

## Article

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# ***Local Union Officers' Donations to a Political Action Committee***

**MARICK F. MASTERS  
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*During the 1980s, unions in the United States significantly increased their political activity, partly as a strategic response to declining membership. An important aspect of this effort is contributing money to congressional and presidential candidates through political action committees (PACs). U.S. federal election campaign laws allow unions to raise PAC money from members on a strictly voluntary basis. Elected local union officers may play an important part in union PAC fundraising, as they are a sizable cadre of potential donors and their donations may send powerful signals to rank-and-file to donate as well. This paper examines the PAC donations among a sample of elected local union officers of the United Steelworkers of America (USW). The descriptive results show significant variation in officers' PAC donations. Regression analyses show that union commitment is a significant predictor of PAC support as is location in a non-right-to-work state. The results have implications for promoting union PAC fundraising efforts, and hence the potential of U.S. unions to rely on political action as a strategy for resurgence.*

In the 1980s, unions in the United States substantially increased their involvement in national politics (Masters, Atkin, and Delaney 1989-90). A key aspect of this effort was the sizable rise in political action committee (PAC) receipts collected by unions (see Masters and Delaney [1987] for a review of the literature on U.S. union political action). Under U.S. federal election campaign laws, unions raise PAC money from their members on a voluntary basis to contribute to congressional and presidential campaigns

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within specified dollar amounts (Epstein 1976, 1980; Masters and Zardkoochi 1987, 1988).<sup>1</sup> Between the two elections in 1980 and 1990, total union PAC receipts rose from \$27 million to \$89 million, despite the loss of millions of union members in the eighties (U.S., Federal Election Commission 1982, 1991).<sup>2</sup> Research has shown that PAC contributions to U.S. lawmakers may influence their votes on key labour legislation (Kau and Rubin 1981; Chappell 1982; Masters and Zardkoochi 1988). The salience attached to PAC activity is revealed by organized labour's withholding of PAC money from Democratic party congressional campaign coffers after the U.S. Congress passed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) despite all-out union opposition.<sup>3</sup>

As U.S. unions depend almost exclusively on their members for PAC money, their political clout will rest heavily on maximizing those factors which promote members' donations to union PACs (Sabato 1985). Of particular interest is the potential relationship between union commitment (including its various core dimensions) and members' donations to union PACs. Despite a broad array of research which measures commitment (e.g., Thacker, Fields, and Tetrick 1989; Tetrick, Thacker, and Fields 1989) and acknowledges its potential positive consequences (Klandermans 1989; Mellor 1990; Eaton, Gordon, and Keefe 1992; and Kuruvilla, Gallagher, and Wetzel 1993), little research empirically associates this psychological construct with behavioural outcomes (see Fullagar and Barling 1987). In particular, few if any studies have associated union commitment attitudes with members' political behaviour, although Fields, Masters, and Thacker (1987) and Masters and Atkin (1994) empirically show a relationship between commitment and attitudinal support for political action undertaken by two major U.S.-based international unions.

1. The Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, as amended, prohibits unions from using dues and other regular sources of income as contributions to U.S. congressional and presidential campaigns. It permits unions, however, to raise money from members on a voluntary basis and place the funds into separate accounts (i.e., political action committees). PACs may give up to \$5,000 to each candidate per primary and general elections. Thus, a candidate may receive up to \$10,000 from a union's PAC. If an international union has many local PACs, the limit applies to these PACs collectively. Thus, unions may not effectively circumvent the limit by proliferating PACs at the local level. See U.S., Federal Election Commission (1992). Federal election laws do permit unions to spend their treasury moves on lobbying legislators and *raising* PAC money.
2. U.S. federal (i.e., congressional and presidential) elections occur during two-year cycles. The cycle includes the year preceding the election, which is an odd number year (e.g., 1979, 1989) and the year in which the elections are held, or the even year (e.g., 1980, 1990).
3. In the U.S., the Democratic party depends heavily on organized labour for campaign funds. The overwhelming majority of union PAC contributions go to Democratic candidates (Masters et al. 1989-90).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the PAC donations made by elected local union officers.<sup>4</sup> These leaders are in an important position to affect PAC fundraising (Fosh 1993; Hammer and Wazeter 1993; Johnson, Bobko, and Hartenian 1991). First, they are a sizable cadre of potential donors themselves. Second, as leaders, their donations send a powerful signal to the rank-and-file and otherwise suggest their willingness to beat the drums in behalf of PAC giving (e.g., Hudson and Rosen 1954). The sample studied here is a group of elected local union officers within the United Steelworkers of America (USW), a major international U.S.-based union that has lost hundreds of thousands of members but nonetheless intensified its political efforts in the U.S.<sup>5</sup> As discussed below, data are from a questionnaire survey of 790 local union officers located in various regions of the U.S. The analysis focuses on reported donations to the international USW-PAC made in the U.S.'s 1985-86 congressional election cycle.

The paper is structured as follows. The first section presents the explanatory model and the following section outlines the hypotheses. Next, the data and methods used are described, followed by a section in which the empirical results are reported. The last section discusses the conclusions and implications of the findings.

### ***MODEL OF LOCAL OFFICERS' PAC DONATIONS***

Three streams of research pertain to the analysis of local union officers' PAC donations. One concerns the determinants of political participation (e.g., Powell 1986; Jackman 1987; Jackson 1993; Verba et al. 1993). This research explores the incentives for individuals to participate in various political activities, such as voting and contributing money to political causes. A second, more focused area is about union members' views as to the legitimacy of union political activities and objectives and their voting behaviour in congressional and presidential elections (Sheppard and Masters 1959; Wolfe 1969; Delaney, Masters, and Schwochau 1988, 1990; Rapoport, Stone, and Abramowitz 1991). Third, research on the incentives for employees to join economic groups for political reasons is also pertinent (Olson 1965; Salisbury 1969; Moe 1981; Berry 1984; Hansen 1985; Fiorito 1987). A common theme of this multidisciplinary research is the role of expected

4. The terms PAC donation, PAC support, and PAC participation are used interchangeably, unless specifically noted otherwise.
5. In the 1980s, the international USW instituted several political action programs in the midst of a rapidly declining membership. Such programs were an integral part of its strategy to protect the steel manufacturing industry. For example, the USW's constitutional convention "voted to apply one percent of dues to politics" (USW 1990: 131), to be used to generate grassroots activity. "The continuous increase in the cost of campaigns requires that we raise more PAC funds from our members" (USW 1990: 132).

benefits and costs in political participation (Delaney, Fiorito, and Masters 1988). In particular, citizens' participation in politics, union members' political support, and employees' incentives to join unions for political purposes depend ultimately on expected utility or net rewards.

The model developed here assumes that elected officers' donations to a PAC (i.e., PAC participation) varies with expected benefits and costs (equation 1). These pecuniary and nonpecuniary benefits and costs, in turn, correspond more or less with social-psychological (S), demographic (D), economic (E), regional (R), and elective-experience (EE) factors (equation 2). The unavailability of data estimating benefits and costs directly at the individual level requires an analysis based on equation 3.

$$\begin{aligned} (1) \quad \text{PACDON}_i &= f [E(B)_i - E(C)_i] \\ (2) \quad [E(B)_i - E(C)_i] &= g (S_i, D_i, E_i, R_i, EE_i) \\ (3) \quad \text{PACDON} &= b_0 + b_1 S + b_2 D + b_3 E + b_4 R \\ &\quad + b_5 EE + e \end{aligned}$$

$\text{PACDON}_i$  is the amount of reported donations by each officer to the USW-PAC;  $E(B)_i$  and  $E(C)_i$  are expected benefits and costs to each officer; ( $S_i, D_i, E_i, R_i, EE_i$ ) designate an individual officer's measure on the noted factors;  $b$ 's are regression coefficients; and  $e$  is the error term.

## HYPOTHESES

### *Social-Psychological*

Commitment to the union *per se* is associated with a wide range of union members' attitudes and behaviours (Fullagar and Barling 1987, 1989; Kelloway and Barling 1993). Its possible political effects emanate from several related forces. First, commitment implies a more or less successful socialization, which facilitates the acceptance of union norms, including political activism (Stagner 1956; Spinrad 1960; Campbell et al. 1964; Wolfe 1969; Bok and Dunlop 1970; Fosh 1993). Also, it may simply promote the transmission of such organizational norms. Committed union members will be more willing to repeat the union message. Further, commitment encourages a sense of collective empowerment or instrumentality in which individuals view their joint actions as increasing the likelihood of favourable outcomes (Fullagar and Barling 1987). Fields et al. (1987), and Masters and Atkin (1994) suggest a similar relationship by showing a correlation between commitment and support for the legitimacy of union political action. Based on these arguments, it is hypothesized that commitment to the union will be positively associated with local officers' donations to the USW-PAC.

A second social-psychological variable is the perception of the democratic orientation or fairness of the union. Blume (1973: 53) argues "that the

way in which unions can help resolve their problems of cohesion, communication, and political support is by opening up the decision-making process". Increased political support may derive from a sense of either psychological satisfaction or instrumentality. Organization theorists contend that participative decision making "will cause increases in satisfaction and motivation to meet organizational goals" (Katz and Kahn 1978: 682). Also, democratic practice gives confidence that the genuine interests of the membership will be represented by the political activities of the union.

The specific hypothesis advanced is that local officers will be more supportive of the USW-PAC if they perceive governance at the international USW as democratic or fair. Tensions commonly exist between different organizational levels within unions, sometimes because locals perceive international leaders as being out of touch or insensitive (e.g., Dworkin et al. 1988). If local leaders perceive a top-down autocratic style, they may seriously question the real local benefits to be derived from supporting political activities advocated by the international.

### *Demographic*

The expected benefits and costs of PAC donations are hypothesized to covary with several demographic characteristics. Age and tenure within the USW may exhibit a nonlinear relationship with such participation. Strate et al. (1989) proffer a life span cycle theory that relates civic participation to age. They argue that certain barriers to participation, such as lack of civic awareness plus occupational mobility, decline as middle years approach. Net benefits may diminish over time, however, levelling participative tendencies. Similar arguments apply to supporting a union PAC, which seems akin to intraorganizational civic responsibility (Verba et al. 1993). In organizational contexts, however, tenure may be as relevant as age, contributing to a keener sense of awareness and responsibility. Thus, both are hypothesized to influence PAC donations in a curvilinear fashion.

The effects of race and gender stem partly from empowerment theory. Bobo and Gilliam (1990: 379) argue that "empowerment should influence participation because sociopolitical behavior has a heavily instrumental basis...people participate because the perceived benefits of doing so outweigh the perceived costs." Underrepresented groups may therefore participate less in politics. For local USW officers, a logical point of reference is the international leadership. In this regard, minorities and women occupy few high-level positions in the USW.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, they may be expected to

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6. In 1986, the USW international executive board consisted of five international officers (President, Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President of Administration, and Vice President of Human Affairs) and 24 regional district directors. The Board was all male, including only one minority.

respond less favourably to international leaders' political importunings. Although this expectation is consistent with other studies showing a lower level of minority participation (e.g., Abramson and Claggett 1991), the USW's political agenda may be more in line with women and minority concerns *per se*.<sup>7</sup> This congruency may encourage their political support.

Marital and family responsibilities impose various constraints which may reduce incentives to donate to the PAC. Community and workplace size, however, should positively affect PAC donations, as unions may make greater efforts to raise money from officers in more densely populated locations where the expected returns relative to fixed fundraising costs are superior. Next, industry and occupation should predict USW-PAC donations. Routinized, assembly-line work promotes political activism partly because such workers expect to receive greater benefits from fair labour standards and occupational safety policies (Greenstone 1977). Thus, USW local officers who work in blue-collar jobs in the manufacturing sector should be more supportive of the PAC. Finally, increased education fosters both a "sense of citizen duty" and "political efficacy" (Campbell et al. 1964: 253), which will raise PAC donations.

### *Economic*

Two economic variables should predict PAC support. First, larger incomes imply greater discretionary resources for the PAC. Conversely, a recent layoff experience may heighten economic insecurities, which would lessen an officer's willingness to donate money to the PAC.

### *Region*

Region in the U.S. is commonly associated with various political differences (e.g., Abramson 1987). A regional factor particularly relevant to unions is the presence or absence of a state-enacted right-to-work (RTW) law, which bans collective-bargaining agreements requiring employees to join the union as a condition of continued employment.<sup>8</sup> In essence, all employers

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7. As the USW stated in a document celebrating its 50th anniversary, "[f]rom its inception the United Steelworkers has been committed to the protection and extension of civil rights and liberties" (USW 1986: 90).

8. The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 permits each state in the United States to enact a law effectively disallowing union or agency shops. Where not so disallowed, unions typically negotiate a union shop agreement in order to require, at a minimum, that employees belonging to exclusively recognized bargaining units pay union dues as a condition of continued employment. Union shops, which require membership, and agency shops, which require dues payment, are used by unions to avoid free riding, which occurs when represented

in RTW states are "open shop," thereby creating a situation in which bargaining unit employees may opt not to join the union. Under U.S. labour law, the local union has a duty to represent fairly the grievances of all bargaining unit members, whether union members or not.<sup>9</sup> Not surprisingly, then, "free-riding" is a common problem in open shop situations, including RTW states (Masters and Atkin 1990). Under such conditions, local union officials may emphasize those matters (e.g., grievance representation) which have immediate, local, tangible impact (Olson 1965). Accordingly, union political action, especially when directed at the congressional and presidential level, may become decidedly secondary in importance. Thus, the hypothesis is that local officers located in RTW states will be less supportive of the USW-PAC than their counterparts elsewhere.

### ***Elective-Experience***

Finally, a local officer's prior elective experience may influence PAC donations. Specifically, incumbent officers may strategically moderate their positions to maximize reelection, including how much they give to the PACs. This argument runs parallel to notions that U.S. senators behave similarly (Wright and Berkman 1986). The moderation, however, is an empirical question, depending upon local officers' initial positions regarding PAC support.

## **DATA AND METHOD**

### ***Questionnaire***

The questionnaire consisted of more than one hundred items divided into five principal parts. Three parts included various items, such as commitment to the union, measured on five-point Likert scales (1=strongly disagree...5=strongly agree). A fourth part consisted of items dealing with union participation, including self-reported donations to the USW-PAC. The last part contained questions related to demographics.

Time constraints did not permit formal pretesting of the questionnaire, although many of the attitudinal items were adapted from carefully developed psychometric studies which have been frequently replicated in diverse

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employees, who reap the benefits of union representation, refuse to pay union dues or join the union. Currently 21 states, located mostly in the South and Southwest, have enacted RTW laws.

9. *Vaca v. Sipes*, (U.S.S.Ct 1967) 55 Labor Cases, 11731.

settings.<sup>10</sup> The international USW printed and administered the questionnaires in order to maximize a multiregional response.<sup>11</sup> Local union officers participated in the survey on a strictly voluntary basis while attending educational programs conducted by various USW regional districts in the U.S. in the spring and summer of 1987. They were assured of anonymity, and individual questionnaires were kept strictly confidential.

### ***Measures***

*Dependent.* The dependent measure is based on each local union officer's reported donations to the USW-PAC in the 1985-86 U.S. congressional election cycle. Officers reported their donations within designated ranges, which were converted into numerical values for purposes of subsequent analysis.

*Explanatory.* Table 1 reports descriptive information on the explanatory variables. Several, including gender, race, education, layoff, and right-to-work, are dummy coded as noted on Table 1. Age and tenure are mid-point numerical values of specified levels of each variable, and income is the log of such designated values. Commitment sums responses to nine items encompassing three dimensions (i.e., identification with the union, loyalty to the union, and responsibility to the union) identified by Gordon et al. (1980). Fairness is a single-item attitudinal measure based on officers' perceptions as to the degree to which union members have a fair chance of being elected to an international USW office.

### ***Characteristics of the Sample***

As reported in Table 1, the sample of local officers is mainly white, married, and between the ages of 30 and 45. Further, most work in production/maintenance jobs in the manufacturing sector. Unfortunately, insufficient data exist to determine the representativeness of the sample. Available data on the population of USW officers suggest the sample is somewhat comparable in terms of gender and race (e.g., Needleman and Tanner

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10. For example, union commitment is a widely discussed measure in industrial relations and psychology (Fullagar and Barling 1987). The specific union-commitment attitude items were obtained from Gordon, Philpot, Burt, Thompson, and Spiller (1980), and have been widely replicated (e.g., Thacker, Fields, and Tetric 1989).

11. Unlike many other studies, such as Fields, Masters, and Thacker (1987), which focused on union members in one local area, this study is multiregional. The international's cooperation made this kind of a response both possible and practical.

TABLE 1  
Descriptive Statistics for Explanatory Variables<sup>a</sup>

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N</i>
Sex (male=1)	.84	.36	786
Race (white=1)	.87	.34	785
Education (At least some college =1)	.42	.49	779
Married (Married=1)	.76	.43	784
Family status (At least 1 child=1)	.89	.32	784
Age	40.40	8.90	785
Tenure	15.02	7.54	788
Ln(Income)	3.23	.31	784
Previous Officer status (Previous officeholder=1)	.72	.45	786
Layoff status (Layoff in past 3 years=1)	.16	.37	790
Community size (Larger than 100,000=1)	.16	.37	781
Workplace size (Larger than 500=1)	.61	.49	790
Industry (Manufacturing=1)	.84	.37	787
Occupation (Production/Maintenance=1)	.84	.37	780
Fairness <sup>b</sup>	3.28	1.15	788
Total Commitment	40.46	3.59	769
"Identification with the union" <sup>c,d</sup>	13.64	1.44	788
"Responsibility to the union" <sup>c,e</sup>	13.56	1.71	788
"Willingness to work for the union" <sup>c,f</sup>	13.26	1.68	771
Not-right-to-work (=1)	.83	.38	790
District 4 (Yes = 1)	.03	.17	760
7 "	.03	.18	760
9 "	.09	.29	760
23 "	.04	.19	760
27 "	.05	.21	760
29 "	.08	.27	760
30 "	.22	.41	760
32 "	.06	.23	760
33 "	.08	.27	760
34 "	.13	.33	760
36 "	.17	.38	760

<sup>a</sup> Descriptive statistics are for total sample, not the regression sample, which deletes observations with missing data. Statistics are comparable between the total and regression samples.

<sup>b</sup> The fairness item is an officer's response (1=strongly disagree...5=strongly agree) to the following: "Union members with leadership abilities have a fair chance of being elected to an International union office if they are willing to make the effort to run for office."

- c Scale reliabilities: Identification, alpha = .717  
 Responsibility, alpha = .770  
 Willingness, alpha = .844
- d Adds responses to three 5-point Likert items: (1) "I feel a sense of pride being a part of the United Steelworkers;" (2) "The record of the United Steelworkers is a good example of what dedicated people have done;" (3) "There is a lot to be gained by being a United Steelworker."
- e Adds responses to three 5-point Likert items: (1) "It is every member's responsibility to see to it that management lives up to all terms of the collective-bargaining agreement;" (2) "It is the duty of every worker to keep his/her ears open for information that might be useful to the United Steelworkers;" (3) "It is every union member's duty to know exactly what the collective bargaining agreement entitles him/her to."
- f Adds responses to three 5-point Likert items: (1) "If asked, I would serve on a committee for the United Steelworkers;" (2) "If asked I would run for an elected office of the United Steelworkers;" and (3) "I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected of a [union] member in order to make the union successful."

1987).<sup>12</sup> Complete data for subsequent analysis were available for 700 persons.

### ***Method***

Ordinary least squares (OLS) multiple regression is the statistical method used to estimate equation 3. This method does not adjust for systematic self-reporting biases which may occur in questionnaire surveys. Although no systemic biases are expected with regard to responses to demographic, economic, elective-experience, and regional variables, they may occur on similarly scaled attitudinal and participative items. In other words, local officers may overstate their commitment to the union, their perceptions of union fairness, and their PAC donations. Spurious correlations between these social-psychological explanatory variables and the dependent measure may therefore appear (see Kelloway and Barling [1993] for a similar discussion). However, McShane (1986) has found that self-reports may be highly correlated with actual union member behaviour, at least with regard to attendance at union meetings.

12. Although precise numbers are not available, USW International education staff who administered the questionnaire indicated that the overwhelming majority of the sample of elected officials consisted of local union presidents who occupied their position on a fulltime basis. Most, as shown in Table 1, had worked in production/maintenance jobs in the manufacturing sector.

Moreover, adjustments may be made to assess the relative bias produced by the introduction of these social-psychological variables in the estimation of equation 3. Accordingly, the equation is estimated in two phases. The first introduces all variables except the social-psychological. A second estimation introduces commitment and perceived fairness.

## RESULTS

Table 2 reports frequencies on local officers' reported donations to the USW-PAC. It shows that a sizable majority (more than 84 percent) gave some personal money to the PAC. Most donations were less than \$20; more than 100 officers, however, reported donations in excess of \$50.

TABLE 2  
Officers' PAC Donation Frequency Distribution for  
1986 Congressional Election Cycle

<i>Donation Range as Noted on Questionnaire</i>	<i>Assigned Value for Statistical Analysis</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	
0	0	125	15.8%
\$1-9	5	172	21.8%
10-19	15	178	22.5%
20-29	25	128	16.2%
30-39	35	55	7.0%
40-49	40	30	3.8%
50 or more	60	<u>102</u>	12.9%
		790	

$\bar{X}$  = 20.41

sd = 19.19

Columns 1 and 2 of Table 3 report the basic OLS analyses. Column 1 omits commitment and fairness. The results support the hypotheses with regard to tenure, workplace size, education, income, region, and prior elective experience.

The introduction of commitment and fairness (Column 2) significantly improves the general explanatory power of the model (F change = 12.43,  $p < .001$ ). Commitment in particular is strongly significant in the hypothesized direction. Fairness is negatively related to PAC donations, although the coefficient is not statistically significant.

TABLE 3  
OLS Analyses of PAC Donations

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Column 1</i>	<i>Column 2</i>	<i>Column 3</i>
Constant	1.713(14.716)	-30.690(16.351)	-35.596(15.731)*
Sex	-2.492(2.329)	-2.882(2.292)	-1.310(2.221)
Race	0.609(2.378)	-0.619(2.354)	-1.680(2.277)
Education	3.994(1.486)**	3.174(1.481)*	2.296(1.458)
Marital Status	-1.496(1.865)	-1.669(1.834)	-0.668(1.778)
Family Status	0.523(2.541)	0.321(2.500)	0.734(2.402)
Age	-8.427(7.026)	-10.986(6.930)	-2.364(6.755)
Age <sup>2</sup>	1.030(0.823)	1.336(0.812)	0.378(0.791)
Tenure	1.055(0.404)**	1.004(0.397)*	0.757(0.385)*
Tenure <sup>2</sup>	-0.026(0.011)*	-0.026(0.011)*	-0.022(0.011)*
Ln(Income)	7.036(2.855)*	7.484(2.815)**	6.661(2.716)*
Previous Officer	3.257(1.704)*	3.052(1.681)	3.110(1.624)
Layoff Status	0.182(1.973)	0.141(1.945)	0.617(1.879)
Community Size	2.520(2.007)	2.985(1.981)	3.604(1.951)
Workplace Size	3.266(1.512)*	3.558(1.494)	2.154(1.452)
Industry	-2.632(2.080)	-2.478(2.070)	-1.865(2.014)
Occupation	-1.272(2.066)	-1.653(2.037)	-1.976(1.999)
Fairness	—	-0.961(0.657)	-1.028(0.647)
<u>Total Commitment</u>	—	1.011(0.203)**	—
"Identification"	—	—	0.292(0.538)
"Responsibility"	—	—	0.153(0.436)
"Willingness"	—	—	1.931(0.448)**
<u>Not-right-to-work</u>	4.135(2.008)*	5.393(1.993)**	—
District 4	—	—	-1.619(4.314)
" 7	—	—	19.851(4.110)**
" 9	—	—	-8.011(2.835)**
" 23	—	—	11.518(3.827)**
" 27	—	—	6.602(3.554)
" 29	—	—	8.005(3.090)**
" 30	—	—	2.574(2.350)
" 32	—	—	4.867(3.395)
" 33	—	—	5.435(2.942)
" 34	—	—	10.739(2.551)**
R <sup>2</sup>	.076	.108	.197
adj R <sup>2</sup>	.053	.084	.161
F	3.296***	4.357***	5.467***
df	17,682	19,680	30,669

\* p&lt;.05

\*\* p&lt;.01

\*\*\* p&lt;.001

Together, the results in columns 1 and 2 suggest a minimal self-reporting bias effect. The pattern of non-social-psychological coefficients is similar across both columns in terms of direction, magnitude, and significance. Also, the differences between the commitment and fairness results suggest a discriminating response among officers. In this vein, the nonsignificance of fairness does not seem due to multicollinearity (the correlation between commitment and fairness is  $r=.21$ ).

### *Extended Analyses*

Two extensions of the OLS analysis follow. The first exploits the multidimensionality of commitment (Gordon et al. 1980; Thacker et al. 1989; Tetrick et al. 1989), while the second explores further the role of region. Column 3 (of Table 3) shows the OLS estimates using actual districts rather than the right-to-work dummy and using the three dimensions of commitment (identification with the union, responsibility to the union, and willingness to work for the union) instead of a total commitment score. The omitted district is the only one covered by a right-to-work law.

The results indicate that the commitment effect appears to result largely from the dimension associated with a "willingness to work for the union." This effect does not seem to result from multicollinearity among the three scales (the intercorrelations range from .309 - .347). Recalling that the omitted region is the right-to-work region, eight of the 10 regional coefficients are in the hypothesized direction, although only four are significant. One (district 9) is significant and in the opposite direction. Why this is so is not evident. Thus, there does appear to be both an effect due to right-to-work status and an effect specific to region.

### DISCUSSION

The results of this study yield several important conclusions, which raise significant implications for union PAC fundraising efforts and hence the potential political influence of labour organizations in the U.S. First, there is substantial variation in reported PAC donations among elected local union officials. Apparently, being such an official does not perforce lead to political involvement. Second, average donations by local elected officials exceed that of the rank-and-file by tenfold, suggesting a broader practical definition of commitment than is implied by the Gordon et al. (1980) measure of commitment.<sup>13</sup> This expanded view holds that "people who take the

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13. The USW membership in 1986 was 572,000, and the total amount donated to the USW-PAC was \$1,084,233, suggesting an average rank-and-file contribution of less than \$2.00. As can be observed on Table 1, local elected officials donated, on average, slightly more than \$20.00.

time and effort to organize or to rise to power in an interest group share a commitment to the collective purposes or material benefits which it espouses" (Sabatier and McLaughlin 1990: 930). In other words, political action may be another important aspect of commitment to the union as a collective entity. Further, the level of USW local officers' PAC participation lends additional credence to other studies which have shown that union leaders are more inclined to support broader political objectives, such as electing endorsed candidates (Juravich and Shergold 1988; Rapoport et al. 1991).

Third, the results indicate that union commitment is a significant predictor of PAC donations, even among local union officers who are presumed to be more committed than the typical member. Of particular interest is the strong relationship between the "willingness to work for the union" dimension and reported PAC donations. Kelloway and Barling (1993), utilizing Tetrick's argument (1989), have examined the causal relationship among the various dimensions of union commitment, with "willingness to work" an outcome of union loyalty (not studied here) and "responsibility to the union." Kelloway and Barling (1993) found that the "willingness" dimension was predictably related to a generalized measure of participation in union activities while the other dimensions were predictably *not* so related. The current results are therefore consistent with Tetrick's argument and Kelloway and Barling's results.

As hypothesized, local union officials located in RTW states report generally lower PAC donations. Our hypothesis was that officials located in RTW states would prefer those actions likely to produce local, tangible outcomes to those whose impact was more distant and less tangible, such as national-level political efforts. While the results are consistent with this argument, the actual situation may be more complex. The coefficient for District 9 is significant and opposite that predicted. Moreover, the coefficients for several other districts are not significant, although in the predicted direction. This suggests that, in addition to an RTW effect, there may also be a unique district effect. That is, political activism among local union officials may be a local or regional phenomenon for multiple reasons, a position consistent with Goldfield's (1987: 235, *inter alia*) observation that the "lack of [union] political influence is a reflection of...regional isolation". Furthermore, Masters and Atkin (1994) found that the strength of political-support *attitudes* of USW local officials was directly related to location in RTW states. That is, location in RTW states appears to be associated with both stronger positive political-support attitudes *and* lower levels of PAC donations. Such inconsistency between attitude and behaviour tends to be observed when external factors make it difficult or impossible for individuals to manifest behaviour consistent with their underlying attitudes (Herman 1973).

The specificity of regional or local effects regarding political activism lies in stark contrast to the apparent generality of the union commitment construct. Union commitment appears to be salient to the rank-and-file (e.g., Thacker et al. 1989) and local union officials (current study), to union members who are professionals and nonprofessionals (Ladd et al. 1982), to white-collar (Gordon et al. 1980) and blue-collar (Fullagar 1986) nonprofessionals, and to samples from the Netherlands (Klendermans 1989), South Africa (blacks and whites) (Fullagar and Barling 1989), England (Fosh 1993), and the U.S. Although much of the research has been methodological in form (e.g., demonstration of factor structure or temporal stability), and measurement systems vary, substantive evidence is accumulating concerning both antecedents and outcomes.

For example, we believe union commitment has implications for U.S. union PAC fundraising efforts. This study suggests that there are real political benefits to inculcating a stronger sense of union commitment in general and willingness to work for the union in particular. Unions, for example, might attempt to socialize leaders and rank-and-file, systematically educating them as to the expected benefits of supporting collective action in the political process.

As noted earlier, the importance of early socialization as an important facilitator of union activities, including political activism, has long been recognized (Stagner 1956; Spinrad 1960; Campbell et al. 1964; Wolfe 1969; Bok and Dunlop 1970). Fifteen years ago, Gordon et al. (1980) demonstrated that early union socialization increased union commitment. More recently, this relationship has been replicated in two independent studies (Fullagar and Barling 1989; Kelloway and Barling 1993) and extended in the sense that commitment was simultaneously related to participation in union activities. Based on these and other findings, "the results suggest several avenues through which unions might increase the commitment and participation of their members; [local union officials and] shop steward training and the careful implementation of socialization practices emerge as two of the most likely avenues of intervention" (Kelloway and Barling 1993: 276). Both are consistent with Fosh's (1993) "workplace-renewal-of-unionism" thesis.

While the study does not address the attitudes and behaviour of rank-and-file, it hints at the potential gains of moving the rank-and-file to the level of political activism exhibited by local leaders. Specifically, if the USW membership as a whole had participated in the USW-PAC at the same level as local officer reported (84 percent giving an average of \$20), then the USW-PAC would have raised a total of approximately \$9.6 million in the 1985-86 congressional cycle.<sup>14</sup> Instead, the USW-PAC raised just slightly more

14. This figure was computed by multiplying  $(.84 \times 572,000) \times \$20$ . USW's reported membership for 1986 was 572,000.

than \$1 million. The shortfall was likely due to a combination of a smaller percentage of rank-and-file donors plus a lower average level of giving among such donors. Indeed, to the degree to which the rank-and-file expects to receive the benefits of political activism without incurring the costs, an extension of Olson's thesis (1965) would predict a "PAC free-rider" attitude to prevail.

A similar comparison may be made with regard to U.S. labour unions generally. If U.S. union members as a whole had participated at the same level as USW local officers (.84 giving an average of \$20), total labour PAC receipts would have exceeded \$285 million in 1985-86. Instead, unions raised \$65.3 million. As long as rank-and-file members participate at apparently much lower levels, labour union PAC influence will be significantly limited. The USW in particular and unions in general thus could become much more politically powerful if they took steps that would lead to a greater willingness of members to give to PACs. In this regard, the role of local elected officials is critical, as they may be central agents in the socialization of union commitment (Gallagher and Clark 1989; Fullager, McCoy, and Shull 1992; Kelloway and Barling 1993) or key figures in transforming commitment into action (Fosh 1993).

As U.S. union membership remains stagnant or declines, one strategy of resurgence is political action aimed at modifying labour public policy (Kochan, Katz, and McKersie 1986). The results of this study suggest that empowering local leaders to raise PAC money through visible grass roots education and inculcating a stronger sense of commitment to the union *qua* union may be two important tactical steps unions might take to energize political action.

PAC activity is an important aspect of a union political action strategy for three reasons. First, as previously mentioned, PAC contributions to lawmakers may significantly affect legislators' votes on key labour issues. As Masters and Delaney (1987:345) observe, studies "tend...to support the view that union PAC contributions have an impact on voting on some legislative issues." Although organized labour lost a big legislative battle on NAFTA, its PAC money may be an even more important factor in legislative decision-making than before. This seeming irony is due to the fact that unions are giving more serious thought to withholding all PAC money to lawmakers or nonincumbent candidates who defy their wishes on watershed issues like NAFTA.

Second, Democratic candidates in particular are heavily dependent on union PACs for money. In the 1989-90 election cycle, Democratic candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives received substantially more PAC money from labour than any other source (e.g., corporate, trade/membership/health associations). In fact, Democratic House candidates

received 36 percent of their \$72.3 million PAC money from labour unions. Many of these candidates simply could not run viable campaigns without unions.

Third, PAC money is an important complement to other union political action tactics. The impact of PAC contributions *per se* may be greater if candidates can associate them with union-sponsored get-out-the-vote drives, phone banks, and grassroots political education efforts. In this regard, if various union PAC and non-PAC activities were at least implicitly coordinated with other interest groups, then their impacts might still be greater.

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## RÉSUMÉ

### **Les contributions des dirigeants syndicaux locaux à un comité d'action politique**

Durant les années 80, les syndicats américains ont grandement accru leurs activités politiques en partie en réaction stratégique à la réduction du nombre de leurs membres. Une caractéristique importante de cet effort est la contribution financière aux campagnes présidentielles et des membres du Congrès par des comités d'action politique (CAP). En vertu de la loi électorale fédérale, les syndicats peuvent prélever auprès de leurs membres, sur une base volontaire, des sommes d'argent CAP pouvant servir, dans des limites prévues, aux campagnes électorales générales et celles des primaires pour les candidats à la présidence et au Congrès.

Les dirigeants syndicaux locaux élus peuvent jouer un grand rôle dans cet effort syndical de ramasser des fonds CAP puisqu'ils représentent un groupe important de donateurs potentiels et que leurs dons personnels peuvent influencer leurs membres. Cependant, le seul statut de dirigeants locaux n'implique pas un comportement homogène. Peu de recherche empirique a porté sur les dirigeants locaux en soi, aussi nous avons eu recours à une documentation pertinente plus large dans les domaines tels la participation politique générale, la participation politique des syndiqués et l'incitation des employés à se joindre à des groupes d'intérêts pour des fins

politiques. À partir de cela, nous proposons des hypothèses spécifiques eu égard aux variables socio-psychologiques, démographiques, économiques, régionales et expérimentales pouvant influencer les dons CAP des dirigeants syndicaux locaux.

Nous avons vérifié nos hypothèses à l'aide d'analyses de régression de données colligées suite à une enquête menée auprès de 700 dirigeants locaux des Métallurgistes unis d'Amérique (Métallos) qui ont tous suivi des séminaires commandités par le syndicat international. Les résultats révèlent une variation considérable dans les dons qu'ont eux-mêmes rapportés les dirigeants locaux. Cependant, en moyenne, ces dons excèdent de beaucoup ceux des membres. Chez les dirigeants, les résultats démontrent que l'implication dans le syndicat est un bon prédicteur de dons CAP. Les résultats suggèrent que les Métallos et les syndicats américains en général pourraient accroître leur niveau actuel d'action politique en permettant aux dirigeants locaux de ramasser de l'argent CAP par une éducation de base et par le fait d'inculquer un plus grand sentiment d'engagement syndical.

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