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**A Framework for Evaluation of the
Union-Management Relationship in Government**

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Coping with the constraints imposed by employee unionization and collective bargaining is a major problem facing government organizations (Chapman & Cleaveland, 1973). Public management has become a partner in a system of organizational governance in which control of administrative decisions is shared, preferred management outcomes are more difficult to achieve, and policy decisions are no longer even formally an interchange merely between the public and its representatives. The initial response of public managers and legislators to the rapid growth of collective bargaining has been cast around pragmatic concerns such as the legalization of collective bargaining and the administration of union-management relations. Newland (1976) notes that this pragmatic approach has often failed to link the problems created by collective bargaining to management practices. An area of particular neglect, suggests Newland, is the relationship of collective bargaining to social change, "including identification of social indicators and evaluation of accomplishments in terms of general government goals and objectives" (p. 532).

In the present study, a framework is developed for evaluating the union-management relationship in government based broadly on the concept of organizational effectiveness. A number of previous evaluative studies of the union-management relationship are first examined to demonstrate some of the inadequacies of alternative approaches as well as the differences between these approaches and the framework we develop. The conceptual rationale for using organizational effectiveness as the yardstick against which to evaluate the union-management relationship is then discussed. We conclude with a discussion of the utility of the framework for evaluating union-management relationships in government.

The impact of the union-management relationship on government effectiveness cannot be underestimated. Newland (1971) argues that "collective

bargaining must serve as one of several vehicles for creative change...if it is to be compatible with future public interests" (p. i). A variety of assessments indicate, however, that collective bargaining in government has been, rather than a vehicle for creative change, an instrument for achieving partisan interests (Doherty, 1971; Nigro, 1972; Perry & Levine, 1976; Shaw & Clark, 1972). As long as public managers pit public employees against citizens or public employee unions pit the public against management, labor-management relations in government will have decidedly negative impacts on the parties, the public, and the political system. Methods are needed for re-integrating management, employee, and citizen interests. The evaluative framework we propose highlights the multiplicity of interests that must be balanced through the union-management relationship. It also identifies explicit criteria for which all the parties in public sector bargaining should be held accountable.

APPROACHES TO EVALUATING THE UNION-MANAGEMENT RELATIONSHIP

It is important at the outset to identify what we mean by the "union-management relationship" and "evaluation." The union-management relationship is "a continuing institutional relationship between an employer entity and a labor organization concerned with the negotiation and administration of agreements covering joint understandings about wages or salaries, hours of work and other terms and conditions of employment (Davey, 1972, p. 19). This definition is sufficiently broad to encompass a variety of governmental forms (e.g., general local governments and special districts) and several types of labor organizations such as unions and associations. Evaluation "is the notion of judging merit; someone is examining and weighing a phenomenon against some explicit or implicit yardstick" (Weiss, 1972, p. 1). Thus, our objective is to develop a means for judging the merit or quality

of the union-management relationship against some explicit criteria.

A basic question underlying this objective is how do we conceptualize the association between the union-management relationship and governmental activities in order to identify what are appropriate evaluative criteria? Some empirical studies have been conducted on a limited set of bargaining outcomes in local government, for example, wages, hours and work stoppages (Ashenfelter, 1971; Ehrenberg, 1973; Kochan & Wheeler, 1975; Gerhart, 1976; Perry & Levine, 1976; Perry, 1977). A number of years ago Dotson (1956) proposed a theory of equity of the public employment relationship. None of these studies have, however, advanced an explicit framework for evaluating the union-management relationship in government. Those perspectives which public administrationists presently use to evaluate the quality of union-management relations in government rely heavily upon experience in the industrial sector. Because of the private sector's relatively long experience with collective bargaining and the institutionalization of its outlook on labor relations, this transfer is not surprising. The studies discussed briefly below are representative of the evaluative perspectives which public administration has borrowed from industrial experience.

One group of studies in the immediate post World War II period places primary emphasis on what were perceived as the immediate dysfunctions of the union-management relationship. Thus, the relationship was evaluated in terms of its ability to "resolve serious issues and conflicts of interest without resort to economic warfare" (Lester & Robie, 1948), or to maintain "industrial peace" (Golden & Parker, 1955). These studies were primarily descriptive in nature, largely limited to a narrow concern with strikes, and based upon a number of uncritical assumptions about the elements that "contribute to satisfactory labor relations."

Harbison and Coleman (1951) attempted to discern the criteria "by which we may judge whether union-management relations are 'constructive' or 'destructive'." They distinguished between the outcomes of the union-management relationship (economic warfare, industrial peace, strikes, etc.) and the process by which such outcomes were achieved. They focused their attention on the process by which the two organizations learned to live together.

The process orientation toward evaluation of the union-management relationship was the basis of several major field investigations. Whyte (1951) evaluated the union-management relationship in terms of four basic concepts: interactions among the participants; symbols (words or objects that symbolize relations); activities of the participants; and sentiments (the way people feel about themselves and others). Yodor, Heneman, and Cheit (1951) utilized three broad factors: relevant policies and practices; economic characteristics of the firm; and employee attitudes and reactions. Finally, Derber, Chalmers, and Stagner (1960) developed a framework based upon three primary dimensions: union influence (the scope and depth of union participation); attitudes (i.e., the attitudes of both management and the union); and pressure (e.g., contract pressure, grievance pressure). The common thread which runs through all these studies is an emphasis on the individual perspectives of the parties; the union-management relationship was evaluated by the way in which it was independently perceived by the parties.

Blake and Mouton (1962) approached the union-management relationship from the premise that the win-lose conflict orientation needed to be changed into a "collaborative orientation based upon shared motivation"--i.e., joint problem-solving efforts. Bakke (1966) expanded upon Blake and Mouton's

notion of a collaborative orientation in concluding that "...there is at least the possibility of mutual effort to arrive at a consensus on terms of employment providing mutual benefits for employers, unions, and the workers they represent, and a mutual commitment to mutual survival" (p. 93). The emphasis on mutuality suggests the presence of common goals which open the way for joint problem-solving on the part of both union and management.

One theme that runs through these evaluative studies is the emphasis on conflict (competition) and cooperation (harmony) and the assumption that healthy labor relations are somehow the result of maximizing the latter and minimizing the former. Analyses of social conflict by Coser (1957), Walton and McKersie (1965) and Deutsch (1969) suggest, however, that the negative associations frequently accorded conflict in conceptualizing the union-management relationship are unrealistically simplistic:

It has been long recognized that conflict is not inherently pathological or destructive. Its very pervasiveness suggests that it has many positive functions. It prevents stagnation, it stimulates interest and curiosity, it is a medium through which problems can be aired and solutions arrived at; it is the root of personal and social change (Deutsch, 1969, p. 35).

A strong case can be built for the argument that union-management conflict in government, and particularly the strike, has indeed served some positive functions. The use of the strike by public employees has frequently highlighted inequities in public employment, occasionally expanded important issues to the attention of the public, and recently catalyzed public backlash against employee benefits considered by many as too generous.

A second feature of these evaluative frameworks is that, although they generally distinguish between process and outcome, their emphasis is almost exclusively on process considerations. Little direct attention is accorded the extent to which the parties achieve their separate goals and take into account the goals and policies of the other. The nearly exclusive emphasis

on union-management processes. leaves one to draw the inference that, if union-management interactions appear to be accommodative, then some reasonable resolution of conflicts of interest have been achieved.

The validity of the assumptions underlying this inference, however, come into question within the institutional context of government. Studies of industrial collective bargaining employ a closed system perspective, relying upon assumptions about the competitive market setting and a strictly bilateral relationship to evaluate the union-management relationship as an isolated entity. The quality of union-management interaction suffices as an evaluative criterion since it is assumed to be directly related to profitability and mutual survival; as long as the two parties survive it can be assumed that the interests of third parties are being served. The assumptions about a competitive market setting and bilateralism are highly suspect in governmental contexts and might appropriately be replaced by assumptions of monopoly and multilateralism. Stanley (1972) writes of the differing contexts: "The private employer must stay in business and sell his goods and services in order to pay his employees.... Governments, on the other hand, have to stay in business, and their payrolls are met from taxes or fees imposed on the public" (p. 19). Similarly, several studies (Juris & Feuille, 1973; Kochan, 1974) indicate that collective bargaining in government involves a multiplicity of parties and interests. The complexities of resolving conflicting union-management and citizen interests highlights the inadequacies of evaluating union-management relationships in government simply on the basis of whether they are predominately conflictual, accommodative, or cooperative.

A number of studies we discussed earlier touched briefly upon alternative criteria that might be more appropriate for evaluating the union-management relationship in government. Harbison and Coleman (1955), suggest, for

example, the "extent to which such relations promote the attainment of the commonly held goals of a free society, broadly defined as economic progress and equality, the enhancement of the freedom, dignity, and worth of the individual, and the strengthening of democratic political institutions" (p. 9). Purcell (1960) notes that "turnover, productivity, grievances, race relations, and other matters are equally important to both the short and the long run" (p. 259-260). Derber (1958) notes that "results which might also be worth analyzing include productivity or efficiency, labor turnover, absenteeism" (p. 420).

These alternatives imply that in addition to evaluating the union-management relationship in terms of the process of interaction it would also be constructive to pursue evaluating the union-management relationship as the extent to which the groups achieve their separate goals and take into account the goals of relevant others. This broadens the scope of relevant evaluative criteria to include the continuing impact of the relationship on the delivery of goods and services to the public. It can also lead the way to the definition of explicit standards of reasonableness, an objective to which the process approach contributes little.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AS THE BASIS FOR EVALUATION

The literature on organizational effectiveness reflects a common belief that organizations differ in the extent to which they achieve their goals and meet the demands placed upon them. Researchers have, however, disagreed over the crucial question: effectiveness of what? In response to this question, two principle schools of thought emerge from research on organizational effectiveness: the goals approach and the systems approach (Campbell, 1974).

The goal approach to organizational effectiveness assumes that the

organization has a limited and definable number of goals. The degree to which such goals are achieved becomes the degree to which that organization is "effective." Criterion measures are developed to assess how well various goals are being achieved, and evaluation of the success of the organization vis-a-vis goals achievement follows quite naturally. The major criticism of the goal model is that goals are only abstractions which have little or no meaning in organizational decision-making.

This, in fact, is precisely the argument advanced by proponents of the systems view -- i.e., that complex and dynamic organizations are subject to a variety of goals which are too numerous and too elusive to submit to definition. Schein (1970) puts the systems view succinctly when he writes:

Acknowledging that every system has multiple functions, and that it exists within an environment that provides unpredictable inputs, a system's effectiveness can be defined as its capacity to survive, adapt, maintain itself, and grow, regardless of the particular functions it fulfills (p. 118).

Thus the systems view is primarily concerned with the degree of success with which an organization functions in its environment; with its success in acquiring scarce resources in competition with different systems.

Neither of these perspectives would appear adequate by itself for identifying criteria for evaluating the union-management relationship in government. The goal approach, even when organizational goals can be specified, is unable to provide a satisfactory means for assessing the extent to which the parties take into account the goals of the other. On the other hand, the systems approach tends to ignore the need to measure the programmatic accomplishments of government organizations vis-a-vis the union-management relationship.

Mohr, Thompson, and Warren offer some formulations useful for integrating these two approaches. Discussing the organizational goal concept, Mohr (1973) distinguishes between transitive and reflexive goals:

A transitive goal is one whose referent is outside of or in the environment of the organization in question. A transitive goal is thus an intended impact of the organization upon its environment.... We may identify as the general reflexive goal of an organization that inducements will be sufficient to evoke adequate contributions from all members of the organizational coalition (pp. 475-476).

Thompson suggests that effective organizations seek to control their dependence on various groups (e.g., clients, suppliers, and competitors) in their sphere of activity. Warren (1972) refines Thompson's notion of sphere of activity by suggesting that it can be defined "in terms of an organization's access to necessary resources" including "not only those resources needed for task performance...but also those needed for maintenance of the organization itself" (p. 22). Cross-classifying Mohr's distinction between transitive and reflexive goals with Warren's distinction between task accomplishment and system maintenance serves to identify four components of organizational effectiveness. These four components of organizational effectiveness are displayed in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Components of Organizational Effectiveness

	Task Accomplishment	System Maintenance
Transitive	Achieving intended environmental impacts	Acquiring environmental resources needed for maintenance of the governmental organization
Reflexive	Optimizing resource utilization and goal-directed activity	Maintaining or enhancing inducements/contributions ratios

This conceptualization of organizational effectiveness defines effectiveness not only in terms of the conventional notion of environmental impact, but also in terms of management and employee goals. It thus provides an

appropriate framework within which to evaluate the extent to which the organizations achieve their separate goals and take into account the goals of the other.

Although measures of these four dimensions of governmental effectiveness can be used as the yardstick against which the union-management relationship is evaluated, other factors have independent influences on the effectiveness of government organizations. Factors such as the competence of management and the aggressiveness with which the government organization interacts with its environment may independently influence organizational effectiveness. The effectiveness criteria must therefore be limited to concepts associated with the impacts of the interactions and decisions which occur under the umbrella of the union-management relationship. We employ two rules for selecting specific criteria:

1. The measures encompass all four of the components of organizational effectiveness.
2. The measures are significantly influenced by union-management interaction or decisions covered by the collective agreement.

Using these criteria we have selected six concepts for evaluating the union management relationship: withdrawal, labor productivity, adaptability/flexibility, job satisfaction, commitment, and user satisfaction. As a group these concepts have high face validity for measuring the extent to which the organizations achieve their goals and take into account the goals of the other parties. Each of the six concepts are discussed briefly below:

Withdrawal. Absenteeism and tardiness represent the degree to which organization members fail to report for scheduled work. Turnover is the amount of change in the personnel of the organization. These behaviors

together reflect member withdrawal from an organization (Porter & Steers, 1973). Member withdrawal is likely to be related to a number of factors that vary with the quality of union-management decisionmaking: pay and promotions, supervisory relations, job content, and job autonomy and responsibility. The withdrawal of organizational members has been shown, in turn, to have significant impacts on the cost and quality of the services an organization provides. Macy and Mirvis (1976) demonstrate that member withdrawal has significant financial impacts on the organization because of the costs associated with adapting manning requirements to withdrawal and the costs associated with recruiting and training new employees. Seashore, Indik and Georgopoulos (1960) indicate that absenteeism is important to the delivery of services, particularly those which operate under a highly coordinated, rigid, daily schedule such as refuse collection and urban mass transit, where any kind of absence can severely disrupt the work process.

Labor Productivity. Labor productivity represents the efficiency of human inputs in the production of governmental goods and services. It is likely to be influenced significantly by wage and benefit decisions arrived at in collective bargaining negotiations and the affective orientations of members of both organizations developed from their continuous interaction. Since labor productivity focuses on labor costs vis-a-vis outputs it provides a substantive alternative to evaluating the union-management relationship merely in terms of absolute wage levels.

Adaptability/Flexibility. Adaptability refers to an organization's ability to solve problems and to react with flexibility to the rapidly changing environment of which it is a part. It reflects an organization's readiness to tackle unusual problems, initiate improvements in work methods

and operations, and try out new ideas and suggestions (Campbell, 1974, p. 100). As a criterion for judging the quality of the union-management relationship, it measures the extent to which collaborative decision-making actually occurs (Walton & McKersie, 1965).

Job Satisfaction. Price (1972) defines satisfaction as the "degree to which members of a social system have a positive affective orientation toward membership in the system" (p. 156). Herzberg (House & Wedgor, 1967) conceptualizes job satisfaction as a function of those job characteristics considered satisfiers--achievement, recognition, responsibility, and advancement--while other environmental characteristics of the organization are primarily responsible for dissatisfaction--working conditions, interpersonal relations, and salary. Job satisfaction represents the extent to which union-management decision making and interaction fulfills the goals of individual union members. The level of job satisfaction is likely to reflect both the quality of negotiated settlements and the on-going actions of union and management in administering the collective agreement.

Commitment. Campbell (1974) defines commitment as "the strength of the predisposition of an individual to engage in goal-directed action or activity on the job" (p. 80). Individual commitment to organizational goals is likely to be influenced by both the adequacy of employee representation by their bargaining agent and the fairness with which employees perceive they are treated by management. Katzell and Yankelovitch (1975, p. 35) also indicate that the degree of individual commitment to organizational goals is strongly associated with several of the other criterion measures suggested here, particularly productivity and job satisfaction.

User Satisfaction. User satisfaction represents an evaluative criterion for the union-management relationship grounded in the perceptions

of the third parties who are the recipients of the organization's goods and services. The quality of user evaluations of government goods and services is likely to reflect user assessments of the cost and quality of goods or services, the scope and responsiveness of the services provided, and user reaction to contacts with organizational members. User evaluations are likely to vary with the quality of the union-management relationship because of its affect on the continuity of services, the cost or quality of services, member attitudes toward their jobs, and the ability of the governmental unit to respond to public needs and demands.

UTILITY OF THE EVALUATIVE FRAMEWORK

These concepts have a variety of uses as a tool for evaluating the union-management relationship in government. First, the six concepts discussed above could be used as a means for comparing similar governmental organizations or organizational subunits. The use of a uniform evaluative tool would facilitate identifying the factors conducive to constructive union-management relationships in government. More importantly, it would focus evaluation of the union-management relationships in government on its consequences for governmental performance rather than on the partisan interests of unions, management, legislators, or the public. Second, measures of each of the concepts can be used in the on-going management of government organizations by continuous monitoring within an organization's regular data collection system. Third, since unit costs can be attached to measures such as labor productivity, turnover, and absenteeism, incentive plans could be developed from these measures which would make rewards contingent upon appropriate changes in the effectiveness indices. A less tangible but nonetheless significant benefit of such an evaluative framework might be its influence on the perspectives of the parties and outside observers.

Indicators of organizational performance frequently serve a self-fulfilling prophecy function (Dubin, 1976). Given the present status of union-management relationships in government, it would be useful to begin fulfilling the "prophecy" of the standards of reasonableness presented here.

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