

# CONSTRAINTS ON WHITE-COLLAR UNION BARGAINING

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## Research on White Collar Trade Unions

As a profession, we owe a great deal to those researchers who have developed theories of union growth and bargaining strategies, particularly Dunlop, Perleman, Davis, Shister, Bernstein and Bain. In the more specialized area of white collar union growth a debt is owed particularly to the last of these men, G.S. Bain,<sup>1</sup> and in the Australian context at a more empirical level to R.M. Martin<sup>2</sup>. From their work, a considerable knowledge of the institutions and mechanics of union growth and function has been gained. To date however we have a better understanding of the bargaining strategies of the so-called, blue-collar union<sup>3</sup> than we have of the bargaining strategies of the white-collar union (W.C.T.U.). This comment is not designed to denigrate previous research, but rather to suggest that the slow accumulation of data about W.C.T.U.'s strategies and the peculiar constraints on their bargaining functions is the next step.

Simply, most analyses of W.C.T.U.'s have confined themselves to the issues of overall growth, density, institutional organization and sociology<sup>4</sup>. There is little of great substance to add to these writers in those areas. What remains is the less dramatic documentation of the internal organization and bargaining patterns of the W.C.T.U.'s. It is here that the teachers unions have tended to stand out as well documented case studies,<sup>5</sup> and as exemplars of a "new militancy"<sup>6</sup>. Possibly this is most easily seen as a product of their employment in large numbers by governmental (local or state) departments which fund the teachers salary bills, if nothing else, a major budgetary burden and thus an area for scrutiny, economy and bureaucratic supervision.

In this type of discussion, a useful idea was introduced by Hamermesh<sup>7</sup> who pointed to the peculiar problems facing a W.C.T.U.'s leaders during a dispute in terms of reconciling their internal and external relationships. The internal relationship involves the leadership's relations with the union's members; the external relationship being with employers and the public. The overt behaviour of the W.C.T.U. leadership in its normal external and internal relations is a product of "middle class" values and "professional responsibility" self-perceptions, although internal relationships often tend to follow the same motivating tactics and even slogans as the manual trade unions (e.g. "Unity is Strength" etc.),

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1. G. S. Bain, *The Growth of White Collar Unionism*, Oxford, 1970.
  2. R. M. Martin, *White Collar Unions in Australia*, A.I.P.S. Monograph No. 5, 1965; and "Australian Professional & White Collar Unions", *Industrial Relations*, October 1965.
  3. For example, W. E. J. McCarthy (ed), *Trade Unions* Penguin, 1972; and R. Martin, *Trade Unions in Australia*, Penguin 1975.
  4. For example the valuable studies of R. Lansbury, "The Growth and Unionization of White Collar Workers in Australia", *J.I.R.* March 1977; and R. Martin *ibid*; and R. Martin, "Class Identification and Trade Union Behaviour: The Case of the Australian White Collar Unions", *J.I.R.* July 1965.
  5. M. H. Moskow, *Teachers and Unions*, Philadelphia 1966; and E. B. Shils & C. T. Whittier, *Teachers, Administrators and Collective Bargaining*, New York 1968.
  6. B. Bessant & A. D. Spaulf, *Teachers in Conflict*, Melb. University Press, 1972.
  7. D. S. Hamermesh, "Professional and White Collar Unionism" *Industrial Relations*, October 1966.



particularly during a dispute. The dilemma of the executive of any W.C.T.U. finding itself in a dispute situation involves the attempt to maintain an appearance of professionalism in the eyes of the community, while at the same time achieving some degree of economic advance for members. This attempt to achieve often divergent goals damages the image of professional responsibility both in the eyes of the membership who will tend to withdraw support, particularly if the dispute is prolonged (leading to executive splits as the organization's internal politics are worked out), and also in the eyes of the wider external community.

Thus, even though an important reason for the growth of W.C.T.U.'s, particularly over the past decade, has been "the emergence of effective leadership"<sup>8</sup>, this leadership is seriously limited by membership peculiarities in its ability to pursue the goals which presumably motivate the members to join and remain members. The tactic used by many W.C.T.U.'s to sugar the pill has been to develop a variety of ancillary services for members, adding to their real income but avoiding the bargaining situation which leads to reduced membership cohesion and lowered support for the leaders (e.g. health, insurance, discount buying etc.). While Martin remarks with some humour that "white collar militancy seems to be chiefly a matter of middle class unionists acquiring working class manners"<sup>9</sup>, this possibly begs the question, as the constraints operating on the W.C.T.U.'s leaders bargaining strategies seem to be far more serious than those shaping the tactics of a manual union's leadership.

In a low growth or no growth society, the positional goods<sup>10</sup> which were previously acquired by workers in the professions are no longer attainable, but are nonetheless still desired. Awareness of positional possibilities, however slight, will continue to reduce the cohesion of W.C.T.U.'s and limit militancy except where income issues have become sufficiently acute to outweigh status damage — such as was reasoned during strikes by Victoria and N.S.W. secondary school teachers, private bank employees, air traffic controllers and airline pilots over recent years. I suggest that it is this continuing awareness of, or belief in the possibility of,<sup>11</sup> positional goods that accentuates the problems, in a conflict situation, for the leaders of such collectivities.

As organizations grow larger, as government departments and service industry firms become structurally more complex, there also tends to be a growth of supervisory functions and a reduction in individual autonomy. Bain<sup>12</sup> argues that not only does bureaucratization encourage the growth of W.C.T.U.'s, but such unions by demanding standardization of working conditions lead to further bureaucratization. While such structures provide an additional range of positional goods, they are also characterised by a move from a "high discretion" environment in employment to a "low trust" situation at work<sup>13</sup>. The white collar worker is caught in this syndrome and the increased pressure to comply with orders of an enlarged or vertically heightened hierarchy.

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8. R. Lansbury, *ibid* 1977.

9. R. Martin, *ibid*, 1975, p.132.

10. F. Hirsch, *Social Limits to Growth*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977, Ch.3.

11. Despite their long term contraction observed as early as 1962; See F. C. Mann, Ch.3. in J. T. Dunlop (ed) *Automation and Technological Change*, Prentice Hall, 1962.

12. G. S. Bain, *ibid*, p.184.

13. A. Fox, *Beyond Contract: Work, Power and Trust Relations*, Faber 1974, p.110.



chy of superiors involves a serious conflict with perceptions of professionalism<sup>14</sup>. Some professions have suffered more than others from bureaucratization: in Australia particularly marked examples are to be found in teaching, civil service, journalism, banking and even professional engineers<sup>15</sup>. These, unlike medicine, law or architecture, have been the industries where the leadership's realization of the evolution of a low trust situation has induced a more active, "radical", response. White collar militancy is the response to the bureaucratization of professionals<sup>16</sup>. As a result, they are also the industries where the conflict between internal and external relations had been, on an increasing number of occasions, more brutal as they (the members) conclude that they are no longer regarded as competent persons in an essentially benign society<sup>17</sup>.

However, the tactics permitted to the leaders of the W.C.T.U. will still be constrained by the members' belief in a "high trust fraternity status"<sup>18</sup> part of which is the acquisition of positional goods by rising into or within the managerial hierarchy. These beliefs or aspirations will have a critical impact on the strategies open to the professional's union, which will be constrained to avoid direct action and to emphasise rational discussion as if between equals. Walker's sampling of opinions published in 1967, supports the proposition that professionals believe in a high trust relationship with their employer<sup>19</sup>. Overall, the White Collar Union leaders have placed considerable emphasis on cooperation and affirmed a belief in a pluralistic society. If the employer, as a result of deliberate ideological policy or as a result of bureaucratic size and inflexibility, chooses not to reciprocate such a high trust approach, the W.C.T.U. leadership has problems!

A simple proposition that may now be made is that, particularly in the case of white collar unions, there is a peculiar dichotomy between the protective and representative functions expected of those associations' executives and the basically conservative attitudes and socially conformist aspirations of the general membership. Recently,<sup>20</sup> in my own experience as a staff-union executive member this dichotomy has manifested itself. The proposed restrictions on the availability and duration of study leave sent shock waves through Queensland University and the executive, responding to demands for "something to be done" proposed several methods of actively combating the Federal Government's proposals. Tactics proposed included applying to the State Industrial Court for a State award incorporating present conditions of employment; alternatively a range of direct action proposals were made incorporating many of the methods so successfully used by the Air Pilots Federation. In the event the membership enforced, by overwhelming vote at a general meeting, a policy of gentlemanly protest and avoidance of open conflict or

14. A. Fox, *ibid*, p.32. Also Bessant & Spaul, *ibid*, Ch. 4.

15. R. J. O'Dea, "Some Features of the Professional Engineers Case", *J.I.R.* IV 1962.

16. C. J. Margerison & C. K. Elliott, "A Predictive Study of the Development of Teacher Militancy", *B.J.I.R.* Nov. 1970

17. A. Fox, *ibid*, p.36; these propositions are discussed by Margerison & Elliott, *ibid*, in the context of British teachers.

18. B. Goldstein, "Some Aspects of the Nature of Unionism Among Salaried Professionals in Industry", *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 20, 1955.

19. K. F. Walker, "White Collar Unionism in Australia", p.19-20 in A. Sturmthal, *White Collar Trade Unions*, University Illinois Press, 1967. For example, the vast majority believed that industrial relations would be less peaceful in the absence of the arbitration system. Their reasoning appears to be that arbitration provides a forum for discussions between equals. Alternatively one could suggest that arbitration avoids the odium of face-to-face conflict and superficially avoids a clash between internal and external relationships.

20. Executive Minutes of University of Queensland Academic Staff Association, Union of Employees. June 1978.



"radical" responses evincing a belief in a continued high trust relationship with the employer<sup>21</sup>. Here we have the problem in simple terms: in order to appear to be a productive white collar union executive it is necessary for that person to appear forceful, in command of all the procedures for negotiation with employers, and able to present an impressive image to the employer. But, while the electorate will choose such people to lead the organization, that same electorate will ultimately disapprove of any forceful tactics adopted by the leadership, of any use of the stronger negotiating procedures and of any tough approach to the employer. The membership will tend to prefer, in the event, despite the seriousness of the basic issue, the maintenance of an A.M.A. type image — secure but respectable.

D. W. Rawson, (1956),<sup>22</sup> observes two major deficiencies of white collar trade unions compared with manual trade unions (M.T.U.). These were that the W.C.T.U.'s lacked the ideological aims of the M.T.U.'s and the former received less unswerving loyalty than the second. Over the past twenty years, I suggest, the first deficiency has been partly repaired<sup>23</sup>. It is now predominantly the W.C.T.U.'s of Australia that are talking in terms of worker participation in management and industrial democracy (the Public Service Unions); are concerned with wider issues of social equity (Education Unions) and with macro-economic management (the peak councils of the W.C.T.U.'s). However, in implementing these broadly "ideological" aims they are severely hampered by the survival of the second deficiency which is, in broad terms, due to the members "middle-class" perceptions of themselves combined with genuine beliefs in responsibility and high trust relationships.

Thus, the simple "model" I am putting forward for the white collar T.U.'s behaviour patterns involves a (1) considerable growth of white collar — professional membership due to factors such as the necessity to have union membership to obtain greater security of employment tenure by having representation before wages tribunals<sup>24</sup> and possibly, as in Britain,<sup>25</sup> because of an awareness that "professional", i.e. clerical, status has fallen<sup>26</sup>. Membership has risen as such workers have with some reluctance decided that the maintenance of real income is marginally preferable to an image of moderate professionalism. This decision has been made despite their basic conservatism, defined in terms of their willingness to accept the legitimacy of the ruling groups. (2) The leadership which evolves with these W.C.T.U.'s will tend to be well educated, highly aware of the relative decline of their status and relative income and will tend to be particularly concerned for the wider social issues of an affluent but low-growth society. For want of a single better word, they are more "radical". (3) This commonly puts the W.C.T.U. leadership into a cleft-stick. They must be strongly spoken or "radical" in order to acquire leadership: this outspoken stand will be required in order to obtain the electoral confidence of the membership. Yet radical action is not really desired by the membership of the majority of professional associations who tend to withdraw from the threshold of con-

21. Of the type discussed by A. Fox, *Beyond Contract, Work, Power and Trust Relations*, Faber 1974, Ch. 1 & 2.

22. D. W. Rawson, "The Frontiers of Trade Unionism", *Aust. Journal of Politics & History*, May 1956.

23. R. M. Martin, in J. E. Isaac & G. W. Ford, *Australian Labour Relations: Readings*, Sun 1971.

24. R. M. Martin, Isaac & Ford, *ibid.* p.229.

25. R. Lumley, *White Collar Unionism in Britain*, Methuen 1972, p.31.

26. R. M. Martin, Isaac & Ford, *ibid.* p.230.



frontation even on fundamental issues, attempting to retain a high trust relationship.

### **A Case Study: The Queensland Teachers' Union:**

The case I propose to take in order to demonstrate some of these themes is that of the conflict between the Queensland Teachers Union (Q.T.U.) and the Queensland Government during mid 1976. Superficially the conflict was the result of the summary dismissal from the teaching service of three secondary school teachers following their court conviction for being "in possession of a prohibited plant" (cannabis). However the general issues that this summary dismissal raised (that is the issues of "double punishment" of civil servants and the absence of rights of appeal against discipline) were of far greater industrial importance than the civil liberties issue of cannabis consumption. While under section 28(2) of the Qld Public Service Act<sup>27</sup> a teacher found guilty of an indictable offense could be dismissed with no right of appeal it was felt that the process of dismissal was highly discriminatory against teachers and that the sequence of events in these particular dismissals were improper and constituted a miscarriage of justice.

When found guilty as charged, the three teachers were fined three hundred and fifty dollars each and the Acting Stipendiary Magistrate, when passing sentence on 18 June 1976, added the prejudicial comment that he would not want to have such people teaching his children (18 June 1976). The Queensland Minister for Education immediately made similar statements to the metropolitan press — speaking to the politically conservative climate of Queensland. These public statements of opinion and intent appeared, to the executive of the Queensland Teachers' Union, to have pre-empted the Public Service Boards decision making powers as to the appropriate form of discipline to be imposed in this case. Before the Q.T.U. could make a submission to the Public Service Board, the three teachers were dismissed on 20 July 1976. On 22 July the Q.T.U. executive decided to approach the newly appointed State Ombudsman before proceeding with a writ against the Minister of Education. At this stage the executive had not adopted any flamboyant or radical policy likely to cause dissent among the membership, and in order to obtain support from the public and from teachers, protesting press statements were issued and emergency "news-flash" circulars were sent to teachers throughout the state. The executive, believing at this stage that some type of appeal might be possible in these individual cases actually counselled against any other action by the union until the Ombudsman's decisions had been made. Further, at this stage, the Union's attention like that of the general public was focussed narrowly upon personalities rather than broadly on principles. On 13 August, the Ombudsman (Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations) rejected the Q.T.U. submissions. This outcome naturally angered the Executive which reasoned that the Ombudsman as a former Chairman of the Public Service Board had relied solely on the advice of the Public Service Board to the detriment of equitable treatment: four other state public servants were known to have been convicted of similar drug offences but had **not** been dismissed. A

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<sup>27.</sup> J. L. Middleton, "Indictable Offences", *Teachers Journal*, Sept. 1976.



key element of the Q.T.U. submission to the Ombudsman was that there should be an avenue of appeal for teachers-public servants dismissed, similar to the facility of the W.A. Teachers Tribunal. This submission was avoided by the Commissioner on the grounds of claimed incompetence to investigate policy matters and he further inflamed matters by offering the value judgement that right of appeal is not necessary in the case of indictable offences<sup>28</sup>.

During the August school vacation of each year, the Q.T.U. General Conference convenes, to which all regional branches of the Q.T.U. send delegates. The branch delegates often tend to be what Martin<sup>29</sup> calls the activists who by carrying branch (not school) motions to the conference and raising general business issues of more personal interest at the Conference may not give an entirely accurate reflection of the views and predilections of the membership. It was these "activists" who provided the pressure and the legitimacy for the executive to now adopt a new direction. The Conference strongly condemned the dismissals and called on the State Government to reinstate the teachers within seven days — a strong, outspoken policy. Further, the Conference directed that if reinstatements were not made Q.T.U. members would refuse to take the classes of the dismissed teachers. The Conference had thus set in train a policy which would ensure confrontation (with a more than willing antagonist in the State Government).

After the Conference, on the 28 August, the Executive called for a series of rolling strikes if the negotiations and tactics already implemented appeared to be fruitless. On this issue of rolling stoppages the executive had been evenly divided until the Union's President used his casting vote to support strong action. The Executive was not committed to a strong, "radical" line of action and the issue was now becoming prolonged.

To legitimise and to legalise such a strategy, it was necessary to hold a state-wide ballot of the total membership. It had been ruled by the State Industrial Commission (March 1968) that any attempt to implement strike action without a complete ballot of members was illegal. From previous experiences in 1974<sup>30</sup> the Executive was justifiably apprehensive that such a general ballot would reject their strategy. They also appear to have believed that by holding ballots only in those schools that required such a ballot that they would have sufficient testing of opinion. Further, they would have an improved chance of endorsement, on the reasoning that if a school staff requested a ballot there was a probability that a majority of those teachers approved the Executive's rolling strike strategy — the 1968 strategy<sup>31</sup>. Further, the success of the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association holding votes on stoppages in individual schools, showing that individual schools were more prepared to take strong action with solidarity,<sup>32</sup> must have provided support to the Executive's strategy. The consistency with which Section 28 of the Public Service Act applied was also a main cause for concern and was exacerbated some months later when two Queensland teachers, found guilty of the indictable offence of theft by a

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28. Letter to Mr. Clark, General secretary Q.T.U. 13 August, 1976.

29. R. Martin, *Trade Unions in Australia*, Penguin 1975, p.59 and pp. 77-79.

30. J. F. McMorrow, "Queensland Teachers Salaries: A Case Study in Militancy" *JIR* June 1977.

31. J. F. McMorrow, *ibid.*, p.175.

32. B. Bessant & A. D. Spaul, *ibid.* M.U.P. Ch.3, 1977.



N.S.W. Court, were given appointments with the Queensland Department of Education.

In the event the Executive's action was vindicated as instead of the rejection of strike action by a state-wide general ballot, many individual schools voted to strike separately and individually on 2, 3 and 6 September<sup>33</sup>. This, of course, was the Executive's dilemma: in order to galvanise support for strong action against the Minister for Education, an illegal balloting system had to be used which in turn would activate the conservatives of the membership into public opposition. In fact there was already a tide of opposition to the executive decision on rolling strikes and the selective ballots from the more conservative sections of membership, some of whom were later disciplined by the executive because they made their complaints to the press. All this was against a background of publically expressed belligerent intransigency by the Premier and Minister for Education<sup>34</sup> designed to intimidate the Union and increase the conservative reaction of members. The executive initiated the program of rolling stoppages on 6 September (Monday) after the failure of the fourth conference before the Industrial Commission. The Executive continued with the program despite the imposition of a restraining order on the Union by the Industrial Commissioner, on 3 September, to become effective on 6 September.

The Q.T.U. is not affiliated with the State Trades & Labour Council (T.L.C.), reflecting the distaste of a majority of Queensland teachers for any association with blue collar organizations or tactics<sup>35</sup>. Nevertheless the T.L.C. at this stage became unilaterally and voluntarily involved in support of the Q.T.U. Executive on the principle of opposition to double penalties. The T.L.C. meeting of affiliated unions, held on 6 September, passed a resolution which called for the use of industrial stoppages by other Unions (especially the Miscellaneous Workers Union which covers school cleaners) in support of the Q.T.U.

This support strengthened the resolve of the Q.T.U. Executive such that on 10 September (Friday) they decided to ignore the restraining order, even though both the Union and individual members participating in a strike could be heavily fined.

On 14 September (Tuesday), the Q.T.U. presented a further compromise suggestion to the Member for Education. This was that the Board of Teacher Education, which by registering teachers passes judgement on their fitness to teach, should be the appropriate body to solve the dispute by giving or temporarily withholding registration. But, as the case with the August 31 conference of the Q.T.U. President with the Minister for Education (at the request of the Industrial Commission), this compromise was subverted and preempted by another bellicose public statement by the State Premier, knowing that his voice would induce membership dissention from the Executive's policy. There was no other response and the executive felt that the aggressive attitude of the Government gave them a highly legitimate reason to continue strong action in defence of the victimised teachers<sup>36</sup>.

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33. Q.T.U. "News Flash", 6 Sept. 1976.

34. *Courier Mail*, 31 August, 1976.

35. Such affiliation has been on several occasions vigorously rejected by Q.T.U. members, J. F. McMorrow, *ibid.*, p. 185.

36. I am grateful to one of my past students, Mr L. Harold, a teacher, for pointing out the contravention by the Queensland Government, during this dispute, of the provisions of Article 50 of the U.N.E.S.C.O./I.L.O. Convention on the rights of



Thus, on the 20 September the Q.T.U. executive commenced to meet with other trade unions to plan a wider industrial strategy to overcome the Government's intractable opposition. It was this step (seen to be tantamount to effective affiliation with the T.L.C.) that appears to have accelerated the conservative reaction and was the major issue that was later cited by the Vice President — with his eye on the Presidency — as influencing his decision to resign as Vice-President. Here we have the almost inevitable split within the Executive on the criteria of the desirability of salvaging the maximum of a high trust relationship with the employer by avoiding both direct action and affiliation with non-professional organizations. Nevertheless, at this stage, the Council of the Q.T.U., on 25 September voted strongly in support of this Executive strategy, despite widespread membership dissent articulated by an ultra conservative (D.L.P.) faction within the Union, but finding sympathy with a majority of teachers motivated variously by the responsibility-trust syndrome and by the desire to achieve positional goods and to retrieve social status feared lost.

I should also make it plain that the Queensland Government thrives on this type of confrontation. The Premier<sup>37</sup> was able to denigrate the Union (and thus accentuate divisions within it) for its association with "left-wingers". He also suggested that parents lobby him (i.e. provide political legitimacy) to lift the immunity of the Q.T.U. so that parents could sue the Q.T.U. for damages arising from any strike. The rural populist State Government and the moralising press consistently presented the issue to the public as nothing more than a dismissal for drug offences generally disapproved of in the wider society.

The Q.T.U. Executive unfortunately failed to effectively publicise, even among teachers, the basic issue, that of summary dismissal of government employees without the right of appeal. Thus, despite the public support (23 September) given to the Q.T.U. by the relatively conservative Queensland Council of State School Organizations (over the Premier's suggestion that parents should sue teachers) the Q.T.U. Council found that the conservative membership backlash had grown too strong and on 25 September called off the rolling stoppages. The Executive turned to a safety campaign in the hope that this would repair relations with the membership.

The statement on 21 September by the Minister for Education<sup>38</sup> may also have had some bearing on this decision — "Let me make this clear once again. When Mr. Costello (the Q.T.U. President) unconditionally calls off, not suspends, but abandons the illegal strike action he initiated I shall be happy to consider any matter which may contain potential for productive discussions. Concerning the issue of the teachers dismissed for drug offences I remain unconvinced that there can be productive discussion with my Department". The Executive may naively have believed that the Minister was leaving the door open for negotiation on the general principle of rights of appeal of Crown employees in cases of dismissal. Such hopes were not soundly based: the Premier had been provided with a case of a union apparently supporting drug-

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teachers, to which Queensland was a signatory, particularly:  
"the right to defend himself and to be defended by a representative of his choice, adequate time being given to the teacher for the preparation of this defence";  
"the right to be informed of the decisions reached and the reasons for them";  
"the right to appeal to clearly designated competent authorities or bodies."

37. *Courier Mail*, 22 September, 1976.

38. *Courier Mail*, 21 September, 1976.



users and the Queensland press happily amplified his union-bashing statements. Not an environment for a high trust relationship! The basic issue had become clouded for the public, the Parliament and the Union's membership. The Premier maximised his political capital by focussing on the contentious and emotive issue of teachers using drugs. In this way he was able to lock the door firmly against the Q.T.U.'s broader complaint and reinforce the locks by influencing the conservative reaction of the membership particularly as the dispute lengthened.

Certainly, the Executive's campaign strategy contained some major flaws, central to which was a failure, at the outset, to emphasise to the membership that the real issue was not drug-use (of which it strongly disapproves) but the process of summary dismissal without right of hearing or appeal, which involved a "double punishment". The Union's executive could have emphasised not the particular cases but rather the need for an appeals tribunal independent of the Public Service Board which would provide for teachers the safeguards of the U.N.E.S.C.O./I.L.O. charter.

It has been claimed by many observers of the Q.T.U. that this case in particular has contributed to disunity within the Q.T.U. and a further weakening of the executive by promoting ideological schisms at that level. Certainly in the election, some months later, of a new executive some faces were changed. But, the new executive, in its attempts to serve what it perceives as teacher's industrial needs has found itself similarly restricted in its ability to use any of the normal tools of collective bargaining by exactly the same type of conservative membership reaction. For example, the hesitant and ultimately desultory campaign to reactivate two adventurously liberal teaching programs in 1978<sup>39</sup> foundered on the rock of the membership's withdrawal of support — in order to plead with the employer for a return to a high trust relationship and to retain their conservative professional image.

As was illustrated by the Q.T.U.'s salaries campaign during 1974, during which the leadership attempted to organize a strike in support of the claim, I believe there were two basic general lessons to be learned. First, the move for militant action came from some key members of the executive, not from a mass movement motivated by a groundswell of teacher discontent. The Executive contained members who were there because of their militant articulateness. Second, the fact that the union's leaders were unable to sustain a long-term momentum to their militant campaign because of the ultimate influence of the membership. The membership could be described variously as conservative or professionally responsible or as having an enduring belief in the desirability or possibility of high trust relationships. McMorrow regards the low success of this campaign as being the result of the democratic system governing the Union which led to a debilitation of the leadership's attempts to rapidly improve their economic rewards<sup>40</sup>. Democratic government or not, the membership's perceptions of their status vis-a-vis the employer (which they prefer to think of as equal in a high trust situation) and their responsibility to the community (whether or not this is a rationalization of baser motives)<sup>41</sup> would, in the event of a prolonged conflict, seriously inhibit the executive's militancy. This is so,

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- 39. The MACOS and SEMP issues — educational programs proposed to be introduced to social studies programs in Queensland schools but opposed by Mother Grundy elements and finally proscribed by the State Government early in 1978.

40. J. F. McMorrow, *ibid*, p. 185.

41. C. J. Margenson & C. K. Elliott, *ibid*, p. 415, suggest that "baser motives" appeared to be the case with ambitious middle-aged professional teachers.



particularly as the employer, a large bureaucracy (compounded by an ideology antagonistic to Unions) was inclined towards a low trust unitarist stance.

The same experience and lessons were learned again by the same Union in 1976. The extreme case, and thus a highly illustrative case of the professional union syndrome, also shows up in the academic bargaining situation. In the cases discussed above, the W.C.T.U. leadership found itself unable to effectively reconcile their internal and external relationships. This resulted in the defeat of their bargaining strategy, exasperated internal ideological conflict manifesting itself in an executive split, and reduced general unity which has undermined the effectiveness of bargaining since.

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## ATTITUDES TO INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN FOUR NEW ZEALAND INDUSTRIAL GROUPS

J. H. Kerr Inkson\*

### Introduction

While the attitudes of New Zealand trade unions and union officials to various aspects of industrial relations are consistently publicised, relatively little is known of the attitudes and opinions of rank-and file union members. The democratic structure of union organisations would lead one to expect a basic congruence between the policies and collective actions of unions, the public pronouncements of their elected officials, and the attitudes and wishes of their members. Yet public suspicion abounds that union officials are "unrepresentative", and do not genuinely reflect members' views: this suspicion is particularly strong when officials suggest that there are fundamental conflicts of interest between employers and employees, or when they take strong action in pursuit of demands. It is fanned by media coverage of industrial relations which stresses conflict and union militancy.<sup>1</sup> The question of trade unionists' own attitudes is clearly important; these attitudes can both reflect and influence the conduct of bargaining process, and a knowledge of them can help both sides to pursue their objectives in a more realistic way.

There have been relatively few studies of New Zealand workers' attitudes to industrial relations: the pioneering study of Seidman is the most obvious exception.<sup>2</sup> However, the present writer recently conducted an interview survey of attitudes and orientations to work among groups of workers in four key New Zealand industries — meat freezing, motor-car assembly, the waterfront, and construction. The survey enabled data to be gathered on attitudes to several broad issues affecting industrial relations. The specific issues dealt with were: team-work versus conflict-oriented views of industrial relations; union objectives and power; members' involvement in, and opinions of, their unions; and

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1 J. Cordery, B. Jamieson, and B. Stacey, "Industrial relations as news", *New Zealand Journal of Industrial Relations*, 1978, Vol. 3, pp 57-62.  
2 J.I. Seidman, *Attitudes of New Zealand Workers*, Industrial relations research monograph, No. 1, Victoria University of Wellington, 1975.