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, exascerbated internal ideological conflict manifesting itself in an executive split, and reduced general unity which has undermined the effectiveness of bargaining since.

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.[1] 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.[2] 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

perceived causes of good industrial relations. This article provides some of the data and draws rudimentary conclusions. Comparisons are also made between the four groups of New Zealand workers and a sample of British industrial workers studied by John Goldthorpe and his colleagues in Luton, England in the well-known "Affluent Worker" study of the sixties.[3]

Method and Samples

An interview survey was conducted among four samples of male industrial workers, each sample being chosen randomly from the appropriate total group at its workplace. In each case active support was received from both management and local union officials, and survey results were made available on an equal basis to both parties. Individual confidentiality was guaranteed, and refusal and unavailability rates were low (about 13% overall). Each man was interviewed privately in an office near his place of work by the writer or a trained assistant. The schedules of structured and semi-structured questions dealt mainly with occupational and social background; job satisfaction; attitudes to work, co-workers, supervision, management, the union, pay, and industrial relations; aspirations for the future; and home background and leisure activities.

The four samples were as follows:

> 133 meat-freezing workers employed on a seasonal basis in two works in the Otago/Southland area;
>
> 72 assemblers employed in two Central N.Z. factories assembling motor-cars from imported parts;
>
> 87 watersiders from the permanent workforces in the ports of Dunedin and Port Chalmers;
>
> 91 trade carpenters employed in building construction on twenty building-sites in the Dunedin area.

All interviewees were union members, except for three carpenters who had avoided joining.

Some of the key characteristics of the four samples are summarised in Table

TABLE 1: Key characteristics of four samples

	Freezing Workers	Assemblers	Watersiders	Carpenters
Nature of work	assembly line	assembly line	varied labouring	skilled craft
Stability of workforce	moderate	low	high	moderate
Median age	32	29.5	49	35
Basic adherence to job	financial	lack of alternatives	financial & social	loyalty to employer & trade
Job satisfaction	low	low	moderate	moderate
Satisfaction with pay	high	low	high	moderate

1. Further information on other aspects of the study may be obtained from other papers.[4]

Teamwork versus conflict in industrial relations

A basic question which has had the attention of a number of industrial sociologists overseas, is that of whether workers take an essentially ''harmonistic'' or teamwork view of employer-employee relations, or whether they take an essentially ''dichotomous'' or conflict view. By ''harmonistic'' is meant the belief that although short-term local disagreements and conflicts may occur, fundamentally management and labour are highly interdependent, that in the long term their common interests are more important than their differences, and that they should therefore work co-operatively towards common goals. By ''dichotomous'' is meant the view that there are fundamental conflicts of interest between the two groups, that their relationship is inevitably characterised by antagonism and conflict, and that any occurence of collaboration is temporary, accidental, or caused by employer deception. Studies of ''traditional'' industrial groups in Europe have shown that their attitudes are frequently characterized by the dichotomous view, which appears to relate closely to high class-consciousness.[5] On the other hand recent British studies of workers in modern engineering and process industries have shown that they take a much more harmonistic perspective.[6] What is the situation in the modern, rural-based economy of New Zealand, where class-consciousness is popularly believed to be low?.

The critical question used by Goldthorpe **et al.** in the ''Affluent Worker'' study to evaluate these perspectives was as follows: ''Here are two opposing views about industry generally: I'd like you to say which you agree with more. Some people say a firm is like a football side — because good teamwork is to everyone's advantage. Others say that men are really on different sides. Which view do you agree with more?'' Table 2 shows the answers by the New

TABLE 2: ''Images'' of employer-worker relations.

Freezing Workers

	Works A n = 73	Works B n = 60	Assemblers n = 72	Watersiders n = 87	Carpenters n = 91	All n = 383
			Percentage			
''Harmonistic'' image	78	60	65	85	84	76
''Dichotomous'' image	19	35	32	10	12	20
Don't Know	3	5	3	5	4	4

4   J.H.K. Inkson, ''The job satisfaction of New Zealand male manual workers''. **New Zealand Psychologist**, Vol. 6, 1977, pp. 2-13; ''The man on the disassembly line: New Zealand freezing workers'', **Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology**, Vol. 13, 1977 pp. 2-11; ''Workers' attitudes: an empirical study of the technology thesis'', **Journal of Industrial Relations**, Vol. 19, 1977, pp. 241-254; ''The work values of New Zealand male manual workers: a research note'', **New Zealand Psychologist**, Vol. 7, 1978, p. 46.

5   For example, N. Dennis, F. Henriques, and C. Slaughter, **Coal is our Life**, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1956; University of Liverpool, Department of Social Science, **The Dock Worker**, Liverpool University Press, 1954; A Willener, ''L'Ouvrier et l'organisation'', **Sociologie du Travail**, Vol. 4, 1962.

6   Goldthorpe et. al., **Industrial Attitudes**, op.cit., D. Wedderburn and R. Crompton, **Workers' Attitudes and Technology**, Cambridge University Press, 1972.

Zealand groups to the same question. Because of the differences between workers in the two freezing works, they are tabulated separately.

All four groups had substantial majorities of workers expressing a harmonistic view, the overall 76% having this view being in excess of 67% reported by Goldthorpe **et al.**, and the 71% reported by Wedderburn & Crompton for a sample of British process workers.[7] These results suggested that the majority of workers believed that the interdependence between management and labour was in the long term more important than the differences between them. However, as Ramsay has pointed out, it is important to distinguish between that which the worker believes to be an ideal, and that which he experiences as the current state of affairs in his own organisation.[8] The figures in Table 2 suggest that most workers believe a harmonistic **ideal** to be possible. The workers' impressions of the extent of teamwork in their own organisation may be very different, as Ramsay's own data suggests.[9]

The data failed to support the expectation that traditional, solidary occupational groups would have the highest incidence of dichotomous views: the watersiders came closest to being such a group, yet have a higher proportion of harmonistic responses than any other group.

It has been suggested that because of the psychological stresses imposed on workers by repetitive short-cycle tasks, the assembly-line worker is "the prototype of the militant worker"[10]. This view was not supported by data from the Goldthorpe **et al.** study, the assembly sample giving a high percentage of harmonistic responses. In the present case, however, the data supported the view that a dichotomous, conflict-oriented view of industrial relations was related to assembly-line work. The two mass-production groups gave significantly more dichotomous responses than did the other two groups ($X^2 = 16.8$, df = 1, $p < .01$). The most conflict-oriented group was the freezing workers at Works B, which had lower pay, a poorer industrial relations record, and less employee-centred management than had Works A. The data also provided the opportunity to test the hypothesis, frequently argued in the freezing industry, that mutton slaughtermen are typically more conflict-oriented than other workers. The hypothesis was supported, 39% of mutton slaughtermen opting for the dichotomous alternative, compared with only 22% of other freezing workers ($X^2 = 4.0$, df = 1, $p < .05$).

Relations with Employers

The adoption by a worker of an essentially harmonistic perspective does not necessarily mean that he has a positive view of his own employer, or that he sees no conflicts of interest. Because he believes that teamwork is ultimately a good thing, he does not necessarily believe that everyone in the team is playing fairly. The criteria by which the worker judges his employer are clearly important: what do workers expect of their employers? Answers to a survey question, "What things do you think employees have a right to expect from their

7   Goldthorpe et. al., ibid., pp. 73-75; Wedderburn and Crompton, ibid., p. 71.
8   H. Ramsay, "Firms and football teams", British Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol. 8, 1975, pp. 396-400.
9   Ibid., -. 398.
10   Blauner, R., Alienation and Freedom, University of Chicago Press, 1964, p. 123.

companies?" are shown in Table 3. There are problems of interpretation due to ambiguities in the meaning of terms such as "conditions" and "fair treatment": do they refer to financial rewards, physical working conditions, or psychological climate? Nevertheless, it was apparent that most workers laid their main emphasis on **material** conditions and rewards rather than less tangible matters such as dignity and respect. When the responses which referred to **specific** extrinsic/economic factors (i.e. pay, conditions, facilities, perks and privileges, security and seniority) were aggregated these were found to account for 67% fo the freezing workers' responses, 58% of the assemblers', 57% of the carpenters' but only 30% of the watersiders'.

TABLE 3: Perceptions of employees' rights.

	Freezing Workers n = 133	Assemblers n = 72	Watersiders n = 87	Carpenters n = 91	All n = 383
			Number of Mentions		
Good pay, fair pay	45	20	20	31	116
Good conditions	50	19	15	31	115
"Fair" treatment	32	16	26	26	100
Consideration, respect, etc	28	3	53	11	95
Good facilities	28	8	3	9	48
Privileges and "perks"	19	11	5	6	41
Good communication, information	2	8	14	14	38
Security, seniority provisions, etc	16	2	2	11	31
Other	15	16	10	13	54
TOTALS	235	103	148	152	638

A number of possible interpretations are possible for the deviance of the watersiders. Perhaps due to their close involvement in industrial relations they had a more sophisticated conception of issues and recognised the importance of both substantive and psychological rewards; perhaps they felt that their economic rights had already been won; or perhaps, because they were an older group, mostly with established homes and few dependents, their priorities had shifted. In the other groups however, the perceived relationship between employers and workers suggested by these data was very much that of an economic bargaining relationship.

The workers' evaluations of their own organisations as employers were asessed by means of two questions. Firstly, "How would you say your company compares to others you know of as a firm to work for? Would you say better than most, about average, or worse than most?" (This question was not asked of watersiders, whose employment status on contract to various separate stevedoring companies made it difficult to answer). Secondly, "Do you think the company could afford to pay you more?" (In the case of watersiders, the word "employers" was substited for "company").

The results are given in Tables 4 and 5.

TABLE 4: Evaluation of the company as a firm to work for.

	Freezing Workers						
	Works A	Works B	Assemblers	Watersiders	Carpenters	All	Goldthorpe Study
	n = 73	n = 60	n = 72		n = 91	n = 296	n = 229
			Percentages				
"Better than most"	40	18	38	n.a.	43	36	65
"About average"	56	65	56	n.a.	56	58	25
"Worse than most"	1	17	5	n.a.	1	5	6
Don't know	3	0	1	n.a.	0	1	5

TABLE 5: Opinions of whether the company could afford to pay more.

	Freezing Workers						
	Works A	Works B	Assemblers	Watersiders	Carpenters	All	Goldthorpe Study
	n = 73	n = 60	n = 72	n = 87	n = 91	n = 383	n = 229
			Percentages				
"Could afford to pay . . ."	41	57	71	48	49	53	74
"Could not afford to pay . . ."	40	27	13	33	31	30	20
Other, don't know	19	17	16	18	20	17	7

The results showed that most men felt either neutral or mildly positive to their companies as employers; only in freezing Works B was there a substantial minority who believed their employers to be below average. Despite this acceptance of employers, however, a majority of worker believed their companies could afford to pay them more, the proportion of (low-paid) assemblers expressing this view being particularly high. Nevertheless, the fact that around a third of freezing workers, watersiders, and carpenters believed their companies could **not** afford to pay them more is surprising, and may reflect changes in economic conditions since the mid-sixties, when the Goldthorpe study was conducted.

Relations with Union

In another paper the writer has shown that there were major differences between the four samples in terms of their participation and interest in union activities.[11] Watersiders had the greatest involvement (for example 93% claimed that they regularly attended union meetings), followed in order by freezing workers (78%), assemblers (38%), and carpenters (5%). These differences appeared to result mainly from differences in the stability of the workforces, solidary feelings among members and the potential of workplaces for site-

11   J.H.K. Inkson, "Factors influencing workers' involvement in their unions", unpublished manuscript, University of Otago, P.O. Box 56, Dunedin.

based union activities. Other data showed that a majority of the workers believed that the union activities should be confined to securing improvements in pay and conditions; 52% held this view, against 43% — including majorities of assemblers and watersiders — who believed unions should also try to get workers a say in management. A majority in all samples — 56% overall — agreed that unions in general had too much power. On the other hand, the vast majority of men (84%) believed that their union was doing a good job for its members at their place of work.

The Personalisation of Industrial Relations.

When the workers in the four samples were asked to indicate the reasons for their generally positive evaluations of their unions, it emerged that their answers were split almost equally between indications of satisfaction with results achieved by the union in terms of pay and conditions, and indications of satisfaction with local union officials, their competence, energy, effective communication with members etc.[12] The importance of the latter (personal) factors was shown by the fact that the higher the involvement of the members of an occupational group in union activities, and the higher their evaluation of union performance, the more likely was that performance to be seen in terms of personal qualities of local union officials: 57% of watersiders mentioned these factors, compared with 42% of freezing workers, 28% of assemblers, and 20% of carpenters.[13] The extent of on-site union activity and the consequent visibility and accessibility of officials therefore appeared to be key factors promoting member confidence in the union.

The importance of personal elements in the attitudes of these workers to industrial relations was further demonstrated by answers to another question, which was also used in the Goldthorpe **et al**. study, ''This firm has a good industrial relations record. Why do you think this is?'' (The question was omitted in Freezing Works B, which has a notoriously bad record and in a number of very small building firms employing carpenters, where it would have been inappropriate). Answers are shown in Table 6, and show considerable inter-sample difference. However, taking the New Zealand results together initially and comparing them with the results of Goldthorpe **et al**., the outstanding finding appears to be that in the New Zealand samples good industrial relations were viewed much more as a product of good **human** performance and relationships and much less as a product of good systems and procedures. For example, only 4% of the N.Z. answers concerned effective industrial relations machinery, compared with 24% in the U.K. study. Percentages of workers mentioning effective union and management officials were slightly higher in N.Z., and 21% of N.Z. workers mentioned good relations between union and management personnel. Finally, references to qualities and characteristics of the workforce accounted for 36% of the N.Z. total, compared with only 22% in the U.K. study. Moreover the main **types** of response concerning the workforce were quite different between the two countries: nearly two-thirds of the U.K. answers concerned weaknesses in union organisation and/or policy, compared with only a

---

12   Ibid.
13   Ibid.

small minority in N.Z., where workers stressed instead the loyalty and co-operativeness of the local workforce, and the absence of transient militants. All in all, it appeared that these N.Z. workers viewed industrial relations in highly local, personal, non-bureaucratic terms.[14].

TABLE 6: Reasons for company's good industrial relations record.

Freezing Workers

	(Works A only)	Assemblers	Watersiders	Carpenters (reduced sample)	All
	n = 73	n = 72	n = 87	n = 63	n = 295
			Number of Mentions		
1. Effective machinery for consultation, negotiation, & settlement of disputes.	3	-	3	7	13
2. Good management/union practice					
management reasonable	17	11	7	17	52
supervision good	-	5	1	13	19
union officials responsible/efficient	11	7	22	1	41
management/union relations good	19	10	17	12	58
Total	47	33	47	43	170
3. Good pay, conditions, and benefits	3	6	3	7	19
4. Characteristics of Work-force					
all local men, no outside "stirrers"	21	2	8	2	33
loyal co-operative workforce	5	4	43	6	58
men unwilling to strike	5	2	9	6	22
union organisation weak	1	8	1	2	12
Total	32	16	61	16	125
5. Other	-	11	7	5	23
Total	85	*66	121	78	350

* At one of the two assembly plants studied, 17 out of the 34 interviewees responded "don't know" to this question.

Other features of the results shown in Table 6 reflect idiosyncrasies of the four samples. It is clear that the freezing workers in Works A attributed their good industrial relations record in large measure to a stable local workforce, with few disruptive elements from elsewhere. It was interesting that in this sample, and more particularly among the carpenters, managers were attributed more responsibility for good industrial relations than were union officials. Among the cohesive, solidary watersiders, on the other hand, almost all the men saw harmonious relations as being derived from a good co-operative workforce led by sensible and effective union officials. The assemblers lacked a clear "conventional wisdom" on the issue; but theirs was the only sample in which there existed a sizeable minority who seemed interested in stronger industrial action, and who believed that this was being prevented by weak union organisation.

Conclusions

In drawing broad conclusions from this study, it is important to be aware of

14   See Goldthorpe et al., op.cit., Table 30, p. 77, for comparative statistics.

its limitations. The four groups, drawn mainly from the southern part of the South Island, and entirely from male manual occupations, are not necessarily representative of trade unionists in New Zealand. Only a few questions on industrial issues were asked, and these were very broad so as to be applicable to a range of different industrial situations. In some cases responses clearly reflected local idiosyncracies. Nevertheless, some tentative broad conclusions may be drawn.

The first conclusion is that, compared to the image of New Zealand unionists consistently presented by the media, the workers appeared, as did those studied by Seidman[15], to be remarkably docile and contented. Relatively few believed that conflict between employers and workers was inevitable, hardly any evaluated their current employers as below average, a sizable minority (nearly a third) even believed that their employers were paying them as much as they could afford and a majority felt that unions in general had too much power. How such a result is to be interpreted — as a welcome indication of the ultimate commonsense of the worker-in-the-street or as a sign of the low consciousness that he has of his real position — is of course a matter of individual attitude. The results certainly appear to suggest that industrial problems are seen by wokers themselves as being a lot less intractable than some of their employers and government leaders appear to believe.

Secondly, there was a strong element of materialism running through these workers' conceptions of industrial relations. Their relation to their employers was seen as a purely economic bargain, having little to do with political or class conditons. By and large the men seemed little interested in using their unions for the extension of their power in organisational decision-making, nor did they see the nature and extent of their psychological involvement in their work as an industrial issue. In other words, they came close in these respects to the prototypical "instrumental" worker described by Goldthorpe and his colleagues in the "Affluent Worker" books — perceiving industrial relations as a means of individual material advancement rather than of collective organisational or political change.

Finally, the personalisation of industrial matters that appeared to characterise these samples deserves further comment. Assuming personalisation is not an aberration of the four groups studied, but represents something characteristic of New Zealand workers more generally, several explanatory hypotheses may be put forward: elsewhere, the writer and others have suggested special factors about New Zealand society which may lead to particular attitudes and behaviour in the workplace.[16] Psychologically the personalisation of industrial relations may reflect a desire for personal contact at work. It may reflect the small sizes of New Zealand units of organisaiton, both in industrial companies and in unions. Or it may indicate decentralization of industrial issues to an extent where rank-and-file union members feel personally involved in what is happening. It may perhaps give pause to those who advocate rationalisation of union organisation as a **sine qua non** of solutions to the country's industrial problems. Whatever the explanation, the finding that union members in these four groups had personalised industrial relations to this extent is an interesting one which deserves further investigation to determine whether it represents a general New Zealand tendency, and, if so, what the implications are for the conduct of industrial relations in New Zealand.

15   Seidman, op.cit.
16   J.H.K. Inkson, "The job satisfaction", op.cit., G.H. Hines, "Cultural influences on work motivation" Occasional Paper N. 3, Department of Business Studies, Massey University, 1975