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Daniel G. Gallagher et Kurt W. Wetzel

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Local Employer and Union Perceptions of Two-Tier Bargaining

Daniel G. Gallagher
and
Kurt W. Wetzel

This study examines local union and employer views of the concept and operation of a two-tier bargaining structure for teacher contract negotiations in Saskatchewan. The results are based on a survey of 138 local union and trustee representatives' views of collective bargaining under a centralized multiemployer arrangement with supplementary local negotiations.

More than a decade ago, J. Douglas Muir wrote an insightful article concerning the problems associated with the decentralized structure of teacher-school board bargaining in Canada¹. His thesis was that local teacher-trustee bargaining had ceased to reflect the institutional realities of contract determination. Muir's contention was that the increased inter-district coordination provided by provincial trustee and teacher associations contributed to a leveling of salaries across local bargaining units. The teacher's use of whipsawing tactics contributed to this trend toward inter-district wage uniformity. The teachers also availed themselves of the statutory impasse procedures which allowed local teachers to use inter-district comparisons to justify their demands. Muir noted that the shifting burden for funding education from local districts to provincial governments served as an additional impetus to implement province-wide bargaining. Increased provincial funding could reduce interdistrict economic disparities as well as present the government with an opportunity for input and control.

* GALLAGHER, Daniel G., Associate Professor, Industrial Relations and Human Resources, University of Iowa.

WETZEL, Kurt W., Associate Professor, Department of Industrial Relations and Organizational Behaviour, College of Commerce, University of Saskatchewan.

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¹ J.D. MUIR, «Decentralized Bargaining: Its Problems and Direction in the Public Education Systems of Ontario and the Western Provinces», *Relations Industrielles*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1971, pp. 124-145.

Muir concluded that decentralized bargaining was antiquated. It needed to be replaced by province-wide bargaining in which representatives of trustees, teachers and provincial governments could participate².

The movement toward multiemployer bargaining was already well-established in Saskatchewan. During the 1960's and 1970's, teacher-trustee bargaining moved from the local level to an area level and finally to a two-tier structure consisting of multiemployer province-wide bargaining and supplementary local negotiations³.

Trustees were the principal advocates of the area-wide structure. The resulting legislation divided the province's 120 local districts into thirteen areas or zones. Area-wide bargaining did not, however, eliminate whipsawing. Rather, the focus shifted from interdistrict to interarea comparisons⁴. In addition, evidence suggests that bargaining became protracted under the area-wide system because the parties feared criticism for establishing unfavorable patterns⁵. Interdistrict conflict also arose within areas. This conflict emerged from the relative salary advantage enjoyed by urban over rural districts under the previous local bargaining system⁶.

The problems created by area-wide bargaining resulted in the parties expressing preferences which were not anticipated by Muir. Through the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association (SSTA), the trustees pushed for a return to local bargaining, arguing that it addressed local conditions more effectively. The Saskatchewan Teachers Federation (STF) held that the similarity of teaching responsibilities justified the province-wide standardization of terms and conditions of employment, an objective best realized through centralized bargaining. The STF wanted to negotiate directly with the provincial government, the principal funding agent. From the STF's perspective, meaningful negotiations could not occur in the absence of this key decision maker⁷.

² *Ibid*, pp. 143-144.

³ K. WETZEL and D. G. GALLAGHER, «The Saskatchewan Government's Internal Arrangements to Accommodate Collective Bargaining,» *Relations Industrielles*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 1979, pp. 461-465.

⁴ D.G. GALLAGHER and K. WETZEL, «Centralized Multi-Employer Negotiations in Public Education,» *Journal of Collective Negotiations*, Vol. 9, 1980, p. 284.

⁵ The Minister's Advisory Commission on Teacher Contract Bargaining, *Teacher-Trustee Bargaining*, Regina, Saskatchewan, Department of Education, October, 1972, p. 20.

⁶ P. WALMSLEY and M. OHTSU, «Teachers' Salary Differentials and the Quality of Educational Services in Saskatchewan,» *Relations Industrielles*, Vol. 30, No. 4, 1975, pp. 585-611.

⁷ D.G. GALLAGHER and K. WETZEL, *Public Sector Bargaining In Saskatchewan*, Saskatchewan Law Foundation, Regina, Saskatchewan, November, 1979, p. 45.

The responsibility for reconciling SSTA and STF differences was vested with the Minister's Advisory Committee on Teacher Contract Bargaining. In 1972, the committee recommended dismantling the area-wide system and replacing it with a multiemployer structure⁸. In a compromise effort in 1973, the Legislative Assembly enacted the *Teachers Collective Bargaining Act* which established a two-tier system. At the first tier, a province-wide agreement is negotiated for statutorily prescribed issues, e.g., salary, longevity pay, insurance and superannuation. The act provides for a bipartite provincial management bargaining team consisting of five government and four SSTA representatives. The STF assumes representational responsibility for its approximately 12,000 members. At the second, or local, tier, school district trustees and teachers negotiate a narrow scope of mandatory topics. The local parties may expand the scope by mutual agreement. Provincial government representatives do not participate in second-tier negotiations.

RESEARCH ISSUES

Literature on the development of both centralized and multiemployer bargaining structures, similar to Saskatchewan's, is replete with discussions of the advantages and limitations of broader-based bargaining. While most of the research focuses on the private sector, the benefits associated with multiemployer bargaining are also applicable to the public sector⁹.

Among the commonly recognized advantages is the increased opportunity for the parties to utilize professional representatives. Also, both parties can enjoy certain economies of scale by negotiating a single master agreement and benefit programs can be more efficiently funded and administered. Employers may be able to curtail a union's capacity to employ

⁸ Minister's Advisory Commission, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁹ See: F. BAIRSTOW, «The Structure of Bargaining: International Comparisons — A Story of Diversity,» Proceedings of the 1980 Spring Meeting of the Industrial Relations Research Association, Madison, Wisconsin, 1980, pp. 514-525; J. CRISPO, «Collective Bargaining in the Public Service,» *Canadian Public Administration*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1973, pp. 1-13; W. ABELOW and N. METZGER, «Multi-Employer Bargaining for Health Care Institutions,» *Employee Relations Law Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1976, pp. 390-409; C.F. SMYTHE, Jr., «Public-Private Sector Multi-Employer Collective Bargaining — The Role of the Employer Representative,» *Labor Law Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 8, 1971, pp. 498-508; P. FEUILLE *et al.*, «Multiemployer Bargaining Among Local Governments,» Proceedings of the 29th Meeting of the Industrial Relations Research Association, Madison, Wisconsin, 1977, pp. 123-131; A.R. WEBER, «Stability and Change in the Structure of Collective Bargaining,» in *Challenges to Collective Bargaining*, L. ULMAN ed., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1967, pp. 13-36.

whipsawing and leapfrogging strategies. A union can standardize the terms and conditions of employment for its membership, thereby reducing internal differences among its locals.

From a public policy perspective, multiemployer bargaining arrangements may discourage strike actions. The potential cost of a strike may limit the union's willingness and ability to undertake, fund and maintain strikes¹⁰. Furthermore, the likelihood of government intervention to terminate a strike may increase when it extends beyond an isolated local union-employer bargaining relationship.

There are also problems inherent in the operation of multiemployer bargaining arrangements. Employer and union organizations may encounter difficulty in establishing bargaining objectives. The compromises necessary to reach an agreement covering all units and employers may generate intraparty conflict. For employers, disagreement over the objectives and outcomes may reflect differences in working and market conditions as well as unequal abilities to fund a standard agreement. Due to the heterogeneous interests, internal consensus may be more elusive for employers than it is for local unions. For unions, an organization may encounter difficulty in reaching consensus if powerful locals feel that their bargaining power is being diluted by the weaker locals.

Multiemployer bargaining may have a significant adverse impact on local autonomy and control. A comprehensive multiemployer bargaining agenda or agreement may diminish the importance or necessity for local union-employer bargaining. The absence of local negotiations may limit the parties' capability to address specific local issues, it may also undermine local understanding of the bargaining process. As bargaining becomes more remote from the local parties, familiarity with the system and comprehension of the central agreement may decline. To lessen this local detachment, multiemployer agents may emphasize soliciting local input and providing feedback about the process and outcomes of multiemployer bargaining. To promote local control and involvement in the bargaining process, the local parties may negotiate supplementary agreements on issues of specific local concern.

To date, most of the literature on multiemployer bargaining is impressionistic. It is based primarily upon the observations of private sector experiences and tends to reflect the perceptions of bargaining agents responsible for negotiating central or multiemployer agreements. The existing research tends to examine multiemployer bargaining primarily from the employer perspective.

¹⁰ F. BAIRSTOW, *op. cit.*, p. 515.

This study focuses upon a well-established public sector multiemployer structure, the two-tier teacher-trustee structure in Saskatchewan. The study assesses this industrial relations system with the goal of empirically evaluating some of the purported benefits and limitations of multiemployer bargaining which are discussed in the literature.

In contrast to most of the existing research on multiemployer bargaining, this study offers an evaluation which is distinct in three fundamental respects. First, rather than solely evaluating multiemployer bargaining from the viewpoint of the employer organizations, this study provides a comparative evaluation from the perspectives of both the management and the union. Second, the study design allows for a locally based assessment of the multiemployer bargaining arrangement rather than an evaluation based only upon the perceptions of the provincial staff responsible for centralized bargaining. Third, this study also looks at the local parties' evaluations of the role of local bargaining within the context of multiemployer negotiations and at their comparative assessment of local versus centralized bargaining arrangements.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Based on the authors' previous interview studies of bargaining structures in Saskatchewan and the existing multiemployer bargaining literature, a multisection questionnaire was developed to measure local union and employer perceptions of teacher-trustee negotiations under the Saskatchewan two-tier structure¹¹.

The first twenty statements of the survey instrument focus on identifying local union and trustee representatives perceptions of provincial level negotiations. The items were designed and selected to assess the parties' views of such dimensions of province-wide bargaining as: the desirability of wage and benefit standardization; the extent to which a single province-wide agreement accommodates local interests; local input to the bargaining process; satisfaction with representational arrangements; and the comparative utility of province-wide versus local bargaining.

A second set of twenty items solicits the parties' evaluation of local, or second-tier, negotiations within the context of province-wide bargaining. The items focus on such dimensions as: the value of negotiating local level

¹¹ D.G. GALLAGHER and K. WETZEL, *Public Sector Bargaining In Saskatchewan*, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-61.

supplements to the province-wide agreement; satisfaction with local bargaining agendas; and the interrelationship between provincial and local negotiations.

Survey participants were instructed to respond to both sets of items, within the context of their own local situation. Responses were scored on a five-point Likert-type scale, indicating the extent to which the respondents agree or disagree with each item.

The entire population of chief local teacher and trustee bargaining representatives in the province's 120 school districts was mailed a survey instrument. A total of 93 (77.5%) of the local union representatives and 83 (69.0%) of the local trustees responded. A review of the completed surveys showed no bias based on school district size or location.

For the purposes of data analysis, the response group was reduced to 138, representing a matched pair of union and trustee bargaining representatives from 69 of the province's 120 school districts. This matched pair design was used to minimize biases between teacher and trustee responses which could be attributable to uncontrolled differences in local environments. The design also provides a stronger basis from which to compare union and trustee perceptions of the bargaining structure as well as an opportunity to identify the degree of intradistrict congruence of responses.

FACTOR ANALYSIS

To identify the underlying dimensional structure for each set of twenty items in the survey instrument and to construct a manageable number of dependent variable scales, a factor analysis routine consisting of a principal-component solution was utilized. All resulting factors with given values of 1.0 or greater were retained and rotated using an orthogonal method. A few complex items with relatively high loadings on more than one factor were eliminated from the analysis. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was computed to measure the level of internal reliability for each multi-item factor.

Provincial Bargaining Factors

Factor analysis of the twenty items assessing local representatives' perceptions of province-wide bargaining resulted in five conceptually distinct factors or scales. The first factor represents the respondent's views of the «Value of Standardization». The three items included in this factor dealt with preferences for negotiating major economic items on a province-

wide basis, the desirability of standardizing salary and working conditions, and the extent to which the province-wide agreement is more advantageous than a locally bargained agreement would have been.

The second factor reflects the respondent's evaluation of the extent and quality of intraorganizational «Information Exchange» between the provincial and local level. Six items are included in this factor which measures local perceptions of the extent to which the provincial organization solicits local input into the province-wide bargaining process and the extent to which local representatives are apprised of central bargaining table developments and outcomes by the provincial organization.

The third factor consists of items which represent the respondent's «Satisfaction with Representation». There are two dimensions to this factor. The first includes two items which ascertain the extent to which the respondent's own provincial representatives are perceived as possessing sufficient bargaining power and as capable of representing local constituent interests. The second dimension contains two items which measure satisfaction with the involvement of government representatives in province-wide bargaining¹².

The factor analysis also produced two single-item factors: 1) local respondent perceptions of the degree to which province-wide agreements adequately accommodate differences in local conditions and 2) the respondent's concurrence that bargaining should occur entirely at the provincial level. These two single-item factors appear to suggest that respondents conceptually differentiate between the ability of centralized bargaining outcomes to accommodate local interests and a preference for a single-tier bargaining arrangement on a province-wide basis.

Local Bargaining Factors

Factor analysis of the twenty survey items pertaining to the parties' evaluations of second-tier, or local-level, negotiations results in five multi-item and one single-item factor. The first factor focuses on local respondents' views of the «Importance of Local Bargaining» within the context of province-wide multiemployer bargaining. The three items that load heavily on this factor deal with the respondents' perceptions of whether local negotiations are an essential supplement to provincial

¹² Examination of the internal consistency of the three multi-item factors reveals an acceptable level of reliability (see: J.C. NUNNALLY, *Psychometric Theory*, New York, McGraw Hill, 1978, pp. 226-227). The Cronbach alphas for the three factors are as follows: «Value of Standardization», .82; «Information Exchange», .80; and «Satisfaction with Representation» .72.

bargaining, the extent to which local negotiations are a preferred forum for negotiating nonmonetary issues, and the significance of local-level negotiations. In essence, this first factor represents local representatives' evaluations of the need for, and importance of, maintaining a local-level bargaining relationship within a multiemployer framework.

The second factor consists of four items which measure the respondent's level of «Satisfaction with the Scope of Bargaining». The items pertain to the representatives' perceptions of the extent to which the restricted scope of local bargaining complicates negotiations by limiting tradeoff possibilities, thereby reducing both the opportunity for meaningful negotiations and the overall satisfaction with the subject matter of local negotiations.

The third factor is «Absence of Economic Issues Not Problematic». The three items comprising this scale measure the degree to which the absence of major economic issues does not increase the complexity of bargaining, reduce the significance of local bargaining, and/or diminish the level of bargaining power held by local representatives. This factor differs from Factor 2 in that the respondents appear to differentiate between the perceived limitations of the overall scope of bargaining and the specific effect of excluding major economic issues from local-level negotiations.

Factor 4 is a three-item scale of the local representatives' assessments of the extent to which local bargaining under a two-tier structure reduces the potential for local conflict. The factor, labeled «Reduced Conflict Potential», groups items which assess the propensity to strike over local issues and whether the absence of major monetary items reduces the likelihood of local conflict.

The fifth factor addresses the degree of provincial-level influence upon local bargaining. The three items in the «Independence from Provincial Level» scale assess two dimensions of interaction between provincial and local-level bargaining. The first dimension assesses local representatives' perceptions of both the degree to which local negotiations are affected by the content of the provincial settlement and the degree of difficulty encountered in reaching a provincial agreement. The second dimension measures local representatives' perceptions of the extent to which local-level bargaining is devoid of complications arising from their counterparts' desire to achieve bargaining objectives advocated by the respective provincial organization. Overall, this fifth factor is most clearly interpreted as

reflecting the perceived degree of independence of the local bargaining process from provincial-level negotiations and central control¹³.

The sixth factor, labeled «Beneficial If All Bargaining Local», is a single-item factor. The item measures whether the respondent's «constituents would benefit if all issues that are currently negotiated at the central table were negotiated locally». This factor clearly represents local teacher and management perceptions of the benefits which could accrue from negotiating contract terms on an entirely local basis¹⁴.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

In addition to the eleven factor scales developed to assess local union and trustee perceptions of province-wide and local-level negotiations, four independent variables were constructed to determine whether the respondents' perceptions are influenced by characteristics of the local environment and by their bargaining experience.

Archival data were used to construct the variable UNIT SIZE, which measures the number of teachers employed on a full-time equivalent basis by each school district in the sample¹⁵. It was anticipated that local union preferences for centralized bargaining would be inversely related to UNIT SIZE. Presumably, small locals have more to gain by joining with larger and more powerful locals. Conversely, a positive relationship was expected between UNIT SIZE and trustee perceptions of the advantages of multiemployer bargaining. Trustees may believe that multiemployer bargaining dilutes larger local unions' bargaining power. For those items evaluating local negotiations, relationships inverse to those indicated above were anticipated.

The second variable, EXPERIENCE, was developed from the survey data and measures the respondents' years of direct involvement with teacher-trustee bargaining. This variable is exploratory. There is no *a priori* rationale to suggest a relationship between bargaining experience and a respondent's perception of multiemployer or local bargaining.

¹³ The alpha reliability coefficients for the five multiple-item factors 1-5 are: .75, .78, .73, .65 and .61, respectively.

¹⁴ Based on the factor analyses, eleven factor scale scores were completed. The factor scores are unweighted but for interpretive ease are standardized according to the number of items comprising each scale.

¹⁵ Source: «Audited Financial Statements of School Divisions,» provided by Saskatchewan Education, Regina, Saskatchewan, April, 1981.

To determine whether respondents are influenced by the school district's financial characteristics, data were obtained from the Saskatchewan Department of Education regarding the percentage of local operating funds which are generated from local sources¹⁶. LOCAL FUNDS identifies the proportion of a district's total operating budget that is derived from local tax and revenue sources. Districts with a greater ability to pay shoulder a greater portion of the funding burden. It is anticipated that trustees from school districts which generate a larger proportion of funding from local sources will be more critical of provincial bargaining and more positively disposed to local bargaining so as to control the allocation of locally derived funds. No relationship was expected between teachers' responses and LOCAL FUNDS since budget revenue is primarily an employer concern.

Finally, a relationship was anticipated between the respondents' perceptions of provincial and second-tier bargaining and the extent to which the parties have utilized local bargaining. Based on local bargaining agreements made available by the STF, a contract index was developed by the authors for each district¹⁷. The contract indexing procedure is based on prior research studies which sought to quantify both the number and strength of the provisions contained within collective bargaining agreements¹⁸. Each local agreement was analyzed, coded and assigned a numerical value (CONTRACT INDEX). It was anticipated that union perceptions of provincial and local bargaining would be more favorable in districts where local agreements address in greater detail a broader range of employment issues. No *a priori* expectation exists for a relationship between trustee responses and the CONTRACT INDEX measure. Trustees may view the more extensive local contract either positively, as a mechanism to address mutual concerns, or negatively, as a limitation on their authority.

Prior to examining the relationship between each of the four independent variables and the eleven factor scales, the statistical independence of each of the four independent variables was analyzed. The results revealed that the variables UNIT SIZE and CONTRACT INDEX are significantly correlated ($p < .001$). This is not surprising. Larger bargaining units could be expected to generate a broader range of local concerns which might eventually be incorporated into local bargaining agreements.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Source: «Summary of Clauses Recently Settled Agreements,» provided by the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, April, 1981.

¹⁸ T.A. KOCHAN and R.N. BLOCK, «An Interindustry Analysis of Bargaining Outcomes,» *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 91, No. 3, 1977, pp. 431-452; P. GERHART, «Determinants of Bargaining Outcomes in Local Government Labor Negotiations,» *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 1976, pp. 331-351.

Given the intercorrelation between UNIT SIZE and CONTRACT INDEX, the latter variable was dropped from the analysis. However, the composition of the CONTRACT INDEX variable and its intercorrelation with UNIT SIZE enhances the interpretive value of the UNIT SIZE variable. UNIT SIZE not only captures the number of teachers a district employs but it also reflects the extent of the local agreement.

ANALYSIS

A paired comparison of means test was used to identify differences in union and trustee perceptions on the 11 factors. In addition, an intradistrict correlation analysis was conducted to determine the degree of congruence between the responses of union and trustee respondents paired at the local level. Bivariate correlation analyses were conducted to examine the extent to which each party's responses varied on the basis of school district size (UNIT SIZE); the respondent's years of experience as a local negotiator (EXPERIENCE); and the percentage of the local operating budget funded through local revenue sources (LOCAL FUNDS).

RESULTS: LOCAL PERCEPTIONS OF PROVINCIAL BARGAINING

Comparing the mean responses in Table 1 reveals a substantial difference between the parties' perceptions of centralized multiemployer bargaining. The teachers' local bargaining representatives' views of the «Value of Standardization» are significantly more positive than those of local trustee representatives (Factor 1). The union representatives are also more positive about intra-organizational «Information Exchange» between local and provincial representatives and are more satisfied with provincial-level representation (Factors 2 and 3). The teacher representatives are also more likely than the trustees to agree that the provincial bargaining outcome adequately «Accommodates Local Conditions» (Factor 4). While the first four factors reveal clear teacher-trustee differences, the final factor indicates that both parties reject the proposition that «bargaining should be conducted exclusively on a province-wide basis.»

The correlation between union and management responses on each of the five factors is also presented in Table 1; there are no significant intradistrict correlations between the parties' responses. The absence of a significant positive or negative correlation indicates no strong congruence or discordance in perceptions between local teacher and trustee representatives within the same school district. The intradistrict correlation analysis,

combined with the results of the t-test analysis, suggests that the significant overall differences on four of the five factors are aggregate in nature and do not reflect systematic union-trustee differences within each of the individual districts.

TABLE 1
LOCAL PERCEPTIONS OF CENTRALIZED MULTIEMPLOYER BARGAINING:
COMPARISON OF UNION AND TRUSTEE RESPONSE

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Union</i> (<i>N</i> = 69)	<i>Trustee</i> (<i>N</i> = 69)	<i>Paired</i> <i>T-Test</i> <i>T-Value</i>	<i>Intra-District</i> <i>Correlation</i> <i>R-Value</i> (<i>N</i> = 69)
1. Value of Standardization ^a	4.15 ^b (.76) ^c	3.22 (.86)	6.31**	-.14
2. Information Exchange	3.85 (.58)	3.36 (.73)	4.84**	.19
3. Satisfaction with Representation	3.74 (.63)	2.33 (.74)	12.25**	.03
4. Accommodates Local Conditions	3.20 (1.23)	2.53 (.96)	3.37**	-.11
5. Bargaining Should Be Exclusively Provincial	1.97 (1.09)	1.74 (1.10)	1.25	.03

^a For comparative purposes factor scores are adjusted for the number of items in each factor. Response code: 1- Strongly Disagree; 2- Disagree; 3- Neutral; 4- Agree; 5- Strongly Agree.

^b Mean Score

^c Standard Deviation

** Significant at .01 level

Table 2 presents the correlations between the parties' responses on the five factors and each of the three independent variables. For the union, two factors are significantly correlated with UNIT SIZE. A strong negative relationship exists between school district size and teacher perceptions of the «Value of Standardization», while «Satisfaction with Representation» is positively related to UNIT SIZE. In contrast, there are no significant relationships between UNIT SIZE and local trustee responses on the five factors.

TABLE 2
CORRELATION OF LOCAL PERCEPTIONS OF CENTRALIZED
MULTIEMPLOYER BARGAINING WITH SELECTED VARIABLES

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Union Size</i>		<i>Experience</i>		<i>Local Funds</i>	
	<i>Union</i>	<i>Trustee</i>	<i>Union</i>	<i>Trustee</i>	<i>Union</i>	<i>Trustee</i>
1. Value of Standardization	-.40**	.01	.09	.22*	.14	-.21*
2. Information Exchange	.06	-.01	.06	.27**	.02	.12
3. Satisfaction with Representation	.20*	.15	.10	.02	.25*	-.21*
4. Accommodates Local Conditions	.07	.04	.05	-.14	.13	-.23*
5. Bargaining Should Be Exclusively Provincial	-.16	.12	.23*	.04	.16	-.22*

** Significant at .01 level

* Significant at .05 level

For the teachers, EXPERIENCE is related to only one factor; more experienced teacher representatives are more favorably disposed to having bargaining occur exclusively at the provincial level (Factor 5). Experienced trustees, on the other hand, indicate a more favorable attitude toward the «Value of Standardization» (Factor 1) and are more satisfied with the quality and level of information exchange between the local school districts and their provincial bargaining representatives (Factor 2).

The third variable, LOCAL FUNDS, varies more systematically with trustees' evaluations of province-wide bargaining than with the teachers' responses. As might be expected, trustees from districts which derive a relatively larger share of operating revenues from local sources are less favorably disposed toward standardization (Factor 1). They also tend to indicate less satisfaction with their provincial representation (Factor 3), in contrast to the teacher representatives from these districts who express more satisfaction with their representation. These trustees are also more likely to indicate that provincial agreements do not adequately accommodate local conditions (Factors 4). Finally, and consistent with the above results,

trustee responses regarding conducting negotiations exclusively at the provincial level (Factor 5) are negatively correlated with the LOCAL FUNDS variable.

DISCUSSION: LOCAL PERCEPTIONS OF PROVINCIAL BARGAINING

The parties' perceptions of province-wide multiemployer bargaining show a clear pattern of significant differences. Local union representatives' highly favorable view of the value of standardization is not unexpected. Standardization complements the teachers' professional orientation as well as the political dynamics of their union. Although the salary schedules vary reflecting differences in seniority and educational attainment, it is not difficult to understand why teachers embrace the concept of uniformity for those with similar qualifications who perform similar work, regardless of whom the immediate employer happens to be. The training, working conditions and tasks of members of the teaching profession are basically similar. Professional standardization is a union objective; wage and benefit standardization helps promote the union's position that it achieves equity for its members.

If negotiations were entirely local, teachers could expect the local district's ability to pay to be argued vigorously by the trustees. That, together with a fractured bargaining unit, would tend to undermine a general acceptance of standardization. Teachers may recognize that their equity and professional goals can be best achieved by province-wide multiemployer negotiations.

Despite the teacher representatives' strongly positive perceptions of the value of standardization, this view is negatively related to local unit size. Teachers in smaller, i.e. rural, school districts probably exercise less bargaining power than urban teachers. Prior to centralization, the former were generally paid less than urban teachers and, hence, would have gained more from standardization. In contrast, teachers in larger school districts may believe that their bargaining power and ability to attain higher salaries and benefits are curtailed by a uniform province-wide bargaining objective. However, it is important to note that urban teachers' expression of less satisfaction with the objective of standardization does not extend to dissatisfaction with their provincial organization's representation at the central bargaining table or with government participation in bargaining.

On an aggregate basis, trustee representatives are favorably disposed toward standardization. However, standardization is viewed less favorably by trustees from districts in which a relatively larger share of the budget is

funded from local revenues. This may indicate trustee concern that standardization reduces their capacity to allocate local funds.

The intraorganizational aspects of provincial bargaining provide revealing insights. Both parties express satisfaction with the level of information exchange between the local units and their provincial bargaining agents. They are satisfied both with their opportunity for input into provincial bargaining and with their information concerning bargaining developments and outcomes. It appears that both the STF and SSTA have developed adequate mechanisms to involve their local constituents in the centralized bargaining process.

The comparison of means test indicates a major difference in the parties' satisfaction with representation at the central bargaining table. When interpreting this intergroup difference one must be aware that the four items comprising the «Satisfaction with Representation» factor consist of two dimensions of representation. The first is local perceptions of the extent to which the provincial representatives possess sufficient bargaining power to effectively represent local interests. The second assesses the benefit of having provincial government representatives at the central table. The trustees' negative perceptions of representation may reflect an uneasiness about the SSTA's minority status on the bipartite management bargaining team. Trustees appear to believe that their provincial representatives lack sufficient influence. While local trustees may have sufficient access to their provincial representatives, and vice versa, the SSTA's ability to act unilaterally upon local trustee concerns is limited by the arrangement. In contrast, the teachers' positive views of their representation appear to indicate satisfaction with the roles of their representatives and the government at the provincial table. Teachers from larger districts seems particularly receptive to the government's presence at the bargaining table and satisfied with the responsiveness of the STF agents to the concerns of larger locals.

Finally, both parties strongly disagree with the proposition that bargaining should occur exclusively at the provincial level. For the teachers, this result is interesting given the positive views they express about provincial bargaining. Within the context of a favorable assessment of provincial-level bargaining, the teachers seek to retain some local union-management interaction. It is particularly important to note that the teachers' perceptions of restricting bargaining to the provincial level do not vary with UNIT SIZE or LOCAL FUNDS. However, more experienced teacher representatives are more supportive of conducting negotiations exclusively at the provincial level. On the other hand, it is not difficult to understand the trustee's rejection of the idea of restricting bargaining to the provincial level. This sentiment is stronger among trustees from districts which finance

a greater proportion of their operating costs from local sources and indicates a clear preference for retaining a degree of local control over collective bargaining.

RESULTS: LOCAL PERCEPTIONS OF LOCAL BARGAINING

Comparing teacher and trustee perceptions of local negotiations, within the context of centralized bargaining, reveals further substantial interparty differences, with trustee responses generally more positive than those of the teachers. The mean responses shown in Table 3 indicate that the parties share similar positive perceptions of the importance of establishing and maintaining supplementary local negotiations (Factor 1). However, both parties disagree with the proposition that it would be beneficial if all bargaining were local (Factor 6) with the teachers disagreeing more strongly.

TABLE 3
LOCAL PERCEPTIONS OF LOCALIZED SECOND-TIER BARGAINING:
COMPARISON OF UNION AND TRUSTEE RESPONSE

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Union</i> (<i>N</i> = 69)	<i>Trustee</i> (<i>N</i> = 69)	<i>Paired</i> <i>T-Test</i> <i>T-Value</i>	<i>Intra-District</i> <i>Correlation</i> <i>R-Value</i> (<i>N</i> = 69)
1. Importance of Local Bargaining	3.33 ^b (.48) ^c	3.37 (.49)	.50	-.10
2. Satisfaction with Scope of Bargaining	3.32 (.62)	2.70 (.54)	6.35**	.02
3. Absence of Economic Issue Not Problematic	2.34 (.81)	2.68 (.90)	2.34*	.02
4. Reduced Conflict Potential	3.02 (.68)	3.28 (.64)	2.46*	.08
5. Independence from Provincial Level	3.13 (.50)	3.34 (.55)	2.52**	.04
6. Beneficial If All Bargaining Local	1.78 (.89)	2.70 (1.17)	5.05**	-.04

^a Response code: 1- Strongly Disagree; 2- Disagree; 3- Neutral; 4- Agree; 5- Strongly Agree.

^b Mean Score

^c Standard Deviation

** Significant at .01 level

* Significant at .05 level

Teachers express significantly greater satisfaction with the subject matter of local negotiations and its impact on the local bargaining process (Factor 2). However, both parties disagree with the proposition that removing major economic issues from the local purview is not problematic. This negative perception is significantly stronger among union respondents (Factor 3).

Trustee representatives are more inclined than teacher respondents to perceive local bargaining, in the context of multiemployer negotiations, reducing the potential for local union-management conflict (Factor 4). In addition, local trustees are more likely to agree that local negotiations exist in an environment which is largely free of spillover and control from the provincial level (Factor 5).

Despite the substantial number of factors upon which the parties differ, the intradistrict correlations between teacher and trustee responses reveal no significant relationships. This again suggests that the perceptions of parties from the same school district do not vary systematically.

Results of the correlation analysis (Table 4) of the six factors which measure perceptions of local bargaining and the three independent variables reveal more about the teachers than about the trustees. Of the three variables, UNIT SIZE is most often related to differences in the teachers' responses on the local evaluation factors, with significant correlations for five of the six factors examined. Due to the previously identified correlation between UNIT SIZE and CONTRACT INDEX, UNIT SIZE can be viewed as encompassing the degree to which the parties have concluded comprehensive local agreements. Urban districts typically have more comprehensive agreements.

The results indicate that teachers from larger units attach more significance to maintaining a supplemental local bargaining relationship (Factor 1) than do teachers from smaller units and are less likely to view the absence of major economic issues from the local bargaining table as problematic (Factor 3). They are also significantly less likely to perceive local bargaining within the two-tier system as reducing the potential for local labor-management conflict and as being independent from provincial-level bargaining developments and control (Factors 4 and 5).

Finally, there is a significant relationship between respondents' perceptions that their local constituents would benefit if all negotiations occurred on a local basis (Factor 6) and UNIT SIZE. Teacher responses are strongly and positively related to UNIT SIZE. By contrast, trustee responses are negatively related to UNIT SIZE.

TABLE 4
CORRELATION OF LOCAL PERCEPTIONS OF LOCALIZED
SECOND-TIER BARGAINING WITH SELECTED VARIABLES

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Union Size</i>		<i>Experience</i>		<i>Local Funds</i>	
	<i>Union</i>	<i>Trustee</i>	<i>Union</i>	<i>Trustee</i>	<i>Union</i>	<i>Trustee</i>
1. Importance of Local Bargaining	.27*	.10	-.06	.13	.07	.17
2. Satisfaction with Scope of Bargaining	-.15	.11	-.03	.12	-.05	.06
3. Absence of Economic Issues Not Problematic	.29**	-.07	.13	-.08	-.13	.01
4. Reduced Conflict Potential	-.23*	-.12	-.07	-.24*	-.09	-.13
5. Independence From Provincial Level	-.24*	-.08	.12	-.07	.11	.18
6. Beneficial If All Bargaining Local	.44*	-.22*	.11	-.16	.11	.05

** Significant at .01 level

* Significant at .05 level

The results show virtually no relationships between the parties' evaluations of second-tier bargaining and their negotiating experience (EXPERIENCE) or the percentage of operating funds derived from local sources (LOCAL FUNDS).

DISCUSSION: LOCAL PERCEPTIONS OF LOCAL BARGAINING

The parties' similar positive views of the importance of local bargaining suggests that both parties regard local negotiations within the two-tier structure as significant and essential. Local bargaining is seen as a forum for direct local participation and an opportunity for interparty decision making for items not suitable to provincial bargaining, e.g., local working conditions.

Despite the fact that the mandatory scope of local bargaining is limited by statute, the teachers indicate greater satisfaction with the scope of bargaining than do the trustee respondents. This unexpected finding is further complicated by subsequent teachers responses which reveal that they, more than trustee representatives, view the absence of major economic issues as problematic for local negotiations.

There may be various plausible explanations for these seemingly contradictory results. First, the teachers' satisfaction with the scope of bargaining may be the result of trustees voluntarily agreeing to expand the scope of issues addressed at the local level. Although such expansion requires agreement by the trustees, the decision to enlarge the scope may result from pressure exerted during the bargaining process. Hence, it may be done reluctantly although by mutual consent. Second, the trustees may find the mandatory scope so restrictive that it hampers meaningful negotiations. The results may reflect a preference for negotiating certain major economic issues locally rather than provincially. The latter point receives some empirical support in that the trustees do find the absence of major economic issues problematic for local negotiations. The trustees may be torn between their preference for standardization and a desire to exert direct control over major economic issues.

The teachers' responses also indicate that the absence of major economic issues is a problem. They may be tacitly acknowledging that money is a medium of exchange to which both parties can attach a value. In the absence of a clear monetary nexus, the parties must develop mutually agreeable alternatives to define value. To bargain without an agenda linked to major economic issues may increase the difficulty or complexity of second-tier bargaining. The related finding that urban teachers are less likely to perceive the absence of major monetary items as a problem may indicate that larger locals have the resources and membership interest to sustain a second bargaining tier, i.e., their memberships may be sufficiently large to develop identifiable interest groups which are able to articulate concerns and generate support for issues which can be brought to local bargaining tables. These issues may fall within the statutory scope or the local unions may prevail upon the trustees to expand the scope of bargaining.

The trustees give the two-tier structure more credit for contributing to the record of industrial peace than do the teachers, whose responses reveal an ambivalence on this point. Teachers representatives from larger school districts with more extensive local contracts are less inclined than those from smaller units to recognize local bargaining as a factor which reduces potential for conflict. It is noteworthy that the parties' local relationships have been almost devoid of job actions since the two-tier structure was

established in 1973. Even though local parties are removed from direct confrontation over the major allocation of economic resources, this is a remarkable record. Thus, while local trustees express dissatisfaction with the scope of bargaining, they seem to perceive two-tier bargaining as improving opportunity for industrial peace.

Both parties perceive a moderate degree of independence from developments at the central table and from difficulties which may result from their local bargaining counterpart's desire to implement at the local level objectives advocated by the provincial organization. This suggests that the parties view local bargaining as a distinct process occurring largely within a local framework. Union representatives from larger districts are more likely to feel that provincial-level events and interests may spill over onto local relationships. Perhaps they are more aware of province-wide negotiations and sensitive to the impact which province-wide agreements can have on local agreements. This size relationship may also reflect a cognizance among urban teachers that the visibility of larger units' agreements generates greater concern within the provincial trustee organization which may lead to greater central involvement in local bargaining.

Finally, and of importance, is the finding that both parties express reservations about returning to entirely local bargaining. Furthermore, the relatively large standard deviations in the parties' responses suggest disparate intraparty opinions concerning the value of bargaining exclusively at the local level. Opposition to entirely local bargaining is less evident among teachers from larger school districts. This may mean that the teacher locals which have negotiated more extensive local agreements are less likely to oppose a return to local salary bargaining. Teachers representatives in smaller units seem to recognize the advantage of consolidating bargaining responsibility with the larger and potentially more powerful teacher locals. By contrast, trustees in larger school districts perceive less benefit for their constituents in giving up provincial bargaining to return to entirely local teacher-trustee bargaining. Small district trustees are more likely to favor local bargaining.

CONCLUSION

The multifaceted results of the study do permit some salient observations. While there are significant differences between union and trustee respondents regarding provincial and local bargaining, both parties appear generally satisfied with the opportunity to standardize the major terms of employment within a framework which permits them to address issues of

local concern. However, on the union side, perceptions of standardization and local bargaining are influenced by unit size.

The results also seem to confirm the validity of Muir's suggestion that public sector multiemployer bargaining becomes more feasible as the provincial government assumes a greater share of the funding responsibility. The Saskatchewan Government's role as a major funding source reduces resistance to standardization from districts with limited abilities to pay. The apparent corollary is that districts with greater abilities to pay, i.e. those which fund a greater share of operating expenses from local sources, are less positively disposed toward multiemployer bargaining.

The most evident characteristic which differentiates the trustees' responses from those of the teachers relates to internal structure. The trustees express strong reservations about the way in which school boards interests are represented provincially. Clearly, the trustees do not appreciate the government's prominent and powerful presence. Herein lies a policy dilemma. One of the reasons that the teachers support the current central bargaining structure is because the provincial government has been brought to the table. To the apparent chagrin of local trustees, this enables the teachers' representatives to bargain directly with the government on important money matters thereby curtailing the trustees influence. The trade-offs involved for government policy makers on the representation issue are evident. The ideal arrangement to satisfy both groups is not so evident.

The restricted scope of provincial bargaining, in conjunction with a flexible scope at the local level, enables the local parties to exercise their decision-making authority as well as to recognize the benefits associated with second-tier bargaining as the forum for addressing issues of local concern. The delineation between provincial and local issues sustains local union-employer interaction by providing the parties with a meaningful mechanism for bargaining. This minimizes the possibility that the local role will atrophy or become inconsequential. Both parties appear interested in keeping this local forum alive. Despite mutual recognition of the value of local bargaining and despite any ideological commitment to local control and decision making, neither party supports a total return to local bargaining. Conversely, neither party endorses the prospect of negotiating exclusively on a provincial basis.

Finally, two caveats are warranted in assessing the results of this study. First, the survey results reflect the perceptions of local bargaining spokespersons who operate within a relatively mature bargaining relationship. At the time the data were collected, this bargaining arrangement had stabilized and adjusted to any initial problems. Second, the bargaining

structure and mandatory participation were legislatively imposed. Thus, it should be borne in mind that not all of the respondents may be willing participants in the bargaining arrangement. More positive results might be anticipated if a study were conducted using data gathered from local parties who are voluntarily participating in a multiemployer arrangement.

Perceptions des employeurs et des syndiqués de la négociation à double palier

En Saskatchewan, les négociations collectives entre les enseignants et les commissions scolaires, qui, auparavant, s'effectuaient au niveau local, ont fait place à un régime plus étendu, c'est-à-dire à une structure à deux paliers consistant en une négociation multipartite pour toute la province et aussi à des pourparlers au plan local. Sous le nouveau régime, au premier palier, la convention provinciale, portant sur les sujets déterminés par la loi, est négociée, d'une part, pour les employeurs entre un comité bipartite provincial formé de cinq représentants du gouvernement et de quatre représentants de l'Association des commissaires d'écoles (*Saskatchewan School Trustee Association*) et, d'autre part, par les représentants de la Fédération des enseignants (*Saskatchewan Teachers Federation*). L'entente qui en résulte s'applique aux cent vingt commissions scolaires de la province. Au deuxième palier, les commissaires d'écoles locaux et les représentants des enseignants négocient une convention collective traitant de questions obligatoires d'une portée moins générale, quoique extensibles, qui s'appliquent au niveau local.

Constatant la fréquence accrue de conventions collectives multipartites dans le secteur public, cet article traite de la structure de négociation à double palier en Saskatchewan. Le but en est d'évaluer de façon empirique quelques-uns des avantages escomptés et des limitations de la négociation multipartite étudiée dans les travaux portant sur les relations professionnelles tant dans le secteur public que privé. Contrairement à ce qui s'est publié sur la négociation multipartite et à double palier jusqu'ici, l'étude actuelle met l'accent sur une évaluation comparative des perceptions d'ensemble plutôt que sur les impressions des responsables provinciaux des négociations centralisées.

Fondé sur des études antérieures des auteurs au moyen d'entrevues portant sur les structures de négociation en Saskatchewan ainsi que sur des travaux théoriques, un formulaire comportant quarante questions fut mis au point pour évaluer leurs opinions sur la négociation en milieu scolaire tant à la table centrale qu'au niveau local. L'échantillon comprenait des représentants jumelés des syndicats et des commissaires dans soixante-neuf des cent vingt districts scolaires de la province. Une analyse a permis de dégager onze facteurs portant sur la perception qu'on avait au

plan local des divers aspects des négociations. Cinq traitaient des impressions qu'on avait localement de la négociation multipartite centralisée: valeur de la standardisation, qualité des échanges d'information, satisfaction de la représentation au niveau provincial, ajustement des conditions locales, volonté de négocier exclusivement au plan provincial. Les autres points portaient sur l'estimation de la négociation supplémentaire au niveau local: importance de la négociation locale, satisfaction quant au volume des sujets négociés, absence d'enjeux économiques majeurs, possibilité réduite de conflit, indépendance par rapport au niveau provincial, désirabilité de négociations totalement locales.

En se fondant sur une comparaison appariée des réactions obtenues, les résultats ont démontré qu'il y avait des différences marquées entre les évaluations des enseignants et celles des commissaires du niveau local au sujet des éléments composant la structure des négociations tant au premier qu'au deuxième palier. En général, les représentants des syndicats locaux étaient plus positifs dans leur évaluation que les commissaires, spécialement en ce qui se rapportait à la valeur de la standardisation, à l'ajustement des intérêts locaux et aux mécanismes de représentation. Bien que les commissaires au niveau local aient eu dans l'ensemble une attitude positive touchant la valeur de la standardisation et la qualité des échanges d'information entre les représentants locaux et provinciaux, ceux-ci semblaient avoir des réserves marquées quant à l'aménagement de la représentation à la table provinciale de négociation et aussi quant à la façon dont les conditions locales étaient réglées au premier palier de négociation. En ce qui concerne les impressions des parties au sujet des négociations dans le contexte de la négociation provinciale, celles-ci considéraient la négociation locale comme une partie importante de l'ensemble du processus. Les résultats révèlent que, comparativement aux représentants des syndicats, les commissaires engagés au plan local étaient moins satisfaits quant au volume des questions négociées au niveau local, mais plus positifs pour ce qui avait trait à l'indépendance des négociations locales du contrôle provincial et du risque réduit de conflit.

D'une façon générale, les résultats de l'enquête n'indiquent pas que les parties inclinaient vers une négociation exclusivement provinciale ou à un retour vers des négociations entièrement locales. Toutefois, la préférence pour des pourparlers strictement au plan local était plus prononcée parmi les commissaires que parmi les représentants des syndicats. En outre, si l'on tient compte des réponses des responsables syndicaux, les résultats tendaient à indiquer que la valeur de standardisation perçue était reliée à l'importance de l'unité de négociation locale. Les représentants des enseignants de groupes importants étaient moins affirmatifs touchant la valeur de la standardisation et aussi plus enclins à voir à leur avantage des négociations exclusivement locales. Pour les commissaires, les résultats de l'enquête tendaient à démontrer que, là où l'insatisfaction au sujet de la négociation provinciale existait, elle semblait provenir de leurs inquiétudes au sujet du partage de la représentation avec les mandataires du gouvernement.