le Danemark et la Norvège ont même, semble-t-il, enregistré de nouvelles hausses des taux de syndicalisation.

Quoi qu'il en soit, il est incontestable que, dans l'ensemble, on assiste à un recul des effectifs syndicaux. Même si on reconnaît que la flambée du chômage explique pour une part ce recul, force est de constater que les difficultés que connaît actuellement le syndicalisme pour recruter de nouveaux membres dans les secteurs en expansion sont la manifestation d'une crise plus profonde. Certes, le pourcentage global de syndiqués dans la population active est un indicateur très partiel de la puissance des organisations syndicales. Par exemple, le faible taux de syndicalisation n'empêche pas les syndicats d'exercer une réelle influence sur la prise de décisions du fait que leurs effectifs sont concentrés sur quelques secteurs clés de l'industrie et des services publics. "La conjoncture économique peut bien faire reculer ici et là les effectifs syndicaux; presque nulle part elle

n'affaiblit l'influence des organisations syndicales, qui au contraire a progressé dans beaucoup de pays, notamment en France" (17). Il n'en reste pas moins que l'affiliation à un syndicat constitue le meilleur indicateur de représentativité et de crédibilité du mouvement syndical.

Un deuxième facteur de représentativité a trait aux structures - unitaires ou pluralistes - du mouvement syndical. Là où l'unité syndicale prévaut, comme dans les pays scandinaves, en République fédérale d'Allemagne, en Autriche, en Irlande, et au Royaume-Uni, les chances qu'ont les syndicats de surmonter la crise économique, sociale et institutionnelle actuelle sont, me semble-t-il, beaucoup plus grandes que dans les pays à pluralisme syndical dû à des clivages d'ordre idéologique, religieux ou politique, comme par exemple en Belgique, en Espagne, en France, en Grèce, en Italie et au Portugal. Les divergences de caractère idéologique et politique entre les organisations syndicales en présence constituent un facteur de vulnérabilité, de concurrence et d'affaiblissement évident du mouvement syndical. C'est peut-être pour cette raison que des efforts ont été entrepris au cours de dernières années dans certains pays européens - tels que l'Irlande, l'Italie et les Pays-Bas en vue de surmonter les rivalités idéologiques des organisations syndicales. Par ailleurs, la tendance à la consolidation des structures syndicales, à la fusion des syndicats, à la centralisation et à la concentration des structures syndicales - observée dès la fin de la deuxième guerre mondiale - s'est accentuée vers la fin des années 70 et le début des années 80 dans les pays scandinaves, en Amérique du Nord et surtout au Royaume -Uni (18).

Enfin, troisième facteur de représentativité, la composition du mouvement syndical est en train de se modifier profondément en raison de la désindustrialisation, de la croissance rapide des secteurs des services et de l'arrivée massive des femmes sur le marché du travail. D'ores-et-déjà, les travailleurs non-manuels représentent, dans de nombreux pays, 40, 50 pourcent, voire davantage, de l'effectif syndical (19). L'augmentation du taux de syndicalisation dans le secteur public et la fonction publique constitue, peut-être, l'événement le plus significatif de l'histoire syndicale des dix dernières

années (20). Il en est de même de la montée des syndicats d'ingénieurs, de techniciens et de cadres (21). Cette arrivée massive de nouveaux acteurs sur la scène syndicale est en train de modifier le visage traditionnel du syndicalisme. Pour sauvegarder leur représentativité et leur pouvoir de participation aux décisions, les syndicats doivent faire un effort sans précédent d'adaptation à cette nouvelle donnée. Car l'apparition sur la scène syndicale de ces nouvelles catégories de travailleurs contient en elle potentiellement le risque de tendances centrifuges qui pourraient, si l'on n'en prenait garde, provoquer l'éclatement du mouvement syndical en une multitude d'organisations catégorielles, jalouses de leur indépendance les unes à l'égard des autres.

Orientations idéologiques des syndicats

Ceci m'amène à mon deuxième exemple de mutations du syndicalisme, celui relatif à l'évolution des orientations idéologiques des syndicats. On sait que, contrairement aux syndicats américains, plus pragmatiques, le mouvement syndical européen a une longue tradition d'orientation idéologique et politique, profondément enracinée dans les moeurs de ses dirigeants. Révolutionnaires ou réformistes, d'inspiration laïque ou confessionnelle, les syndicats européens ont eu - et continuent d'avoir - des liens plus ou moins étroits avec les partis politiques qui leur sont idéologiquement proches (22). En fait, il n'existe pas de mouvement ouvrier qui ne soit pas en même temps lié à des forces politiques, qu'elles soient révolutionnaires ou réformistes. Cependant, les valeurs et les caractéristiques traditionnelles des syndicats ouvriers, porte parole de la classe ouvrière et ayant des fidélités politiques bien établies, sont en train de perdre de leur empire.

Sans aller jusqu'à affirmer que les syndicats européens sont actuellement en train de jeter par dessus bord leur idéologie et leur appartenance politique, je me bornerai à constater que la crise actuelle incite les dirigeants syndicaux à se remettre en question, en procédant à de nouvelles analyses qui tiennent davantage compte des mutations techniques, économiques et socio-culturelles intervenues au cours de la dernière décennie. Ce qu'on nomme recul du syndicalisme fait le plus souvent référence au déclin de la conscience

ouvrière, c'est-à-dire au déclin du mouvement ouvrier et des idéologies mettant en cause le mode de gestion sociale de la production industrielle. Ce qu'on dit moins souvent, c'est que ce déclin - qui est incontestable - s'accompagne, dans la plupart des pays industriels occidentaux, par des progrès notables de l'influence économique et politique des syndicats. Mais je reviendrai tout à l'heure à cette question lorsque j'aborderai le troisième et dernier point de ma démonstration, celui relatif à l'évolution de l'action syndicale.

Un dernier mot à propos du déclin des idéologies traditionnelles. Les dirigeants syndicaux savent pertinemment que la puissance et la crédibilité des syndicats ne sont jamais définitivement acquises et que le rôle du syndicalisme dans la société n'est pas immuable. Cette évolution de la réflexion au sein des syndicats concernant le rôle du syndicalisme dans la société d'aujourd'hui et de demain constitue peut-être un des traits les plus caractéristiques des années quatre-vingts.

Evolution de l'action syndicale

Dans quelle mesure la crise actuelle conduit-elle à des modifications de l'action syndicale? Celle-ci pouvant prendre des formes multiples, je limiterai mon propos à quelques exemples ayant trait successivement à la façon dont se prennent les décisions au sein des syndicats, à la participation accrue des syndicats à l'élaboration des politiques nationales, à l'évolution de la négociation collective, à l'action syndicale dans les entreprises et enfin, à l'action syndicale internationale.

Le débat sur la démocratie syndicale a fait coulé beaucoup d'encre depuis que les syndicats ont fait leur apparition (23). Au fur et à mesure que les syndicats renforçaient leur position en tant qu'institution essentielle de la démocratie industrielle, le fonctionnement démocratique des syndicats retenait de plus en plus l'attention. Même si des voix s'élèvent encore parfois pour dénoncer les "abus" du pouvoir syndical, on sait que, en règle générale, les dirigeants syndicaux doivent rester à l'écoute de la base s'ils veulent garder la direction de leur organisation. Plusieurs commentateurs ont mis récemment l'accent sur l'importance du rôle qui incombe aux dirigeants syndicaux dans l'adaptation du mouvement syndical aux mutations de son environnement.

L'expérience récente montre que le syndicalisme résiste mieux à la crise actuelle lorsqu'il combine étroitement capacité de pression politique au sommet et militantisme à la base, ainsi que le démontre, entre autres, le système de relations professionnelles pratiqué en République fédérale d'Allemagne (24) et en Suède (25). La présence de spécialistes et d'experts dans les appareils syndicaux - tant décriée - est une réaction naturelle et saine du syndicalisme face à la complexité croissante des problèmes à résoudre. Plus un syndicat accorde de l'importance à la participation, à l'élaboration de politiques nationales et à la négociation collective, et plus les experts prennent le pas sur les militants.

Plusieurs commentateurs ont récemment attiré l'attention sur le danger que représente pour les syndicats une certaine désaffection de la base à l'égard d'appareils syndicaux accusés d'avoir perdu leur crédibilité ou d'être éloignés des préoccupations des adhérents (26). Est-ce que cette tendance à la baisse de la combativité - constatée dans nombre de pays européens - risque de durer? Ne serait-elle plutôt une conséquence de la conjoncture maussade actuelle? Après tout, le temps n'est pas si lointain où l'on assistait - c'était au début des années 70 - à une montée du militantisme, à une multiplication des conflits et à une pression accrue de la base. Quoi qu'il en soit, qu'elle soit conjoncturelle ou permanente, la démobilisation de la base est un signe que les appareils syndicaux auraient tort de ne pas prendre suffisamment au sérieux.

Une deuxième tendance qui se dégage en matière d'action syndicale a trait au phénomène de participation accrue des syndicats à la prise de décisions au niveau national. Plusieurs observateurs de la scène sociale ont souligné le paradoxe qui consiste à ce que la consécration du syndicalisme en tant qu'interlocuteur valable en matière de politique économique et sociale intervienne précisément en période de crise du syndicalisme, de désaffection de la base et de contestations fréquentes concernant sa représentativité.

Aux dires de certains, associé de plus en plus étroitement aux grandes décisions en matière économique et sociale, le syndicalisme cesserait progressivement d'être reformiste ou révolutionnaire pour devenir ainsi gestionnaire, voire corporatif ou, comme on dit parfois, néo-corporatif (27). Je pense qu'il s'agit là d'une conclusion un peu trop

rapide ou en tout cas quelque peu schématique, car elle oublie que la capacité des syndicats d'influer sur les décisions au niveau national - donc, d'exercer une pression politique efficace - n'exclut nullement une action syndicale, plus traditionnelle, au niveau de la négociation collective et des conflits, en particulier au sein des entreprises. Ainsi que je l'ai déjà fait observer, c'est là où il y a conjonction de ces deux formes d'action syndicale complémentaires que le syndicalisme résiste mieux à la crise actuelle.

S'agissant de la négociation collective, troisième exemple de l'évolution de l'action syndicale, on constate, un peu partout, un affaiblissement du pouvoir de négociation des syndicats, conséquence des difficultés économiques et de l'augmentation du chômage. De même, la fréquence et l'ampleur des grèves ont généralement diminué dans les pays industrialisés. Cependant, si les mouvements d'ensemble deviennent notoirement difficiles - il suffit pour s'en convaincre de jeter un coup d'oeil aux événements récents en France et au Royaume-Uni - , la pression locale, notamment dans les entreprises, se relâche peu. La question de savoir s'il existe une relation de cause à effet entre l'avènement de l'Etat providence moderne et l'affaiblissement du pouvoir de négociation des syndicats mérite cependant de retenir l'attention. Il est en tout cas certain que les grands progrès que la législation du travail et les systèmes de protection sociale ont faits dans la plupart des pays européens au cours des 30 à 40 dernières années - obtenus d'ailleurs souvent sous la pression des syndicats - sont venus tempérer la nécessité de l'action syndicale.

L'étude de l'évolution de la négociation collective au cours de la dernière décennie permet de déceler deux tendances qui, toutes les deux, influent sur la nature de l'action syndicale (28). Il s'agit, d'une part, de la tendance à la décentralisation de la négociation qui traduit un désir d'assouplissement et d'adaptation aux situations locales. Analysée dans un grand nombre de travaux (29), cette tendance intéresse la quasi-totalité des pays industrialisés; elle entraîne un renforcement du pouvoir des représentants syndicaux locaux et contribue ainsi à la décentralisation du pouvoir au sein des syndicats.

Une deuxième tendance, moins nette peut-être mais non moins significative de l'évolution actuelle, a trait à l'importance accrue accordée par la négociation collective aux aspects qualitatifs des

conditions de travail: qualité de la vie de travail, contrôle social des innovations technologiques, redistribution du travail et de l'emploi, etc. (30). Il y a là quelque chose de profondément novateur qui cherche à s'y exprimer. Tout laisse à croire qu'il s'agit là d'une tendance qui risque de s'amplifier dans les années à venir; reflétant une évolution profonde des espérances et des comportements des travailleurs, elle constitue un défi tant pour les chefs d'entreprises que pour les syndicats.

La tendance à ramener de nombreuses négociations au niveau de l'entreprise ou de l'établissement risque, dans certains cas, de porter atteinte aux organisations syndicales centrales, surtout lorsque l'initiative des revendications se situe au niveau de l'équipe, du groupe de travail, d'une catégorie de salariés. On sait, par ailleurs, que sur les lieux de travail l'organisation syndicale se heurte souvent à la présence d'autres instances de représentation des travailleurs, indépendantes du syndicat et, pour cette raison précisément, encouragée par certains employeurs. De plus, les nouvelles formes d'organisation du travail résultant des innovations technologiques, notamment dans les grandes entreprises, appellent une nouvelle définition du rôle des syndicats: une équipe semi-autonome, ce n'est certes pas un groupe de travailleurs indépendants, mais c'est bien une nouvelle distribution des responsabilités, des pouvoirs, des contrôles qui remettent en question le rôle traditionnel du délégué syndical.

Enfin, dernier exemple de l'évolution de l'action syndicale, l'internationalisation de l'économie pose de nouveaux défis au syndicalisme, l'obligeant à adapter son action à des contextes économiques et à des structures de production entièrement nouveaux (31). Qu'il s'agisse de la Communauté économique européenne et de l'OCDE ou des sociétés multinationales, l'élasticité croissante des frontières nationales, les mouvements migratoires et, bientôt, la liberté de circulation des travailleurs dans l'Europe du Marché Commun, obligent les syndicats à revoir leurs structures et à inventer de nouveaux modes d'action. Qu'en sera-t-il à l'avenir? Est-il permis de prédire un déplacement du pouvoir syndical du niveau national vers le niveau supranational? Est-il concevable que des conventions collectives puissent un jour être conclues à des niveaux supranationaux? Par ailleurs, du fait que les entreprises multinationales mènent des stratégies autonomes, en grande partie indépendantes des pouvoirs politiques nationaux, les structures traditionnelles du pouvoir syndical - les confédérations

nationales et internationales - et l'action syndicale classique - grève, négociation, participation - se sont avérées peu adaptées. C'est sans doute du côté des organismes spécifiques que constituent les secrétariats professionnels internationaux (trade secretariats) - ceux de la métallurgie, de la chimie, des employés et techniciens, des industries agro-alimentaires, par exemple - qu'il faut aller chercher les signes d'une nouvelle efficacité. Là aussi, on assiste donc à une nouvelle définition du rôle du syndicalisme (32).

III . Perspectives d'avenir

J'en viens à la troisième et dernière partie de mon exposé: quel pourrait être le rôle futur des syndicats en Europe? Je serai extrêmement bref, car je n'ai pas l'intention, à ce stade de nos travaux, de répondre à cette question. Mon exposé liminaire a été conçu uniquement pour lancer le débat en vous proposant quelques points de repère concernant les causes et les manifestations de la crise actuelle du syndicalisme. Quant à l'avenir, je me bornerai à faire quelques remarques rapides dans l'espoir qu'elles retiendront l'attention des participants lors de la discussion qui s'engagera dans la suite de nos travaux.

La première remarque sera pour insister, encore une fois, sur la vitalité du phénomène syndical. Malgré la crise actuelle - qui le frappe autant que d'autres institutions de nos sociétés -, le syndicalisme survivra dans l'Europe de demain, bien que son visage puisse - ou même doive- changer. Ceux qui pourraient être tentés par le rêve d'une société industrielle ou post-industrielle sans syndicats ou avec des syndicats dociles et "assagis" sont des nostalgiques d'un passé définitivement révolu. La garantie de la liberté et de l'indépendance syndicales reste et doit toujours rester un préalable à toute discussion sur le rôle des syndicats. Le travail salarié a été à l'origine de l'apparition et du développement du syndicalisme. Les transformations que connaît le travail humain appellent un syndicalisme de transformation, non sa disparition. Déjà nécessaires à l'aube de l'industrialisation, les syndicats deviennent indispensables dans nos sociétés contemporaines, de plus en plus complexes et secouées par les mutations économiques, technologiques, démographiques et socio-culturelles que j'évoquais dans les deux premières parties de mon

exposé. Plutôt que de s'interroger sur leur survie ou de s'éterniser sur les raisons de leur déclin, il faudrait donc s'efforcer de mettre davantage l'accent sur les adaptations nécessaires de l'organisation et de l'action syndicales.

Ma deuxième remarque sera pour rappeler que c'est, bien entendu, aux travailleurs et à leurs organisations syndicales qu'il appartient, en tout premier lieu, de se prononcer sur le rôle futur du syndicalisme. Il est cependant naturel que leurs interlocuteurs habituels - les responsables gouvernementaux, les cadres dirigeants d'entreprises, les spécialistes des questions du travail - émettent des avis à ce sujet et formulent des suggestions, comme il est naturel que les syndicalistes émettent, de leur côté, des avis concernant l'évolution de la fonction sociale des entreprises ou celle de la politique économique et sociale menée par le gouvernement. C'est dans cet esprit que j'ai formulé mon propre diagnostic et c'est dans ce même esprit, j'en suis convaincu, que vous souhaiteriez aborder cette question au cours de nos délibérations.

Enfin, ma troisième remarque sera pour dire que s'agissant du rôle futur des syndicats et de l'évolution des relations professionnelles, les situations décrites par ceux qui s'exercent à la futurologie n'ont jamais été aussi contrastées (33). Ces ébauches de l'avenir, tantôt pessimistes et tantôt optimistes - et dont on trouvera trace dans certaines communications présentées à cette conférence - ne sont pourtant pas inutiles: même si la réalité sociale n'épousera en fin de compte aucun des canevas ainsi proposés, cerner les futurs possibles dans un domaine aussi complexe que celui de l'évolution du syndicalisme reste une démarche utile, car elle peut éclairer les acteurs en présence lors de la définition de leurs objectifs et stratégies respectifs. Dans l'ère de turbulences dans laquelle nous vivons, on aurait tort de ne pas tirer profit de la moindre lumière, fût-elle faible et hésitante.

Je m'en tiendrai, pour ce moment, à ces quelques constatations générales. Je préfère, en effet, ne pas préjuger de nos débats. Lorsque l'heure de la synthèse arrivera, à l'issue de nos travaux, j'aurai sûrement l'occasion de soumettre à votre réflexion quelques propositions basées sur les idées qui émergeront des débats de cette conférence. Laissant les recommandations pour l'action future aux

acteurs en présence - et en premier lieu aux syndicalistes eux-mêmes -, j'ai l'intention de centrer ma synthèse sur les principales lacunes des études consacrées au phénomène syndical dont nous disposons et de suggérer quelques pistes de recherches à suivre dans les années à venir.

Genève, août 1985.

NOTES

1. Conférence internationale du Travail, 71e session (1985): Rapport du Directeur général, partie I, "Les relations professionnelles et le tripartisme: mutations structurelles, dialogue et progrès social" (Genève, BIT, 1985), pp. 20 et s.
2. BIT: Impact des nouvelles technologies: emploi et milieu de travail (Genève, 1982); Commission of the European Communities, Programme of research and action on the development of the employment market: New technology and changes in industrial relations: An Anglo-saxon Comparison, par Jim Conway Memorial Foundation, Cleveland (Bruxelles, St. 81/21); European Trade Union Institute: Negotiating Technological Change (Bruxelles, 1982); Rapport du Directeur général: op. cit., pp. 13 et s.
3. BIT: Evaluation du Programme international pour l'amélioration des conditions et du milieu de travail (PIACT), Conférence internationale du travail, 70e session, 1984, rapport VII; Georges SPYROPOULOS: "Les conditions de travail dans les pays industriels: quel avenir?", Revue internationale du travail, vol. 123, no 4, juillet - août 1984, p. 434.
4. Faute de pouvoir citer les centaines d'études consacrées à la "flexibilité" de l'emploi et du travail, on se bornera à renvoyer le lecteur à deux rapports résumant les points de vue, d'une part, de la Commission des communautés européennes (CEE, Direction générale des affaires économiques et financières: Amélioration de la flexibilité du marché du travail, note à l'attention du Comité de politique économique, Bruxelles, 12.4.1984; et Résumé et conclusions, Bruxelles, 16.7.1984 et, d'autre part, de la Confédération européenne des syndicats (Institut syndical européen: Flexibilité et emplois; mythes et réalités (Bruxelles, mai 1985).
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6. Wil ALBEDA: The future of the Welfare State (European Centre for Work and Society, Collection "Work and Social Change", no 14, Maastricht, 1984); BIT: La sécurité sociale à l'horizon 2000 (Genève, 1984).
7. Jean-Daniel REYNAUD: Les syndicats, les patrons et l'Etat; tendances de la négociation collective en France (Editions économie et humanisme, les éditions ouvrières, collection "Relations sociales", Paris, 1978), pp. 81 et s.
8. Parmi la volumineuse littérature consacrée à cette question, on consultera, à titre d'exemple: Women and Trade Unions in Eleven Industrialised Countries (sous la direction de Alice H. COOK, Val R. LORWIN et Arlene KAPLAN DANIELS (Philadelphie, Temple University Press, 1984).
9. Alain TOURAINÉ, Michel WIEVIORKA, François DUBET: Le mouvement ouvrier (Paris, Fayard, Collection "Mouvements" 2, 1984), pp. 285 et s.

10. Pierre DROUIN: "Le gong du chômage", le Monde (Paris), 24.8.1985.
11. Jean ROUSSELET: L'allergie au travail (Paris, Seuil, 1974).
12. Rapport du Directeur général: op. cit. p. 18. Parmi l'abondante littérature consacrée à l'évolution des attentes et des comportements individuels, on consultera avec profit: Association internationale Futuribles: Développement culturel, modes de vie, projets de société (Paris, 1981); Guy ROUSTANG: Le travail autrement, travail et mode de vie (Paris, Dunod, 1982); Alain TOURAINE et al: op. cit., passim.
13. Cité par Michel NOBLECOURT: "Le malaise de la CFDT", Le Monde (Paris), 13.3.1985.
14. R. UNDY, V. ELLIS, Ms McCARTHY, Am. HAMOS: Change in Trade Unions: the development of UK Unions since the 1960s (Londres, Hutchinson, 1981), pp. 314 et s.
15. BIT: Rapport sur le travail dans le monde, vol. 2 (Genève, 1985), tableau I.1.
16. AFL-CIO: The Changing Situation of Workers and Their Unions. A report by the AFL-CIO Committee on the Evolution of Work (Washington, février 1985), p.5. Sur l'évolution de l'affiliation syndicale aux Etat-Unis, voir également Larry T. ADAMS: "Changing Employment Patterns of Organised Workers", Monthly Labor Review (Washington), vol. 108, no 2, février 1985, pp. 25-51.
17. Alain TOURAINE et al.: op.cit., p. 326.
18. John P. WINDMULLER: "Concentration Trends in Union Structure: An International Comparison", Industrial and Labor Relations Review (Ithaca), vol. 35, no 1, octobre 1981, pp. 43-57. On peut également consulter Solomon BARKIN (sous la direction de-): Worker Militancy and Its Consequences, 2e édition, "The Changing Climate of Western Industrial Relations " (New York, Praeger, 1983), pp. 400 et s.; Robert BUCHANAN: "Mergers in British Trade Unions 1949-79", Industrial Relations Journal, vol. 12, no 3, mai-juin 1981, pp. 40-49.
19. Voir notamment Paul BLYTON et Gill URSELL: "Vertical Recruitment in White-collar Trade Unions: Some causes and consequences", British Journal of Industrial Relations vol. 20 (2), juillet 1982, pp. 186-194; CEE: New Technology and Changes in Industrial Relations, op.cit.; R. HYMAN, R. PRICE: New Working Class? White-Collar Workers and their Organizations: A Reader (Londres, Macmillan, 1983); Russel LANSBURY: "Australian White-Collar Unionism in Transition" Industrial Relations Journal, vol. 10(4), hiver 1979-80, pp. 31-42.
20. Voir, entre autres, rapport du Directeur général, op. cit., pp.20-22; Joseph W. GARBARINO: "Unionism without Unions: The New Industrial Relations?", Industrial Relations, vol. 23 (1), hiver 1984, pp. 40-51; Larry T. ADAMS: op. cit.
21. European Trade Union Institute: The Unionisation of Professional and Managerial Staff in Western Europe (Bruxelles, 1982).

22. On citera, à titre d'exemple: Solomon BARKIN: op.cit., passim; Guy CAIRE: Les Syndicats ouvriers (Paris, Presses Universitaires, Collection "Thémis", 1971). pp. 25 et s.; Patrick DE LAUBIER: Histoire et sociologie du syndicalisme. XIXe - XXe siècles (Paris, Masson, Collection Histoire Contemporaine générale, 1985); Jean-Daniel REYNAUD: op. cit; idem: "Industrial Relations and Political Systems: Some Reflections on the Crisis in Industrial Relations in Western Europe", British Journal of Industrial Relations vol. 18 (1), mars 1980, pp. 1-13; Alain TOURAINE et al: op.cit., passim.
23. Pour un exemple récent de ce débat, voir les articles publiés dans la revue Droit social (Paris) par Gérard ADAM: "L'institutionnalisation des syndicats, esquisse d'une problématique", novembre 1983; idem: "Les syndicats: un pouvoir excessif", no spécial "Les réformes VIII", janvier 1984; et les réponses de quatre syndicalistes dans le no d'avril 1984. Voir également Nigel NICHOLSON: "Mythology, Theory and Research on Union Democracy", Industrial Relations Journal, vol. 9 (4), 1978-79, pp. 32-41.
24. Voir notamment Walther MÜLLER-JENTSCH: "Nouvelles formes de conflit et stabilité institutionnelle. Evolution récente des relations professionnelles en RFA", Sociologie du travail (Paris), 22e année, avril-juin 1980.
25. Voir notamment Rudolf MEIDNER: "Our concept of the Third Way. Some remarks on the Socio-political Tenets of the Swedish Labour Movement", Economic and Industrial Democracy, An International Journal (Londres), vol.1, no 3, août 1980, pp. 343-368; P. GOUREVITCH, A. MARTIN, G. ROSS, C. ALLEN: Unions and Economic Crisis: Britain, West Germany, Sweden (Londres, George Allenand Unwin, 1984).
26. Un récent sondage réalisé en France en février 1985 par "IFOP-Affaires sociales" a conclu que 36 pour cent des salariés ne font confiance à aucun syndicat. Chez les moins de 25 ans ce taux atteint 47 pour cent.
27. Cette opinion est assez répandue en Italie; elle a été défendue notamment par Tiziano TREU dans plusieurs de ses écrits. Voir par exemple "Nuovi termini del potere e del controllo", Progetto (Rome), vol. 1 (4-5), juillet-octobre 1981, pp. 42-46.
28. BIT, Rapport du Directeur général: op. cit, pp. 38-45 et s.; Bulletin d'informations sociales (Genève, BIT), note sur l'évolution des relations professionnelles au Royaume-Uni en 1983, no 3-4, 1984, pp. 478 et s.; CEE: New Technology etc.: op. cit, passim; European Trade Union Institute: Negotiating etc: op. cit, passim; ILO: Collective Bargaining: A response to the Recession in Industrialised Market Economy Countries (Genève, 1984); Everett KASSALOW: "Industrial Democracy and Collective Bargaining: A Comparative View", Labour and Society, vol. 7 (3), juillet-septembre 1982, pp 209-229; Jean-Daniel REYNAUD: Les syndicats etc: op. cit; "Le dialogue social dans la Communauté", 30 Jours d'Europe, juin-juillet 1983, pp. 32-39.
29. Notamment dans la plupart des travaux cités dans la note no 28 ci-dessus.

30. Voir par exemple Yves DELAMOTTE, Shin-ichi TAKEZAWA: Quality of Working Life in International Perspective (Genève, BIT, 1984) et l'abondante littérature citée dans cet ouvrage. Voir également Jean-Daniel REYNAUD: Les syndicats, etc: op. cit., pp. 42 et s.
31. Robert W. COX: Labor and transnational Relations (Genève, Institut international d'études sociales, Reprint no 19, 1971); Georges SPYROPOULOS: "Le rôle de la négociation collective dans l'harmonisation des systèmes sociaux européens", Revue internationale du droit comparé (Paris), vol. 18(1), janvier-mars 1966, pp. 19-55.
32. Karl CASSERINI: "L'internationalisation de la production et les syndicats", Revue économique et sociale, juillet 1967, pp. 189-201; International Federation of Commercial, Clerical, Professional and Technical Employees (FIET): Trade Union Strategies in Multinational Banks (Genève, 1985); J. ROBINSON: Multinationals and Political Control (Aldershot, Gower, 1983)
33. Il est impossible de présenter ici une liste représentative des travaux disponibles. Outre plusieurs des études déjà citées (voir en particulier Jean-Daniel REYNAUD: Les syndicats, op. cit., pp. 167 et s.; Salomon BARKIN: Worker Militancy, etc: op. cit., pp. 424 et s.), on peut consulter les ouvrages ou articles suivants: W. BROWN, K. SISSON: "Industrial Relations in the Next Decade", Industrial Relations Journal, vol. 14 (1), Printemps 1983, pp. 9-21; N.W. CHAMBERLAIN: Forces of Change in Western Europe (Londres, McGraw Hill, 1980); Charles B. CRAVER: "The Future of the American Labor Movement", The Futurist, vol. 17(5), octobre 1983, pp. 70-76; European Trade Union Confederation, 1985 Congress: The Role of Work, Workers and Their Trade Unions in the Society of Tomorrow, document présenté au cinquième Congrès de cette confédération qui s'est tenu à Milan en mai 1985; L.A. PERMAN: "Future of American Unionism", numéro spécial de la revue Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (Philadelphie), no 473, mai 1984, pp. 9-251; Bill FORD, David PLOWMAN: Australian Unions: An Industrial Relations Perspective (Melbourne, Macmillan, 1983), pp. 478-519; David E. GUEST: Les relations professionnelles dans les sociétés post-industrielles, Association internationale des relations professionnelles (AIRP), Sixième Congrès mondial, Kyoto, 28-31 mars 1983, volume spécial; P. LEMATTRE: "Crise ou mutation du syndicalisme français", Futuribles (Paris), 47, septembre 1981, pp. 25-35; M. POOLE, W. BROWN, J. RUBERY, K. SISSON: Industrial Relations in the Future: Trends and Possibilities in Britain over the Next Decade (Londres, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).



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THE INTER-RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE TRADE-UNIONS
AND THE NATIONAL LEVEL WORKERS COMMITTEES WITHIN
THE ISRAEL LABOUR RELATIONS SYSTEM

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The inter-relationships between the trade-unions and the National Level Workers Committees within the Israel labour relations system

By: Joshua Stauber *

PREFACE

The basic theories in industrial relations neglect the differences between trade unions and Workers Committees. Those theories describe both sides as one actor - "The Workers" (Dunlop, 1958).

On the other hand, Friedman (1974) relates to the issue in a sequential model which describes two ideal types of trade unions: "economical" and "political". The first aims to achieve better conditions to its rank and files and the latter emphasizes the need of change in the structure of the society.

The differences between trade unions and Workers Committees in the western world are not so acute as in Israel.

The linkage and the obligations of the local delegate to the trade unions are much stronger in the western world than in Israel, where the members of the Workers Committees are not obliged even to be members of the Histadrut - the General Federation of Trade Unions (Shirom, 1983).

Therefore, Friedman has located the Histadrut, as centralized federation near to the "political" pole and the Workers Committees near the "economical" pole. Shirom (1983) defines the phenomenon as "the doubled structure of workers representation in Israel".

* The study was carried out under the supervision of Professor A. Shirom and submitted as a final assignment towards M.A. degree at the Tel-Aviv University.

THE PARTIES:

a) The Histadrut:

The General Federation of Workers, the Histadrut, is situated in a center of the economic, social, cultural and political life. It is also playing a dominant role in the industrial relations system.

Around 80% of the labour force in Israel is organized in the Histadrut. Besides, the economical organizations of the Histadrut are employing around 15% of the Israeli labour force which produces as much as 20% of the GDP.

The Histadrut leaders saw themselves as partners to the founding of the State and emphasized the fact that the Histadrut is an overall organization and not only a trade union. It took care of national aims like creating employment, absorption, health care, education, culture, national economy and so on. Despite de-centralization tendencies the Histadrut is, still, a centralistic body which tries to consider the needs of the national economy not always considered by trade unions.

Non-formal ties between the leadership of the Histadrut and the ruling (until 1977) labour party strengthened its national orientation. The two formed a political exchange relationship: a moderate industrial policy for participation in the national decision making. The Histadrut was able to act upon national and pragmatic considerations (to meet the needs of the national economy in the long run) even at the expense of the workers well-being in the short run. (Shirom, 1974; Fisher, 1978; Reshef, 1981).

b) The trade unions within the Histadrut:

The central leadership was, in fact, forced to form a specific trade unions (it started to do so only 24 years after its foundation). On one hand, the leaders understood the importance of democratization and de-centralization of the system but on the other hand, they were afraid of tendencies towards too much independence of a stronger trade union which could always try to secede

as, for instance, the secondary school teachers have already done (Tocatly, 1979; Ofek, 1984).

The trade unions also had to cope with the direct demands of the workers. Namely, they had to manoeuvre between "economical" (worker) and "political" (Histadrut) needs.

Ofek (1984) makes a difference between trade unions which have more "political" characteristics and those who have more "economical" ones. Ofek (1984) elaborates Friedman's (1974) model by his claim that also within the Histadrut there are "political" trade unions (mostly on industrial branch level) and "economical" ones (professional and on one employer basis).

c) Workers Committees:

The members of Workers Committees are elected directly by the workers at the plant, unlike the election to the Histadrut leadership which is based on party system. According to the Histadrut instructions the Workers Committee alone cannot be a formal representative. During the 1960's the local Workers Committee started to form a National Level Workers Committee abbreviated as NLWC affiliated to a big national working place. By doing so, they have strengthened their power, militance behaviour and separatistic tendencies from the Histadrut. Those trends enforced the leadership of the Histadrut to deepen the de-centralization and democratization processes (i.e. participation of chair persons of big NLWC's to the central Committee which governs the Histadrut). They have also recognized that the NLWC has a strong influence in the working place while the Histadrut has relatively little influence on the committees (i.e. the increasing numbers of wildcat strikes appointed against the Histadrut (Reuveni, 1974).

THE INTER-RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TRADE UNIONS AND NLWC

Galim
Few studies (Galim and Harel, 1978; Tocatly, 1979) suggested that NLWC have taken (and also gotten) authority (formal and non-formal as well) in fields which in the past were only in the hands of the trade unions. Moreover, it is also difficult for the trade

unions to impose control on the NLWC. The system is voluntary and the control can be made upon good relationships and not by punitive instructions (Marsh, 1963; Goodman and Whittingham, 1969). A well known example is the case of El-Al Airlines in which the Workers Committees repeatedly did not obey the Histadrut orders. But when the company management had decided to fire a few Workers Committee members for breaking the rules, the Histadrut firmly opposed the decision. Reshef (1981) makes a distinction between a weak Workers Committee and a stronger one. The first needs the help of the Histadrut most of the time. The latter needs it in times of economical recession or when it is getting into deadlock in a bargaining procedure. The Workers Committees see the Histadrut as a moderator. Sometimes they would like to be supported by its experience in collective bargaining, its economical resources and organizational ability. Batstone et al (1976) have found those relationships rather co-operative and friendly despite certain conceptual differences. The prevailing opinion about conflicting relationships between militant Workers Committees and trade unions is mostly derived from the unbalanced cover of such disputes by the media. It seems that the two have an ambivalent pattern of relationships. Shirom (1983) defines it as "exchange relationships" in which the two are mutually benefiting from one another. The Workers Committees are enjoying the various services supplied by the Histadrut which, sometimes, even ignores wildcat strikes. Therefore the Workers Committees are trying to co-operate and to act without breaking the rules of the game. As the NLWC became bigger and stronger they needed the Histadrut less than before. The alienation of the NLWC from the Histadrut framework (Shirom, 1971) was defined by Ofek (1984) as "organizational secession tendencies". This development has created a stronger "conflict role" for the trade unions within the Histadrut. Crouch (1979) mentioned those constrains which force the trade unions to manoeuvre between his political aims (to strengthen its national influence by withholding the rank and files from action) and the economical ones (achievements which will strengthen its position among the workers). In Israel the trade union have to meet

the demands and needs of various Workers Committees and different groups of workers and besides it is not permitted to break away from the Histadrut overall policy. The NLWC hardly share such a conflict. Their leaders pointed out that in the first place they are representing the workers who elected them and they have nothing to do with long run considerations. This study examines the inter-relationships between the Union of Civil Servants (UCS), a trade union having "political" characteristics* and the NLWC affiliated with it and having "economical" characteristics. The study hypotheses dealt mainly with the associations between the power of the NLWC and the quality of its working ties with the UCS.

THE RESEARCH SYSTEM

Twenty-three NLWC's were identified in the Civil Service. Five structured questionnaires were filled for each NLWC. (Its two central officers, two UCS officers and a management spokesperson who interacts with the NLWC). All together 115 questionnaires were completed.

FINDINGS

A. Table no.1: Pirson correlations
(According to UCS officers)

	2	3	4	5	6
1	.88*	.60*	.06	.66*	.57*
2	-	.56*	-.12	.75*	.61*
3		-	.20	.60*	.16
4			-	-.06	.03
5				-	.51*
6					-

* P<.05

* A review analyzing the industrial relations system in the Civil Service and characterizing the UCS as "political" trade unions is available upon request.

1. NLWC power
2. NLWC influence on the internal labour relations system
3. UCS influence on the internal labour relations system
4. UCS obligation to the Histadrut
5. UCS satisfaction from its relationships with the NLWC
6. Frequency of mutual connections

As the power of the NLWC increases:

1. the influence of the UCS on the internal labour relations system is also increases.
2. UCS becomes more satisfied with its relationships with the NLWC.
3. The mutual connections become more frequent.

B. Table no.2: Pirson correlations
(According to NLWC officers)

	2	3	4	5	6
1	.81*	.09	.20	-.13	.66*
2	-	.12	.04	.23	.57*
3		-	.54*	.55*	.04
4			-	.56*	.20
5				-	-.11
6					-

* $P < .05$

1. NLWC power
2. NLWC influence on the internal labour relations system
3. UCS influence on the internal labour relations system
4. NLWC obligation to the Histadrut
5. NLWC satisfaction from its relationships with the UCS
6. Frequency of mutual connections

As the influence of the UCS on the internal labour relation system increases:

1. The NLWC becomes more satisfied with its relationships with the UCS.
 2. The NLWC obligation to the Histadrut is also increasing.
 3. It was also found that there is no correlation between the UCS influence and its frequency of connections with the NLWC.
- C. The obligation of the NLWC towards the Histadrut is relatively low (\bar{X} =3.43 out of 7) compared with its obligation towards the UCS (\bar{X} =5.42 out of 7)
- D. Additional findings (by non-structural interviewes):
1. UCS officers often silently agree with informal demands and activities taken by the NLWC. It was explained by the necessity to stick to the overall policy and in the same time not to lose ground among the workers.
 2. Consequently, the NLWC officers tended to make a difference between the UCS as a formal trade union and the UCS officer who mostly shows them sympathy and understanding. As a result, the NLWC tend to co-operate with the UCS officers, often at a non-formal level.
 3. Most of the strikes in the Civil Service were defined formally as "wildcat actions". But both sides officers have clarified that at an informal level most of those actions were supported silently by the UCS officers.

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

The literature reviewed has described the NLWC members as mainly obliged to the workers who elected them and therefore will pay most of their attention to

their "economical" interests. Nevertheless, the UCS is finding itself in a "role conflict" position derived by the need to meet the demands of the Histadrut and various groups of workers as well. As a result, the stronger NLWC tend to act independently. By doing so they are harming the UCS status within the specific organization (Galim and Harel, 1978). The findings have shown that as the NLWC have more power the influence of the UCS also increases. In other words, a stronger NLWC which co-operates with the UCS, helps to strengthen the latter's status within the organization. It seems that the UCS officer would prefer to co-operate with a stronger NLWC (despite the need to cope with independent activities). Therefore, the findings also show positive correlation between NLWC power and UCS satisfaction from the interrelationships. So it comes to the conclusion that the UCS is in an inferior position to the stronger NLWC.

There is a gap between the need of the UCS officer to carry out the Histadrut general policy and the need to co-operate with the stronger NLWC, having special demands and high potential for independent activity. To bridge this gap he creates informal patterns of relationships and always manoeuvres between the two basic needs. UCS has to comply with the situation aiming to prevent a disconnection. Moreover, Friedman (1980) claims that even the Histadrut leadership sometimes complies with such situations. (since 1977, when Labour ceased to be a ruling party, the leadership of the Histadrut adopted few of the attitudes and ways of activities mostly exercised by a trade union with "economical" characteristics).

We suggest to add to Friedman's model (1974) a dynamic dimension. It may fit a trade union such as the UCS which constantly moves between the "political" (in a formal way) and the "economical" (in a informal way) polars of the sequence.

FUTURE PROSPECT

The Histadrut is going to face a decline in its power. More workers will prefer to leave the organization seeing it as out of time and not capable to meet their needs (especially in the high-tech industries which are

growing rapidly in Israel). Many others will identify themselves not with the Histadrut and its ideology but with a trade union which has to deal with the direct "economical" needs of a particular group of workers. Those tendencies will enforce the trade union to adopt its own separate policy aiming to meet those demands and become less dependent on the Histadrut. The latter also will give them more autonomy if it does not want to face growing secession tendencies and increasing dissatisfaction among trade unions and Workers Committees leaders.

Consequently, there are researchers (Lutenberg, 1978) who suggest that the system should, immediately, be decentralized before it is too late. We suggest that democratization measures be taken but gradually and in a moderate way, especially in the complex industrial relations system in the Civil Service. The "exchange relations" enables the system to keep going on while the UCS appears as a responsible and compromising factor among the NLWC and the managements as well. If the power of the UCS is taken from it, the militant NLWC will directly confront the public employer.

In summary, the Histadrut will consider its actions in a more "economical" way and will allocate more authority to trade unions and Workers Committees. In general, one may suggest that there is a comprehensive shift of the industrial relations system towards the "economical" polar. The trade unions seem to become another pressure group within the social life, and is no longer an ideological labour movement. Nowadays only the Workers Committees and part of the trade unions are purely "economical" oriented, and they are going to lead the Israel industrial relations system unless the Histadrut is able to lead and control the change. The Histadrut leadership is fully aware of the mentioned problem and it is ready to take far-reaching steps to meet the challenge. Although, it is rather difficult to change ways of thinking and organizational frameworks in such a big and complex multi-organization.

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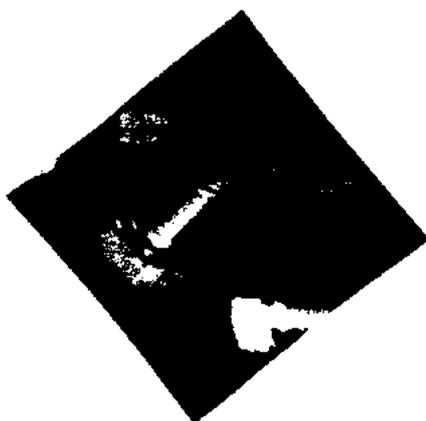
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CHANGES IN THE ROLE OF THE TRADE UNIONS
IN HUNGARY, EFFECTS OF CHANGES IN THE
SYSTEM OF ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT AND
IN THE ORGANISATIONS STRUCTURE
IN INDUSTRY.

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CHANGES IN THE ROLE OF THE TRADE UNIONS IN HUNGARY:
EFFECTS OF CHANGES IN THE SYSTEM OF ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT
AND IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF INDUSTRY

The aim of this paper is to analyse past trends and future prospects on the role of Hungarian trade unions.

As to the past trends, three phases can be distinguished within the past forty years dealt with here. The first period, from 1947 to 1967, was characterized by the centralized system of economic control and management; in this system the role of trade unions was to formulate opinion, to present proposals and, first of all, to defend workers' interests, mainly those of individual workers. The second phase, beginning in 1968, was influenced first of all by the new economic mechanism, by the decentralization of control and management, and by the growing independence of the enterprises. The role of trade unions increased considerably in this system. Measures influencing workers' remuneration and working conditions, or prejudicing the interests of a greater group of workers could not and cannot even now be taken without the consent of trade unions. The third phase started in the early eighties with the new wave of economic reforms. The main aim of this new reforms is to rely to an even greater extent on market forces and to alter the organizational structure of industry. This

means the abolition of monopolies, the increase in the number of firms and of semi-independent organizational units, and the introduction of a great variety of organizational forms.

These later changes assume and thus wish to promote an increase in the role of trade unions and the community of workers. Starting from the so-called right of consent introduced at the time of the first wave of reforms and to be explained later on a definite progress can be observed - following the second wave of reform - towards the workers' effective cooperation in and responsibility for management, i.e. towards - to use the expression common in Western literature - industrial democracy. This change, however, raises some questions as to the future: the greater participation of the workers and of their organizations and representatives aims on the one hand at defending and preserving their own direct and immediate interests, and on the other hand at a greater role in the management of the firm where they are employed. This double effort is not free from problems and conflicts, and the final outcome cannot yet be foreseen.

The changes to be described here have always been induced by the inherent force of economic changes but theoretical debates have also played an important role. We shall try to point in the following to both of these factors. The first changes were always introduced in the system of economic management and in the organizational structure of industry, and these changes were only followed by the changes in the role of trade unions. We shall describe the events in the same order. Finally, all these changes influence and are also influenced by the distribution of

power within society; we shall also point shortly to these aspects.

Although this paper deals first of all with the changes in the role of trade unions that were taking place in the past forty years and are to be expected in the future it would be misleading not to cite the constant elements of the picture. The economic system has been and remains built on the principle of state property; the greatest part of workers and employees are trade union members; the trade unions are participating in the political processes and have a share in the political power; the rights of the trade unions are established by the constitution and the law; the conflicts of interests are expected to be solved by arbitrage and cooperation; and finally the trade unions are not only interested in safeguarding the workers' interests in the narrower sense but also in promoting the general social and political development of the country. It must also be emphasized that the authors of the present paper are not trade union representatives but economists interested in the reform of the system of economic control and management and who are therefore emphasizing first of all the economic and systemic aspects of the problem.

In the first section we shall describe the centralized system of economic management and the role of trade unions at its time. In the second and third sections we shall deal with the first wave of reforms and its effects on the trade unions' functions, while the last and most voluminous two sections will deal with the second wave of reforms and the ensuing changes in the role of trade unions and of the other institutions representing workers' interests.

*The Centralized System of Economic Management
and the Role of Trade Unions in Its Time*

The centralized system of economic management can only be described here in a very summary way. It was introduced in Hungary at the end of the 40's within a very short time, and its main features were similar to those of the economy of the Soviet Union and of the other European socialist countries. The introduction of this system, as it is generally known, was motivated, among others, by the relative economic backwardness and by the need of rapid economic development and industrialization of these countries. The most important elements of this system were the centralization of economic decisions, the central allocation of resources, and a strict central control of firms.

The firms executed in this system central decisions and instructions, and their sphere of authority covered only the choice of the means used to fulfil the targets; in fact even this choice of the means was greatly restricted by various regulations. The production plan was prescribed

by the centre, and firms could only sell their own products or buy the necessary materials on the basis of central allotments. This system of management led directly to the decrease of the number of enterprises because, of course, central planning was easier if the number of enterprises was smaller. All the decisions within the enterprise were taken by the enterprises director on the basis of the so-called principle of one-man responsibility what means that the director made the decisions himself within the bounds determined by the very detailed central orders.

The system of wage determination was also strictly centralized. Different kinds of labour were categorized on the basis of their so-called complexity, and the wage rates pertaining to the individual categories were also centrally defined. The wages fund was also centrally allocated and one of the most important elements of central planning was the balance of the incomes and the expenditures of the population that was supposed to ensure equilibrium on the consumer goods market. The firms could ensure consistency between the level of production and wages payed out by the extension of the piece-wage system and by the modification of time norms of certain tasks.

As a result the power structure pertaining to this system was also strictly centralized. The director was appointed and relieved of his office by the ministries; it was also the ministries who could give instructions as to the level and composition of production and as to the details regarding the fulfilment of production plan. The role of trade unions could only be relatively limited in this system; trade unions and workers' communities had only

the right to formulate their opinion and to present their proposals with respect to problems concerning the activity of the enterprise as a whole. The trade unions' duty was at the same time the representation of the interest of the workers, and it was also the trade union that administered welfare funds. This system corresponded to the principle of the absolute predominance of global social interests; a principle which left only an insignificant role to partial interests, and which - in the case of a conflict of interests - emphasized the primacy of the interests of the society as a whole.

The First Wave of Reforms

The reform of the Hungarian system of economic management started in many respect already in 1957, but the most decisive step was only taken with the 1st January 1968. We may not be too far from truth by saying that some changes in the economic situation gave the crucial impulse to the introduction of the reform. The growth rate was slowing down in the mid-sixties, and also the rate of increase of labour productivity became moderate. The investment per unit of output, i.e. the incremental capital-output ratio was permanently increasing. The belief became general that it became impossible to ensure further growth by directing peasants into industry because these labour force reserves had become exhausted, or, simultaneously, by increasing the capital stock in a quantitatively sense, more or less on the same technological level. It became clear that adjustment to domestic and foreign demand and to changing market conditions, an acceleration of technological development,

and greater economic flexibility in general was needed. There was also a general agreement that these aims could only be achieved by expanding the independence of firms.

A few words can only be devoted to the theoretical aspects of this first wave of reforms. Many publications argued that the strictly centralized form of economic decision-making is not the only possible form of the socialist economic system, and that a greater role of the markets and of commodity production is compatible with socialism or can even promote better the attainment of socialist ideals. This way of thinking is very close to the Lange-Lerner thesis well known in Western economic literature.

The essence of the changes introduced in 1968 was the abolition of the so-called systems of plan specification and of the system of technical-material supply. According to the system of plan specification the plan of all the individual units of the economy constitute a hierarchical system. The production plan of the national economy as a whole is equivalent to the sum of those of the separate ministries, while the production plans of the ministries are equivalent to the sum of those of the enterprises under their control. In the same way, the employment and wages fund plans of the separate firms add up the total available labour force and the total wages fund and so forth.

The system of technical-material supply is closely ^{of} connected to this system hierarchical planning. On the one hand it comprises thousands of material balances in physical units, where the supply side contains production and imports, and the demand side the domestic demand and exports, and where the two sides must be in equilibrium. On the other

hand, this system governs trade in such a sense that firms may only sell and purchase if they have the necessary allotments made by the government instances on the basis of these material balances. It is therefore centrally determined to whom a certain firm can sell a certain product, and from whom another firm can buy it. Because of practical reasons this system did not work exactly in this way in every detail but the essence is well expressed by this description.

The reform introduced in Hungary with the 1st January, 1968, abolished these two fundamental elements of the classical system of economic planning and management. Since this time Hungarian firms do not have centrally approved production plans: they can define their production plan, the quantity and composition of their production themselves. The system of technical-material supply was abolished at the same time: enterprises can sell their products to whom they wish and buy their material inputs from whom they wish. Right after the introduction of the new system and even in the following longer period the trade channels were still officially prescribed for the greatest part of trade: wholesale firms had a certain kind of monopoly in many cases, but the second wave of reforms abolished most of these restrictions.

These really revolutionary changes could be introduced from one day to the other without any greater difficulty. The planners accumulated stocks of materials which were considered to be in short supply, and these stocks proved to be adequate at the time of the introduction of the new system. The two most important steps dealt with just now were followed by others, such as the introduction of free

prices for many products and the liberalization of foreign trade. This system worked undisturbed and led to an increase of production and productivity; certain, though only temporarily restrictions were introduced at the time of difficulties following the second oil-price hike and the credit crisis.

This change did not lead to any modification in the organizational structure of industry and trade - it was rather the further centralization of the organizational structure introduced just before 1968 that made the 1968 reforms possible. In the middle of the 60s, i.e. immediately before the introduction of the reform, a great wave of centralization took place in the Hungarian industry. Great enterprises were formed by fusing several formerly independent firms, and so-called trusts were formed which amalgamated in many cases whole industrial branches into a single horizontally integrated trust - almost into a single enterprise. The independence of firms belonging to a trust was very limited: the trust could reallocate the capital equipment and profits of the enterprises under its control. This organizational structure was in obvious conflict with the ideals of the reform, as market relations can hardly prevail and competition can hardly exist in an industry that consists of a single firm. Nevertheless, this system ensured a gradual, flexible transition from the centralized to the decentralized system.

There were in this time no fundamental changes within the firms. The director's one-man responsibility remained the fundamental principle in the management of firms. In a theoretical sense all the decisions had to be taken by the director; it was only the director who could take decisions;

if lower-level managers of a firm were in fact able to take decisions they could only do so on the delegated authority of the director.

The directors' subordination to the ministries remained also in force. They were appointed and relieved of their duties by the ministries also in this time. The remuneration and promotion of the directors remained also in the competence of the same authorities. The dependence of managers and thus of firms persisted therefore in actual practice, even if in a theoretical sense they were completely independent as to the formation of their production plan and business policy. It can again be argued that it was just this situation that made a smooth transition to the new system possible, but it is again doubtless that this situation was in conflict with the very spirit of the new economic mechanism which aimed at increasing the independence of the firms and the role of market forces as much as possible.

No matter how limited the independence of the directors was even after 1968, the 1968 reform introduced fundamental changes in the power relations within the society. The power of directors - in spite of all restrictions - definitely increased in their relationship with the ministries, i.e. the superior authorities, with other firms, i.e. horizontally, and also within the firm. The dependence on the superior authorities definitely decreased, even if some important elements of this dependence survived. The horizontal power position definitely improved, as the firms freed from the system of technical-material supply could buy and sell or could make or refuse a contract as they wished etc. Finally,

the directors' power of disposing within the firm also increased as several restrictions were released what increased the directors' possibilities of free disposal. The main beneficiaries of the change were therefore the managers or rather the enterprise directors - a rather narrow group, after all, as the number of firms did not reach one thousand within the whole manufacturing and mining, and, in addition, the independence of firms belonging to trusts was very limited. The recognition of this problem might have played a great part in the extension of the rights of trade union representatives.

The Trade Unions after the First Wave of Reforms

The introduction and growing importance of the so-called right of consent of trade unions and of shop stewards was the first step aimed at solving this problem. The most important relevant regulations appeared already in the law II. of 1967, the Labour Code, but a longer period had to elapse till what had been written there could really influence or rather determine events. Several trade union resolutions were needed for this, the most important of them being the resolution adopted at the 21st Trade Union Congress in 1973 which dealt with the enforcement of the Labour Code, i.e. with a more resolute assertion of the rights incorporated in it. In 1976 a further resolution was passed concerning the right of industrial trade unions to formulate their opinion about the decisions of the ministries. This means that in certain specific cases the ministries are obliged to ask the opinion of the competent trade union.

The second part of Labour Law deals in a detailed form with the workers' participation in the management of the firm. It proclaims that "the community of workers has the right to formulate opinion on and to present proposals for solving significant problems pertaining to the competence of enterprise management and affecting interests of the community of workers". In certain specific cases this community has even the right to take decisions and to control their fulfilment. The right of decisionmaking and control extends, however, only to welfare questions and to problems of similar character. As to the management of the enterprises the community of workers only retained its right to formulate opinion and to present proposals - a right that existed already in the system of centralized management described earlier.

In actual practice those paragraphs of the Labour Law were the most important which stated that the trade union or its representative had the right of consent in problems concerning the wages, remuneration and social benefits of workers. At the beginning the mere wording of this "right of consent" was a great problem in the everyday practice as it was not clear enough what would happen in case of lack of consent. After a rapid development it became clear that no decisions concerning wages, remuneration, employment and working conditions can be reached without the consent of trade unions or at the same time without the agreement of the workers' community because the trade union representative must ask and follow the opinion of his constituents.

To sum up what has been told above, the right of consent is not a right of veto, but a right of active participation in decision-making. This arrangement introduces to the enterprise and even workshop level the consensus policy applied by the Hungarian government on a national level with undeniable success since decades. To speak something also of the actual practice, and although this is not completely conform to the accepted principles, in case of wage setting and similar matters management usually tries to promote efficiency and differentiation according to performance, while the trade union representations try to promote social aspects and equality but a compromise acceptable to both parties almost always emerges. In theory, if no compromise can be attained at a lower level, the higher level representatives of management and trade unions have to discuss the problem and to arrive at a consensus, but this procedure is very rarely used in actual practice. Consensus can almost always be attained at the workshop or enterprise level, and workers' wishes and interests can be asserted, even if the power position of the director or of the other managers is usually stronger than that of the trade union representatives.

Disregarding here some other functions of trade unions, such as the protection of individual workers' interests and the management and distribution of welfare funds, we are going to discuss the right of veto of trade union representatives. There is namely a legal provision that trade union representatives may interpose their veto against the director's decisions regarding working conditions of individuals, of groups of workers or of the whole community. Such veto has

a delaying force: the measures of the director cannot be carried through before an inquiry and decision of the competent authority. Such a right of veto can only be exercised, however, in case of problems regarding employment and working conditions and not in case of dissent with respect to problems of business and management. Trade unions have therefore ample possibilities to protect the interests of workers; it seems impossible to discuss here in more detail the further legal provisions such as their possibility to initiate inquiries and other legal proceedings, and their right to be consulted by the management before taking measures influencing the employment and working conditions of greater groups of workers.

Even this short summary shows in a convincing way that the first wave of reforms led to a very definite extension of the rights of trade unions and thus of workers. All these rights dealt with here concern, however, the protection of workers' interests but - apart from formulating opinions and making proposals - do not give any opportunity to take part in decisions regarding business and management. The changes in progress aim at the creation of such possibilities, and are directly connected with the second wave of reforms.

The Second Wave of Reforms

The second wave of reforms, in progress now, and aiming at the expansion of democracy, was also preceded by serious economic problems. Planners did not recognise in time that - after the first oil crisis - the growth process slowed down for a longer time and all over the world, and tried to maintain the growth and welfare policy targets set previously, at the time of rapid world-wide economic expansion. The Hungarian economy has therefore maintained its previous growth rate and the standard of living could develop until the end of 1978 just as it did previously, but - owing to the deterioration of the terms of trade - this could only be financed by foreign credits. It was only in and after 1979 that the economy shifted to a new and much slower growth path. From this time it became even more obvious that world market prices must play a greater role even in the domestic economy, and that it is only by a greater independence of the enterprises and by their more direct adaptation to international standards that such circumstances can be created that allow at least the approximation of the previous growth rates.

It has also been generally accepted that under the new and more difficult conditions not only a further increase in the role of markets and a greater independence of firms is needed, but also a greater participation of the workers in the firms' affairs. Only a greater role of the markets can ensure that firms feel the changes in world market prices and conditions immediately, and shape their business policy accordingly. This can only be attained if the inde-

dependence of the firms increases, and if the incomes of workers and managers mainly depends on the firms' success on the markets. It is also necessary that workers have a wider knowledge about the affairs and the position of the firms, and participate in their shaping to greater extent. It should be made obvious that their incomes and private fortunes depend on the income and success of the enterprises; only such a situation can lead to higher productivity and creativity. Finally, the deteriorating position of the budget renders the increase of welfare expenses financed from the central budget or even their maintenance increasingly difficult. This makes it inevitable that enterprises take upon themselves a greater part of welfare expenses what means that the interconnection between the firms' results and the individual welfare becomes even closer. The state of the economy leads therefore to some form of industrial democracy.

The increase of the independence of and democracy within firms was preceded by a serious theoretical debates. In this debates a great role was plaid by the idea that the owners' functions must be clearly distinguished from the functions of the managers and also from the functions of the state administration. According to this opinion the owners' function is to formulate the long-term strategy of the firm and the appointment of the managers, the managers' function is to lead the day-to-day business of the firms, and the state administration's function is the control of compliance with the law and the safeguarding of general national interest. It was easy to realize that the owners'

functions were not appropriately fulfilled in the present system. This role ought to have been fulfilled by the ministries, but, on one hand, their way of thinking was necessarily that of government agencies and not of proprietors, and, on the other hand, they were always overburdened with day-to-day work. As a result, long-term interest in increasing the value of property, characteristic of the way of thinking of proprietors, was lost, and the current short-term problems came into the centre. Such a way of thinking characterizes also the enterprise managers.

The first proposal to solve this problem was to form separate agencies to exercise the function of owners. These agencies would have worked on a line similar to some Western foundations, i.e. their aim would have been to administer a part of the property owned by the state with a view of ensuring its greatest profitability but without entering directly in any business activity apart from obtaining and exercising the right of control over some enterprises. These agencies would therefore be entitled to redistribute wealth between the enterprises and would be led solely by profit considerations. They would therefore have followed neither sectoral nor territorial principles.

The most important difficulty of the idea was - and this led to the rejection of this plan - that this system did nothing to solve the social problems related to the inducement to higher efficiency. The leaders of these institutions administering public property would not have been owners but officials, who would have inevitably been exposed to political pressures and who would have been

hardly able to support risky ventures. What is even more important, this system would not have created the real interest in increasing output and efficiency in the workers of the individual enterprises. To increase the profit or property of a distant and practically unknown property-administering agency is not an aim in which the workers' community could be interested. This system cannot therefore be expected to make a wider circle of workers interested in and responsible for the lot of their enterprise,

Owing to these considerations it has been decided that the right to the administration of the state property, i.e. the owners' rights must in most cases be given to the community of workers and employees of enterprises. The property remains therefore in the hand of the state, i.e. the principle of state ownership is maintained, but the state cedes the right of administration of enterprise property - permanently and irreversibly - to the community of workers and employees of the enterprise. This is how this community can be induced to feel that their financial conditions depend on their own activity, and that they must be interested in promoting the success of their enterprise. In this case the functions of the owners, of the managers, and of the state administration can also be separated properly.

These principles, however, could not be extended in the same way to the total sphere of all firms. There types of enterprises had to be distinguished: state enterprises led by the enterprise council; state enterprises led by the members' assembly, and state enterprises under direct government control. The role of the so-called trusts had

to be modified as well, and, of course, the institution of cooperatives has been maintained. We are going to deal with all these topics in turn, apart from the cooperatives where no change has occurred.

The most important new form is the state enterprise directed by the enterprise council. The enterprise council comprises the representatives of the management and the elected delegates of the workers. The director is always a member of the council. The representatives of management consist of the leaders of the organizational units and of other executives delegated by the director, while the delegates of the workers are elected by the assembly of workers or by the assemblies of the individual organizational units. The enterprise council is the organ of the enterprise which makes strategic decisions and which - preserving the principle of the state property and therefore within the scope determined by the state - exercises the most important rights with respect to operating and maintaining state property. This function involves that the council elects the director. The direction of the day-to-day business of the enterprise is the right and duty of the director.

The number of council members and the proportions of representation are determined by the organizational and operational statutes of the enterprise, and these statutes are established by the enterprise itself. There are, nevertheless, some general rules, and the most important of them is that the number of worker's delegates cannot be less than half of all council members. There are some other rules

relating to the proportions of the members delegated from the enterprise management and reducing the director's capability to determine the composition of the council. Finally, the mandate of the delegates elected by the workers is valid for a definite period, usually five years; re-election is possible. The elected delegates must render account to their electors and may be recalled what gives some guarantee that they really represent workers' interests.

The sphere of the council's authority comprises all the problems of strategic importance. Into this sphere belongs

- the determination of the medium-term, i.e. five-year, and the short-term, i.e. annual plan of the enterprise;
- the approval of the yearly balance sheets and of the profit and loss accounts of the enterprise;
- considerable modification of the sphere of operation of the enterprise;
- important decisions concerning investments and loans, the floating of bonds; and the transfer or acquisition of organizational units, money and capital equipment;
- decisions on the turning organizational units of the enterprise into an independent enterprises, on creating a subsidiaries, and on establishing closer cooperation with other enterprises;
- approval of the organizational and operational statutes, and
 - within their framework - establishment of independent organizational units;
- major decisions concerning employment;

- determination of the principles regulating income distribution within the enterprise;
- election and discharge of the director; evaluation and general control of his work;
- transfer of the general management of the enterprise to the members' or to the delegates' meeting, i.e. decision on transposing the enterprise into the second group of enterprises to be dealt with later on;
- decisions on de-merger and merger, and decisions on other problems where the authority of the council is established by the law.

We have to deal with the rules governing the election of enterprise managers in more detail. The enterprise manager is elected and relieved of his duties by the enterprise council by secret ballot and with a two thirds majority. This does not mean, however, that the election of the director pertains completely into the sphere of authority of the enterprise council: to the election and discharge of the director the previous consent of the founder - in most cases a state agency - is needed. The actual process of election starts with an open competition published in the journals, and directors are elected in most cases for five year, with the possibility of reelection. Requirements must be defined in the tender, and the evaluations of the director's work must be based on these stated requirements.

The sphere of authority and the duties of the enterprise council were discussed here in a detailed form, in

many cases quoting verbatim the rules. It can be seen from what has been written here that decisions of really strategic importance belong to the sphere of authority of the councils, at least the half of whose members are elected representatives of the workers and employees. It can also be seen that the director is independent in his concrete, day-to-day decisions, so he is not subordinated to the council with respect to the actual, day-to-day management of the enterprise. His independence is consolidated also by the fact that he is elected for five years, that a two thirds majority is needed for his discharge, and that he can be relieved of his duties - apart from cases defined by law - if he does not meet the requirements defined when he was engaged.

This system is thus a compromise and the result is that workers and employees, the professional managers of the enterprise, and the founders, in most cases state agencies have all their say in management, and that a certain reconciliation and compromise of interests must be attained. We shall deal with this very important question, the problem of the power relations and interest conflicts later on.

The second group of enterprises in the state enterprise led by the general assembly or the delegates' meeting. The property managed by these enterprises is still state property and this is what distinguishes the state enterprises belonging to this group from the cooperatives, while the technique of management is similar to that of the cooperatives; the enterprise is directed by the general

assembly or the delegates' meeting. In the first case all workers and employees, in the second case only elected representatives of the workers and employees take part at the general assembly or at the delegates' meeting. The choice between the two alternatives obviously depends on the number of workers or the number of the units within, and the territorial division of the enterprise.

What has been told before involves that smaller enterprises belong to this circle where the community of workers can have a direct control over the affairs of the enterprise. In the case of these enterprises there exists also a management comprising fewer members than the general assembly; the management and the director are elected by the general assembly. The fundamental decisions belong to the sphere of authority of the general assembly while the smaller decisions to that of the management; the day-to-day business is led by the director.

This means that the management and the director depend in this case on the general assembly or on the delegates' meeting to a greater extent than the directors of the state enterprises led by an enterprise council, and the director has a smaller influence on the composition of the various bodies than in the case of enterprises controlled by the enterprise council. This is supported by considerations that in the cases of these smaller enterprises efficiency may be better promoted and public interest may not be violated if the control of the enterprise is practically in the hand

of the community of workers and if the management of the enterprise corresponds in its main lines to that of the cooperatives.

Let us now turn to the last group of enterprises, those under direct administrative control of the government. To this sphere belong local government enterprises and public utilities, further the firms under the control of armed forces, and finally the enterprises dealing with the production and processing of primary energy and of raw materials of fundamental importance. The management of these enterprises corresponds essentially to the old system. The enterprise is directed by the director and the director is appointed by the founder - mainly a central or local government agency. A board of directors can be formed also here but its members are mainly the executives of the enterprise. To compare the importance of the various groups of enterprises dealt with here, about 60 p.c. of them pertain to the group directed by an enterprise council, and about 20 p.c. to the other two groups each.

It seems necessary to deal with the so-called trusts, at least in short. In the old system trusts had a dominant position as compared with the enterprises belonging to them; they could regroup income and resources among the enterprises freely. In the new system there is a possibility for forming trusts of limited powers. In such a case the general manager is flanked by a board of directors comprising the directors of the enterprises belonging to the trust, and decisions of primary importance can only be made by this

board of directors. This means that enterprises are not agencies of the trust in this system but the trust is the agency of the enterprises, fulfilling the duty of co-ordination and reconciliation of interests, but by no means directing the enterprises as its subordinates.

From the aspect of theoretical economics the main problem of the new system is certainly system the redistribution of capital among enterprises. Giving the capital into the hands of the community of workers of an enterprise makes the enterprise structure more inflexible and the flow of capital between different enterprises more difficult. The enterprises organized in such a way tend to use their savings themselves. This leads very obviously to the problem of the optimal allocation of resources. An enterprise relatively well endowed with capital may be in a position to invest even if demand is not expanding for his products while another enterprise less well endowed with capital may not find the additional means to invest even if its markets are expanding. Various measures to promote capital transfer between enterprises, first of all the decentralization of the banking system aim at solving this problem. There is no space for a detailed discussion of these problems here but it is obvious that the leaders of the Hungarian economic reform process are aware of this problem and try to solve it.

This development of the management and control of the enterprises goes hand in hand with an increase in the number of enterprises. In the previous section it has already been indicated that the efficiency of the first wave of

reforms and the increase in the role of market conditions was greatly limited because the number of enterprises did not change; in fact it decreased somewhat in the years after 1968 as certain dynamic companies - using their power position - were able to incorporate smaller enterprises. Today, however, there is a definite tendency and effort to increase the number of enterprises and to create in such a way the conditions of real competition.

The efforts aimed at increasing the number of enterprises are many-sided. On the one hand trusts were dissolved. The trusts - mainly in the light and food industries - concentrated whole branches practically into a single centrally directed enterprise because the independence of the firms pertaining to a trust was so limited that they were more or less like workshops and not enterprises. Under such circumstances it was fairly obvious that the workers of an enterprise under the control of a trust could hardly feel that their future and financial welfare was in their own hands and that they really had some influence on the affairs of their enterprise. After dissolving these trusts and forming really independent enterprises the situation is obviously different.

There is, apart from this, nearly unlimited possibility for different enterprises to start joint ventures and to found subsidiaries. In the first case several enterprises found for some given economic purpose one new enterprise

depending on all of them, while in the latter case certain existing or recently formed sections of certain existing enterprises obtain limited independence. Finally, workshops of the existing enterprises have the opportunity to initiate their disengagement from their enterprises and the formation of a new enterprise of their own. Scores of enterprises have availed themselves of this possibility.

Finally we have to deal in short with the system of wages control as this shows the importance of recent changes. We can only deal very briefly with this very complicated problem; a satisfactory description needs at least another paper. But as trade unions - not surprisingly - are interested in wages we cannot omit a short analysis.

The rigid central control of wages typical of the centralized system of economic management was replaced by the control of average wages already at the beginning of the first wave of reforms, i.e. from 1957. Even this new system remained very rigid and was in obvious conflict with the requirements of efficiency as the enterprise with above-average increase in productivity could not attain above-average increase in wages. Nevertheless, the system proved to be very important because it helped to avoid a wage-price spiral.

The 1968 system introduced profit-sharing and the dependence of wages on enterprise profits. This system, in its original form, strictly separated the two parts of after tax profits: the development fund and the profit sharing fund. The fundamental consideration leading to this

solution was that enterprises - under the pressure of the community of workers and owing also to the right of consent ensured to the representatives of workers just at that time - will be inclined to neglect development, and to distribute too great a part of profits as profit shares. Excessively high level of profit shares paid was also made impossible by progressive taxes of prohibitive character.

This solution of the problem led to certain economic problems, and was not conform to the efforts aiming at greater and increasing independence of enterprises. The system was therefore modified and enterprises can freely decide now which part of profits is used to increase investments and personal incomes, respectively. The system of taxation obviously influences this decision. even now but the right of decision belongs to the enterprises. Thus the community of workers through their elected representatives has the possibility - although this possibility is limited by the central authorities through defining the rules of profit taxation - to influence the decisions on the use of profits. It is perhaps here that it can be shown in the most obvious way how the role and responsibility of the members of the enterprise council, elected by the workers, and the role and responsibility of the trade union representatives, elected also by the workers, may be different in the future. To this we need to discuss here the latest Hungarian discussions regarding the interest structure within an enterprise, in fact interest relations in general.

The Role of Worker's Representatives after the Second Wave of Reforms

We can deal with the role of trade unions under the new circumstances - i.e. with the main topic of this lecture - only in this short concluding section. First we are going to survey in short the factors influencing the role of trade unions and then we shall briefly describe our assumptions as to their future role. It must be emphasized that we are expounding here our personal views while in the previous sections we were describing actual facts and events mostly without any comments and views of our own.

The situation is determined by the fact that the two waves of reforms of economic control and management - as described in some detail previously - have given a greater role to two types of workers' representatives. The first wave - by giving the right of consent and in some cases the right of veto - increased the role of trade unions in the defence of worker's interests, while the second wave - by creating state enterprises directed either by enterprise councils or by the general assembly of employees or the delegates' meeting - gave the right to the representatives of workers to participate in the direction of enterprises. This second group of representatives has not taken over any function from the trade unions - its functions were formerly exercised by the enterprise directors and in most cases by the ministries - nevertheless, this new form of workers' representation cannot be

without any effect on the role of the trade unions. The future role of trade unions will depend on the relative importance and power position of these two strata representing workers' interests - at least partly and in a certain sense.

It is quite clear that the new system created a much more complicated interest structure than the previous one. On the one hand the interests of enterprise workers definitely depend on the position of the enterprise as such, and these interests are represented - let us focus this analysis on the most typical form of enterprises, i.e. on the enterprises led by an enterprise council - by the elected members of this council. The primary interest here is the prosperity of the whole enterprise. In the same time the direct interests of the workers are represented by the trade unions. There may be perhaps a certain tendency that the first group of interests will be of a somewhat more long-term character than the second.

Under such circumstances there may be a difference between direct worker interests represented first of all by the trade unions and enterprise interests represented also by the members of the enterprise who were elected by the workers. As it has been shown previously, the enterprises are now free to decide which part of the profits is to be invested and which part is to be paid out in the form of profit shares. It may be assumed that members of the enterprise councils will be perhaps more inclined to take into consideration long-term enterprise interests and the need to increase the capital of the firm while trade union representatives may perhaps be more interested in wages, although all this is mere guesswork.

The interest structure is made even more complicated by the fact that the direct interests of the managers and of the professional executives of the enterprise also have a definite role. The managers' attachment to the enterprise may be in many cases of a more short-term or even temporary character than that of the majority of workers. The successful manager can obtain a higher position in a bigger enterprise and can rise to higher position along the social ladder of managers or can obtain a leading position in the state administration. In the case of many enterprises the managers are attached to the enterprise for their whole life, but this is not necessary. At the same time many workers are attached to an enterprise for their whole life. This is especially true in smaller towns or villages, where there are only one or two enterprises. As a result, the interests of the executives are not identical with those of the community of workers and it cannot even be told that they are better representing the long-term interests of the enterprise than the elected members of the council.

The complexity of this situation is also increased by the actual power positions. It is obvious that - at least at the beginning - the power position of the directors and of the professional executives is usually stronger than either that of the representatives of trade unions or that of the worker representatives of the enterprise council. This follows directly from the deeper knowledge of details and the wider

role in the everyday decisions. But it is also true that a few years after the introduction of the right of consent the trade union representatives could greatly strengthen their position and were able to obtain a very important role in decisionmaking regarding wages, remunerations, benefits and working conditions. It is therefore highly probable that it will not take a too long time until the elected members of the enterprise council can strengthen their role and develop their real power.

It must also be mentioned that the trade unions have taken an active part in the formation of enterprise councils. As the participation of workers in enterprise councils is a new phenomenon, and as it takes a certain time until it fully develops, it is obvious that the already existing forms of workers' representation must play here a role at least at the beginning - the more so as trade union representatives were always promoting the reform of the system of economic control and management. It is also possible that certain elected members of the enterprise council are trade union officials, and thus they have to represent two different - but, of course, not greatly or fundamentally different - interests at the same time. It is also true that trade union representatives are non-voting members of the enterprise council, and, as a result, they must also represent workers' interest duly considering at the same time the interests of the enterprise as such.

The complexity of this situation made a certain codification necessary. This was made by the 1982. resolution of the Council of Ministers and the Presidium of the Trade Unions Congress on the questions of industrial democracy. This resolution described again the rights of the community of workers and their represen-

tatives and ensured the conditions of their actual realization but introduced no fundamental changes in the concepts already described.

However unambiguous the division of roles between the two kind of workers' representation in principle is, the final and actual division of roles depends also on further developments.

(The outcome depends also on the actual power position the workers' representatives in the enterprise councils can attain. If they can strengthen their position and if they can obtain a decisive role in strategic decisions, it will be mainly they who promote democratism in the life of Hungarian enterprises. But if they cannot strengthen their actual position as compared with the enterprise director and the professional executives, the representation of workers' interests will remain primarily in the hand of the trade unions.

It is possible or even probable that a different situation will emerge in the state enterprises directed by enterprise councils and in those directed by the general assembly of workers or by a delegates' meeting, respectively. In the latter case, as these enterprises are smaller, workers can follow the affairs better and influence them more directly. The workers' representatives can be expected to obtain a really decisive role here soon. This may lead to a relatively smaller role of trade unions here, because in case of such enterprises it is very evident that the whole community has to produce what can be distributed, and it is also very evident that there is a close connection between the activity of the individuals and of their smaller groups,

and the success of the enterprise as a whole. In case of greater enterprises, however, that are controlled by enterprise councils, the workers' representatives are most probably much less able to follow, influence and control the business policy of the firm. It can therefore be assumed that the actual participation of workers' representatives will be smaller, and will develop more slowly. Accordingly, in these enterprises the relative importance of trade unions will probably be greater. The same is even more true for the enterprises under direct government control.

Finally, we have to deal with an essential problem: that of the optimal allocation of resources. An extensive literature deals with this problem and states that the system based on workers' self-management makes the enterprise structure rigid, restrains the reallocation of capital, decreases the flexibility of the economy, is detrimental to the optimal allocation of resources, and hinders therefore development in the long run. It seems impossible to go into detailed discussion of the theoretical problems here but it is obvious that the possibility of free entry and the inducement to capital reallocation are the most important means to solve or at least to alleviate these problem. It can be hoped that the measures on this line will lead to a situation where the optimal allocation of resources will at least be approximated.

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UNION INFLUENCE OVER TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE:
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR UNION ROLES IN THE WORK PLACE.

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work and society
Maastricht**



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Introduction

The widespread application of new and in particular micro-electronics based technologies to production and administration was widely predicted in the late 1970s to bring profound, and possibly negative changes to employment and skill requirements, working conditions and power relations in the workplace.

The trade union movement in Britain and many European countries sought to influence corporate decision making over technological change to fulfill union objectives around maintaining or improving job security, conditions of employment, quality of working life, and union organisation. The method of intervention pursued by the unions was largely shaped by the existing industrial relations system, but frequently included extension of the scope of collective bargaining to include technological change. In 1979, the British Trades Union Congress (TUC), drawing on Scandinavian union approaches, called on union negotiators to sign Technology Agreements with employers that would include both substantive commitments (e.g. on wages or job security) and procedural provisions to enhance union consultative rights.

This attempt to influence the process of technological change and its employment effects can be seen, in the British case certainly, as a novel element in union responses to technological change, and one that involved them in areas far beyond their traditional activities and expertise. With the benefit of five years experience, it is now possible to assess the achievements of these union initiatives, to highlight the problems that have arisen and to discuss the implications for union roles in the workplace.

Trade Union Strategy for New Technology.

In 1978-9 the British Trade Union Congress (TUC) and many individual unions developed policies for dealing with the introduction of microelectronic-based technology at the workplace. The 1979 TUC report Employment and Technology has been seen as the most authoritative policy statement. In some respects this document merely repeated the thrust of post-war union policies on technological change - for example its calls for government and employer action to 'ease the transition' by retraining displaced workers etc. However other elements of the 1979 TUC policy represented a radical departure.

In particular, it proposed that unions should seek to influence the process of technological decision making itself - to safeguard workers against some of the more negative effects that had been predicted as arising from new technology (eg on jobs, health and safety, work pace etc) and to ensure that the benefits of new technology were 'equitably' shared. A major plank in achieving these objectives was to be through an extension of the scope of company/plant level bargaining to include technological development. Specific safeguards and procedures were to be established by negotiating 'New Technology Agreements'.

It is instructive to examine the origins of this policy. It appears to have been inspired by Scandinavian initiatives, in particular the agreement on computer-based systems between the Norwegian union (LO) and employers' (NAF) organisations in 1975, and informed by a radical and critical analysis of the implications of technological change for employment levels, work skills and

autonomy. However Technology Agreements were originally conceived as operating in the context of an expansion of industrial democracy, as an extension of the TUC policy of seeking tripartite 'Planning Agreements' involving unions, companies and the state. This element seems to have evaporated after the election of a Conservative government with strong laissez-faire and anti-union policies.

Five years later, it is clear that the actual achievements of trade unions have been very uneven. Faced with ambivalence or hostility from employers organisations to national or industry level agreements, most of the technology agreements have been concluded at plant or company level. Thus although at least 400 technology agreements have been negotiated, these represent only a small fraction of the total number of companies and workplaces. An analysis has been made of the content and distribution of 240 of these agreements. (Williams and Steward 1985). These agreements have mainly been negotiated by four 'white collar' unions (APEX, ASTMS, NALGO or TASS) individually or in combination. Manual workers' unions have rarely been involved. In manufacturing industries, where 'multi-unionism' predominates, the technology agreements that have been signed typically cover only a small part of the workforce. Only in a few, office-based industries have technology agreements covered most workers in an organisation. In some of these industries, such as local government and commercial insurance, technology agreements provide the main avenue for handling change. However, in the vast majority of workplaces, technological change is being handled without a formal technology agreement, by means of 'conventional consultative mechanisms'. However, in many of these companies, workers have established the right to some form of consultation in advance of the introduction of technological change

(Rush and Williams 1984).

Where technology agreements have been concluded, their provisions have typically fallen far short of union guidelines, both in terms of the scope of union involvement and the safeguards achieved. The limited achievements of collective bargaining over technological change must be seen against the context of the rapidly worsening economic and political circumstances facing labour, but cannot be reduced to this.

The content and pattern of signing technology agreements reveal some important features about the ways in which union policy was put into practice, in particular regarding:

the priorities of union negotiators, which in turn were shaped by:

the degree of articulation of union policy,

its compatibility with other elements of union strategy and organisation,

the feasibility of implementing a policy given the particular constraints

of market pressures, employer opposition and limited union powers.

For example, it has been noted elsewhere that the technology agreements covered the physical environment and health and safety aspects of new technology far more frequently, and in a more substantial and detailed manner, than they dealt with the implications of technological change for job satisfaction or the quality of working life (Williams and Pearce 1984). A number of overlapping factors can be identified which facilitated union influence around health and safety. Union policy on health and safety was highly developed, it was sustained by union expertise and often expressed in precise and quantifiable terms; educational and organisational resources

existed for its dissemination; union intervention in this area was supported by legal consultative rights and was perceived as legitimate by many managers, as well as union representatives and workers. These factors did not pertain to the area of the quality of working life. Intervention in the latter area poses particular difficulties. For example union objectives around the quality of working life tend to be more subjective, and depend on the prevailing conditions in the workplace in question, and are less amenable to being encapsulated in precise, centrally determined union guidelines.

Within the technology agreements there is evidence of a divergence of negotiating strategy between those unions organising specific occupations or crafts (e.g. TASS - the union for engineering technicians, the printing unions) and unions representing general clerical labour (e.g. APEX, ASTMS and NALGO, which recruit a wide range of administrative grades). The 'craft' groups tended to have a longer tradition of union activity and stronger organisation.

The main thrust of bargaining by the 'general clerical' unions had been to establish consultative procedures and provisions for the introduction of future technological change. A wide range of issues were often covered - which reflected the content of union policies/ model agreements. However, the terms agreed were often very weak. It would appear that union influence over the process of change would be minimal. In contrast the 'craft' unions, which already possessed well-established consultation rights, sought agreement on specific items of technological change. These agreements were often more narrowly focussed, particularly around the traditional union concerns of pay and job security, where significant benefits were often agreed. The agreements

were ususally sectional in their objectives - for example wage etc. benefits were limited to the equipment operators or particular bargaining groups. A major concern was to maintain the skills, status, autonomy/work regulation and union organisation of the craft group through the process of technological change. Thus many of the agreements were concerned to reaffirm lines of demarcation of union membership and work activity. Some even stipulated restrictions in the areas of application and use of new technology. These agreements emphasised the importance of training for users of new technology.

The distinction between the 'craft' and the 'general' union strategies was not rigid. In a number of cases, 'general clerical' unions had signed agreements relating to specific items of change - principally relating to the introduction of word-processors or computer-based administration systems. However, the main objective of the union in these cases appeared to be one of **monitoring** rather than **modifying** the process of change.

The apparent greater effectiveness of 'craft' unions than 'general clerical' unions in shaping the process of technological change and its effects on work is partly related to the greater 'bargaining strength' of the former. However the possession by the 'craft' groups of strongly articulated occupational objectives would also seem to play an important role. These enabled the 'craft' groups to derive concrete demands around technological change. (These demands were, moreover, compatible with the other elements of group strategy and organisation. Conversely, 'craft' objectives / organisation seem to have inhibited the take up of the broad policy perspectives contained in TUC and individual union policies).

The craft union strategy may have been sectarian, and focussed on narrow economic issues, but it was effective. In contrast, the non-craft groups had attempted to apply the broader policy approach proposed by TUC and individual unions, but with much less apparent effect.

The strategy of signing technology agreements can be seen as beset by a number of shortcomings and misapprehensions. The underlying assumption, was that unions could simply extend collective bargaining to influence employers' plans for technological change either by making substantive a priori agreements about such change and its employment consequences, or by opening up management planning of change for negotiation.

The limited number of technology agreements signed, indicates the extent of management opposition to this encroachment in the traditional spheres of 'managerial prerogative', and the lack of union power to negotiate the implementation of their policy particularly given the dramatic transformation in the economic and political climate since 1979 and the election of the present Conservative government. The subsequent escalation of unemployment to record levels and the introduction of legislation that restricted employee and union rights and intervened in the internal running of trade unions, have not only altered the balance of bargaining power in favour of management, but have also been accompanied by a shift in the industrial relations agenda. In 1978, the extension of industrial democracy was the topical issues of industrial relations on the agenda and was the subject of a government enquiry (The Bullock Report, 1978). Current union concerns focus on saving jobs and maintenance of union membership in a hostile environment. In the

face of government and employer insistence on the imperative of market forces, unions sometimes found it difficult to convince their members that technology bargaining was a necessary and feasible way of pursuing their interests.

Where agreements were signed, more progress was made on some issues than on others. In particular it would appear that:

- i) although union negotiators gave a high priority to some issues (e.g. employment security figured in most technology agreements) they often lacked the bargaining strength to obtain water-tight assurances on these issues.
- ii) policies for intervention in certain wider areas, such as operating arrangements and job design, were not sustained by the provision of detailed guidelines that were technically feasible, politically winnable and incorporated union objectives.
- iii) that union negotiators appeared to be more effective at achieving some types of demands than others - for example more progress was made in improving wages than reducing working time. What was most readily achieved differed according to the form of union organisation and its traditional strategy - viz the different areas of bargaining headway by 'craft' and 'clerical' groups.

The policy of technology agreements can be criticised for its concentration on a formal strategy of extending union influence, at the neglect of the real political, economic and technical constraints. Our research into technology bargaining has highlighted the limited achievements of union negotiators at a time of reduced union bargaining power. However this research also reveals important opportunities for union influence that were going largely untapped.

Negotiation and Management Decision-Making over Technological Change.

In addition to our survey of new technology agreements, a number of detailed case-studies have been made of the processes involved in introducing new technology in the workplace. These have confirmed some of the above findings regarding the limited union achievements in bargaining over technological change. However they also highlight certain opportunities for union influence over the process of technical change.

A set of case-studies was undertaken of the introduction of technological change in firms with well-established union organisation (Williams and Steward 1984). These focussed on the processes of management decision-making and its interaction with collective bargaining. It found that unions only rarely made a fundamental challenge to the basis of management decisions regarding technological change. What was largely absent from the union response was an alternative vision of how the technology might be introduced. Partly as a consequence, many of the issues for union involvement operated at the margins of management plans for technological change; the major issues subject to negotiation were the distribution of the consequences of technological change rather than the character of the change itself, and concerned the relationship **between groups of workers** as much as the relationship between workers and their employer.

A number of other studies have noted the same lack of bargaining influence, and some have suggested that the process of technological change is going with negligible influence by the workforce and its union organisation.

However such a view would be extremely misleading. Our case studies exhibit a notable divergence from this model of economic or managerial dominance over technological change. In particular it becomes clear that, although trade unions have not been able to articulate and implement their own objectives for technological change, winning the consent of workers to the change remained a central managerial objective. These shaped managements plans - not only regarding their industrial relations strategy for implementing change, but in some cases the design of jobs and even the choice of technology. In all our cases, management had decided to implement change through consultation, rather than by management dictat - in contrast to the model of the 'macho manager' that was receiving considerable publicity in some political circles.

Underlying this 'need for consent' was management's reliance on worker cooperation and skills in implementing the new technology and achieving productive goals. The need for consent was not uniform, but varied between groups of workers and across industries according to the product market, the technological characteristics of production, as well as its social organisation. Management's concern to win worker compliance/consent was focussed on those groups of workers who had strong trade union organisation as well as possessing the skills and experience necessary for successfully implementing and operating the new technology. Conversely, it was least marked, inter-alia, with low-skill workers or those in plants that were to be closed. For example, in a Cigarette manufacturing company, the low-skilled, mainly female 'crew' received far less consideration than the groups of predominantly-male skilled, semi-skilled and supervisory workers. In redesigning operating arrangements for new production equipment, management

adopted a deliberate strategy of 'sharing the costs' of the change equally between these three groups while ensuring that there would be some promotion and upgrading opportunities for each group.

The social and technical difficulties of the change being implemented were very marked in some cases. These in turn determined the 'problem-solving' load and had important effects on how the processes of decision-making and mediation over change were conducted. These varied between cases in ways that could be related to the technological, labour and market etc. characteristics of production.

For example, in the Cigarette Company, management was able to conduct detailed advance planning of the introduction of change on a five year time scale. Conversely, in the introduction of CNC machine tools for batch production of components for a 'high technology' sector of the Mechanical Engineering industry, the technical difficulties of production, the centrality of worker skills to overcome these and the strength of craft trade union organisation combined to force management to adopt both decentralised planning of technological change and an incremental process for negotiation and implementation of change.

Sectional conflicts over technological change based on differences in perspective and interest were noted not only between sections of the workforce, but also within management - for example, when craft workers at one of the mechanical engineering firms studied 'took over' responsibility for programming CNC machines away from the technician programmers (members of another union), they gained support from many of

the engineering managers who had been promoted from amongst the craft workers. This was the only example in the cases studied where the technology eventually introduced differed substantially from the arrangements that management had conceived. Many other factors lay behind management's willingness to assent to this change; operator programming worked well and eliminated a number of operational problems of technician programming. Moreover, management did not want to imperil the manual workers' recent acceptance of substantial changes in working practices and staffing levels. A key factor was union strategy, and the fact that the senior union representative was aware of the range of operating arrangements with CNC and had developed a long term strategy to enable the craft union to sustain and enhance its position through a period of technological change. In two other, almost identical, engineering firms, the craft workers did not challenge technician programming. This highlights the importance of union strategy and policy as a constraint on the ability of the unions to shape technological change.

Overall, it appeared that although technological change had many negative impacts, there were often substantial benefits to workers from accepting technological change, although these benefits were often sectional (for example by improving the grading, job security or skills of current employees, at the expense of other workers in the firm, or those outside the labour market). Trade union policies emphasised the negative aspects of new technology, and often failed to grasp the benefits available. In some cases, union negotiators seeking to regulate the rate or conditions of introduction of technological change found themselves outflanked by their members who were keen to get their hands on the new systems.

Problems of union involvement

In the cases examined, the difficulties experienced by the trade unions in developing and implementing their perspective over technological change were substantial. Weaknesses of union policy and strategy for technology can be related to organisational problems of access to expertise, union structure and orientation and perceptions of union role.

In most of the cases, the unions lacked an alternative vision of how technology might be introduced as well as the information and other resources that would be needed to sustain and apply that vision. In part this can be attributed to the tendency for certain forms of technology to predominate - which will be discussed in the next section - however this was reinforced by weaknesses in union resources and union objectives. The union representatives did not have access to technical expertise and information available to management, and lacked the time and facilities to develop their own responses. In most cases they did not have alternative models or criteria to assess or criticise management proposals for technology. National union policy documents might provide general descriptions of union objectives regarding technology, but a concrete policy was in the main lacking. The major exception here was on health and safety - over which a consistent union intervention was achieved. Union objectives regarding health and safety are fairly evident and well-articulated. Moreover it is possible for union organisations to define safety guidelines on a central basis that will be appropriate to a range of working situations, whereas it is much harder to codify union objectives for other

aspects of technology. Such an approach would require a substantial increase in union resources and expertise and might only be possible at local level.

Trade union structure in Britain has some distinctive features which shape the union strategies that can be pursued. In particular it has a strong tradition of craft and occupational union organisation which are often based round defence of a particular group against incursions by other groups of workers as much as by management. In manufacturing industry in particular, and in most of the cases-studied, the trade union organisation was built (i.e. divided) around the pre-existing division of labour/technology. The highly decentralised character of union organisation and activity accentuated divisions between workers in different companies and in different plants in the same company. Thus a company would often contain a variety of different 'bargaining groups' which pursued radically differing strategies for achieving their objectives. These differences of approach between different groups had a long tradition and were deeply rooted in the daily activity of the union.

Within this fragmented structure and divergent basis of union organisation, the interests of different groups of workers regarding technological changes were often counterposed. This is particularly problematic where a division of labour/work organisation established under one production technology is replaced by another technology embodying a different division of labour - for example in the introduction of photocomposition to in the printing industry.

Thus union structure constrained the policies that the unions were able to develop and implement (Williams and Steward 1984, Moore, Levie et al. 1984).

One example was the introduction of CNC machine tools in the Mechanical Engineering industry which affected craft machinists and technician-programmers who were in different union sections - AUEW Engineering Section and AUEW TASS respectively. Bryn Jones (1983) has pointed out that the division of the engineering workforce between craft and technical unions in Britain has impeded the development of a union policy that could mediate between the two groups of workers, such as the development of an occupational ladder between machine operators and programmers. Such a solution has been adopted in many continental companies, in which technical and manual workers are not in different unions.

Whilst it is easy to identify a range of 'structural' obstacles that might frustrate attempts by union representatives to pursue an alternative vision of the technology, it is not clear that these factors constituted a barrier in any practical sense on a day-to-day basis. Although union policies for technological change called for representation and influence by union members in corporate decision making from the earliest stages, there was considerable ambivalence amongst union members and representatives about the role that unions should adopt. This seemed to stem partly from direct assent to the lines of managerial prerogative (see also Scarborough, 1985), supplemented, amongst union representatives in particular, by a desire to remain 'at arms length' from the managerial function for fear that the union would become incorporated within management's outlook.

The Model of Technological Change.

The two possibly most wide-spread models of technological change at work exhibit opposite failings of either underestimating the role of economic and political factors in technological development or conversely seeing economic considerations as dominant (Wilkinson 1983). The former approach, which can be described as 'technological-determinism', sees technology as essentially neutral and inevitable in its development, and ignores the social forces which instigated it and influenced the choices involved in its application.

Probably the most influential proponent of the alternative approach was Braverman (1974), who portrayed production technology as essentially certain in its implementation, and as a vehicle for employers to achieve their objectives, resulting in the displacement, de-skilling and enhanced managerial control over labour. Braverman's work has been criticised as a form of 'economic-determinism' and for its failure to adequately consider countervailing factors to these trends.

However, research at the Technology Policy Unit demonstrates a model of technological change as being shaped by a complex array of forces. For example, though employers' economic and political objectives over labour were clearly evident in the changes being introduced in the case-studies, management was frequently forced to moderate pursuit of these objectives in too narrow a way in order to reach some form of accommodation with the workforce or with sectional interests within the sphere of management.

Managerial objectives from technology included other considerations than simply controlling labour. Implementation and operation of new technologies was often beset by considerable difficulties and uncertainties. The process of change was subject to a variety of social, political and technical factors within the organisation. Some of these served to mitigate, and others to enhance the potential for trade union influence over technological change.

What was notable in most of the cases was that unions had very little awareness of the scope for alternative approaches to the design of technology and associated working systems. Partly this can be attributed to a (frequently conscious) managerial strategy of presenting their particular plans for technological development as unalterable, inevitable, and neutral. Here, a major problem facing union negotiators was their lack of awareness of the variety of technological and organisational solutions in existence (in the case of the CNC machine tools, variation between workplaces a few miles apart).

A deeper obstacle derives from the tendency, arising from the cumulative nature of technological development, for a single paradigm of technology to predominate. The choices inherent in technological development and application are thereby submerged in two ways:

- i) by not being expressed in the first place, and
- ii) by a process of selection. Selection operates for example where a new area of application of technology has emerged and a variety of technical and organisational solutions have been thrown up as part of the learning process. In most cases, a single technological paradigm tends to predominate.

However, countervailing factors can be noted including heterogeneous user markets and continuing technological change. The existence of alternative methods of job design around computer controlled machine tools can be seen as illustrating these factors (See Figure 1).

Clearly, union strategies for influencing technology need to be informed by a deeper understanding of the processes of technological change. A major ^{for unions} problem/is their exclusion from the design and decision making process. However, opportunities may arise from the uncertainties and difficulties which may be associated with the introduction of advanced technologies. In automating complex operations, technologists may need to tap the skills and experience of existing workers; workforce skills and 'tacit knowledge' (experience that cannot readily be codified) may also be essential in both implementing new technology systems and their successful operation. These considerations create a 'window of influence' for workers and their unions. They forced the managers in our case-studies to seek the consent of the workforce to change. Technologists have increasingly been forced to seek 'user-involvement' in the application and development of new technologies - especially computer-based systems (Friedman 1985).

In Britain initiatives in 'user involvement' have frequently been conceived and conducted in ways that have little value as a model for union strategies for influencing technological change. For example they seem to have been conducted in a manner that is divorced from, or at least markedly ambivalent towards trade union representatives and aspirations (see for example Mumford and Hensall 1979).

Figure 1: The Case of CNC Machine Tools

The design of Numerical Control (NC) machine tools has been seen as incorporating Taylorist principles of job design - by transferring responsibility and control over machining techniques from the craft machinist to the programmer. NC programme preparation required expensive computer equipment as well as computing skills, and was allocated to technical workers. Noble (1979) notes that the advent of Computer-Numerical Control, in which the computing power for programme preparation is attached to the machine tool, can be seen as subversive to the 'Taylorist' technological trajectory of NC machine tool design, in that it made it feasible for programming to be carried out on the shop-floor and thereby opened up opportunities for craft workers to retain control over programming. As a result, divergent models of job design/ technological operating systems exist in the arena of computer controlled machine tools. The control boxes fitted to most current models of CNC machine tools are designed for technician programming. However a number of manufacturers have introduced models designed for shop-floor programming. (Wilkinson, 1983) Whereas craft workers put up little resistance to technician programming of NC machine tools, responsibility for programming CNC machine tools has been contested between machinists and technicians in many engineering factories in Britain.

Why has this arisen?

* Noble cites the rapidly falling costs of computing power as making it economically feasible to have both distributed application of computing power and more sophisticated 'user-friendly' systems - thus a tension arises between the existing technological trajectory and future technological potentials.

* There are important differences in the market for machine tools in terms of the technical and organisational characteristics of the user firms as well as the type of production to which they are applied. These have been systematically investigated - in particular by Sorge et al. (1982). For example, technician programming is more frequent amongst larger firms. These were more likely to have been NC users, and thereby already possessed NC programming departments as well as Computer Aided Programming equipment and specialist technician programmers. In contrast, operator programming was more frequent amongst smaller firms, which tended to have fewer technical resources and greater flexibility of both labour allocation and organisational structures.

* Problems of implementing and operating the new technology may be important. Thus the apparent economic and political benefits for employers of technician programming have to be offset against possible resistance from strongly unionised craft machinists, and the fact that machinists may have considerably more expertise than technicians in the unpredictable area of metal-cutting technology (Williams and Steward 1984).

* There may be genuine uncertainty about the long-term development of the technology. One scenario would involve the continuation of present tendencies for the centralisation and upward transfer of skills. Conversely, as design and production engineering functions become more subject to automation, management may need shop-floor workers who possess some programming as well as metal-cutting skills.

Faced with this state of affairs, the chief response of British trade unionism has been to shun participation altogether, rather than to be represented on bodies that they feel unable to influence, lest they are seen as responsible for or bound to the decisions that it takes. However this strategy, of avoiding the possible perils of participation, also closes off a potentially valuable avenue through which unions could gain advance information, and influence decision making over technological change from its earliest stages. Given the apparently increasing prevalence of 'user-involvement', the unions need to go beyond debating whether or not to be involved, but address instead the question of which forms of involvement might yield most opportunities for union influence.

Our model of technological change reveals a number of different scenarios for union and worker influence. An important consideration will be the characteristics of the technological change - in particular its 'certainty' of operation, and the extent to which the potential for choice over technological systems exists and is articulated. For example, where a proposed innovation is well understood and reliable, and operating arrangements are widely established in the industry, the scope for union influence may be very narrow. The technology is purchased as an 'off-the-peg' system, to carry out specific requirements. There may be little difference between available models. An example of this might be a stand-alone word-processor. The main items for union influence would centre around adjustments to the labour supply - selection, training, staffing levels, grading etc. Such matters could be adequately dealt with under conventional negotiating procedures.

The next distinct situation is where the technology is well known, but where the working arrangements are not established - for example where technological change has undermined an existing division of labour, or where there are multiple models for job design/operating arrangements. This opens up an important area for discussion over job design - but still has a limited effect on the technology itself.

At the other end of the spectrum are systems where the technology is complex, uncertain in its effectiveness and impacts, and where there may be considerable flexibility in designing such systems (e.g. computer-based administration systems). These factors will accentuate management's need for user commitment and may favour a participatory approach. In addition there may be considerable potential for workers and their unions to influence the choice of application/ systems design. However, such involvement places a much greater load on the union organisation in terms of:

- the wide range of issues being discussed,
- the need to exert influence from the earliest stages of system development,
- the need for access to information and expertise.

In short, a pro-active rather than a defensive/reactive union response is needed. It may be difficult to conduct such involvement through conventional bargaining channels, and other supplementary avenues may be needed - e.g. direct access to specialists involved in system design, or through 'user-involvement' initiatives. This situation holds the greatest potential for influence as well as the biggest problems for workers/unions both in articulating their own requirements of technology and getting them represented/implemented.

A Trade Union Strategy for Influencing Technological Change?

The distinctive feature of information technology compared with other waves of technological change is its flexibility of application. A very wide variety of technological systems and working arrangements are possible, and substantial scope for choice and amendment exists when the technology is being implemented in the workplace. It is this feature which enables the application of information technology to such a wide range of industries and work activities where it will have a potentially substantial impact on working life. Information technology automates the ways in which human beings operate, regulate and administer the process of production. It has a potential to be used in ways that incorporate existing skills into machines, that centralise skill requirements and control of production, and leave the mass of workers with routinised, unsatisfying, low paid jobs with little prospects of promotion. However alternative outcomes are feasible which offer the potential for workers to acquire new skills, for certain kinds of local autonomy for work groups, for a re-integration of working activities (compared to the detail division of labour of conventional mass production), which could bring improvements in the quality of working life, rewards and power in the workplace.

The new technologies and working systems currently being developed and implemented are creating the working environments for the next decade. Our research has observed certain social and political processes which give hope for a more positive vision of work with new technology. Whether this is realised will depend very much on the strategies adopted by the trade unions.

We will now raise some of the key issues which trade unions need to consider in developing a union strategy for influencing technological change. They can be discussed under the following headings:

union roles, objectives and policies, organisation and resources.

Union roles: the dominant union response to technological change has been defensive, reactive after-the-event, and has focussed on a narrow range of consequences of change (in particular the 'core' union concerns of wages and employment security). To meet the challenge of technology the unions need a more strategic, 'pro-active', approach that seeks involvement and influence over key areas of decision-making and design of technology and working systems. We should not underestimate the difficulties of such a change. The British trade union movement exhibits considerable 'conservatism' in favour of traditional methods of organisation and roles. For example, the strength of 'craft' and 'adversarial' approaches in Britain disguises widespread acceptance that major business decisions including technological change are a managerial prerogative.

Existing avenues for union policy formation and influence tend to embody and reinforce the narrow defensive approach. The strategic approach would require extension of the scope of collective bargaining, and a more 'political' approach to achieving influence. Collective bargaining agendas tend to be narrow and revolve around a short (annual) time perspective. Although the collective bargaining system has demonstrated an immense capacity for adaptation, other avenues might have a supplementary role to play (e.g.

'user-involvement' groups, or discussions about long-term corporate technology policy, which might not fit easily within a bargaining context).

Another element of a pro-active strategy for union influence is the possibility of a dialogue or alliance with the consumer of the final product or service. This could be particularly important factor for service workers in the public sector.

Objectives and policies: probably the most critical problem facing the trade unions is the limited articulation of union objectives for technological development and their incorporation in concrete policies. This reflects the fact that unions have largely abstained from involvement in decisions over technological change, as well, in Britain, as questions of job design and the quality of working life. Policy has been developed in some areas, such as health and safety, but in other areas is rudimentary.

Union representatives need a critical understanding of the processes of technological change and the opportunities for choice and influence that exist. This in turn needs to be incorporated into policies that can be achieved in the workplace. These could take the form either of specific models for technology/working systems, or of more general criteria. The checklist approach that proved effective around health and safety of VDUs could be applicable to a broader range of areas (e.g. job design, worker privacy etc.).

Such an endeavour would require a dialogue between trade unions and

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THE LABOUR MOVEMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN SPAIN

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**European centre for
work and society
Maastricht**



THE LABOR MOVEMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN SPAIN
(1975 - 1985)

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INTRODUCTION

The following paper presents the working ^{reflections} ~~hypotheses~~ of the research currently being done by the Fundació Jaume Bofill of Barcelona with the collaboration of the Volkswagen Foundation on the subject of "The Labor Movement and Social Change in Spain (1975-1985)."

The first part of the paper describes several factors which can be used as indicators in diagnosing the state of the Spanish labor movement.

The second part of the paper aims to evaluate the principal social changes which have taken place in Spain and their impact on current trade union activity.

At the present time field work is being done in an attempt to validate these hypotheses.

A.- DIAGNOSIS OF THE SITUATION OF UNIONS IN SPAIN

A.I. Organizational strength of unions among workers

1.- Union membership in Spain is among the lowest in any western European country (1).

2.- Since the legalization of democratic unions, overall union membership figures have tended to decline steadily (2).

3.- Union membership has shown a clear tendency to concentrate among men, mature workers, employees in a few industrial sectors and isolated branches of the service sector, in the more highly developed and industrialized zones of Spain, and among left-wing voters (3). The profile of CCOO members shows more polarization than that of the UGT.

4.- The Basque union, ELA-STV, constitutes an exception to the above-mentioned trend. Far from falling off, membership has increased steadily and the profile of members is less polarized than in other unions (4).

(1) According to the recent study by the International Labour Organization "Work in the world" (Geneva, 1985, Vol. 2. p.9), union membership figures for developed countries are as follows:

<u>Percentages of union membership</u>	<u>Countries</u>
80-90%	Finland, Sweden
70-80%	Belgium, Denmark
60-70%	Austria, Luxemburg, Norway
50-60%	Australia, Ireland, Italy, United Kingdom
40-50%	Federal Republic of Germany, New Zealand
30-40%	Canada, Greece, Japan, Netherlands
15-30%	Spain, United States, France, Portugal

(2) See for example the studies by PEREZ DIAZ, EDIS, ALVIRA and GARCIA LOPEZ, and CIS, already quoted.

(3) See for example the studies by TEZANOS and EDIS quoted above.

(4) The latest study by the EDIS team, conducted towards the end of 1984, on workers' opinions about the AES and union membership, again highlights the unusual characteristics of the ELA-STV as the only union whose membership not only has not dropped but, on the contrary, has shown a slight increase.

5.- The proportion of workers who are covered by collective representation in Spain is lower than in other western European countries: approximately half the workers who are entitled to such representation have none because union elections (to comités de empresa) have not taken place. Coverage has not improved over time: no noticeable increase has occurred between the first democratic union elections (1978) and the present day (5).

6.- A sizeable percentage of the work force (approximately 20-30% in the last elections held in 1982) abstain when union elections take place in their company (6).

7.- The distribution of union votes in the various elections since the return of democracy reveals a progressive concentration of the vote among the major federations (UGT and CCOO) to the detriment of the small unions (notably those to the far left) and a gradual rise of the UGT at the expense of CCOO. Owing to this the UGT is now the leading Spanish union, though support for the two major federations continues to be fairly evenly balanced. The growing strength of the ELA-STV in the Basque country and the INGLA in Galicia constitute exceptions of considerable importance with respect to the trends described (7).

(5) See the studies by EDIS and PEREZ DIAZ quoted above.

(6) EDIS team. Elecciones sindicales 1982. Op. cit.

(7) The results of the elections according to Ministry of Labour figures are:

	1978	1980	1982
CCOO	34.4%	30.8%	33.4%
UGT	21.7%	29.2%	36.7%

In the Basque country (excluding Navarre) the results are:

	1980	1982
ELA/STV	26.6%	30.2%
UGT	19.2%	21.5%
CCOO	17.5%	17.1%

In Galicia, the INGA won 18.9% of the delegates.

Social contract is the social contract par excellence.
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8.- Workers have a far more favourable feeling towards unions than the membership figures would indicate. This shows that the influence of unions seems to reach well beyond their members (8).

9.- Only a relatively small proportion of members take an active part in union activities, such as meetings for instance. The amount of unpaid union work done by militants at company level is also small (9).

10.- In recent years workers have been increasingly reluctant to respond to union calls for strikes and other pressure tactics. Fear of lack of support discourages some unions resorting to pressure tactics as often as they would wish (10).

11.- Workers' appraisals of the performance of unions over the past 10 years are not enthusiastic and there is much criticism, though few feel able to suggest viable alternatives to the policy followed so far by the major unions (11).

12.- An "instrumental" view of unions seems to predominate among workers rather than a feeling of ideological identification with the whole of their programs (12).

For more information: you should have been there!

(8) For information on union voting and membership and feelings and knowledge about unions, see the studies by PEREZ DIAZ, CIS and the EDIS team.

(9) See the studies by the EDIS team and PEREZ DIAZ already quoted.

(10) On this subject, see the opinions of intermediate level union leaders as reported by FISHMAN in his study of company level leaders, quoted above.

(11) See PEREZ DIAZ, and EDIS team, op. cit.

(12) PEREZ DIAZ, op. cit.

A.II.- The structures and resources of unions

13.- Taking total membership into account, Spanish unions have fewer union leaders, both at company level and higher up, and fewer full-time employees than their counterparts in most western European countries. Spanish union leaders are also among the worst paid in Europe, relatively speaking, a fact that makes positions of this type somewhat unattractive to skilled workers in higher income brackets (13).

14.- The qualifications of union leaders and employees in Spain are usually below the European average. This is particularly clear at levels below industrial branches or sectors. Education, occupational skill and specialized union training are less than successful fulfilment of the union tasks of negotiation, representation and participation would require.

15.- The personal profile of union leaders at intermediate and higher levels is even more polarized than that of the rank and file. The characteristics of leaders, in terms of age, sex, economic sector and zone of origin, and political vote often fail to match those of union members and, to an even greater extent, of voters.

16.- The opinions of intermediate and higher ranking union officials on political, social and labour matters are generally more radical and militant than those of members and voters (14).

17.- The technical and professional counsellors engaged by the unions (lawyers, economists, engineers) are insufficient in numbers and qualifications. Lack of financial resources prevents the unions from calling upon an adequate number of able, experienced professionals. Economic problems have forced many unions to cut down on the number of professional advisers in recent years. The ELA-STV may constitute an exception to the general rule.

(13) For the information on this aspect of the situation in Europe, see CAREW, Anthony.

(14) See, for example, FISHMAN's study, quoted above, in which he examines the more radical positions of company-level labour leaders in comparison with company workers as a whole.

18.- The finances of Spanish unions are at a low ebb. Union dues are low (usually a fixed amount instead of being proportional to income) and the percentage of members who in fact pay is also small. Automatic deductions from the pay packet are still exceptions and most union members hand over the money directly to union representatives in the company or at local level (15). Here again the Basque union, ELA-STV, appears to be an exception: the dues are high and proportionate to income, and payment is computer controlled, with the result that the union's finances are in a healthier state.

19.- Spanish unions are usually lacking in buildings and office space in which to conduct their operations. Delays in the restitution of property belonging to the former vertical union have aggravated this state of affairs. Some unions have had to give up their offices because they were unable to pay the rent.

20.- Spanish unions offer their members a much more limited range of services, chiefly on account of the inadequacy of their human and material resources. Services are confined to legal and economic counselling and representation in collective bargaining and even so difficulties are experienced in providing adequate facilities. Spanish unions do not play the role, approaching that of a state organization, that is played by unions in some European countries (such as Scandinavia or Belgium) in certain aspects of public assistance and welfare services. The training facilities offered are meagre and few workers have access to them.

(15) See EDIS team, Las elecciones sindicales 1982. op. cit.

A.III.- The negotiating strength of the unions: scope and achievements

21.- Since unions were legalized, the negotiations they have undertaken have led to a situation in which many more workers are covered by collective agreements today than during the last years of the dictatorship (thanks to the gradual replacement of government-enforced settlements by collective agreements worthy of that name). Even so, coverage does not yet extend to all employees in industry and the service sector.

22.- Legislation continues to favour universally enforceable agreements ("convenios de eficacia general", the terms of which are applicable to union members and non-members alike). In practice, however, the disproportionate strength of the employers in relation to the unions has often enabled employers' organizations to impose on all their employees the terms of agreements of limited enforceability ("convenios de eficacia limitada", based on pacts with a single union and theoretically applicable only to members of that union). This has the effect of undermining the principle of "eficacia general" in collective agreements.

23.- From 1979 onwards, pay increases granted under collective agreements have meant an overall loss in purchasing power. Though this may be attributed to the crisis -unions have accepted policies based on social sacrifice as the price to be paid for improving the employment situation and providing more assistance to the unemployed-, it is still a factor of major significance (16).

(16) According to the outline figures given by GARCIA DE BLAS, Antonio and RUESGA, Santos M. in their article Crisis económica y mercado de trabajo en España (1975-1984), "Información Comercial Española", Jan-Feb. 1985, p. 227, the trend in pay increases was as follows:

EVOLUTION OF WAGES AND SALARIES (1975-1983) (Annual increases in %)

Years	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)	
	Average earnings per hour worked		Total labour costs per worker		Pay according to collective agreements		Total per capita remuneration of wage salary earners		Unit labour costs	
	NOMINAL	REAL	NOMINAL	REAL	NOMINAL	REAL	NOMINAL	REAL	NOMINAL	REAL
1975	28,6	10,0			21,4	3,8	25,0	6,9	21,6	4,0
1976	30,0	13,1			19,3	3,8	19,9	4,4	14,3	-1,5
1977	30,3	4,7			25,0	0,4	27,6	2,5	23,6	1,1
1978	26,6	5,7	21,1	0,7	20,5	0,6	24,8	4,2	20,5	0,4
1979	23,7	0,9	14,2	-1,5	14,1	-1,4	19,7	3,5	16,7	0,0
1980	18,4	2,5	15,6	1,5	15,3	-0,2	17,9	3,0	12,3	-0,5
1981	20,3	5,0	12,0	-1,6	13,2	-1,4	16,2	1,4	12,8	-0,5
1982	14,1	-0,3	13,7	0,3	12,0	-2,1	13,3	-1,0	10,8	-2,3
1983	15,0	2,6	11,9	-0,1	11,5	-0,5	13,4	1,1	9,9	-1,9

(1) Encuesta de Salarios (INE) and Informe Económico del Banco de Bilbao, 1983.

(2) Ministerio de Economía y Hacienda, "La negociación colectiva en..." (years from 1978 to 1983). Refers to large companies and includes.

(3) Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social.

(4) Contabilidad Nacional de España (INE)

(5) Ministerio de Economía y Hacienda, Programa Económico a Medio Plazo 1983-1986. Documentos I and II. Refers to labour costs per unit produced.

24.- In terms of employment, very few agreements at company level have succeeded in including commitments on the stability or growth of the work force and almost all those which have done so have, significantly, been with publicly owned concerns (the state railways and the telephone company). Moreover, despite agreements with the central government to devote public funds to programs aimed at stimulating job creation or to increase unemployment benefits, these programs have had little impact on the overall upward trend in unemployment (17). However, new legal arrangements have made unemployment coverage available to more groups of jobless workers.

25.- Issues connected with the organization of work continue to be absent from most collective bargaining.

26.- Little progress has been made towards the reduction of real working hours. More has been achieved over the past few years through legislation than through collective bargaining, the socialist government having established the forty hour week. Despite statements of principle, the unions are barely successful in reducing overtime and multiple employment.

27.- Clauses relating to union rights and participation (grievance procedures etc.) have received little emphasis in recent collective agreements. Some companies often fail even to abide by the current legislation.

28.- Collective bargaining has become enormously centralized over the last ten years: state-wide acuerdos interconfederales and agreements covering whole branches of the economy -also state-wide- have become the chief feature of the process. Regardless of who the parties were, these centralized agreements have been largely implemented in practice.

(17) See the first item of the second part of the present hypotheses (B.I) which relates to the new "segmentation" of the labour market.

30.- The leading unions have played a decisive part in the negotiation of the most important agreements. A recent study (1983) on firms with over 250 employees (18) reveals that the UGT was a party to 33.7% of the negotiations, CCOO to 30.9%, independent unions to 11%, unaffiliated representatives to 9.9% and unions confined to one autonomous community to 4.3%. Worthy of note is the high percentage reflecting the presence of independent unions who often defend strictly economic goals and are active within a single branch of the economy.

31.- Over a ten-year period, labour disputes have gradually declined both in terms of the number of hours lost and the number of workers involved. In the years when no overall agreement was signed (1979 and 1983), a rise in labour disputes over collective agreements was registered, causing both employers and the government to look again at their negotiating policy. Aside from this, more and more conflicts have tended to arise, not over collective bargaining, but as a result of the job situation and, above all, as the upshot of layoffs due to industrial restructuring and other steps to offset the crisis. Conflicts seem also to be increasingly concentrated in the public sector.

32.- Unions have met with little success in their attempts to get expected layoffs due to the process of industrial reconversion stopped or reduced. Their intervention has, however, managed to obtain fuller benefits for the jobless in these sectors than are enjoyed by the unemployed as a whole, and preference in some cases for future re-employment. A distinction must be made between the policies of the UGT, CCOO, ELA-STV and INGA in this field.

(18) MINISTERIO DE ECONOMIA Y HACIENDA. Dirección General de Política Económica. La negociación colectiva en 1983. Principales características económicas en las grandes empresas. Madrid 1984.

A.IV.- The institutional influence of unions

33.- The major Spanish unions (UGT, CCOO and, to a lesser extent, ELA-STV and INGA) have succeeded in securing official representation on various important state bodies concerned with economic and social matters, such as the Instituto Nacional de Empleo (INEM), Instituto de Previsión Social, Instituto Nacional de Sanidad (INSALUD), Instituto Nacional de Servicios Sociales (INSS), Instituto de Seguridad e Higiene en el Trabajo, Instituto Social para el Tiempo Libre and Fondo de Garantía Salarial (19). Socialist government promises regarding participation in other institutions have, however, not been fulfilled. An example is the Consejo Económico y Social that has still not been set up. Also, though they are officially represented, the unions complain that insufficient attention is paid to their opinions within these bodies. They appear nonetheless to exert a certain amount of influence.

34.- As representative institutions, the unions have been allowed to use some of the offices belonging to the former compulsory union and some state funding has been forthcoming. The most significant support they have received in this respect, though, has been recognition, on the part of both employers and government of their status, as valid and practically exclusive spokesmen for workers throughout Spain.

(19) The number of union representatives, as laid down by the Ministry of Labour in 1983, is as follows:

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Number of representatives per union</u>
INEM	6 UGT, 5 CCOO, 1 ELA, 1 INGA
INPS	5 UGT, 6 CCOO, 1 ELA, 1 INGA
INSALUD	6 UGT, 5 CCOO, 1 ELA, 1 INGA
INSHT	6 UGT, 5 CCOO, 1 ELA, 1 INGA
FGT	2 UGT, 2 CCOO

B.- FACTORS THAT CONDITION THE PRESENT SITUATION OF UNIONS IN SPAIN

B.I.- The "segmentation" of the labour market

35.- Spain is one of the OECD countries with the highest unemployment rates. One out of very five workers is without a job. The active population even shows a tendency to decrease (20). The consequences of this are twofold:

- a) Workers with jobs are increasingly worried about losing them and accordingly are afraid to join a union or take part in union activities.
- b) There is a constantly growing group of unemployed which is difficult for the unions to organize. Spanish unions have not succeeded in organizing the unemployed to any degree.

36.- This situation is worsened by gradually receding unemployment insurance coverage, especially in view of the fact that the strategy

(20) The impact of unemployment in Spain, compared with the remainder of OECD countries, can be seen from the following table:

EVOLUTION OF ACTIVITY RATES, EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN OECD MEMBER COUNTRIES

	Active population				Population with jobs				Unemployed			Activity rate			Unemployment rate			
	1970	1975	1981	Δ 1975 (%)	1970	1975	1981	Δ 1975 (%)	1970	1975	1981	Δ 1975 (%)	1970	1975	1981	1970	1975	1981
Australia	5,465	6,090	7,055	16,9	5,380	5,790	6,360	9,7	28	270	694	149,8	43,4	45,0	45,8	1,4	4,6	9,9
Austria	3,013	2,975	3,294	-10,0	2,971	2,943	3,167	7,6	42	53	127	139,6	42,0	41,6	41,6	1,4	1,8	3,8
Belgium	3,030	4,010	3,435	-14,2	3,761	3,635	2,930	-23,6	69	168	505	290,6	39,7	41,1	34,8	1,8	4,2	14,7
Canada	8,408	10,193	12,258	20,7	8,012	9,442	10,810	14,5	426	690	1,448	109,9	39,8	44,2	49,2	5,6	6,6	11,9
Denmark	2,380	2,486	2,674*	7,6	2,363	2,363	2,398	3,4	17	121	201	132,5	48,3	49,2	52,2	0,7	4,0	10,5*
Finland	2,224	2,302	2,574	11,8	2,193	2,250	2,418	7,4	41	51	156	205,9	47,7	48,5	52,9	1,8	2,2	6,1
France	21,465	22,300	23,112	4,5	20,965	21,421	21,448	0,1	510	902	1,664	126,2	42,2	42,4	42,8	2,4	4,0	8,0
F.R. of Germany	26,817	26,307	27,445	4,8	26,568	25,323	25,187	-0,5	149	1,074	2,238	110,2	44,8	43,3	44,7	0,6	3,1	8,2
Greece	3,221	3,290	3,678*	11,8	3,171	3,190	3,529*	10,6	50	56	62	10,7	37,2	36,0	37,8	1,5	1,7	1,7*
Iceland	84	93	107*	15,1	83	92	107*	16,3	1,1	0,6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ireland	1,168	1,140	1,264*	10,9	1,053	1,050	1,151*	9,6	65	73	193	164,4	37,9	35,7	36,7	5,8	6,4	15,3*
Italy	19,505	19,302	23,400	18,2	1,896	19,148	21,135	10,4	1,111	1,230	2,271	84,6	39,6	39,7	41,2	5,7	6,2	9,7
Japan	51,530	53,291	58,896	10,6	50,980	52,230	57,326	9,7	591	1,000	1,560	56,0	49,7	47,7	49,4	1,1	1,9	2,6
Luxemburg	135	150	162*	8,0	135	150	160*	6,7	—	0,3	7,1	480,0	41,2	43,4	44,2	0,0	0,2	1,3*
Netherlands	4,752	4,862	5,875	20,8	4,696	4,656	5,074	8,0	47	193	891	315,0	37,1	36,1	40,9	1,0	4,0	13,7
New Zealand	1,091	1,208	1,330	18,1	1,093	1,205	1,254	4,1	1	3	76	2,433,3	36,7	39,8	41,5	0,1	0,2	5,7
Norway	1,557	1,747	2,016	15,4	1,545	1,707	1,952	14,3	12	40	64	68,0	40,1	43,6	48,8	0,8	2,3	3,3
Portugal	3,611	3,666	4,415*	20,4	3,562	3,289	4,059*	20,5	—	222	253	14,0	39,9	42,2	44,2	—	6,0	5,7*
Spain	12,732	13,414	13,265	-1,1	12,539	12,709	10,898	-15,3	193	625	2,461	253,0	38,5	36,1	34,0	1,5	4,7	17,4
Sweden	3,013	4,129	4,303	6,2	3,074	4,062	4,232	4,2	59	67	151	125,4	48,7	50,4	52,6	1,5	1,6	3,4
Switzerland	3,077	2,939	2,952	0,4	3,074	2,929	2,926	-0,1	—	10	26	160,0	49,8	47,5	45,3	—	0,5	0,9
Turkey	15,119	16,222	16,121*	-0,6	14,439	15,198	15,168*	-0,2	1,792	2,120	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
United States	85,503	94,793	113,226	19,4	81,815	86,963	102,509	17,9	4,093	7,929	10,717	35,4	41,9	44,4	48,3	4,8	8,4	9,5
United Kingdom	25,300	25,795	26,647	3,3	24,745	24,929	23,677	-5,0	555	838	2,970	254,4	45,6	46,2	47,3	2,2	3,2	11,1

* 1981.

of the major unions has aimed at producing the opposite effect (21). In most EEC countries a greater portion of the unemployed are entitled to benefits.

37.- A large proportion of those termed unemployed (estimated by some at one in every three, i.e. approximately 800,000 people) are now working in the underground economy without either a contract or social security coverage. For obvious reasons, most of these workers not only are not interested in unions but avoid all contact with them. Spanish unions have had no significant degree of success in overcoming the fear felt by these people, in organizing them or in offering them concrete alternatives of action to improve their situation (22). With the exception of Italy and Portugal, no other country among the present and future members of the EEC has such a widespread underground economy.

38.- A growing number of workers have temporary contracts. There has been a sharp rise in the hiring of temporary and occasional employees trainees and probationers and an increasing proportion of the labour market is now covered by such contracts, though it is less than in most

(21) The gross rate of unemployment insurance coverage (recipients of benefits for total unemployment, excluding temporary agricultural labourers : official registered unemployed persons x 100) dropped from 62.19% in 1976 to 26.37% in 1984. The net rate of unemployment insurance coverage (recipients of benefits for total unemployment, excluding temporary agricultural labourers and recipients who were formerly agricultural workers with permanent jobs : officially registered unemployed persons x 100) has fallen from 69.21% in 1976 to 37.78% in 1984. Source: Boletín de Estadísticas Laborales (Ministerio de Trabajo y de la Seguridad Social).

(22) Calculations based on the latest data from the labour force survey (Encuesta de la Población Activa) indicate that some 170,000 workers are engaged in the underground economy in the textile and shoemaking industries, more than 30,000 in chemicals and transport, and 15,000-20,000 in mining and metallurgy. The worst affected areas are Catalonia, the Valencian Country, Madrid, some areas of the Basque Country, Andalusia, Extremadura and Castile.

EEC countries. Temporary workers are less inclined to join unions because they are afraid of losing their jobs and Spanish unions have not managed to organize this group to any extent (23).

39.- Among the population with jobs, the number of employees in industry and construction work has declined sharply while the service sector has grown in the same proportion. Jobs in the private sector also show a clear drop, while the public sector has remained unchanged (with slight increases in absolute numbers). The number of self-employed persons continues to be very high, considerably higher than in other EEC countries. All this affects the unions since those sectors that constitute the central nucleus of the labour movement have declined in importance: privately owned industries and construction firms. This phenomenon has not been offset by union penetration throughout the service and public sectors where the major unions have difficulty recruiting members (often the employees do not join unions at all or opt for independent unions that are active in only one sector). The trend towards fewer self-employed persons and more wage and salary-earners seems to have been slowed down by the economic crisis: many former employees who have lost their jobs

(23) Statistics published by the INEM (Instituto Nacional de Ocupación) confirm the decline of permanent contracts in favour of temporary contracts. In 1984 new contracts signed were as follows:

37%	seasonal contracts
38%	contracts for a particular task or service
6%	permanent but discontinuous contracts (eg. N days per month)
1%	part-time contracts
8%	full/contracts of indefinite duration
9%	not ascertained

Thus only 8% of contracts were full contracts of indefinite duration. The remainder included some form of flexibility.

owing to reconversion become self-employed, often in the underground economy. This reduces the possibilities of trade union membership (24).

40.- The phenomenon we have just described is even more apparent if the losses and gains in manpower over the last few years are broken down by subsectors. We then find that jobs have been lost especially in the manufacture of light machinery, the manufacture and transformation of metals, some mining industries, transport and the wood and paper industry. On the other hand, optical instruments, education and health (both the latter nearly always in the public sector) and personal and communications services to business, have gained. Thus the subsectors in which the labour movement has its traditional roots have declined while subsectors where unionism is rare or non-existent are growing.

(24) Between 1977 and 1984, 700,000 jobs were abolished in industry and 400,000 in the construction sector. In the service sector the overall number of jobs remained constant. In the private sector 1½ million jobs were lost during the same period, while the public sector grew. The number of self-employed has remained stable (2 million).

Years (Yearly average)	TOTAL WORK FORCE (Th) (employers, employees & self)					UNEMPLOYED (thousands)					UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (% of active population)				WORK FORCE BY OCCUPATIONAL STATUS (thousands)									
	Agriculture	Industry	Construction	Services	Unclassified	Agriculture	Industry	Construction	Services	Unclassified	Agriculture	Industry	Construction	Services	Employers	Company-owners without-emplo- yed	Self-em- ployed	Domestic workers	Employees	Total	Public sector	Private sector	Others	
1977	2 499.8	3 355.9	1 200.3	5 072.4	78.0	104.0	154.6	126.8	220.0	2.9	3.0	11.4	2.4	297.3	2 171.3	996.7	6 537.4	1 336.4	7 209.0	25.3				
1978	2 437.7	3 297.2	1 159.3	5 053.8	85.8	150.5	195.0	109.0	311.2	3.4	4.3	14.4	3.2	410.7	2 110.1	871.1	6 404.6	1 433.6	6 971.6	21.6				
1979	2 254.8	3 206.0	1 095.2	5 102.4	84.9	192.6	237.4	211.3	291.1	3.7	5.6	17.8	3.9	395.6	2 107.4	934.5	6 200.7	1 458.0	6 742.7	22.2				
1980	2 104.0	3 059.1	1 019.7	5 076.8	102.2	252.4	306.9	295.6	510.0	4.8	7.5	23.2	5.5	394.1	2 065.0	806.6	7 917.8	1 509.5	6 408.3	25.3				
1981	1 982.5	2 953.5	941.9	5 063.9	124.2	326.8	368.4	367.7	668.8	5.0	9.9	27.6	6.7	372.0	2 018.0	851.6	7 661.3	1 535.0	6 125.3	26.9				
1982	1 927.8	2 799.3	927.5	5 164.3	111.7	397.4	364.0	435.4	809.1	5.4	12.4	28.1	7.7	358.8	1 982.8	836.6	7 622.0	1 607.0	5 995.0	28.3				
1983	1 971.1	2 722.7	920.5	5 161.5	118.5	421.0	375.8	501.8	919.1	5.7	13.3	29.3	8.8	345.0	2 029.5	812.2	7 499.8	1 710.5	5 782.3	28.2				
1984	1 837.0	2 652.5	789.5	5 108.4	201.6	471.2	437.4	569.2	1 041.7	6.7	15.1	35.5	9.9	352.8	2 050.1	780.1	7 162.8	1 680.5	5 489.3	34.8				

Source: Encuesta de la población Activa (INE)

B.II.- Organization of work and occupational skills

41.- Technological change and improvements in company management are producing considerable changes in the organization of work and required occupational skills. The first of these changes is the growing decentralization of business. New technologies allow, and sometimes encourage, the replacement of large factories employing large numbers of workers by a multiplicity of smaller centres, each with few employees. Splitting up the work force in this way makes the organization of union activities more difficult, reduces the feeling of belonging to a larger group of workers and facilitates the spread of individualistic ideas.

42.- New methods of organizing work tend to make workers more flexible and mobile, both geographically and in terms of type of work. As well as breaking down one of the traditional principles of union action in Spain (the fight for a permanent, stable job), this also hinders union organization and weakens the sense of being part of a body of workers.

43.- The introduction of new technologies often tends to produce a polarization in occupational skills: more workers are to be found at the upper and lower ends of the occupational scale, while certain intermediate levels, comprising skilled and clerical workers, which formerly provided a substantial part of union membership and practically all intermediate and top level union leaders, are declining in importance. Spanish unions have failed almost entirely in attracting members from among the rising, highly skilled occupations.

44.- Often new technologies also alter the decision-making process in firms. Once a technological or organizational decision has been arrived at, it is much more difficult and costly nowadays to go back on it. This raises even more problems for a labour movement like that of Spain, which is lacking in strength, geared to post facto discussion rather than to participation in the decision-making process, and possesses no legal rights of "codetermination". In this context, the unions are left with the task of administering the social costs of technological change without exercising any influence over it.

45.- In terms of the scope of collective bargaining, union intervention in decisions relating to new technologies and organization of work is impossible without an overall state-wide acuerdo marco to provide a framework and without meaningful collective bargaining at company level. In Spain neither of these requirements has been fulfilled, partly because the habit of signing acuerdos marco has itself weakened negotiation at company level and made it increasingly meaningless.

46.- Certain forms of technological change raise new questions as to the forms of action open to unions. The enormous social and economic repercussions of strikes or stoppages in some companies where continuous production processes are in use compel unions to envisage alternative forms of action. Otherwise they are faced with the risk that employees in these sectors may ignore strike calls. The Spanish union movement does not seem to have studied this question seriously.

47.- Rapid technological and organizational change makes the retraining of workers increasingly important. This may soon receive higher priority than pay claims since it is likely to become a prime factor in job security. When redefining their claims strategy, unions must face this new challenge, yet most Spanish unions appear also to have underestimated the importance of this new factor.

B.III.- Labour legislation

48.- Changes in Spanish labour legislation and its application have had, and still have, a profound effect on the labour movement. Of particular importance has been the revision of the labour contract system designed to make it easier to offer contracts for occasional or temporary work. Available evidence seems to indicate that employers resort to these new possibilities on a large scale to the detriment of full contracts for an indefinite period. Not only do these changes contribute to a new "segmentation" of the labour market (as discussed above) which is less favourable to unions: they create a new framework for regulation of the labour market in which unions have a less decisive role to play.

49.- Changes in the legislation on mass layoffs have been less important. Nevertheless, there are signs in the latests Acuerdo Económico y Social of moves tending to make it easier to resort to crisis measures and to exclude the unions (and the comités de empresa) from administrative procedures leading up to them. The weakening effect this would have on the unions is obvious.

50.- Even though legislation presently in force still maintains the principle of "eficacia general" (general enforcibility) for collective agreements negotiated by unions with majority representation, in practice there have been many instances where companies and employers' organizations, after signing agreements of "eficacia limitada" with minority unions, have in practice applied the terms of such agreements to all workers in a particular firm or sector. The fact that this practice has gone unchallenged by either legal measures or union action means there is a danger that in future the basic conception of collective bargaining in Spain (majority representation and general enforcibility) may be called into question. The effects on such a development on the strength of unions would be enormous.

51.- While new legislation has eliminated state interventionism in the solution of labour disputes, no efficient system of mediation between the parties involved has been set up in its place. This allows the employers to fall back on a policy of leaving some disputes to "rot", safe in the knowledge that there will be no decisive action on the part

of the relevant authorities to bring about arbitration. This has weakened the position of the unions and explains why some union leaders regret the passing of the old compulsory arbitration system.

52.- The criteria for union representativity established by the new democratic system strengthen the position of the larger unions (which in fact number only four: UGT, CCOO, ELA-STV, INGA) and practically eliminate the rest. The small range of choices presently open to them may discourage workers from joining unions and taking part in union action. This is especially clear if we consider the new professional profiles that are emerging: in these sectors union options available are clearly unsuited to the clientele, both ideologically and from a purely union point of view.

53.- The Ley Orgánica de Libertad Sindical, on the other hand, provides for a model of labour relations within the company in which union locals are given a leading role at the expense of the comité de empresa. The change was justified on the ground that it reinforced unionism. This however is not necessarily so and indeed the effect may be the opposite of what was anticipated. Less participation for the ordinary worker in union and labour-related activities and a greater professionalization of workers' representatives at company level.

B.IV.- Social and cultural values

54.- Little prestige is attached in Spanish society to tasks that consist of representing and defending collective interests, whatever the group involved (parties, employers, unions, consumers' associations etc.). Membership in associations is consequently low and those who belong to them tend to be seen as people seeking to further their own interests rather than to ensure the collective defence of a group.

55.- In present-day Spain there is a tendency to approach the solution of labour problems from an individualistic point of view, largely on account of the experience of the dictatorship. This individualism was reinforced by a system of labour relations that gave the interests of the individual worker priority over the defence of collective rights.

56.- Moreover, a conception of labour relations based on state interventionism is still widespread. The fact that, under Franco, the state partly replaced the non-existent democratic unions has given rise to inertia. This is particularly clear in the mechanisms for hiring and dismissal and in labour disputes. As a result it is difficult for the unions to gain acceptance as a substitute for the previous state interventionism, particularly when their powers are so limited both legally and in practice.

57.- Another heritage of the type of labour relations established during the Franco period is the narrow, corporatist spirit still surviving among many workers, which consists of attempting to maintain and extend the advantages accrued by one's own particular sector or company, regardless of any overall policy inspired by collective interests. This attitude hinders the spread of a broader conception of unions based on solidarity (25).

(25) An example is provided by the analysis of the tendency of Spaniards to remain with the same company for a long time. The situation in Spain is even more marked than that of Japan in this respect.

JOB SENIORITY						
Job seniority (in %)	Australia 1981	U.S.A. 1981	Canada 1981	Spain 1983(*)	U.K. 1979	Japan 1977
TOTAL	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Less than 6 month	15,7	18,2	17,4	1,4		
Less than 1 year	25,0	27,7	26,4	1,3	13,8	8,8
Between 1 year and less than 5 years	39,5	32,8	31,0	9,6	33,4	24,4
Between 5 years and less than 10 years	17,8	15,9	18,1	23,7	21,9	23,1
Between 10 years and less than 15 years	8,4	9,6	22,1	23,9	15,3	
Between 15 years and less than 20 years	4,2	5,3	5,4	17,0	6,6	9,5
20 years and more	6,8	8,7	9,4	23,1	12,0	18,8
Average seniority						
Overall average	6,3	6,7	7,1	14,9	8,6	11,3
Men	7,0	7,8	8,3	14,5	9,6	11,6
Women	4,7	5,3	4,9	12,1	6,4	8,8

(*) Based on a sample of large companies. Compiled by the Dirección General de Política Económica, Ministerio de Economía y Hacienda. Source: OECD, Perspectives d'emploi. September 1983.

were secured in exchange for moderate pay settlements in certain acuerdos marco), the unions failed to reinforce their position through this process and can in no way claim at the present time to be the sole representatives of the workers. No durable model of institutional participation has been established. Instead there have been a series of agreements based on a particular contingency and wholly reversible at the least provocation.

64.- The leaders of the PCE made grave mistakes in interpreting the probable direction of the political transition in Spain. The resulting widespread confusion and bewilderment among CCOO leaders partly explains their loss of influence.

65.- The action of the socialist government since 1982 may have caused a drop in union membership in general (and in membership of the UGT in particular) since it has been unable to keep some of its electoral promises on labour policy, controversial industrial restructuring processes have been undertaken and flexibility has been introduced in the hiring of workers. The attitude adopted by the UGT of critical support for the government, may have affected its strength among workers, notably in zones most hard hit by reconversion.

66.- In addition to this, the Spanish left is now undergoing a crisis in perspectives caused by the lack of a clear design for society to replace outdated models. This may have helped to weaken union federations who claim to be part of a wider left-wing social movement. The absence of this type of "historical perspective" in the form of unionism defended by the larger federations may have contributed to their loss of strength.

B.VI.- Union practice

67.- The strategy of major unions (UGT and CCOO) over the past ten years has aimed chiefly at helping to fight inflation, to facilitate economic recovery, to improve the lot of the unemployed and to reinforce democracy. The practical application of this strategy has brought about dramatic changes in their former line of action.

- a) Where wages are concerned, it has meant altering the criterion for indexing annual increases to the cost of living: the principle of "inherited inflation" (last year's rate) is replaced from 1978 onwards by that of anticipated inflation. Partly as a result of this, unions have been willing to sign agreements that amount to a loss in purchasing power, contrary to the policy followed in earlier years.
- b) Where employment is concerned, the principle of unwavering defence of job security has been abandoned and the introduction of temporary contracts in labour legislation has been accepted. Though there is still strong union opposition to increased flexibility over mass layoffs, a move in this direction, albeit slow and faltering, is not entirely to be ruled out.
- c) In contrast with the resistance displayed in previous years, the unions have shown readiness (on paper more than in practice and often through lack of strength) to negotiate on subjects related to productivity and absenteeism and have allowed the introduction of scales of productivity in some sectors where they were virtually unknown (the construction industry, for instance).
- d) A still very small group (restricted for the time being to a few members of the UGT leadership) has begun to contemplate the idea of reforming the state welfare system (the Seguridad Social). Large reductions in the existing scale of benefits are involved and the door would be opened to supplementary coverage from the private insurance and health sector.

These often sudden about-turns may have helped drive away certain groups of workers (the higher paid categories, for example, in firms

which could afford to offer increases above those laid down in the acuerdos marco, or those most firmly attached to traditional principles of union action). Workers are quite critical of the performance of unions, as already described (27), and the fact that they can see no alternatives does not make their attitude any more enthusiastic.

68.- What we have just said does not mean that Spanish workers today are calling for more radical union strategies. Loss of support for CCOO and, to an even greater extent, for all more radical labour forces, would seem to prove this. The evolution of CCOO strategy is also significant in this respect: all-out opposition to the model proposed by the UGT and the CEOE has been replaced by gradual acceptance. Today the issues at stake are the speed with which measures are to be introduced, trade-offs that must be secured and the need for union control, rather than fundamentals. The failure of some CCOO attempts to mobilize workers against the Estatuto de los Trabajadores and some acuerdos marco which were signed without its support, are indices that warrant further investigation.

69.- One of the most serious repercussions of the trend towards centralization in collective bargaining is perhaps the gradual fall in the participation of workers at company level. Negotiations within the company have become less meaningful and union life at this level has lost vitality. Increasingly prevalent is the idea that the most significant part of the negotiation is conducted each year by professional experts in Madrid, far away from the individual's place of work. Part of the support for the ELA-STV and the INGA could stem from reaction to this very marked centralization of collective bargaining.

70.- The services offered by most unions are few and of variable quality. If we accept the idea that workers have an increasingly "instrumental" conception of unions, this fact could partly explain the unimpressive membership figures.

(27) See PEREZ DIAZ and EDIS team, op. cit.

B.VII.- Employers' strategies

71.- The attitude of Spanish employers towards the unions has been one of slow, rather grudging acceptance. Anti-union behaviour on the part of employers may today be based on two ideas:

- a) The overall ideological viewpoint of employers (particularly small employers) in which participation plays a very minor part in company affairs and unions are seen as trouble-makers who set the workers against the bosses. Spanish society's lack of experience of democracy may explain the survival of these attitudes to a large extent.
- b) Technological considerations or reasons related to new forms of organization of work may be used as pretexts for proposing new strategies for labour relations based on "superseding" collective representation and bargaining and "returning" to an individual relationship between employer and workers. This type of anti-union concept (which is present in some large and medium-sized firms) may have a much greater effect on unions than that described above.