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Participating in Management: Union Organizing on a New Terrain

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Participating in Management: Union Organizing on a New Terrain

Abstract

[Excerpt] Seasoned organizers know that all organizing begins one-on-one at your base. The workplace is labor's base and, therefore, the key to the labor movement meeting its many challenges in the 1990s — among them, building stronger worker-to-worker and union-to-union solidarity; being broadly perceived as a champion of the public's interest; and attracting large numbers of new workers into its fold. American society cannot be made better unless there is a thriving, more powerful labor movement. And before labor can help create this better society, it must first take care of its crumbling base.

Keywords

union organizing, labor movement, management participation

Participating in Management

*Union Organizing on
a New Terrain*

■ *Andy Banks & Jack Metzgar*

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Andy Banks and Jack Metzgar are editors of Labor Research Review and are labor educators, respectively, at Florida International University in Miami and Roosevelt University in Chicago. Among the many people who helped with this article, they would like to particularly thank David Bensman, Greg LeRoy, Dave Simmons and Dan Swinney for critical comments on various drafts of the manuscript. Thanks also go to Christine Boardman, Dan Broughton, Pat Broughton, Lynn Feekin, Guillermo Grenier, Mickey Jarvis, Mike Leslie, Mike Matuszak, Sam Rosenberg, John Russo and Steve Rosswurm for their comments and criticisms.

Introduction

Joe Imperatori is talking to a Miami travel agent in the characteristically low, breathy voice that prompted his co-workers at Eastern Air Lines to tag him "Whispering Joe." It is early summer 1989, and Joe and other striking Eastern workers are visiting travel agencies to convince them not to book passengers on Eastern or Continental Air Lines. With a calm, studious demeanor, Whispering Joe politely explains how it would be in the best interest of the travel agency to book flights on more reliable airlines—ones that treat both their employees and passengers better than the two airlines owned by Frank Lorenzo.

Whispering Joe is one of the original organizers of the Machinists' Travel Agency Committee in Miami. As co-chair, he is in charge of making sure teams of striking machinists and flight attendants visit nearly 1,000 travel agencies armed with special information packets. These packets divulge information on Continental's bad record of passenger complaints, lost baggage, and the losses that travel agencies could incur if Continental's poor performance caused Lorenzo to declare yet another bankruptcy in his fragile empire.

Surprisingly, most travel agents were very supportive of the unions' position. But some had made the mistake of interpreting the strikers' politeness as lack of determination. Such was the case when the American Express Travel Agency began to give preferred treatment to Continental. As one of the IAM's picket captains, Whispering Joe helped organize a 1,000-person Jobs With Justice demonstration in front of the agency's downtown offices.

Very few Machinist activists still had the day-in and day-out commitment and stamina that Joe did after three months of striking. Asked how he became such a good organizer, where he picked up his dogged commitment to fight Eastern management, and how he was able to successfully communicate to travel agents the complex business practices of Frank Lorenzo, Joe answers "the

E.C.T."—for the Eastern Machinists' "Efficiency Credit Team."

The ECT is from another chapter of the IAM's history at Eastern. To journalists and other outsiders the ECT was from the "cooperation period." To Joe and other Eastern Machinists, the ECT was from an era when the union negotiated a change in the power relations between labor and management. As Joe puts it, "For 18 months the union ran the place better than management ever ran it." Joe and four other Machinists coordinated the Efficiency Credit Team's efforts at organizing the union's members to participate in managing the company. Joe modestly acknowledges that he and the other ECT coordinators are usually picked to direct special strike events because of their past reputations as good recruiters of volunteers in the ECT days.

As we write, it's not clear how the final chapter will turn out at Eastern Air Lines. But what is clear and what this issue of *Labor Research Review* is all about is symbolized by the way Whispering Joe made the remarkable transition from a shop steward to essentially a union organizer. He and the other ECT members became union organizers not by trying to get workers at a non-union company to vote the union in, but by getting union members at Eastern to participate in the management of the airline. Regardless of the outcome of the Eastern workers' battle with Frank Lorenzo, Whispering Joe and the other ECT activists are better prepared to take on a recalcitrant management precisely because they were active in the union-driven participation program at Eastern.

We take most of this issue of *Labor Research Review* to argue that the labor movement has to create many, many more Whispering Joes and that unions can do that in the same way that Machinists District 100 did—by organizing their members to contest management's traditional prerogative to run, or to wreck, the workplaces upon which the livelihoods of workers depend.

Management's own recently increased interest in "employee involvement" programs indicates that they are under tremendous pressure to manage better and are seeking new ways to accomplish traditional goals. In Chapters 1 and 2, we argue that cloaked in the rhetoric of "labor-management cooperation" and geared to extracting the shopfloor knowledge and insight of workers, these new management-initiated programs pose a threat to workers' rights and union power.

In Chapters 3 and 4, however, we outline a union-empowering worker participation program which can take advantage of management's need to manage better. In Chapter 3 we argue that, against the advice of nearly all the "neutral" management

consultants, worker participation should be modeled on the adversarial structures and traditions of collective bargaining.

In Chapter 4 we show that worker participation requires union activists to learn and use many of the same worker mobilization skills that union organizers use to build unions in unorganized workplaces. Indeed, we assert that the real potential of union-empowering worker participation programs lies in their ability to expedite the labor movement's transition from a service model of unionism to an organizing model.

Seasoned organizers know that all organizing begins one-on-one at your base. The workplace is labor's base and, therefore, the key to the labor movement meeting its many challenges in the 1990s—among them, building stronger worker-to-worker and union-to-union solidarity; being broadly perceived as a champion of the public's interest; and attracting large numbers of new workers into its fold. American society cannot be made better unless there is a thriving, more powerful labor movement. And before labor can help create this better society, it must first take care of its crumbling base.

Believe me, we're
throwing everything
we have at the
problem.



Cecil
Simpson © 1989

Chapter 1

Participation vs. Cooperation

Should unions cooperate with management? This is said to be the key strategic question for the American labor movement as it struggles to survive the 20th Century. Both the federal Department of Labor and several states now fund programs to encourage "labor-management cooperation," and the business press is full of inspiring stories of "cooperation" making American workplaces more competitive. In response to this ideological onslaught, many unionists have accepted the terms of this debate and proclaim their acceptance or rejection of "cooperation" as a matter of principle.

Such a debate is meaningless and diverts attention from the real problems and possibilities of the American labor movement. Whether to cooperate with management is always a tactical question for unions, one which bargaining committees routinely face in negotiating a new contract. Answering the question always depends on the specific terms of cooperation and an assessment of the relative strength of the union in relation to management. If, for example, management offers to cooperate by doubling wages and improving benefits across the board, cooperation is highly desirable. If, on the other hand, management seeks the union's cooperation in gutting wages and work rules, cooperation is not desirable, but the union has to assess whether it has the strength in a specific set of circumstances to defend its previous gains by striking. In reality, a practical decision on whether to cooperate with management depends on a complex assessment by union leaders and members of the specific terms and circumstances.

A moment's reflection easily clarifies that whether to be more or less cooperative is not and cannot be a strategic issue for the labor movement. But the confusion is not an innocent one. There is a widespread and growing *ideology of cooperationism* that unionists properly reject.

In every instance, the institutions and rhetoric of "labor-management cooperation" actually refer to workplace programs

which are supposed to involve the *participation* of workers in decisions previously reserved for management. Cooperationism as an ideology uses the terms "cooperation" and "participation" interchangeably, as if they referred to the same thing. In doing so, the potential of worker participation for empowering workers and unions and for changing the balance of power in the workplace is disguised.

In this chapter we seek to remove that disguise and to point to the potential of worker participation for unions.

The Origin of Cooperationism

What today is called "labor-management cooperation" and ballyhooed as a "new industrial relations" had its origin in a bitter critique of Scientific Management by Ivy League business school academics, particularly those from Harvard, MIT and Cornell. Defining Scientific Management not in the narrow sense of industrial engineering and time-and-motion studies but in the broader sense in which all mainstream American management attempts to establish a rigorous and systematic control of all aspects of the labor process, these business school academics marshalled evidence that Scientific Management was undermining managerial efficiency. Trapped in an extremely top-down, command system of decision-making and communication, Scientific Management systematically suppresses information about and insight into the organization of work by those who do the work. As a result, product quality had gradually (but dramatically) declined, and productivity increases were increasingly difficult to attain.

In many of the key documents of this academic critique, the Scientific Management approach was counterposed to "participative management," which would give workers more autonomy in their work and more input into decisions about the organization and management of work processes. Participative management, it was said, would unlock the suppressed potential of American workers and would thereby improve productivity and product quality while at the same time improving the quality of worklife.

Coming from some of the most prestigious business schools in the country, and with some support from various government agencies, American managers could not ignore this critique of their practice. Neither could they ignore—particularly in the more competitive economic environment of the 1980s—the potential for productivity increases that some of the initial participative

management experiments had revealed. But the very terms of the critique challenged their self-esteem and many of the initial models of participative management seemed to involve management's giving up substantial control of the labor process.

Management seemed to face a dilemma. In many places, participative management schemes were quite successful in dramatically increasing productivity, but they also seemed to threaten management control. Business school advocates and a growing army of quality of worklife (QWL) consultants learned to respect this management fear and to design programs that addressed it from the very beginning. The trick for management was to get the productivity increases without losing any control. The trick for consultants was to assure management that this could be done. The result was the creation of the ideology of cooperationism.

Below we argue that the key to productivity increases, cost reduction and quality improvement in participative management programs is the genuine participation of workers in the organization and management of their work. One of the main functions of cooperationism as an ideology is to hide this fact. Wherever genuine participation occurs, it should be called "cooperation," and cooperation should get the credit for increasing productivity, improving quality and reducing costs. Though in all the propaganda about "the new industrial relations" there is usually a statement about the importance of workers participating in the organization and management of their work, the ideology of cooperationism always assures that in the final analysis of what makes these programs successful "cooperation," "trust," and "working together" are seen as *the key*, not the knowledge, insight or participation of the workers.

Management's fear of losing control of a genuine participative process requires that "quality of worklife" programs be heavily encrusted with "jointness training" that ensures against their getting out of control. Chapters 2 and 3 of Mike Parker's book, *Inside the Circle: A Union Guide to QWL*, provide a brilliant exposure of the lengths to which management often will go and the sophistication involved in this training in cooperative attitudes. At many companies, such training is now an end in itself and involves little or no actual worker participation. The emphasis in this training is on workers and management cooperating to achieve common goals, but as Parker shows, both the goals and the process for achieving them are determined by management before the process is begun.

The early term "participative management" is almost never used today and the biting edge of the original critique of American

management practice has been nearly lost. In order to preserve both the self-esteem and the ultimate control of management, the language of "labor-management cooperation" has displaced the early rhetoric of worker participation. Both management and third-party advocates and consultants have a vested interest in confusing *participation* and *cooperation*, in lumping them together, and in exaggerating the importance of cooperation.

Participation & Cooperation at Eastern Airlines

Nowhere is this more clear than in the public perception of one of the most famous cases of "participation/cooperation"—that of the Machinists at Eastern Air Lines in 1984-85.

What Machinists District 100 did at Eastern in 1984-85 is widely (and correctly) acknowledged to be one of the most thorough and far-reaching attempts at *worker participation* thus far in the U.S. No union has ever been involved in participating in management in so many different ways—from representation on the board of directors and veto power over an initial business plan to a variety of shopfloor programs. Many aspects of the Machinists' programs are justly controversial within the labor movement because genuine participation in management poses many difficulties for U.S. trade union traditions. But it is difficult, if not impossible, to get to these issues through the cooperationist framework which has been systematically imposed on the Machinists' experience.

A Department of Labor study conducted by a group of Harvard professors, *Labor-Management Cooperation at Eastern Air Lines*, is probably the worst example of this distortion, but it is a fairly obscure source. A better example for our purposes is a one-hour *Frontline* documentary, which aired on public television in November 1988, three months before the Machinists, the Air Line Pilots and the Transport Workers struck Eastern.

The *Frontline* film is a basically excellent and accurate narrative. We have used it—or pieces of it—in labor education classes and in strike support work. The first 35 minutes of the film trace events at Eastern from 1976, when Frank Borman became the CEO, through the "labor wars" of the early 1980s and the subsequent "cooperative period" in 1984-85, to the sale of the airline to Frank Lorenzo. The last 25 minutes detail Lorenzo's cannibalizing of Eastern for the profit of his Texas Air holding company. Any careful viewer of the entire film is likely to come away with a strong sense of the incompetence (Borman) and venality (Lorenzo) of Eastern management during those years, with some sense of the potential of worker participation, and with considerable



Konopacki

sympathy for the unions.

Though we suspect these are conclusions the filmmakers wanted the audience to arrive at, this is not the framework they put the Eastern experience in. The voice-over narrative introduces the experience as an experiment in "labor-management cooperation," not an experiment in worker participation or even "employee involvement," and it develops a firmly cooperationist storyline:

Things were bad at Eastern when labor and management didn't cooperate with each other prior to 1984. They were good when labor and management did cooperate in 1984-85, and were bad again when "both sides reverted to form" and started fighting each other again.

This basic storyline is not false in itself, but by not focusing on the *terms of cooperation*, it disguises *wh* things were good for both workers and the company during the 18 months that management cooperated with a union-initiated and union-controlled worker participation program. A more accurate storyline would go like this:

At the end of 1983, with Eastern on the edge of bankruptcy,

District 100 of the Machinists granted massive (20%) wage concessions, but they insisted that in exchange management allow them to initiate a worker participation program that could address what they saw as widespread mismanagement of the company. The worker participation program—not "cooperation"—increased productivity, improved service and reduced costs, allowing Eastern to substantially reduce its losses in 1984 and to produce a profit for the first time in six years in 1985. Despite these recognized results, Borman abandoned the program.

Though we do not have the space to discuss the Machinists' worker participation program in more detail here, the *Frontline* film itself shows key instances where management's cooperation was decidedly minimal and passive, while the workers' participation was clearly decisive.

At Boston's Logan Airport, for example, Eastern management "cooperated" by disappearing. Union workers organized and managed their work without any supervision; besides increasing productivity through the elimination of the supervisors, all indicators showed improved performance in all aspects of engine maintenance and ramp service. At most Eastern terminals, some management was present, but everywhere supervision was dramatically reduced and workers, given substantial autonomy and authority over their own work.

In an altogether different program, Joe Imperatori and four other full-time union representatives ran a system-wide cost study team ("the ECT") that gathered and developed workers' ideas for saving the company money. There were no management representatives on this cost study team. Management's cooperation here consisted of paying the salaries of the five union reps and providing management information the union needed to develop proposals for cost savings. As the film shows, the union's cost study team saved Eastern more than \$100 million with a variety of ideas—including by bringing back work that had been contracted out, repairing engine parts instead of replacing them with new parts, and rebidding supplier contracts.

The "cooperative period" at Eastern revealed the scope and depth of management incompetence at Eastern. The broader significance of the Machinists' experience during this period has to do with what it suggests about the degree of mismanagement that may be rife in other workplaces and the potential of union-led worker participation to correct it and thereby create the economic circumstances for enhanced wages, standards and job

security.

The cooperationist version of this story turns it into its opposite. Gone is the focus on irrational management practices with which the academic critique of Scientific Management had begun. Gone is the potential value of expanding real workplace control by workers and their unions. In its place is a poignant, but woefully simplistic, lesson about the need to get along with others.

This might not be that important except that the full-blown version of cooperationism ends up defining the problem with American workplaces not as management's fanatical and counter-productive pursuit of control, but as the adversarial nature of the American labor relations system. In this version, one of the prime reasons for the decline of American industry in the 1980s is said to be that labor (meaning unions) and management are always fighting each other, and that if they just communicate better, work together and engage in joint problem-solving, they can produce higher quality products and services at lower costs.

What is lost in this cooperationist interpretation is that cooperation between labor and management can take many different forms, most of which have little or no effect on improving production. Where production is improved it is because workers are providing knowledge and insight that is otherwise not available to management, and which in most workplaces is still contemptuously ignored.

Cooperation was important at Eastern in one sense, but not in the way cooperationism portrays it. When Borman and Eastern management refused to cooperate with the union's worker participation program, it gradually died. But cooperation in and of itself produced nothing, it merely allowed the union-led participation program to operate. What improved both the operational and financial environment in the company was the participation of workers, led by their union, in decisions and practices that have traditionally been reserved for management. Because this threatened management's sense of control, because the *terms of cooperation* threatened management power, they withdrew their cooperation, even though the union program was improving all the things that management is supposed to care the most about—productivity, quality, costs, even profits.

The Fog of Cooperationism

We do not know the extent to which the ideology of cooperationism has been consciously created to manipulate people and events. Journalists and many academics have a need to appear

"balanced" in their presentations of labor-management relations; fingering *mismanagement* as the problem rather than the failure of the two sides to "cooperate" detracts from the appearance of balance, even if it happens to be true. Likewise, academic advocates and consultants have learned to trim their criticism of management practice in order to sell their programs.

Managers themselves are reluctant to recognize the full potential of worker participation because it undermines their self-esteem and could threaten their control. Our guess is that most managers are very ambivalent about these new programs. But if they are going to engage in them, their interests are served by disguising the value and potential of worker participation under a fog of cooperationist rhetoric.

For unions cooperationism deflects their attention from the potential of worker participation to do exactly what Frank Borman and most managements fear the most: to change power relations in the workplace to the benefit of organized workers.

Based on our experience teaching stewards and local union officers, the fog of cooperationism has penetrated deep into the labor movement. Most local leaders identify "worker participation" with "cooperation" and "cooperation," with concessions and a generally passive union stance. While rejecting this direction in theory, local leaders often accept it in practice. With employers capable of breaking strikes, closing plants and contracting work out, when management urges "cooperation" that includes what is said to be enhanced respect and involvement for workers—labor leaders at all levels see little choice but to cooperate with those managements who are willing to cooperate.

While suspicious about management's motives and reluctant to invest any real trust, leaders passively accept management-initiated programs which promise "participation" and "cooperation." Hoping to be protected by certain safeguards, they go along with a management-designed program which is heavily influenced by management's fear of losing control. Such passive though suspicious acceptance of "cooperation/participation" is a dangerous course for unions. It puts management in control of a process which, as we argue in the next chapter, can strengthen management's control and weaken the union.

We hope to show in subsequent chapters, however, that unions can use genuine worker participation to enhance worker and union power and as a first step in the revitalization of organized labor as a broad social movement.

Chapter 2

Who Will Control Shopfloor Knowledge?

The union-initiated and union-controlled worker participation program at Eastern Air Lines shows that the real potential of participation is in tapping the knowledge and insight of workers to reform the organization and management of work. But most existing participative management programs are not like the one at Eastern. The typical offspring of "labor-management cooperation" is a management-initiated program narrowly confined to localized shopfloor problems. Such a program was, in fact, present at Eastern, where it was called "employee involvement" (EI); it was largely irrelevant to the genuine participation program developed by the union and was of little value to either the company or the workers.

The typical management-initiated program (whether called "quality of worklife," "employee involvement," "labor-management participation teams," or "quality circles") divides the workforce into small groups of workers who work in the same or related areas. After some training, a *talk process* is initiated through which ideas for improving things are supposed to be generated, developed and then (maybe) implemented.

Beyond this general form of small groups talking about possible improvements, there is little uniformity. The mission of the groups, for example—that is, *what* is to be improved—varies substantially from program to program. Sometimes the program focuses the talk on one narrow issue—how to improve quality, for example. Sometimes the focus is quite amorphous, and the group will deal with anything that comes up.

The way the group meetings are conducted also can vary greatly. Management is usually represented either by a full-time QWL or EI facilitator or by specially trained front-line supervisors, but the role management representatives play varies. Sometimes the manager runs the meeting and gives firm direction to the discussion. Sometimes an hourly worker is selected to lead the group,

and management is just there to observe and to offer suggestions.

Just as the stated mission of the small group talk process varies, so do underlying management motives. In many workplaces top management merely purchases a consultant's cooperation/participation program "off the shelf" in the vague hope that it will improve employee relations and productivity; in such cases top management merely requires middle and front-line management to cooperate with the consultants and often has little or no idea of what is actually going on. In other instances, management is upfront and well-focused on what it wants—"we need your ideas in order to improve productivity." In nonunion workplaces, such small groups have been used for intelligence-gathering and anti-union propaganda to defeat union organizing drives. As Guillermo Grenier reveals in his case study of a Johnson & Johnson plant in New Mexico, such a hidden management agenda involves a form of sophisticated psychological warfare that could legitimately be called "brainwashing." (See *Inhuman Relations: Quality Circles and Anti-Unionism in American Industry*.) Likewise, the long-term management goal may be to use these groups to condition workers to identify with management goals and to undermine the "us-vs.-them" attitude so essential to unionism.

Because there are so many variations, it is difficult to make firm generalizations about the character of these programs. The consultants have various controversies about the best processes, structures and techniques, as each seeks to sell his or her program. "Team concept," which is all the rage in auto assembly at the moment, further confuses things. Though lumped with QWL and EI as part of the new, more cooperative industrial relations, it is not built around a talk process or a "team" in any commonly accepted sense of that word; rather, on the evidence presented by Mike Parker and Jane Slaughter in *Choosing Sides: Unions and the Team Concept*, it appears to be a highly coordinated speed-up with an overlay of fancy technological and employee relations gimmicks.

"Team concept" aside, what is the record of the QWL-EI (talk process) type of programs? It is very mixed. On the one hand, the vast majority of these programs achieve little and are either abandoned or become dormant. (See Parker, *Inside the Circle*, pp. 131-139, and Kochan, Katz & McKersie, *The Transformation of American Industrial Relations*, pp. 153-157.) Empirical studies that have tried to measure the overall success of these kinds of programs are unreliable because they do not differentiate between the different character of various programs. On the other hand, there are a number of specific cases where some sort of "employee

involvement" program has had dramatic results in improving productivity, quality and/or cost (Eastern gets counted this way, even though the official "employee involvement" program was insignificant).

It is these success stories that have stimulated management's interest. But, as we have tried to show above, there is great confusion about what causes the success. Managements, consultants and outside observers seem to want to avoid the conclusion that the knowledge and insight of workers is key. Rather the majority view seems to be that what makes these programs work (when they work) is a certain *attitude adjustment* on the part of both workers and managers—an adjustment that involves greater trust, more involvement by workers, and greater cooperation between workers and management.

Our view is the opposite of this. In many places, QWL-type programs have achieved significant success in changing attitudes in the way management wanted, but have not substantially affected productivity, quality or costs. Where there has been success in *these* areas, it is because the knowledge and insight of workers has had a direct impact on changing the way the work is actually done.

Our own view is that a process of gathering and developing worker knowledge and insight has tremendous potential for whoever controls it, and that neither most managements nor most unions realize this yet. Most existing programs aim at changing attitudes rather than at gathering and processing worker knowledge and insight. Thus, based on extensive studies of these programs, Parker and Slaughter conclude: "The new cooperative programs are less about gleaning workers' ideas about production than about reshaping workers' ideas about themselves and their bosses." (*Guardian Book Supplement*, Summer 1988) But this is why most such programs are ineffective.

As we have suggested above, it is very hard for management to recognize the real potential of worker knowledge and insight. But when and if they do, these small group talk processes can be transformed in ways that will substantially *increase* management control of the production process. On the other hand, if unions can control such a process, it can empower workers and put unions in a position to significantly change the balance of power between labor and management.

One of the best ways to explain this is to recount an exchange that happened in one of Metzgar's labor education classes several years ago. In a concrete situation, it shows both the danger and the potential of participative management processes for unions.



How Would Maggie Handle It?

Though she looked a couple decades younger, Maggie was in her early 60s then. She had worked at Hart, Schaffner & Marx in Chicago for more than three decades and had been a steward for her ACTWU local for two of those decades. By her own account (which was confirmed by two other ACTWU stewards in the class) she was a bit of a legend in the company for her ability to sew the crotch in men's pants. As she explained it, the company wanted a "bubble" in the crotch and she could produce that bubble better and quicker than any other Hart, Schaffner sewer.

Over the years, she had been subjected to a series of earnest young industrial engineers standing over her trying to see what she was doing to produce that bubble. She took great pleasure in making monkeys out of the IEs, as she had two ways to sew the crotch—the regular way, which produced a good bubble but took the average amount of time, and her "special trick," which was much faster and produced a superior bubble. Usually, when an IE was present, she would sew only in the regular way. But every once in a while, as she said, "just to prove my hand was quicker than his eye," she'd do it the fast way. When this happened, the

IE would get agitated and insist that she do it again, while she insisted she didn't know what he was talking about. To hear these seasoned ACTWU clothing workers tell it, this was great entertainment for everybody in the area, and they used to look forward to the arrival of the time-and-motion study man.

More recently, the company had installed television cameras, and Maggie knew that her hand was not quicker than that eye, which could be played back in slow motion. The union filed grievances against the cameras, and eventually the company had to limit the amount of time they were in use and to install a bell that indicated when the camera was on. In the meantime, Maggie had to work without using her trick at all, and this made her miserable. By using her trick, she could pace her work, piling up men's pants and then resting while still making her quota. She could also help others in her group pace their work, by helping them out based on her bank of bubbled crotches. Working without it robbed her and them of substantial control over their work.

The company, of course, wanted Maggie's "special trick" so that they could make her and all other sewers do it *all the time*.

When in class Metzgar introduced participative management schemes as an antidote to scientific management, Maggie scratched her head. Metzgar argued that by systematically suppressing the insight and initiative of workers, scientific management had now reached a dead-end. It could no longer produce the kind of productivity gains management wanted because its insistence on top-down control of the workforce resulted in all sorts of irrational work procedures. One of the best parts of the class was always when students were asked to give one example of where management makes them do things the wrong way—wrong, from management's point of view, assuming management values productivity, quality and reduced costs. Not only did such examples always flood out of people, they were told with such passion that it was clear that these frontline union leaders were constantly frustrated with management stupidity.

But Maggie didn't get it. She told the class about her special trick, and concluded, "I don't see how this participative management stuff is so different from scientific management. They couldn't get my trick by watching me, so now they're going to get me in one of these small groups and get me to *tell* them. No way. I'm not that dumb. Nobody's that dumb."

METZGAR: "You might not give up your trick—because you know how valuable it is. But you might give up a lot of information that you don't know the value of. Besides, the group could put a lot of pressure on you to give up your trick. What if the company

were threatening to close the plant?

MAGGIE: "I've never told anybody, and I've had lots of pressure from my workmates to tell." (The other two ACTWU stewards nodded to confirm this.) "My idea is that when I retire, I'll show one person how to do it. It's not hard to do. It's so simple, it's disgusting. Maybe I'll give it to Isabelle or Georgia (the other two ACTWU stewards) if they treat me right," she said with a smile. "But its got to be somebody responsible—somebody who will know how to use it."

METZGAR: "But what if the plant were going to be shutdown? Let's say the company said that unless it was able to reduce costs by \$1 million, it was going to shut down the plant. Let's say the union had their own experts examine the company's books, and the union concluded that the threat was real. And, let's say the company said your trick was worth a million dollars to that plant. Would you give it to them then?"

MAGGIE: [without a moment's thought] "No!"

METZGAR: "Huh?"

MAGGIE: "I would never give it to *them*. Once they have it, its theirs. They can do anything they want with it. They can use it at another plant and shut ours down anyway. What I'd do is I'd get a group of the best workers together, *in the union hall*, and I'd tell them, and I'd make them swear that they would never tell management, and I'd explain how to protect it from management. The company could have their million dollars, if that would save the plant, but I'd never give *them* my trick."

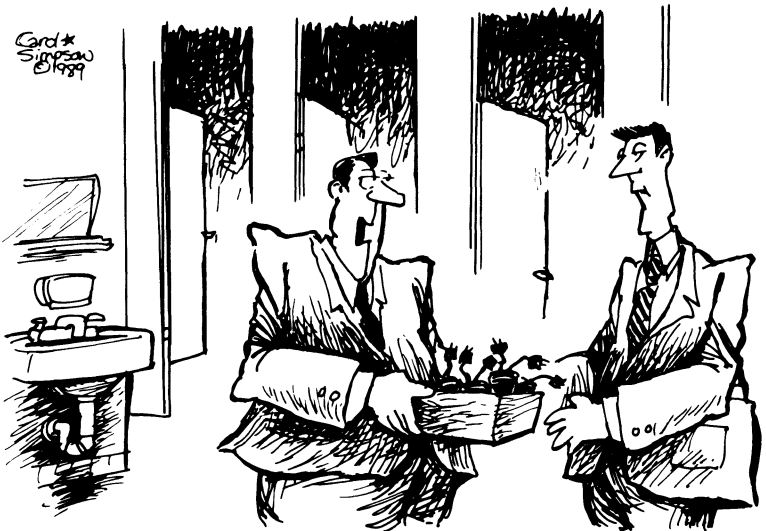
The Maggie Model

Maggie was an extraordinary person—a charismatic black woman who had started her worklife in the late 1940s and ended it in the early 1980s. She had been part of the beginning, middle and end of the organizing phases of the labor, civil rights and women's movements, and in her conversation she constantly referred back to the way things were in order to explain how things are. She was also in possession of an extraordinarily valuable piece of craft knowledge, which the company's time-and-motion study process over the years had made even more palpable to her.

When we speak of tapping the knowledge and insight of workers to improve production, it is not this sort of individually valuable "special trick" we have in mind. Rather, we refer to a much more complex process of interaction among workers which pools knowledge and insight to develop new ways of doing things. But Maggie's single piece of highly valuable craft knowledge allows

us to see certain relationships and dynamics that are usually more difficult to see. And the way she responded to the hypothetical situation she was confronted with provides a model of good trade union practice.

First, Maggie highlighted the danger of sharing worker knowledge and insight with management. These small group talk processes can produce all sorts of information and suggestions that can enhance management's control of both the workforce and the production process. Once management has knowledge that only workers had before, it can do with it what it will, including moving it. There is, in fact, a phenomenon of QWL-type programs appearing just before a plant is closed. David Simmons, one of LRR's editors, was a UE local officer at Westinghouse in Chicago as it was closing down; he thinks management's motive in introducing a QWL program shortly before the shutdown was to undermine worker militancy in challenging the shutdown. Maybe. But Mike Matuszak, who worked at Ingersoll-Rand in South Bend through its shutdown, is convinced that I-R management used its Quality Circle program to extract knowledge that it was then able to use at its nonunion plants in North and South Carolina. (See *Grand Designs: The Corporate Assault on Local Unions*, ed. Charles Craypo.)



"I want to open up better lines of communication with my employees. Plant these listening devices in all the washrooms."

Management motives vary, and from what we've seen and been told about, most managements are much more interested in these talk processes for their psychological value than for the hard currency of knowledge that can be derived from them. But it doesn't really matter, does it? The danger is there, regardless of what management's motives are. To facilitate a management-directed process where workers sit around and give away their knowledge and insight is just not good union practice. There is a long history of workers, both with and without unions, developing ways to protect their knowledge from management's grasp. It is part of what gives workers, organized or unorganized, some control and dignity on the job. The very presence of management in these group meetings should be as abhorrent to unions as it was to Maggie—always and on principle.

This is where Maggie drew the line—sharing her knowledge with management. But there are situations where workers need to improve production in order to protect their jobs. Maggie recognized this in principle in the way she responded to Metzgar's hypothetical situation. The principle she assumed is a good one for such situations: *Give management the result that is required, but do everything you can to hide the process by which the result is achieved.* This is a somewhat difficult principle to articulate clearly, but it is one that we have found is widely understood by shopfloor union leaders. Another example may clarify this:

In 1982, in the midst of the steel industry's great depression, local management at U.S. Steel's Johnstown Works asked USWA Local 1288 for a one-time waiver of certain work rules so that the plant could bid lower for a specific machining job. The waiver would affect some 15 workers, and the local grievance chair met with them to discuss the proposal. After thorough discussion, here's how they responded: They would not waive any work rules, but if management agreed to withdraw *all* supervision while they worked on this one particular job, management could go ahead and bid the job at a severely reduced number of hours. They would produce the work in that number of hours, so long as management made no attempt to find out how they did it.

As this was explained to us, the workers thought they were giving up quite a lot just by admitting that the job could be done much more productively than it had been. And they could see from the work rules that management had designated to be waived (which in their view would not have increased productivity much) that management had not the foggiest idea of how best to do the work. Thus, given that the plant was losing money and in danger of being shut down (which it eventually was), they were willing

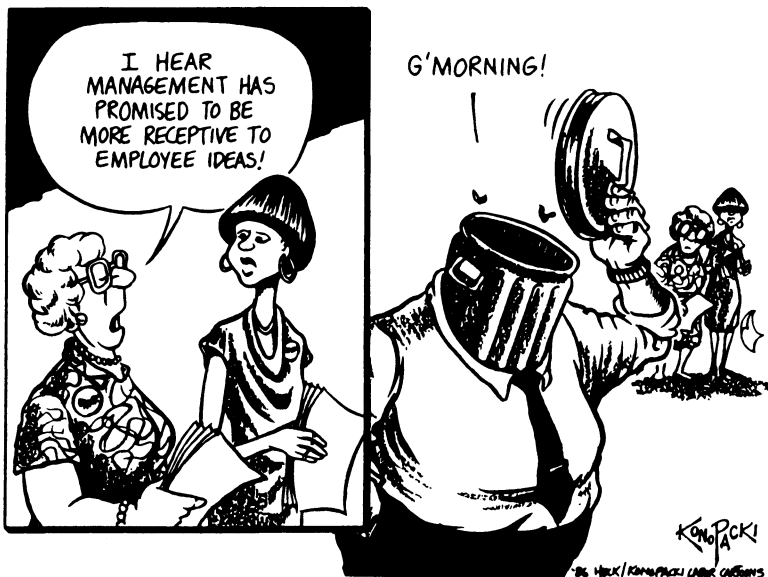
to give management the result it wanted, but not the means for achieving that result in the future.

Such hair-splitting distinctions may sound strange to the public, and to all too many unionists for that matter. The only reason Maggie was willing to share her trick with other workers was because the plant was in danger of being shut down. Likewise, the steelworkers were only willing to work at maximum efficiency when faced with the permanent loss of their jobs. Shouldn't these workers have been improving quality and productivity all along? Wasn't Maggie's hiding of her trick depriving the company of productivity increases that would have made it "more competitive" as well as depriving thousands, maybe millions, of men of better bubbles in their crotches? Isn't this kind of nit-picking defensiveness by workers and their unions precisely what has undermined U.S. industry?

What the public does not understand is the complex interest workers and unions have in productivity. Maggie kept her trick to herself not only because it enhanced her own and others control of their work, but because once the company had it they could impose it everywhere and the resulting productivity increases would have meant job losses. Maggie's own job was not in jeopardy because she had high seniority, but she saw it as her duty to her fellow workers to deny management the productivity enhancements inherent in the widespread application of her trick. When faced with a plant closing, on the other hand, where everybody's job would be lost, Maggie was willing to give some ground, though not as much as management would have wanted.

Around the issue of *productivity* is where all the talk about "working together" and "the mutual interests of labor and management" breaks down. Unions and workers do have an interest in increasing productivity, but it is not and can never be as unambiguous as management's. Management *always* has an interest in *as much productivity as possible*—that is, in the greatest amount of (quality?) product for the least amount of hours worked. Workers have an interest in increasing productivity *only to the degree* that productivity growth is necessary to support increased standards of living and/or to preserve the long-term viability of their workplace. Unions, in order to be effective, need to be able to put workers in a position to *regulate* productivity growth, and to react collectively to situations as they change.

The basic logic of productivity growth is radically different for workers and management. For management, while productivity growth is sometimes more important than others, it is always a desirable goal; management needs no further information to



decide if large increases in productivity are desirable at any give time. The situation is the opposite for workers. If, for example, the market for the product you produce is growing dramatically, steady productivity increases will not eliminate jobs and, by reducing the unit costs of production, will increase profits that organized workers can fight for a share of through wage-and-benefit increases. If, on the other hand, the market for your product is stagnant or declining, productivity increases *will* result in job losses, while the lack of productivity growth, by keeping prices relatively high, may further erode the market, which will also result in job losses. In other words, workers *always* need more information—information about the market, about the financial condition of the company and its operating costs—before they can decide what amount of productivity increase, if any, is in their best interests.

For most of the years since World War II, union workers in the major industries faced something like the first scenario described above. With markets expanding, workers, consumers and employers all could benefit from productivity increases. Since somewhere in the mid-1970s, however, workers have more and more faced something like the second scenario—which, in the language of the cooperationists, is basically a "lose-lose" situation for workers and their unions. In this situation, unions need more information, not less, more control over business decisions at the top levels, and a much more organized and cohesive workforce

at the shopfloor level.

Maggie's response to Metzgar's hypothetical situation provides a model for unions in today's circumstances. She could see the need, in a changed situation, to give up her decades-long fight to deny the company the productivity increases her knowledge and insight could provide. But that didn't mean giving up everything—work rules and all the shopfloor tactics and strategies she had developed through years of experience—and turning to some vague "trust" and "cooperation" over which she and her workmates had no control. Rather, she insisted on moving the fight to a new terrain, one that required gathering "the best workers together, *in the union hall*."

Maggie had kept her special trick to herself for two kinds of reasons. One had to do with the advantage it gave her over other workers, and she was frank about this, justifying it by her "responsible" use of it. But she was also well aware of the difficulty of controlling its use, of denying it to management, with each additional person who knew. She was well aware of the risk involved in sharing it, even *in the union hall*. But she saw it as the union's responsibility to organize the workers into a disciplined and cohesive group who could collectively protect what she had individually protected before.

In subsequent conversation, Maggie expressed her scepticism that this could be done effectively, since it needed to get into the hands of only one "fink" or one careless worker to be gone forever. But Maggie's "special trick" was vulnerable in a way that the more typical and more complex process of pooling worker insight and knowledge is not. The question is whether unions can effectively organize and control such a process—one that is not a matter of simply providing a *service* to their members on an individual case-by-case basis, the way the grievance procedure does, but one that requires systematic and disciplined *internal organizing* of rank-and-file workers.

In our view, this is the question on which the future of unionism in the United States will turn. If unions don't learn how to organize and control the collective knowledge and insight of their members to improve production, managements—despite their inherent disadvantages—will. So far, managements have been limited by their own ego insecurity, their fear of losing control, and by the distrust of workers, based on experience, of giving up knowledge and insight that management can use against them. But these disadvantages will not last forever. Following Maggie's model, unions need to organize their members to fight back on a new terrain.

Chapter 3

Participating as Bargaining

Current models of "participation/cooperation" all claim that effective worker participation programs involve a process that is entirely different from collective bargaining. Whereas bargaining is said to be *adversarial*, worker participation is seen as necessarily *cooperative* and involves building trust between workers and management. This proscription against modeling participation on bargaining not only disarms any potential for strengthening the union through such programs, it distorts the character of collective bargaining itself.

Collective bargaining is a *process through which adversaries cooperate*. Just as two warring countries agree to negotiate their differences rather than battling each other to the death, collective bargaining is a negotiating process between adversaries with conflicting interests. As an adversarial process, each side is expected to pursue its own interests, and the common interest will be arrived at through the give and take of negotiations. When the adversaries cannot negotiate a satisfactory settlement, they go to war with each other—through strikes or lockouts.

Though adversarial, collective bargaining does not exclude cooperation with management. In fact, a labor contract sets the terms and conditions upon which labor and management agree to cooperate for a designated period of time. But in collective bargaining, cooperation between labor and management is not some touchy-feely encounter group with labor and management representatives interspersed in a circle. Labor is on one side of the table and management, on the other. Both management and labor realize that the terms of cooperation they negotiate will be determined by the relative strength (and bargaining skill) of each party. If the union is weak and the members are not united, the terms of the contract will favor management. If the workers are united and management cannot shift work elsewhere or hire replacement workers, the new contract will favor the union.

Worker participation programs should proceed on the same premises. What management needs is the knowledge and insight workers can bring to the improvement of production processes. If it were to ask the union to organize its members to provide that knowledge and insight, it would be clear that this is a bargaining demand. It would also be clear—as it should be anyway—that the knowledge and insight of workers has a dollar value to the company, and if workers are going to give value to the company, they should get something in return. The rhetoric and ideology of cooperationism hides these realities. Approaching worker participation from a bargaining perspective can help reveal them.

Later in this chapter we will outline a worker participation program modeled on a traditional adversarial labor relations structure, but let's first look at some preliminary issues and ask: How would this be handled if it were seen as analogous to collective bargaining?

Goals of the Program

In bargaining, the process begins with both sides laying their demands—their goals—on the table. Likewise, in participative management programs, the goals of the program should be clearly and precisely stated.

Vague goals like "enhancing our human resources" or "creating a cooperative atmosphere conducive to trust and mutual respect" should be dismissed out of hand as goals which can be accomplished through traditional bargaining relationships. Such management goals are always intermediate, means toward other ends. Assuming that management's ultimate aim is not to enhance its own control by undermining union power and influence (which, given the history of these programs, no union can afford to assume), management's ultimate goal is going to be to improve its financial situation—its profits in the private sector or its ability to live within (politically determined) budgetary constraints in the public sector. The specific *management* goals of a participative management program are, therefore, likely to be one or all three of the following:

- to increase productivity.
- to improve quality (and consistency).
- to reduce costs.

Clearly stated in this way the union is in a position to adopt, reject or modify any of management's goals and to propose *union* goals. There are four such goals unions should lay on the table.

First, we believe cost savings should also be a union goal. If labor and management both share this cost reduction goal in order to

improve the financial situation of the enterprise (private or public), then it is obvious from a union perspective that the participative management program must have the capacity to focus on *all the costs of doing business*. Management will instinctively pursue savings only in labor costs and through productivity increases. Unions must insist that programs shift from this narrow focus to a broader definition of cost savings in the company.

This broader definition implies the second union goal: to gain influence at all levels and areas of decision-making in the enterprise. Important areas such as purchasing, sales and marketing, engineering, investment and finance need to be included in the program design. Corporate performance in these areas has a tremendous impact on the ability of unions to bargain over wages, benefits and job security. Unions must begin to develop expertise in these areas just as they have developed expertise through bargaining over production work rules and compensation packages. By gaining access to daily information and input into decisions in these nontraditional areas, unions can eventually influence long-term corporate planning.

Third, unions should insist that the program advances the union's pursuit of its traditional interests such as enhanced job security, improved wages and benefits, an improved work environment, and a stronger union. Most EI-type programs have language which broadly embrace worker-oriented goals, but very few make mention of *union* goals. Insisting on structuring the program to strengthen the union is essential to testing management's motivation. If management's ultimate goal is to undermine the union, it will likely lapse into surprising indifference toward reducing costs when faced with a union-empowering program.

Fourth, to ensure the union's ability to reach these three goals, the union must have structural control over the insights and knowledge of the workforce. If management's ultimate goal is to improve the enterprise's financial situation and if this goal is legitimately related to union goals such as job security, then both goals should be accepted. But, following "Maggie's model," the union should strive to give management the result that is required without giving it control of the process by which the result is produced. The union should clearly articulate from the beginning that one of its primary goals is to strengthen the union and to enhance workers' power over the fate of the enterprise. In order to achieve this, *any shopfloor component of the participative program should structurally exclude management from a direct relationship with the rank-and-file*—just as a healthy bargaining

relationship does not allow management to sell its contract demands directly to the membership.

Thus, by designing a multi-level program that gives the union the opportunity to organize the workers to collectively control their own knowledge and insight, the union will be able to pursue nonlabor cost savings, on the basis of which it can improve its bargaining position.

Consultants & Staffing

No union would agree to have a "neutral" lawyer preside over contract negotiations. Rather, management has its lawyers and economists, and the union has its own. Likewise, unions should reject any notion of a neutral or joint consultant. At worst, these self-proclaimed experts will really be management stooges. At best they will promote their own agendas, which invariably include the creation of a "culture of cooperation and trust" that confuses more than it clarifies. Very often these same consultants can be useful if they are identified and function as management's consultants, while unions identify and hire their own consultants to help train and implement their part of the participation program.

The union should make it clear from the beginning that its resources for union consultants and lost time for union coordinators should be equal to those of management. The union will usually need at least one full-time coordinator to act as its chief advocate in the day-to-day operation of the participation program. It is this person's primary function to insure that the program is used to help the union accomplish its overall bargaining and internal organizing objectives. Shopfloor facilitators should be selected by the union as if they were assistant shop stewards.

This implies that union-selected coordinators and facilitators will become vitally important union leaders. First, they must assert the union's perspective in these nontraditional areas. Second, union coordinators are responsible for organizing the knowledge and insight of rank-and-file workers to formulate appropriate union proposals for cost reduction, higher product quality, and work environment improvements. Third, these union representatives will play a crucial role in mobilizing the membership behind union-initiated programs to correct mismanagement at all levels.

Training & Meetings

It is impossible to imagine contract negotiations where the parties never met separately, where *all* meetings included both

management and union representatives, and where union negotiators discussed the pros and cons of management's latest proposal amongst themselves while management representatives were present. And yet this is exactly how most QWL/EI programs are conducted.

"Neutral" consultants will insist to the union that *all* training and *all* meetings be jointly attended by management and workers. What they don't like to bring up is the fact that management has many meetings, strategy sessions, and training sessions from which the union is excluded.

Again, using a collective bargaining analogy results in a very



different practice. As much of the training as possible should be separate from management. Stewards and committeepersons should be trained alongside the union coordinators and facilitators, and it should be made clear to the coordinators and facilitators that their role is to assist the stewards and the union executive board. The primary objective in the training is to emphasize the entire group's role in pushing the union's internal organizing agenda.

Some of the group leadership skills, statistical methods and problem-solving techniques that are common in most QWL programs can be extremely valuable, shorn of the cooperationist baggage that usually comes with them. (See Chapters 2 & 3 of *Inside the Circle*). Particular attention should be given to training facilitators and stewards on obtaining management information vital to the union's cost-saving efforts.

Likewise, no union bargaining committee worth its salt would enter a bargaining session without first mapping out its objectives and strategies. Facilitators should meet separately with the rank and file to generate proposals, gather management information necessary to develop the proposals, and then meet with the union steering committee to assess which proposals should be brought to the joint labor-management committee and pushed by the union. The union must have its own strategy at all levels of the program prior to any joint meetings.

Union-Empowering Models of Participation

The key to a union-empowering worker participation program is the structural exclusion of management from a direct relationship with the rank and file. This allows the members to hide their knowledge from the boss. It keeps management from screwing up the program, and it clearly identifies the participation program as the union's, not as a nebulous joint program. Any jointness in a union-initiated program should be the same type of jointness that exists when unions meet with management on joint safety committees or joint health and welfare committees. Jointness occurs at the representative level, not at the rank-and-file level.

By keeping these programs away from both company supervisors and "neutral" facilitators, the union can eliminate their potential for the kind of cooperationist attitude adjustment that so many managements seem to be after. Moreover, management will not be able to offer workers a new structure which encourages members to bypass the union and approach management directly to resolve problems.

By excluding management from shopfloor level teams and making these teams accountable to all the workers through the union structure, unions can systematically address the wide variety of irrational management practices which are undermining so many American workplaces, while at the same time expanding and revitalizing themselves as institutions of representative democracy. Three distinct workplace models have emerged to accomplish this goal—the special task force model (STF), the autonomous work group (AWG) and the area-wide union committee (AUC). Combined in a unified structure, these three forms of worker participation can empower workers and their unions.

The Special Task Force

The special task force is set up to look at special systemwide or nonshopfloor problems. Appointed by a union steering committee, the task force's mission is defined by a particular problem identified either by management or by the union. STFs should have access to all necessary company information dealing with the problem and will usually require assistance from management specialists (such as engineers or financial analysts) as well as help from outside experts. But the task force itself is composed of union members only. Members of the union steering committee must have a thorough understanding of the company's annual budget, the business plan and industry data to be able to choose appropriate realms for STF activity. The task force approach is particularly appropriate for looking into traditional management areas like investment, purchasing or production planning.

The Machinists' Efficiency Credit Team (ECT) at Eastern Air Lines is an example of the special task force approach. The ECT acted as a union steering committee and created many special task forces. Many of the task forces achieved cost savings by bringing new work into the company, what the Machinists called "contracting in." Others found ways to repair rather than replace used parts. One task force initiated a reorganization of the airlines' inventory system, and another saved thousands of dollars by finding a supplier who sold tiny air-conditioning filters for three cents that the company had been purchasing for \$5 apiece. At one point middle management formed its own cost-saving team to compete with the union's ECT. When they couldn't generate enough cost-savings to justify their own salaries, they tried to solicit ideas from the workforce. Through its steward system, the union spread the word to make sure that all cost-saving ideas came through the ECT. Cut off by the rank and file, the management team was disbanded. (See "Machinists vs. Mismanagement,"

Labor Research Review #10, pp. 85-101.)

Another example of the task force approach is what UAW Local 686 at Harrison Radiator in Lockport, New York, did when faced with a management threat to outsource an entire department. Forming a cost study team made up of union workers in the affected department, the union solicited ideas from the workforce and in three weeks developed 25 proposals for cutting costs. Since the team met independently of management, it was able to prioritize its list of proposals and give management only its top three ideas, which were enough to make the internal operation less expensive than the bid submitted by an outside contractor, and thus enough to save their jobs. The control the union members retained by excluding supervisors allowed them to keep secret the 22 additional cost-savings ideas their cost study team had generated. (See *A Fighting Chance*, pp. 33-50.)

The Harrison cost study team and the Eastern efficiency credit team illustrate how a union special task force model allows labor to improve the financial condition of an enterprise without giving management access to workers' insight and knowledge. What makes this model valuable is its ability to deal with multi-level issues inside the company. On the other hand, it does not provide the union with a broad day-to-day structure with which it can organize its members.

Autonomous Work Groups

Autonomous work groups go one step further than STFs in keeping workers' knowledge from management. In union-oriented autonomous work groups, supervision is withdrawn and the workers organize and manage the work themselves. All existing work rules are formally preserved, but without supervision present, workers are free to do the work in the most efficient way they deem possible. This is what USWA Local 1288 proposed for one job at the Johnstown Works of U.S. Steel. At Eastern during the "cooperative" period, this was a permanent arrangement for mechanics and ramp servicers.

Known as the "lead/supervisor program," Eastern management and the IAM agreed to transfer non-disciplinary supervisory functions to the chief stewards and to "lead workers" who were selected partly on the basis of seniority and partly by the desires of the work group. To avoid sabotage by first-line supervisors, the IAM and Eastern top management agreed to reduce actual supervisors through attrition and in the meantime to transfer as many as possible to other non-bargaining unit titles. When the Machinists discovered that there was no training program for

Eastern supervisors, they developed their own manual and training program for lead workers.

There are three obstacles to AWGs being broadly accepted as a model for union-empowering participation programs. First and foremost, management will rarely agree to an approach which leaves workers totally unsupervised company-wide. Second, autonomous work groups are not appropriate for all workers. Many workers want a more structured environment in which they are accountable to one person as opposed to an entire group. Third, by its very area-specific structure, an AWG will be forced to focus more on labor-oriented problems than on larger cost-savings and mismanagement issues at other areas and levels in the organization. Thus, while AWGs might be pursued by unions in work areas where management exposure to workers' knowledge and insight makes the workforce especially vulnerable, they are not applicable as a universal model for worker participation.

The Area-wide Union Committee

There is one worker participation structure similar to the autonomous work group which overcomes these complications while still allowing the union to retain most of the positive aspects of AWGs. The area-wide union committee (AUC), like the autonomous work group, is based in a single work area and interacts within a single work group. The AUC is part of the union's structure, so the union selects all representatives to the committee, typically the steward for the area and two or three others who act as assistant stewards on the committee. By using internal organizing techniques such as canvassing and small group meetings with the rank and file, the AUCs gather and process worker knowledge and insight in their work area.

Though management is prohibited from directly soliciting suggestions and ideas from the rank and file, management may have its own area committee and may meet jointly with an AUC at regular intervals to discuss issues which deal broadly with the work product in their area. The AUC meets prior to any joint meetings to map out the union's game plan for that meeting. Before any suggestions are implemented, they must be accepted by a joint steering committee composed of top union officials and top management officials.

Unlike autonomous work groups, supervisors are not removed from the AUC's area, but the AUC's participation activities on the shopfloor exclude the participation of management and supervision. Under this model, those workers who are not interested in participating do not have to. On the other hand, if certain areas

are suitable for autonomous work groups, they can be implemented with the assistance of that area's AUC.

By themselves AUCs will not necessarily empower the workers and the union, but they provide an opportunity for doing so. By providing assistants to help the steward interact with the members, the AUCs provide the basis for the union to develop an internal organizing structure which can be used to mobilize the members behind a variety of union efforts. Though an AUC functions in a specified area of the company, its mission should be broadly defined to generate ideas for cost savings beyond the shopfloor. In fact, these ideas should be given priority in order to shift the cost savings focus away from labor costs and job-threatening productivity improvements. Through its direct line to the union steering committee, the AUC should be encouraged to generate ideas for special task forces to deal with the larger problems of mismanagement.

Building on the union's traditional steward structure, AUCs can multiply the union's eyes and ears on the shopfloor, expanding the opportunities for members to be active in the union and inspiring that activity by actively soliciting membership participation in determining the overall fate of their workplace.

A Union-Empowering Structure for Participation

We propose a union-empowering structure for worker participation which is a combination of the area-wide union committee and the special task force. With such a model, the union will be able to use the task force structure to investigate multi-level issues throughout the institution. And, the Area-wide Union Committee will give the union a permanent structure with which to organize its members' participation in management decision-making and other union activities. This dual structure also allows the AUCs to act as important sources of ideas for special task forces and as a means to identify future STF members.

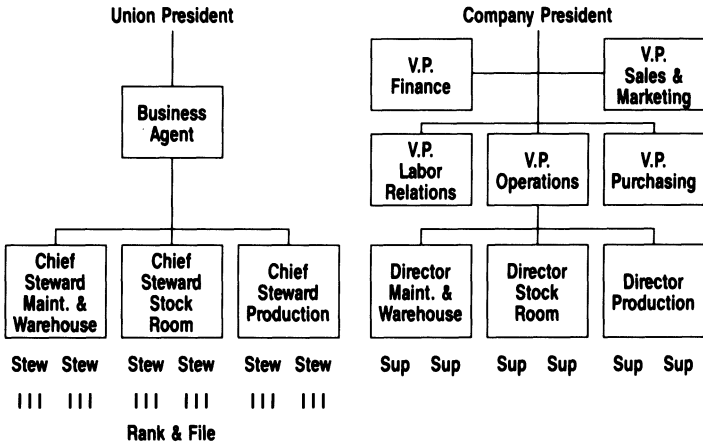
To visually describe the difference between our union-empowering structure and the traditional QWL/EI model, we include three diagrams.

Figure One is an organizational chart depicting a traditional labor relations structure at a typical unionized workplace. For purposes of this discussion, the key features in Figure One are threefold.

First, the union has a corresponding relationship with each level of the company. The president of the union interacts directly with the president of the company. Each chief steward interacts with a company director for a specific area within the company's

Figure 1

Traditional Labor Relations Schematic Within a Unionized Setting

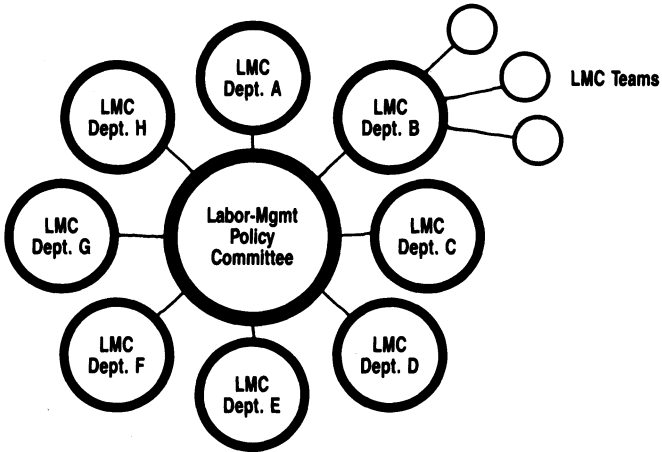


operation. Each steward relates to those rank-and-file members under the jurisdiction of a specific supervisor.

Second, the union has no structural relationship with certain areas of the corporation, such as finance, sales and marketing, and purchasing. What is decided in these areas has a major impact on the workplace, but the union has little, if any, impact on those decisions.

Third, if the diagram were folded or cut vertically in half, the part which describes the union's involvement within the company would now describe how the union operates as its own institution. This last point is of particular concern in this discussion because most QWL/EI programs which profess union involvement, involve unions in ways which have no direct relationship with the basic union structure.

This is readily apparent when we look at Figure Two, which is a generic diagram of a typical QWL or EI program in a unionized setting. At the center of this maze of circles is the Labor-Management Policy Committee, which includes the top decision-makers from both management and the union. Arrayed around the big LMC are a series of departmental and subdepartmental LMCs, which include management representatives and hourly workers (who are not necessarily and not usually *union representatives*, though union members). All ideas and suggestions from

Figure 2**Generic QWL/EI Program**

the little LMCs are funnelled into the Labor-Management Policy Committee, where both the union and management have an opportunity to veto any suggestions.

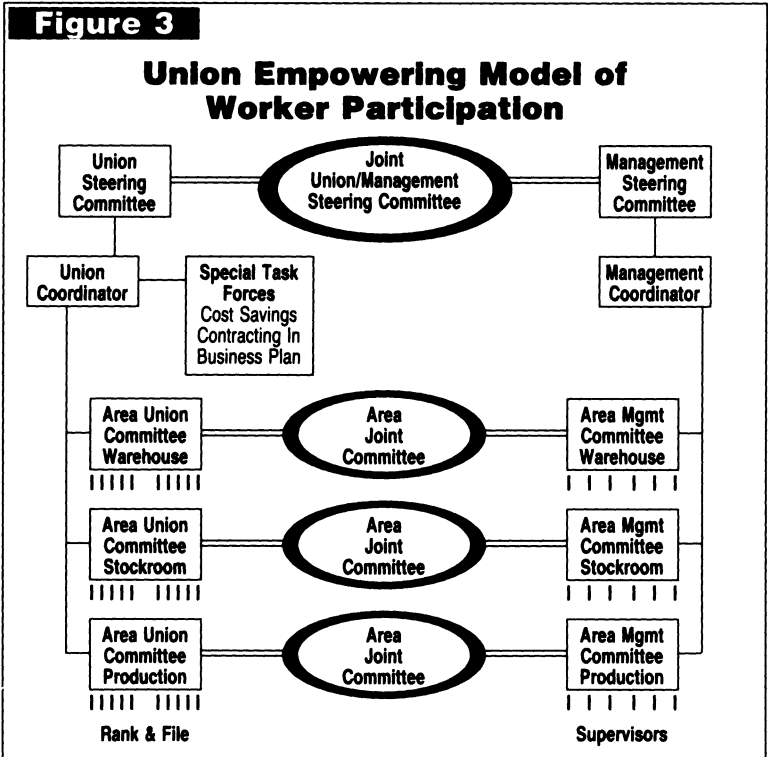
Figure Two portrays the worker participation process as entirely autonomous from both the union structure and the basic corporate structure, both of which are seen to relate to the process only in the central decision-making body. As concerns the union structure, this is usually an accurate depiction of the reality. In most instances, the union's steward system and even most of its executive board is totally removed from the process. But as it concerns the corporate structure, Figure Two falsifies the reality. The corporate structure not only remains in place, it impinges on every aspect of the participation process because the top management which meets on supposedly equal ground with the union in the big LMC has control of its managers and supervisors in a way the union does not and cannot have of its membership. Through the various levels of management structure, management has a line of communications and control that the union does not have.

Of course, unlike Figure One, this diagram cannot be folded or cut in any manner which would describe how the union functions as an independent institution. Clearly, models of worker participation patterned on Figure Two at best ignore the primary role

of unions in the company and at worst subvert the union's role and power.

In Figure Three we demonstrate how a union-empowering model of worker participation would appear schematically. This particular diagram was developed by Banks with Transport Workers Union Local 291, which represents 1,600 bus and rail employees at the Metro-Dade Transportation Administration (MDTA) in Miami. A similar model was the basis for union-initiated programs at Eastern Air Lines, Western Air Lines and the transit authority in Philadelphia.

In essence, the program represented by Figure Three is the periodic joining together of two separate programs, the union's and management's, in the same way that Figure One demonstrates the coming together of the union and management for purposes of collective bargaining and contract administration. Each half of the program has its own constituency, and each party retains its exclusive access to that constituency. Thus, the local union leadership has control over the apparatus of the program which deals



with the rank and file, while management communicates its program through its supervisors.

The union-empowering model of participation is overseen, on the union side, by a union steering committee composed of the top officers of the union. This group reviews all proposals from the union side before they are presented to the joint union-management steering committee. The joint committee is composed of the union steering committee and a management steering committee with an equal number of the enterprise's top managers. The union coordinates its various participation activities through a full-time coordinator (or team of coordinators) who acts as the staff of the union steering committee. It is the union coordinator's job to arrange for training and to assure access to information for the various union participation groups.

With this model, participation takes place in two ways. First, the Area-wide Union Committee undertakes a variety of canvassing and small-group activities to solicit ideas from the workforce and develops them into proposals for change. More area-specific proposals can be presented to management through the Area-wide Joint Committee, though they would be reviewed by the union coordinator and union steering committee before being offered for final approval to the joint steering committee. But some of the suggestions solicited by the AUCs should be pushed up to the union coordinator for possible formation of a Special Task Force, which is the second mode of participation. Where an STF is formed, it should include rank-and-file workers who initially made the suggestion for broader changes in management practices.

Both modes of participation require a sifting process on the part of the union leadership—the AUC members, the union coordinator and the union steering committee—before any proposal is presented to management. "Jointness" in this kind of program occurs only at the representative level, in joint committees which in Figure Three are represented by circles, and only after the union has thoroughly explored the negative and positive potential of any workplace change. But while the union thereby maintains control of the participation process, the proposed changes can only be implemented if management agrees.

Thus, the union needs management's cooperation in order to fully implement a program like that sketched in Figure Three. Management has to pay the salary of the full-time union coordinator(s) and lost time for participants in the AUC's activities, and it has to authorize its personnel to release management information to the STFs. But most of the worker participation part of the program operates autonomously as a union-directed activity.

Like Figure One, Figure Three can be folded or cut vertically in half, and a clear union structure is revealed to the left of the circles representing the joint part of the program.

To see how a union-empowering participation program would work in practice, let's take a hypothetical situation involving Local One representing workers at Urban Pest Control (UPC) Inc. Though purely fictional, this case is an amalgam of elements we have witnessed in one actual case or another.

Pest Control at Local One

Local One represents all hourly workers at UPC Inc., a large urban pest control company which has recently been purchased by a huge food processing conglomerate. During the first negotiations between the new owners and Local One, management insists on establishing a joint labor-management program, and Local One insists that this program be established to empower the union. The terms of the new program allow the union to set up Area-wide Union Committees (AUC) headed by each area's shop steward. Each steward, in turn, solicits two volunteers from the rank and file to be on the AUC. The union is able to establish AUCs in three areas—in fleet maintenance, where the company's trucks are serviced; among the service representatives who actually spray and fumigate houses and lawns; and in the laboratory where the pest control chemicals are mixed. The union appoints as full-time coordinator of the program its First Vice President, Joe Hill. Hill has always been particularly passionate about the issue of mismanagement ("They're running the company into the ground and then coming to us for wage cuts!").

At a union training program Joe Hill teaches the new AUC members about union history, how the corporation's structure works, and how to read the balance sheet in the company's annual report. They learn how the program is supposed to help the stewards, and some techniques in talking one-on-one with the members. They also discover that one of the reasons UPC management agreed to the new program is because the food processing industry traditionally has higher profit margins than the pest control industry and local managers are nervous about their own job security. Of particular concern to local management is the scheduled visit later in the year by a top corporate audit team.

The fleet maintenance AUC canvasses its members and discovers that almost everyone is upset that fleet maintenance averages 15 hours per employee per week in overtime. Joe Hill and the union's financial consultant help the AUC calculate that

by hiring ten new employees, fleet maintenance could save the company \$100,000 a year in overtime costs and reduce the weekly overtime average to three hours.

The lab techs use their AUC to cost out the feasibility of purchasing a new mixer, which would give them greater control over inventory and make the company less reliant on the outside contractors who too often mix the chemicals improperly. Considering the costs of the mixer and the additional machine operator, the Lab AUC estimates that after the initial investment was paid off in a year and a half, the new machine would save UPC \$73,000 annually.

The service reps' AUC also looks at outside vendors and discovers, to its surprise, that the company is paying 5 cents a gallon too much for gasoline and that the fuel distributor is the brother-in-law of UPC's Vice President of Purchasing.

When the AUCs meet with their respective Area Management Committees (AMCs) to discuss their proposals, the response is less than enthusiastic. The overtime proposal from fleet maintenance is rejected out-of-hand because management believes that in every case overtime is cheaper than hiring new workers. The management committee in the lab says that their proposal warrants further study, but that new equipment expenditures cannot be considered until the new fiscal year. The AMC members in the service area say they can't touch the gasoline proposal because it is a "hot potato."

In most "jointness" programs the union would have very few options remaining at this point. But this is not the case with Local One. First, Joe Hill assembles the heads of the various AUCs to allow each group to exchange their ideas and talk about the problems they are having with management. Next, using the surveying techniques learned in the union's training sessions, the AUC representatives solicit signatures on survey forms from workers in their areas to demonstrate rank-and-file support for the union's three proposals. Hill then thoroughly briefs the union president and the union steering committee about the three AUC proposals and provides the union committee with the appropriate documentation.

Prior to the next company-wide joint union-management committee meeting, Local One's president visits UPC's president and assures him that the union would rather implement the three AUC proposals before the auditors come at the end of the month. This way UPC management can share the credit with the union for developing the cost-saving ideas. At the joint steering committee meeting, the union members of the committee discuss the

three AUC proposals, using the supporting documents and survey results which show broad support by the rank and file. The company agrees to the proposals and they are implemented.

In our hypothetical example, the union, with management cooperation and funding, is able to develop its program across the workforce. By involving its members in the program and showing how vital the union is in protecting the members as it systematically uncovers and corrects a variety of forms of mismanagement, Local One strengthens itself and improves the company's economic prospects at the same time.

Of course, things won't always work this well. One thing that can always go wrong is that workers participating in the program may develop a cost-saving proposal that is bad for the union. For example, in the UPC case, the fleet maintenance workers might suggest changing the current daily eight-hour overtime provision to a practice which only pays overtime rates after a worker reaches a 40-hour week. This too would save the company money, but it would not improve the workers' lot and it would jeopardize the rights of all bargaining unit members. In this case, the union's coordinator, Joe Hill, would educate the fleet maintenance AUC members on how their proposal could hurt the very workers the program is designed to help and how the proposal could be reformulated to meet cost-saving and union goals. Hill would also alert the union steering committee to be on watch at the next joint steering committee meeting. In the event management tried to sneak by the proposal at this meeting, the union would be able to exercise its veto.

Another problem that can be expected to crop up is that management will find that cooperating with a strong worker participation program is very stressful. Management might withdraw its cooperation at any time. If so, the union might grieve the issue, or it might decide the best strategy is to do nothing until the contract expires and raise the issue of mismanagement at that time. When company bargainers plead poverty during the negotiations, the union can always point to UPC's past unwillingness to deal with union-identified waste and mismanagement.

But if the union decides that continuing the worker participation program is in its best interests, it has many tactics available to pressure management to cooperate. And if the union has used company resources during the cooperative period to organize its members and expand the program, it should be in an even better position to apply or threaten such tactics. The next chapter will revisit UPC to show what happens when management refuses to cooperate, or decides to stop cooperating, with a union-

empowering worker participation program.

With or without management's cooperation, however, a union-empowering worker participation program requires a level of internal union organization and membership participation that is rare among unions today. But it also provides a concrete way to generate a high degree of organization and participation. And that's one of its main advantages.

Chapter 4

Participating as Organizing

The program for worker participation we have outlined attempts to build on the experience and traditions of unionists in collective bargaining within a traditional U.S. labor relations structure. But this is not because we are uncritical of all union traditions. Implicit in the program we advocate is a critique of what has been called the *service model of unionism* and an advocacy for a return in force to an *organizing model*.

Briefly, a service model of unionism defines union leadership as solving problems *for* the membership on the basis of members' requests or complaints. This puts most members in a passive relation to the union as mere recipients of services for which they pay dues. An organizing model, on the other hand, tries to stimulate and involve the membership in solving problems through group processes and collective action. The labor movement has long used both models, but current practice is far too heavily weighted toward the union as a service organization. (See *Numbers That Count: A Manual on Internal Organizing*.)

In this final chapter we want to develop this distinction by answering three objections to our program that many unionists are likely to raise:

1) "It sounds great from a union perspective. But management would never agree to anything like this."

2) "Without management cooperation, and the promise of some concrete payoffs, our members wouldn't be organizable around these issues. Hell, we can't even get them to attend union meetings."

3) "Yeah, great, I can see how we can do something like this in our union. But the labor movement as a whole is never going to move in this direction. It's too much work to do all the organizing that's necessary."

The first two objections here are much more telling when based, as they usually are, on a vision of unions that neglects their

potential for internal organizing. As concerns the labor movement as a whole, we will present evidence of a gathering tendency toward the use of an organizing model of unionism.

“Management Will Never Buy Into This”

The mission of a union-empowering worker participation program is to improve the economic prospects of an enterprise in order to preserve and enhance workers' wages and standards. Worker participation can improve quality, cut costs and enhance productivity in the long run. This is why management *should* cooperate with it. But, as the case of Frank Borman shows, management will inherently resist and even destroy any approach that threatens its prerogatives and sense of control—what Borman referred to as “the monkeys running the zoo.”

Unions need to be prepared to organize their membership to exert pressure on management by subjecting them to embarrassment and ridicule. It is wrong to assume that management's first priority is the welfare of the enterprise. In most instances, they have a much weaker stake in a company or a public agency than the workforce does. Their top priority is their own careers, and the union must strive to convince managers that their careers are best advanced by cooperating with union-empowering worker participation.

One of the most promising aspects of our model is that the worker participation program can occur with or without management cooperation and that unions can shift from one form to another, depending on circumstances.

To see how this might work, let's go back to the hypothetical example of Urban Pest Control, but now let's assume that management and the union cannot agree to cooperate on a worker participation program. UPC management asks Local One to agree to a joint program which the union sees as undermining rank-and-file identification with the union. In response, Local One's leadership proposes a worker participation program like the one outlined in Chapter Three, but management rejects the proposal as a crass power play by the union.

Instead of giving up, the union develops the program as best it can on its own. The coordinator, Joe Hill, proceeds in this case, where management has refused to cooperate, exactly as he did in the case where management agreed to cooperate. He establishes Area-wide Union Committees wherever the steward is enthusiastic about worker participation, and he trains the AUC members in the skills they will need. In the process of the training, union

members learn that UPC management is nervously preparing for a visit later in the year by a top corporate audit team: everyone agrees that this is a hook the union can use to interest management in the union's participation program.

The AUCs come up with the same recommendations as in our previous example: hire more maintenance workers to cut down on overtime; stop buying fuel from a high-cost supplier who's a relative of the Vice-President for Purchasing; buy a new mixer to increase quality and reduce reliance on outside contractors. Each of the AUCs present their proposals to Joe Hill and then to the union steering committee—the union's top officers.

The union steering committee is concerned about shoring up membership support for the AUC proposal in the maintenance shop. It asks the AUC to circulate a petition among maintenance workers to establish that at least two-thirds of them favor the reduction of overtime, which of course means reduction in take-home pay as well. The steward argues that this is not necessary, since, except for a couple of "work hogs," sentiment among the workers is overwhelming, but the steering committee insists that the AUC document this sentiment and build support among the members for a fight on this issue. The other two AUCs are also asked to fully document both the cost-savings anticipated from their proposals and membership support for the proposals.

One month before the top corporate audit team arrives, the union again presents its worker participation proposal to management. Leading with the fuel overcharge, and presenting detailed calculations on the misuse of overtime and on the feasibility of buying a new mixer, the union also refers vaguely to "other proposals" that could save the company substantially. The union president warns management that if the company rejects these proposals, the union will "go public" by presenting these and "other proposals" to the corporate audit team.

After examining the calculations in the union proposals, management is convinced that the union program promises real cost savings. In addition, while the fuel overcharge involves a relatively minimal sum, it could lead to more than one manager being fired. Because the union has won credibility with its fully documented proposals, management cannot dismiss the union's vague reference to other proposals that it has not revealed. Though management could implement all of the union's specific proposals without agreeing to a union-empowering worker participation program, management can't be sure what other embarrassing data the union might be able to show the corporate audit team. UPC management panics, and agrees to the union's program.

In this case, Local One's tactics forced management to cooperate and fund the union's worker participation program. By involving more and more of its membership in the program and showing how vital the union is in protecting the membership by uncovering and correcting a variety of forms of mismanagement, the union strengthened itself internally while at the same time improving the company's economic prospects.

In this fictional story, we assured a happy ending by assuming that UPC management feared a corporate audit. But unions have similar power even where there is no audit for local management to fear. First, most bosses themselves have bosses whom they fear, and the AUCs can pit one level of management against other levels in a variety of settings. Second, unions can always threaten to go public with charges of mismanagement. In our hypothetical case with UPC, Local One could publicize its three cost-saving proposals in the union newspaper or print up a special leaflet about mismanagement at UPC to be distributed by the stewards to the membership. The union's members could be asked to sign a petition to UPC management urging it to change its position or at least justify its decision to ignore the cost-saving proposals. All this could make an interesting story in the local newspaper—"Union Fights Mismanagement at UPC"—which could then be photocopied and sent to stockholders and corporate headquarters. In such a public campaign, customers might find out about the inconsistent quality of the pest control chemicals. In the same vein the union could sponsor a company-wide rally against bad management or a joint rally with neighborhood community groups demanding more jobs (which the overtime and new equipment proposals would provide.)

In short, if the union educates and mobilizes its members within the worker participation program, it does not need to depend on management good will, or even on its good sense.

Too Much Organizing?

Union leaders from staff reps to shop stewards often complain about the apathy of their members, and many could not imagine organizing and mobilizing the extensive membership participation required in our model. Much of this perceived apathy is based on looking at the membership through the lens of a service model of unionism. If the union presents itself as a service which requires nothing more from its "clients" than to pay for the service, then it should not be surprised if the clients don't show up for union meetings.

Organizers, by contrast, instinctively look for the issues that can galvanize people and the people who can provide new leadership around those issues. Mismanagement provides a wide range of issues about which many workers care deeply, and a union-led participative management program provides a means to tap these concerns and to develop new leadership around them.

To illustrate this, we'd like to retell a story that originally appeared in *Labor Research Review #10* (Mismanagement & What Unions Can Do About It, Spring 1987). Because it involves a situation much worse than most unions face, it should cause some second thoughts about the impossibility of overcoming supposed membership apathy.

The Randall Company in Blytheville, Arkansas, employs about 300 workers represented by UAW Local 1249. The automotive parts manufacturer had broken the union's strike in 1977, and management had unilaterally imposed work rules, frozen wages, and voided the union's right to dues check-off. Arkansas is a right-to-work state, and only 20 workers still belonged to the union when in early 1984 it began a campaign around product quality.

Based on rumors that the Big Three auto companies were going to drop suppliers who had poor quality records, the union approached management with a proposal to improve product quality. Part of the proposal included the protections of a union contract. Management turned down the union proposal, and Local 1249 responded by creating what it called a Quality Audit Team (QAT). The union took two months to select and train 30 of the most trusted workers from key areas and from all shifts who were identified by their UAW t-shirts which proclaimed "Safety, Quality, and Union Rights."

By involving the rest of the Randall workforce in systematically monitoring quality, the QAT team pieced together its own detailed weekly inventory of the quality of all parts and where these parts were shipped. When Randall management was informed of specific product quality problems and refused to remedy the situation, the Quality Audit Team kept a record of the incident. Many of Randall's customers are companies which are also represented by UAW locals. These UAW locals were informed by Local 1249 of the defective merchandise which management had forced its quality-conscious workforce to ship. Eventually, Randall customers discovered management's complacency with quality, and over 700 customer complaints were received by management in less than a year. The union was even able to bring up the issue during UAW-GM negotiations, documenting for General Motors that a major GM supplier, Randall, was shipping it defective parts.

As the quality campaign against Randall management intensified, so did the enthusiasm of the workers for their union. By the end of 1984 the Quality Audit Team had involved so many Randall workers in the campaign that 85% of the employees had signed union membership cards and over 100 were paying their dues on a regular basis. When Randall management gave the workers unilateral pay increases of \$1.20 per hour over two years, they knew their collective effort at management quality control was beginning to pay off.

There are many lessons to be learned from the Randall story. First, by structuring its Quality Audit Team on the basis of a traditional organizing committee or union shop committee, the union was able to function as a union during its campaign for product quality. Second, the union asserted its influence and showed its potential to make a difference in management's exclusive domain of product quality—without management's cooperation. Third, the union's worker participation program was successfully used as a means of organizing the workers into an aggressive union where more traditional means such as filing labor board charges had failed.

The Organizing Model of Unionism

The U.S. labor movement is a complex mosaic of different forces and tendencies. It is easy to be depressed and cynical about the movement's potential to revitalize itself and reverse its precipitous



decline. But as the permanent nature of its crisis becomes more and more apparent, various elements within the labor movement have begun to return in force to an organizing model of unionism. This tendency was greatly strengthened in 1988 when the AFL-CIO Department of Organization and Field Services produced an internal organizing manual, *Numbers That Count*, that articulates a stinging critique of service unionism and provides guidelines for unions to develop their internal organizing capacity.

Most labor leaders view internal organizing as the process of recruiting new members in those unionized workplaces which have no union shop provision in their contracts. While the methods described in the AFL-CIO manual are useful for this purpose also, the manual is written with a much broader definition of internal organizing in mind. In the process of defining the term "internal organizing," the AFL-CIO also projects a dramatic vision of how unions should function if they wish to meet the challenges facing all unions in today's menacing environment.

The service model of unionism has experienced prominence only in the past 30 years, though aspects of it have existed at one time or another for the past 100 years. It is the predominate form of unionism in the United States today. At its basis is an assumption that unions are professional organizations which employ a staff or full-time officers to solve problems for union members. Under this model of unionism, members purchase a service that will protect them against the arbitrary actions of the employer and that will deliver higher wages and benefits on a regular basis.

There is an extremely strong reliance by service-oriented unions on the codified system of collective bargaining and contract administration that has developed since World War II. In order to achieve national production stability, this system sought to take matters out of the hands of committees of workers. Instead, the objective was to make labor relations a profession which utilizes union professionals, management professionals, and professional neutrals to adjust the outcome of most disputes. Rather than rallying the troops around shopfloor issues, unions teach their stewards to write grievances and prepare for arbitration. Under the service model, unions settle disputes *not* by a show of force, but by a reasoned argument before an arbitrator and far away from the shopfloor.

This dependence on bureaucratic processes has sapped unions of their ability to put pressure on management. Nowadays, service-oriented unions find themselves having to follow elaborate rules in an industrial relations system which has become easy for union-avoidance attorneys to manipulate. With its reliance on hearings

and lawyers, the system is very expensive, and management has figured out a formula to impede or even break unions. Management's motto has become: it's the union's lawyers against our lawyers and we can afford more lawyers.

Union staff complain that they are servicing the 10% of the members who have problems and not the 90% who don't. In reality, they are saying the service model of unionism is only geared to the needs of the 10% who have complaints that are grievable under the terms of the contract. The irony is that now management has found ways to overload and frustrate the grievance process to such a degree that unions are often not even able to effectively service the 10%.

Various elements of the labor movement have come to realize that the service model of unionism is no longer functional in today's world. It is becoming increasingly apparent that for unions to even provide decent services to their members, they must once again adopt an organizing model of unionism.

The organizing model is a form of unionism which doesn't solve problems for people; rather, it finds ways of getting union members involved in solving the problems. The key component of the organizing model is its emphasis on mobilization of the rank and file to do the work of the union. The organizing model was the major form of unionism in the U.S. prior to the 1950s, and almost all the major unions were originally founded on its principles. As its name implies, the organizing model of unions uses the same techniques, principles and structures that successful union organizers use to win union representation elections at unorganized worksites.

The organizing model is more effective than the service model because people and institutions respond more readily to the appeals of large groups than to the requests of individuals. Because the organizing model requires the involvement and mobilization of the rank and file, unions that adopt this model find it easier to turn out large groups of people on picket lines, at rallies, and at city council meetings. Employers are more likely to bargain fairly if their workers are very vocal and visible about their support for the union's bargaining demands.

The organizing model gives members a sense of power as a group. When the members share in the decisions and all the activities of the union, they will also be sharing in the victories. When people see that their own involvement with others contributes to organizational success, they create stronger bonds and develop a closer identity with the union. It is ironic to see union halls across America display the slogan "You Are the Union."

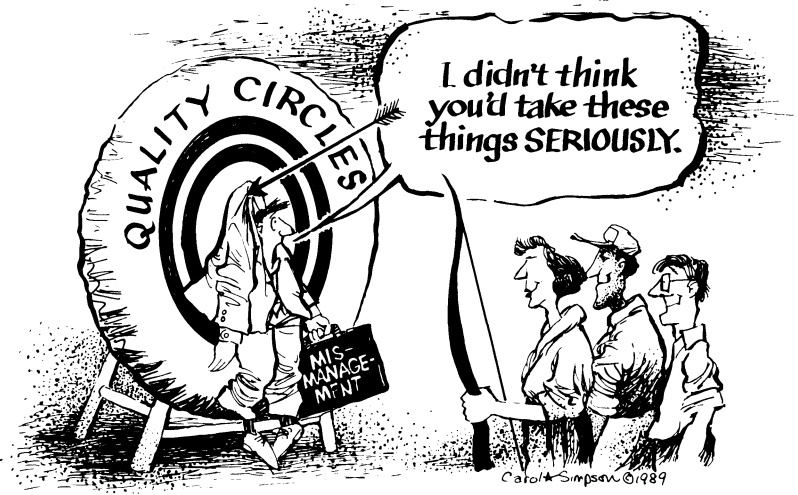
Instead of acting upon this slogan and working hard to find ways to get the members involved, service model union leaders take short cuts and do things without the workers. By separating the union's activities from the members, unions act like a "third party provider" like Blue Cross/Blue Shield—the members are glad they have it, but it hardly inspires loyalty to and affection for the organization. If there is a shopfloor safety problem, the steward files a complaint. If a contract expires, a business manager negotiates a contract and presents it for ratification. Instead, if the union would mobilize the rank and file around these same issues, our members would once again feel part of the union and part of the larger social movement which fights for justice for workers in so many ways.

When union members participate directly in the resolution of a work-related problem, they become better educated about the specific issues facing unions and the broader issues affecting working people in general. This "education by personal experience" creates greater motivation to act upon what is learned. This means that even when a union loses a battle, members are more knowledgeable about the issue and are better prepared for the next fight.

A union which follows the organizing model involves many more people in its daily life, and this means that it will be able to take on and solve more problems. This added help allows the union to initiate activities instead of always having to react to the latest employer-generated crisis. As one union officer who converted to the organizing model explains: "I used to be a constant candidate for burnout and management knew this, so they kept me running in circles. Now we've turned it on them. There are more of us than there is of them. We're practicing in-your-face unionism."

Recently, there have been many indications that unions are switching back to the organizing model. Aside from the AFL-CIO's new manual, the federation's Industrial Union Department (IUD) has published its own manual called *The Inside Game*. In it the IUD explains how unions, in lieu of risking a strike which management is prepared to break, can instead mobilize their members to disrupt the company's operations without striking. Other programs, such as the Machinists' On the Job Canvass and the AFL-CIO Education Department's One-On-One program, teach unions how to recruit and train volunteer shopfloor leaders in the use of important mobilization techniques such as issue development, surveying and one-to-one communication skills.

These efforts, and other remarkable examples of the organizing



model such as Jobs With Justice (which has mobilized tens of thousands of union members nationwide in its effort to gain public support for union campaigns) all have one thing in common. They begin by going to the shopfloor and individually inspiring rank-and-file members to participate in their union.

Perhaps most impressive has been the Communications Workers' effort at recruiting, training and maintaining a system of shopfloor mobilization with a ratio of one "mobilizer" for every 20 members. As a union based in the telecommunications industry, CWA has experienced management's use of automation to outlast striking workers. By turning to its new internal organizing program, Mobilization CWA, the union's leaders hope to activate their members inside a company to accomplish what has been increasingly impossible by walking picket lines outside. Even though the program is used to strengthen the union in workplaces that have had bargaining rights for years, like AT&T and NYNEX, it is the creation of CWA's Organizing Department. With its emphasis on one-on-one shopfloor information gathering and distribution, Mobilization CWA bears a striking structural resemblance to our union-empowering model of worker participation.

Marriage of Two Models

Some unions who now use internal organizing as a means to pressure management during contract negotiations are finding it difficult to connect this membership activation strategy with the

everyday operations of the union after the new contract has been won. Even if we begin to use rank-and-file mobilization techniques to take on grievances and safety complaints (this has proven to be very effective where it has been tried), we must still find ways to reach the hearts and minds of the 90% who never have a grievance—those workers who view the union simply as an insurance policy which you pay for but hope you never have to use.

We propose that the union-empowering model of worker participation described above is the answer to the labor movement's dilemma of applying an organizing model to the modern workplace. By adopting this organizing model of participation in management decision-making, unions will be able to expand the number and scope of shopfloor leaders to include issues which are of concern to the nongrievance sector of the workforce in a manner that will allow these members to experience first-hand the meaning of the adage "there is power in the union."

The organizing/participation model will institutionally provide overworked union leaders with rank-and-file volunteers who will be able to expand the union's work on a day-to-day basis. By using on-the-job organizing techniques such as surveys, petitions and direct action, unions will be constantly on the watch for new people to be active in the program. By using charting techniques common to both union organizers and many QWL consultants, the union will be able to chart every area of the worksite, identify every worker, know every worker's concerns, and record the unique abilities and potential contribution of each individual.

The participation program's company-wide committee structure and multi-level access to information will allow the union to identify and take immediate advantage of management mistakes. At the union's separate training efforts and separate committee meetings, members will be able to dissect, digest and discuss this information and decide how to build a stronger union at the same time that it strengthens the economic prospects of their workplace.

By introducing participation programs based on an organizing model, unions will unearth major new issues with which members can activate greater pressure on even a reluctant management. The union's Area-wide Committees and Special Task Forces will uncover information on issues that unions rarely deal with now. By having a handle on important corporate issues such as investment, purchasing decisions, new product development, and physical plant expansion, unions will be better prepared to assert their influence on corporate decisions which have an impact on the union's ability to enhance the lives of its members and their

communities. The union will reach out to the rank and file to fill the numerous new union positions created by the participation program. In the process of learning how to run committees and small groups, and various financial and problem-solving skills, a whole new generation of workers will develop the skills and confidence necessary to lead the labor movement to face the challenges of a new century.

Conclusion

Labor in America is in a real fix. Unlike our sister unions in industrialized countries (and even in many developing nations), we are shrinking at a dramatic rate. Now, many experts believe that by 1995 unions will make up less than 10% of the private sector workforce in the U.S. It is obvious to even the most casual of observers that the fundamental task of labor is to recruit a larger share of the workforce into its ranks.

To achieve the type of organizing successes that would begin to reverse its steep decline, labor must radically alter the current legal environment which offers workers and unions almost no protection to bosses who want to stay union-free. However, to win the sweeping legislation which is necessary to improve the legal environment for organizing, the labor movement needs to shape public opinion in its favor. And to transform public opinion, unions in America need to mobilize their remaining forces in a manner which projects an image of a movement whose struggle is not the fight of a special interest but a fight for the public interest.

To be capable of sustaining the high level of commitment and endurance which this impending struggle will demand, the very perceptions which union leaders and members hold about the nature of the movement must be refashioned. Right now, most union members are *consumers* of unionism rather than *producers* of it. So long as union members' own image of the labor movement is descriptive of the service model, we will not be able to muster the numbers, the resources, or the enthusiasm sufficient to make the necessary political changes and to attract enough new members into our fold. Labor in the U.S. will have a good chance at making a comeback only when the ethos of the movement is so transformed that those who now belong to unions take an active role in nurturing and building both their unions and their workplaces.

This transformed self-image of the labor movement will only happen when organizing becomes the norm, the everyday experience of unionists on the shopfloor. It is encouraging to see that

labor officials are beginning to look towards their organizing staff for solutions to what are essentially problems with collective bargaining relations. These organizers are transforming the various worker-empowering methods they have developed during external organizing drives into a means by which unions can reverse the decline in power found in most organized workplaces. They are doing this by reintroducing the very organizing committee structures that are usually dismantled shortly after unions win their first contract. A monumental opportunity will be lost if this new breed of internal organizers neglect the potential that participation programs offer as a way to institutionalize the organizing model in the workplace.

Though aspects of the service model will always be necessary, the current imbalance between the organizing and the service aspects of unions is the primary cause of labor's present demise. The fundamental task confronting the labor movement is the challenge to switch from a reliance on the service model of unionism to an organizing model. In the work environment of the 1990s, we will find that the union-empowering approach to worker participation lends itself well as a means for the labor movement to convert back to an organizing model and wrestle back from management control of the shopfloor. Unlike the service model of unions, the organizing/participation models do not depend on a cooperative management. By reintegrating organizing back into its daily life, the labor movement will rediscover what our forebears knew all too well: Organizing never stops. ■

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