

Industrial Democracy

La démocratie industrielle

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Article abstract

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Gordon McCaffrey

The purpose of this paper is to examine the concept of participation by workers in jobs and management and to come to some conclusions as to the role of industrial democracy, in its various definitions, present and future, in Canadian Industrial Relations.

Workers participation has become a magic word in many countries. Yet almost everyone who employs the term thinks of something different. There are people who feel that workers participation is the panacea for solving most labor-management relations problems and that it will even become the underlying concept of the future society.

Some people use the term as a synonym for what they call industrial democracy. Still others use it as a battlecry for uprooting the present system of ownership and management of the economy. Again, for others it is more a tool of applied psychology to be used to counteract the dehumanization of industrial work. Still others employ the term « participation » with regard to specific procedures, for instance the consultation machinery in an enterprise, negotiation over problems of displaced workers, or profit sharing.

The difficulty is that the term « workers participation » is linked with such concepts as democracy, management rights, efficiency, human needs, and moral rights and has become so loaded with emotions and ideologies that a dispassionate discussion, free from preconceived opinions and pre-established attitudes, has become extremely difficult. Industrial Relations (Berkeley) Vol. 9, No. 2, February 1970, p. 117.

— Johannes Schregle, Chief, Labour Law and Labour Relations Branch, Social Institutions Development Department, International Labour Office, Geneva.

Considerable interest is being expressed in the subject of industrial democracy. The term is used to describe one of two broad categories of activity: either participation by workers in determining the scope of their jobs and how they will be performed, or participation in the management of the enterprise.

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The idea itself is not new. The demand for worker participation in — or indeed for control of — industrial decisions has its roots in the earliest days of the Industrial Revolution. As workers became conscious of themselves as members of a class, they began to take concerted action against industrial conditions and the new capitalist power. Cotton mill workers and coal miners in England and weavers in Scotland engaged in the first large-scale strikes in 1808 to get relief from starvation wages and crippling working conditions. Intolerable conditions gave birth to the socialist movement of Robert Owen in the decade 1820-1830, to the Chartist Movement in the 1840s, to Co-operative Movement and the Friendly Societies, the writings of Karl Marx, socialism, syndicalism, guild socialism and the British Labour Party. In each stage of the workers' movement throughout the world there has been the demand for reform of the capitalist system of revolution to overthrow it and create a new society.

The current interest in industrial democracy is part of the historical movement in which workers everywhere have struggled for an equitable share in production and for improved working conditions. It is being stimulated by the sweeping demands for the democratization of school, university, church and nearly every social institution. Participation, it is claimed, will reduce conflict between management and labour and breed industrial harmony. Management and workers will stop being antagonists and become partners sharing common goals. Everyone — workers, management and the public — it is argued, will benefit by the extension of democracy to the workplace. Participation will improve worker morale, develop human potential, increase production, create industrial peace.

The difficulty with both participation and industrial democracy lies with their meaning, which can vary from person to person. The danger is that they will be used to confuse and to manipulate rather than to explain or to elucidate. An activity can be proclaimed as a form of participation where in fact there is only servile obedience to authority. A relationship can be described as a form of industrial democracy where worker participation in vital decisions is illusory or non-existent. It is the purpose of this paper to examine the concept of participation by workers in jobs and management and to come to some conclusions as to the role of industrial democracy, in its various definitions, present and future, in Canadian industrial relations. In doing so, it will attempt to establish what are the impetus and the motivation behind the demand

for various forms of participation, whether particular arrangements for participation distribute real managerial power, or whether rank-and-file workers are drawn into the exercise of power on a democratic basis.

THE DECISION-MAKING POWER

Who makes the decisions in the plant, shop and office? Who should make them? Those who make decisions determine who is hired, promoted, laid-off and fired; the level of wages and the conditions of work; how grievances are settled; when and how machines replace workers; what is made and what services are performed; the price at which goods and services are offered for sale; the distribution of profits; and many other values.

This decision-making, or industrial government, can be carried out in a variety of ways:

- Authoritarianism — one man or a few people make the rules which workers must obey.
- Paternalism — a form of authoritarianism, but based on a one big family concept in which « father knows best ».
- Bureaucracy — working according to an elaborate set of rules and well-marked levels of authority.
- Scientific management — industrial government by experts who prescribe « the best way of doing things ».
- Participation — industrial decisions are made on the basis of varying degrees of participation by workers.

THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF DECISION-MAKING

Since World War II, the demand for worker participation in industrial decisions has intensified on both sides of the Iron Curtain. There are advocates for greater participation both within and outside the labour movement. Leading management consultants and officials have recommended various forms of consultative committee with a broad base of representation, and many such committees have been established. Whether the participation which is advocated involves sharing of authority, sharing of profits, consulting workers on a regular basis, or the overthrow of the capitalist system, it has been invariably described as *industrial democracy*.

Participation by workers in industrial decision-making can be achieved in four principal ways :

- The ownership and control of the means of production are democratized. Workers take control of factories, shops and offices and run them by worker-elected committees on behalf of the total public.
- Workers and management work together in one or another form of partnership. Workers may, by law or by voluntary arrangement, elect representatives to the board of directors of their employer, share in the profits according to a prearranged formula, or acquire stock of the company under favourable conditions.
- Management is democratized. This approach to industrial democracy emphasizes « the right man for the right job » and peak performance as the goals of both workers and management. Decisions in such an enterprise may be made following consultation with a works council representing all categories of workers and supervisory personnel.
- Decision-making is democratized through collective bargaining. Decisions affecting wages and conditions of work are reached by a process of negotiations between management and representatives of workers. The results of bargaining are codified in a collective agreement. Controversial issues which arise during the life of the agreement may, or may not, be subject to negotiation in the period.

WORKER CONTROL OF THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION

Legislation aimed at establishing worker control of factories has been in effect in Yugoslavia since the reconstruction period following World War II. The Yugoslav Government introduced Workers' Councils as the major unit of management at the enterprise level. Patterned on the People's Committees which had been set up to organize war production, they were part of a broad experiment to decentralize economic power and to establish a system of industrial self-government.

Within the enterprise the Workers' Council is the highest authority. Members of the Council used to be elected by the trade union at the plant, but now are elected by the workers without reference to their union. The Council, together with the local People's Committee appoints

the company director. The director and his management board, consisting of three to 11 members, manage the firm under the direction and guidance of the Council, which meets monthly. The Council is responsible for the hiring and promotion of workers. It determines wage levels and the use of profits, and approves plans for production and marketing.

Decisions by the Council and the director are influenced by outside organizations. The League of Communists and the Communist Youth Organization participate in educational and propaganda activities to improve worker skills and productivity. The Producers' Council of the local People's Committee gives advice to the Workers' Council.

Although little is known about the Councils in the West, informed critics of the Yugoslav system insist that if the central political authorities find that a Council has not made wise judgments, the central authority will step in and place restrictions on wage increases and adjust price levels¹. According to a recent study of two Yugoslav companies, market forces exert a significant influence on methods of production, sales policy and profits. The government and the bank exert influence through taxation and the interest rate. After-tax profit is allocated by the Workers' Council to wage increases, investment and housing. If a company operates at a loss, wages may be reduced.

Rank-and-file participation in decision-making in Yugoslav workers' councils is difficult to assess. In theory, there is ample scope for local initiative and decision-making. But in practice, while rank-and-file members, as well as experts including engineers, economists and other management personnel may express their opinions, it is the director who usually makes the decisions. Most members of Council are recruited from among foremen and technicians. Reports on production, technical, financial and marketing matters are prepared by specialists; hence, it is difficult for rank-and-file members to add new information or to criticize decisions already made by management.

Observers of Yugoslav industrial relations have concluded that Workers' Council legislation has not given workers more authority². The

¹ J. KOLAJA, *Workers' Councils: The Yugoslav Experience*.

² See F. E. EMERY and Einar THORSRUD, *Form and Content in Industrial Democracy*, pp. 31-42.

See also Veljko RUS, «Influence Structure in Yugoslav Enterprise». *Industrial Relations*, (Berkeley), University of California, Vol. 9, No. 2, Feb. 1970, pp. 148-160.

Councils have primarily benefited management by giving it more freedom and scope for initiative. Local unions have become more dependent, not only on management but on outside centres. Observers have also noted skilled and white collar workers and management personnel have consistently expressed a greater sense of identification with the company and satisfaction with pay and working conditions than unskilled and semi-skilled workers. With respect to participation, they have found that differences in skill, education and type of work are more decisive than formal arrangements for employee representation.

Under the Yugoslav system, therefore, the real decision-making power at the company level remains with management. The involvement and influence of workers in decision-making is not materially affected by mere membership on a Workers' Council. More important is the individual's insight, skill and job.

Workers can achieve greater rights and influence on decisions either through strong representation within management or through a union. If the workers' representative body within the management group is strong, then the union will be weak, as in Yugoslavia. Yugoslav workers have an unusual opportunity to participate in the major issues confronting management, but while they have been active in dealing with personnel question, they have demonstrated only limited interest in decisions concerning production, finance, sales and investment. Yugoslav workers who have been asked to rank the major sources of job satisfaction have consistently rated pay and working conditions at the top of the list, job interest and promotional opportunities in the middle, and job control and participation in self-management bodies at the bottom³.

PARTNERSHIP OF WORKERS AND MANAGEMENT

The sharing of the responsibility for the management of an enterprise has been developed in a number of countries, including West Germany, Norway, Israel, Sweden and the United Kingdom, to mention only five with different approaches.

West Germany

Sharing of responsibility in decision-making in West Germany dates back to as early as 1891, when workers' councils were introduced by

³ *Ibid.*, Josip OBRADOVIC, « Participation and Work Attitudes in Yugoslavia », pp. 161-169.

legislation. In 1918, under the threat of political revolution, the government extended worker representation by means of collective bargaining and arbitration. In each case the changes were brought about to relieve political tension rather than to change worker-employer relationships. Historically, worker participation in the management of German industry has been the result of government, rather than union initiative. The labour movement, which is splintered between social democratic, Communist and Catholic unions, had been comparatively weak at the plan level even during socialist political regimes. Hitler virtually destroyed the labour movement in the 1930s.

At the end of the World War II, a prime objective of the Allied authorities was to denazify German society and break up the cartels which had financed and equipped the Nazi war effort. The unions were not strong enough to take part in this undertaking, and management could not be relied upon to do so. The British occupation authorities introduced co-determination as a political instrument. The move was fully supported by German trade union leaders who had spent some of the war period in Great Britain and Sweden, and who believed that formal political democracy was not enough to ensure industrial democracy in Germany. Catholic employers endorsed democratization at the company level. A Catholic spokesman declared that co-determination belonged to an order willed by God and must be accepted in the same way as the right of private property⁴. Co-determination was introduced by two major laws of 1951 and 1952. Additional laws were passed in 1955 and 1956.

Co-determination operates at two levels: the Supervisory Board and the Works Council. Worker representatives also have equal voting power with management in the appointment of the Labour Director to boards of management. Participation through these agencies has been adopted most extensively in the coal and steel industries.

In coal and steel, the Supervisory Board consists of five employee members, five employer members, and a neutral member appointed from outside the company. In some large companies the board may have 15 or 21 members. Typical of employee representation on the board, the blue-collar workers and the white-collar workers each nominate one representative, and the remaining worker representatives are nominated at the local union or central union level. The outside union nominees are usually

⁴ *Ibid.*, Deutscher KATOLIKENTAG (1949), quoted by E. Potthoff, O. Blume and H. Duvernell, *Zwischenbilanz der Mitbestimmung*, p. 26.

trade union officials. The outside employer representatives are usually lawyers, politicians, financiers or businessmen. The neutral appointee is typically a civil servant or an academic.

The Supervisory Board does not replace the authority of the shareholders. Its job is to review all business matters and supervise decisions made by the management board. It can call a meeting of shareholders, and can be authorized by the shareholders to exercise specified veto powers over management. But there has been relatively little interference by supervisory boards in day-to-day management.

The Labour Director provides an important avenue for worker influence on the board of management, but he cannot be considered to be a worker spokesman or delegate. He is appointed to boards in the coal and steel industries by majority vote of the worker and management representatives on the supervisory boards. He is usually a former trade union official, but by necessity he is a person acceptable to both parties. The boards originally had three directors, all equal in status — labour, technical and commercial. In recent years, many companies have brought in additional directors, all appointed by the shareholders. The board has the responsibility for managing the company, but the Labour Director is expected to initiate policies for wages and salaries and strictly personnel matters. In Canada such functions would be assigned to a Personnel Manager or Director of Industrial Relations.

Employees of all categories, whether members of a union or otherwise, elect representatives to the Works Council for a period of two years. Representatives, who must be company employees, may be re-elected and they need not be union members. There is little, if any, formal contact between the Council and the local union. The Council is in part a consultative body, but it also concerns itself with many of the issues normally associated with trade unions in Canada; namely, piece work rates and premium pay, hours of work, rest periods, vacation schedules, training, welfare, and health and safety. The Council's main job is to advise the management board on how to achieve co-operation between labour and management and how to maintain discipline. In the event of a major disagreement with the management board, the Council can refer the issue to binding arbitration.

The functions of the Works Council are supplemented by two other bodies. The Company Assembly, a superior body open to all employees which meets at least four times a year, reviews the performance of the

Council. The Assembly can be called into emergency session. The Economics Committee consisting of representatives of employees and management, reports economic information to employees.

Any assessment of co-determination must be made within the German context. Co-determination was introduced during a period when there was a rapid improvement in the level of wages and in working conditions, and relative industrial peace. No doubt co-determination made an important though indeterminate contribution in these areas, as did sustained economic prosperity. It bears repeating that while strong nationally the trade union movement in Germany at the local level is relatively weak, and works councils established by legislation provided for instant worker representation in management deliberations. While it is difficult to conceive of work councils of the German model working alongside unions without clashes of jurisdiction and interest, many German unions have succeeded in establishing a strong position in companies where co-determination is in operation. However, the increasing strength of unions has taken place, as with co-determination, during a period of high employment and pressure for democratization. Works councils have established themselves as effective agencies representing all categories of workers in functions normally associated with unions. It is too early to determine to what extent trade unionism and works councils (and other forms of co-determination) will co-exist harmoniously in situations involving political and economic tension.

Meanwhile, observers have noted that neither labour nor management is satisfied with the institutional arrangements for industrial democracy. Labour spokesmen have criticized their works councils for not going far enough in giving employees an opportunity to be informed and to influence the decision-making process. Rank-and-file workers remain relatively indifferent. They view works councils and supervisory boards mainly as instruments for achieving higher status or advancement for the few workers who are elected or appointed to them. Management has criticized the councils for not aiding sufficiently in improving the operating efficiency of the enterprise. Management has continued to question the right, interest and capabilities of the labour representatives on the councils and boards ⁵.

⁵ Richard B. PETERSON, « The Swedish Experience with Industrial Democracy », *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 6, No. 2, July 1968, pp. 185-203.

Norway

In Norway, worker representatives were placed on the boards of some state-owned companies in the early 1950s. It was expected that this innovation would make three contributions to labour relations. First, it would serve as a control mechanism on the way management performed its personnel functions. Second, it would cause management to tread cautiously with respect to matters that were unpopular with workers. Third, it would increase the chances of managements making decisions that would take worker interests into account.

In most respects, Norwegian experiments with worker participation on boards of management have been disappointing⁶. Independent observers have pointed out that there is little evidence of communication between worker representatives and their rank-and-file constituents; that worker representatives, faced with the choice between supporting the usual management goals and fighting for worker interests, have usually found it most expedient to take sides with the other board members; and that the majority of workers have seldom, if ever, become involved in management matters.

Israel

In Israel, attempts to institutionalize worker participation in enterprises controlled by Histadrut (the General Federation of Labour) have been discouraging⁷. Histadrut is both trade union centre and major industrial entrepreneur. In pursuing its many goals of developing a working class, helping to build a nation and establishing a just society, it has grown into a mass organization with 700,000 dues-paying members. It owns and operates enterprises which account for about one-quarter of national employment and output.

It is recognized, both inside and outside Histadrut, that plant-level labour relations are no different than those which exist in the private and public sectors of industry in Israel. It was expected that Histadrut's enterprises would produce employer-employees relations of an exemplary

⁶ Einar THORSRUD and Fred E. EMERY, « Industrial Democracy in Norway », *Industrial Relations*, (Berkeley), University of California, Vol 9, No. 2, Feb. 1970, pp. 187-196.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Eliezer ROSENSTEIN, « Histadrut's Search for a Participation Program », pp. 170-186.

standard, but there is no more harmony, and in some cases much less, than exists between managers and workers elsewhere in Israel.

A typical failure of the Histadrut experiments with industrial democracy is the Joint Production Committee. The original goals of the committees were to establish a formal framework for worker participation in management, and to increase productivity. Generally, the committees have failed to solve the problems of low productivity and poor work discipline, and have shifted their emphasis from worker involvement in decision-making to increases in productivity through piece-work.

Participation experiments have broken down in Israel as a result of the basic conflict between management and worker self-interests. When the Joint Production Committee program collapsed, by the early 1960s, Histadrut moved to a higher form of participation — worker representation in management at the plant level and in the management of central organizations which control a number of enterprises. This experiment has fared no better than the others. Managers of Histadrut enterprises regard participation as a threat to their authority. Workers regard participation as a threat to their authority. Workers regard participation as a marginal issue and continue to insist on material improvements.

Sweden

In any discussion of industrial democracy, Sweden deserves special mention. Sweden is a highly industrialized country with a long tradition of sophisticated management and union organization as well as democratic government. The Swedes have avoided, or overcome, many of the negative aspects of labour-management relations that prevail in other market economies. Furthermore, Sweden has experienced the operation of works councils in several thousand enterprises for upwards of 12 years.

The idea of works councils was first presented in Sweden in 1920 in a pamphlet, *Industrial Democracy*, by Ernest Wigforss. A government committee was appointed to investigate the feasibility of using councils in industry, but a bill submitted to the Swedish Parliament in 1923 was defeated in the face of fierce opposition from the employers' confederation (S.A.F.). Twenty-three years later a Works Council Agreement between the S.A.F. and the trade union confederation (L.O.) was adopted. It provided for the organization of works councils in plants with a minimum of 25 workers (in 1958 increased to 50) for the sole purpose of mutual

discussion of production problems and exchange of information. The councils were given no negotiating or decision-making power. Within a year of the Agreement some 4,000 councils, including 3,700 representing L.O.-unions, had been set up.

Observers of the Swedish experiments in industrial democracy councils have concluded that the councils have been useful in dealing with the suggestion system for improving production and in-plant safety and have been a useful sounding board for management policies. But council members have shown relatively little interest in making suggestions on company economic policies⁸.

Both unions and employers have criticized the achievements of the works councils. The Works Council Agreement required that councils meet a minimum of four times a year, but unions have complained that many councils fail to meet that often. The unions maintain that information supplied to council members by management is too scarce or too complex. Employers, on the other hand, have found that some worker representatives have failed to show interest in the work of the councils, and have failed to disseminate information to all employees, as required, at annual meetings.

Quite apart from worker and management views, independent observers have found that works councils have had little, if any, influence in the area of management rights. After more than 12 years in operation, the councils have confined themselves almost entirely to consultation functions⁹.

United Kingdom

In Britain, participation by workers has been confined to joint consultation committees. This has been the case despite the election of Labour governments which have nationalized key industries and might conceivably have democratized management on a radical scale. In nationalized industries, trade unionists have been appointed to boards but have been considered as ordinary members and not as worker representatives. Joint consultative committees in both nationalized and

⁸ T. L. JOHNSTON, *Collective Bargaining in Sweden*, Harvard University Press, 1962.

⁹ JOHNSTON, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

Richard B. PETERSON, «The Swedish Experience with Industrial Democracy», *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 6, No. 2, July, 1968.

private industries are concerned with routine health and safety questions and matters of production efficiency. Trade unions have maintained their traditional independent role of representing workers in collective bargaining.

The labour movement has traditionally been wary of participation of workers on management boards. A report by the Trades Union Congress in 1944 concluded that the governing boards of nationalized industries must have an overriding responsibility to the public (as represented by Parliament) and could not be held accountable for their decisions to any outside interests (including those of the employees). More recently the TUC has made proposals (to the Donovan Commission) for increased participation¹⁰. First, it wanted inclusion of a shop steward in « the normal body which regularly meets at plant level to take decisions on the running of the plant ». Second, it suggested representation at intermediate levels, for example, « at a level which represents the functional authority for the particular product in the enterprise ». Thirdly, it proposed that legislation should permit companies to make provision for trade union representation on boards of directors ».

Lord Donovan commented on these proposals : « As regards the suggestion for workers' representatives to be included in managerial bodies in the factory and at other levels of management apart from the board, we believe that our proposals for the reform of collective bargaining on the basis of comprehensive agreements at factory and company level will do more than could any other change to allow workers and their representatives to exercise a positive influence in the running of the undertakings in which they work ». He went on to say that managers and shop stewards must keep in close touch, but each party must be free to meet on their own and make decisions.

Lord Donovan and a majority of the members of the Commission rejected the concept of workers' directors. First, they felt the worker representative would be placed in an intolerable position when the board was making a decision which was deemed to be in the interest of the company as a whole but against the interest of the employees. Second, it would be next to impossible to determine the degree of personal responsibility which the worker representative should bear for board decisions.

¹⁰ Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, 1956-1968, p. 257.

And third, a move to worker representation would divert attention from the need to reconstruct machinery for collective bargaining.

DEMOCRATIZATION OF MANAGEMENT

Management also has its proponents of participation. Beginning with the Hawthorne experiments in human relations in the workplace in the 1920s, this approach stresses the value of co-operation and partnership based on the harmony of goals between employees, or superiors and subordinates¹¹. The idea has evolved through the work of Professor A.H. Maslow, an American social psychologist who formulated a widely-quoted hierarchy of human needs, Douglas McGregor, a professor of industrial management renowned for his Theory X and Theory Y, and more recent exponents of the « managerial grid », « job enlargement » and « T-groups » and the fostering of a spirit of openness and mutual trust in employer-employee relations. The end result is a movement for participative management, where management is regarded mainly as a problem-solving exercise and the aim of managers is to enable the individual or the group to grow with the job. Participation occurs in daily face-to-face relationships between all levels of managers, supervisors and workers in an « open-system » organization.

According to a highly-regarded version of this approach to industrial democracy, the most productive workers are happy workers, and the best way to keep people happy is to scrap all practices based on Theory X and introduce practices inspired by Theory Y¹². Theory X is the conventional approach to management, which, as articulated by McGregor, is based on the idea that workers are inherently lazy and will shun all work if they can, that people must be directed, controlled and motivated by fear and punishment, and that the average person prefers to avoid responsibility, has relatively little ambition and wants security above all.

These negative assumptions about human nature are replaced by positive notions in McGregor's Theory Y. McGregor concluded that the

¹¹ The Hawthorne experiments in work performance related to levels of plant illumination were conducted at the Hawthorne Works of the Western Electric Company in the 1920s and 1930s. They form the basis of the human relations approach to labour relations.

See Elton MAYO, *The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization*. New York City, Viking, 1960.

¹² Douglas MCGREGOR, *The Human Side of Enterprise*.

expenditure of physical and mental effort in work is as natural as play or rest ; that threat of punishment and external control are not the only ways to induce people to work for organizational goals ; that the average person learns not only to accept, but to seek responsibility ; that the capacity for creative work is widely, not narrowly, distributed in the population ; and that in modern industry the intellectual potential of the average person is only partially utilized.

Much of McGregor's work is based on the concepts of Maslow, who pictured man as a creature of ever-expanding wants. As he satisfies his physiological needs for food, water, shelter and other biological demands, his safety needs for freedom from fear and danger, and his social needs for **group activity and affection**, man then aspires to fulfill his ego needs for reputation, self-respect and self-esteem, and finally his self-actualization needs for the liberation of his creative talents. Since we live in an economy which fulfills the basic needs of most people most of the time, more and more people are demanding the intangible rewards offered by fulfillment of the higher levels of needs. Theory Y aims at integrating individual goals with those of the organization by making the job the **principal means through which each employee can enlarge his competence and sense of accomplishment**. When the goals of the individual and those of the enterprise coincide, the enterprise is propelled by the motivation of all its employees. Other management conceptions of participation are similar ; they play down fundamental conflicts and power relationships and emphasize the building of motivation at all levels of the organization ¹³.

DEMOCRATIZATION THROUGH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Collective bargaining recognizes the historical demand of workers for equal authority with management in determining wages and conditions of work. It also recognizes the mutuality of interest between workers and management. Both parties have a stake in the survival of the enterprise, and both parties want it to flourish. But unlike the human relations approach based on a harmony of interests and goals, collective bargaining emphasizes the fundamental conflict between workers and owners over the distribution of the wealth produced in their joint effort. Collective bargaining accepts the power struggle as being both legitimate

¹³ Robert R. BLAKE, Jane S. MOUTON, *The Managerial Grid*.
Frederick HERZBERG, *Work and the Nature of Man*.

and creative, and it provides a structure and a set of procedures for resolving differences.

Unlike the human relations approach to participative management, collective bargaining gives workers a veto power in determining the rules that govern relationships with the employer. Unlike Marxist and socialist approaches to industrial democracy, collective bargaining does not seek to displace professional management with worker-controlled committees. It recognizes management as a specialist function.

With collective bargaining, industrial harmony is always a conditional goal. The degree of harmony will depend on the attitude of the parties toward the degree of equitability in the current wage-effort bargain, the actual work conditions, the level of profitability and comparable conditions in the industrial community. True bargaining exists only when the union has the right to strike, and is willing to use it, and when management is capable of taking, and willing to take, a strike or to impose a lock-out in a dispute over the terms of a collective agreement. Far from being a process which operates under the law of the jungle as is frequently alleged, collective bargaining is based on the rule of law and the twin democratic concepts of freedom of association and freedom of expression. The value of the democratic process in bargaining depends on the viability and effectiveness of the two parties. While a kind of guerilla warfare and some open conflict prevails from time to time, the vast majority of collective relationships proceed from day to day, and year to year, in an orderly and peaceful way.

Conflict, which is the dynamic force in collective bargaining, is based on two opposed sets of wants, aspirations and discontents — those of the union and those of management. Workers want to strengthen their union as an on-going organization, they want higher incomes and improved working conditions, they want more control over their jobs, and they want to pursue broad social and economic goals. For management, collective bargaining is not the central issue. More important are production, investment, planning and marketing. If possible, most managements would exclude unions with outside affiliations as an unwarranted and unnecessary interference in the control and direction of the enterprise. But where a union is recognized, management feels compelled to develop strategies for containing its demands and influence. Management also wants to strengthen and protect its organization by keeping costs down and profits buoyant; to retain control over vital decisions affecting the business;

to achieve an accommodation with « a responsible union » ; and to preserve the enterprise system.

Collective bargaining exists in a variety of industrial relations systems — ranging from those where there is a high degree of authority vested in central management and labour organizations to those which are founded on plant-level unions. Whereas bargaining is restricted to personnel matters in some jurisdictions, in others unions take the view that anything which affects working conditions is a matter for negotiation. As a system of industrial democracy, collective bargaining gives workers an opportunity to participate in social change. Each new collective agreement, which represents an accommodation between what management wants and what the union wants, establishes a new basis of order and a new set of rules to govern behaviour in the workplace. The extent to which a union contributes to industrial democracy depends on the degree to which its members participate in formulating and carrying out its policies and the effectiveness with which the union negotiates and administers agreements.

Milton Derber, a noted American industrial relations specialist concluded his comprehensive study of industrial democracy :

« One of the principal lessons to be learned from the history of the collective-bargaining model of industrial democracy is the strength that it derives from its flexibility and adaptability. Because it is an idea developed out of pragmatic experience, it has the capacity for change as conditions change. Unlike more rigid ideologies which are the product of a single man's thought, it permits, indeed encourages, experimentation. Some practitioners have tended to mythologize 'free collective bargaining' but even these have been more rigid in their rhetoric than in their behavior. Thus we can expect in the years ahead that the model will be no more fixed than it has been in the past, that new methods and procedures will be tried and new rules formulated »¹⁴.

INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY IN CANADA

Following are some of the conclusions which can be made on the subject of industrial democracy as it relates to Canadian labour-management relations :

1. Industrial democracy, viewed as participation by workers in the management of an enterprise, must be examined in the Canadian

¹⁴ *The American Idea of Industrial Democracy*, pp. 534-5.

context. While experiments in various concepts of industrial democracy may or may not, have been successful in other countries, it would be difficult if not impossible to transplant them to Canada.

Industrial relationships in Canada are determined by two major forces — the system of competition which prevails in a market economy and the body of law which has been adopted for the regulation of labour-management conflict and for the provision of certain minimum standards of employment. Both the market system and the legal system have provided the framework for collective bargaining, which in turn determines the level of wages and the nature of working conditions in the major industries and in some levels of government.

According to social and political indicators, Canadians have consistently supported a modified market system, consisting of predominantly capitalist-owned enterprises and a relatively small proportion of publicly-owned enterprises. The vast majority of Canadians also support varying degrees of economic and social change by constitutional processes rather than by violent revolution. Canadian workers, with some exceptions, reject violent revolution as an agency of social and economic change. Through their union organizations they have consistently pressed for a broad program of social and economic improvement for the common people through the democratic process. Thus any modification in the quantity and the quality of participation by workers in management will result from (a) legislative action, (b) pressure exerted by unions through the collective bargaining process, (c) co-operation between representative committees of workers and management, or (d) voluntary action on the part of management.

2. The concepts of industrial democracy and industrial government are derived from political democracy and political government. Whereas participation is the essence of political democracy, it would be quite simple, but erroneous, to exaggerate the degree of participation that is necessary or even possible in industry. Political democracy is based on the rule of law, majority rule, respect for minority opinion — and the important concept of « one man, one vote ». Despite the attractiveness of the notion that democracy in political government is of limited value without the complement of democracy in industrial government, it is impossible to transfer the concept of « one man, one vote » to industry without at the same time destroying the basis of private ownership. Investors would be reluctant, if not foolhardy, to risk their capital in an

enterprise in which workers had the right to participate in decision-making on an equal basis. On the other hand, workers cannot exercise any significant degree of authority in decision-making on the basis of « one man, one vote », since by and large they cannot control enough shares in the majority of capitalist enterprises. Even in worker-owned enterprises, however, it would be necessary (as it has been necessary in other jurisdictions enjoying people's democracy in one form or another) to appoint managers who would be compelled to adopt the same attitudes and exhibit the same behaviour patterns with respect to workers as exist in capitalist enterprises. This would be the case whether the managers were hired from outside labour's ranks and directed by workers, or whether the management consisted of workers elected by, and responsible to, workers.

3. Collective bargaining offers Canadian workers the most favourable opportunities of all the available options for the extension of participation in decision-making. Unless there is unemployment and economic breakdown of catastrophic proportions, Canadians will continue to reject revolution as the means to establishing greater worker participation. In a limited number of situations, Canadian workers have entered into arrangements with management, including labour-management consultative committees which for the most part deal with matters of a marginal or non-controversial nature, and various kinds of profit-sharing and stockholding. In some cases, these experiments in consultation and co-operation exist in organized plants and offices, in others they have been used to forestall the organization of workers. Co-determination (workers representation on boards of management) is an appealing concept, but one which offers little, if any decision-making power and only minor opportunities for actual participation to rank-and file workers. There is the additional difficulty that parallel forms of worker representation inevitably lead to conflict and nullification of effort. Participation through the democratization of management has made some inroads in Canada, particularly among those employers who are willing and able to pay higher wages and better fringe benefits than prevail in industry generally. But there is no identifiable increase in worker participation in decision-making in these firms, except on the level of consultation. This approach to co-operation invariably aims to eliminate unions or undermine their authority, and is suspect as a conscious effort to manipulate workers for increased production.

4. There is no grass-roots demand among workers for participation in management boards. There is, on the other hand, a strengthening of the traditional union demand for elimination of management's so-called residual rights and for the right to negotiate on any matter which affects workers' income, conditions of work and the quality of life.

The demand for worker participation in management boards, or in similar forms of decision-making machinery, comes from three main sources : First, those who substitute catch-phrases such as « all power to the people » for any systematic examination of the way workers can effect improvements on the job ; secondly, those who envisage their vaguely-stated notion of « industrial democracy » as one of the instruments which will establish a new political, economic and social order ; and thirdly, those who deliberately seek to establish a rival system of worker representation in order to drive a wedge between workers and their unions.

5. Rather than striving for membership on a management board or committee, workers are demonstrably more concerned with getting higher income, improved working conditions and more responsibility in doing their own jobs. Participation with management in decision-making inevitably conflicts with these goals. Workers who are elected to represent workers are expected to fight for workers' interests ; but those same workers as members of a board of management would be expected also to support management or company goals. If there is a union in the enterprise, the worker representatives on the board of management would frequently find themselves in conflict with union officials who took issue with management policies, actions and decisions.

6. Increased worker participation lies in the direction of negotiating an area of decision-making related to each job which the individual worker can call his own ; expanding job content so that each worker can become involved in planning as well as execution and inspection, and relate what he does to the finished product and to society ; and providing opportunities for growing with the job and for training at company expense for higher levels of performance or responsibility.

7. While some advocates of industrial democracy seek to integrate the interests of workers with those of management on the theory that this course of action would lead to complete worker ownership and control of industry, this approach ignores the fundamental differences in interests and goals of workers and management. It is more realistic

to seek greater participation for workers in decision-making through the process of collective bargaining. The latter course of action assumes that workers will continue to extend the scope of bargaining to any and all matters affecting income and conditions of work.

8. Since collective bargaining has proven to be the only effective means for achieving for workers a greater share of economic gains and improved working conditions, it is inevitable that collective bargaining will continue to be subjected to concerted attacks by those elements in the community which want to monopolize the decision-making power. Regardless of the political or economic system, workers must organize and maintain strong unions. The labour movement must increase its efforts in organizing the unorganized, maintaining a united front on all vital issues involving income and conditions of work, and pressing for economic and social change on a broad front for the benefit of all Canadians.

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La démocratie industrielle

On a accordé beaucoup d'intérêt à la notion de démocratie industrielle d'un côté comme de l'autre du *Rideau de fer*. L'idée en soi n'est pas nouvelle. Dès les premiers temps de la révolution industrielle, les travailleurs et les mouvements syndicaux ont réclamé la participation aux décisions de l'entreprise.

Une des difficultés majeures concernant la démocratie industrielle, ou la participation des travailleurs à la gestion, c'est que le sens qu'on lui donne peut varier du tout au tout d'une personne à l'autre. On peut se vanter qu'une action est une forme de participation à la gestion alors que, en réalité, il ne s'agit que d'une obéissance servile à l'autorité. Johannes Schregle, chef de la section du droit du travail et des relations professionnelles au service du développement des institutions sociales de l'OIT a fait remarquer que l'expression participation des travailleurs à la gestion « est liée à des concepts de démocratie, de droits de la direction, d'efficacité, de besoins humains et de droits moraux si chargés d'émotivité et d'idéologie qu'une discussion impartiale, libre d'opinions et d'attitudes préconçues, en est extrêmement difficile ». Le présent article a pour objet de considérer le rôle de la démocratie industrielle dans le contexte canadien des relations du travail et d'analyser les expériences tentées en d'autres pays, face à la revendication de diverses formes de participation à la gestion, en se demandant si les ententes particulières s'y rapportant, accordent un véritable pouvoir de décision et si les travailleurs du rang sont intégrés au processus selon une formule véritablement démocratique.

On peut mettre à exécution un système de participation à la gestion de bien des manières. Premièrement, une personne ou quelques personnes, agissant d'autorité, élaborent des règlements auxquels les travailleurs doivent obéir. Deuxièmement, on trouve le paternalisme, forme d'autoritarisme fondé sur la notion de famille étendue en vertu de laquelle « le père a toujours raison ». Troisièmement, il y a le processus bureaucratique où le pouvoir décisionnaire est diffus à travers divers échelons d'autorité et d'un ensemble complexe de règlements. Quatrièmement, on rencontre le système de la « gestion scientifique » où des spécialistes imposent « la meilleure manière de faire les choses ». Enfin, les décisions peuvent découler d'une participation fondée sur divers degrés d'engagement des travailleurs. Dans la plupart des sociétés canadiennes, tout comme dans la plus grande partie du secteur public, l'autorité dans l'entreprise s'exerce selon les quatre premières formules. Ce n'est que là où les syndicats sont pleinement reconnus par la direction et où celle-ci s'efforce d'en empêcher l'implantation que la participation à la gestion revêt une signification spéciale.

Les travailleurs peuvent participer au pouvoir décisoire de bien des manières. On peut démocratiser la propriété et le contrôle des moyens de production. Dans ce cas, à l'extrême, les travailleurs s'emparent des moyens de production qu'ils gèrent au nom de la collectivité. D'autre part, les travailleurs et la direction peuvent s'entendre sur une forme quelconque d'association qui peut inclure la participation aux bénéfices et l'achat d'actions de l'entreprise. On peut aussi démocratiser la direction en ce sens que l'entreprise s'efforce de placer « le bon homme à la bonne place » ou de prendre les décisions après consultation d'un conseil ouvrier qui représente toutes les catégories de travailleurs et de cadres. On peut enfin démocratiser le pouvoir décisoire par le régime de la négociation collective.

Les conseils ouvriers établis par le gouvernement yougoslave après la deuxième guerre mondiale fournissent un modèle moderne de démocratie industrielle par la propriété et le contrôle des moyens de production par les travailleurs. Ces conseils sont la principale unité de direction au niveau de l'entreprise. Les travailleurs de l'usine élisent directement les membres du conseil. C'est le conseil, en collaboration avec le comité des citoyens qui représente l'autorité politique nationale, qui désigne l'administrateur. Le directeur et son conseil d'administration, qui compte de trois à onze membres, gère la firme au jour le jour sous la direction du conseil qui se réunit mensuellement. C'est le conseil qui décide en matière d'embauchages, de promotions, de licenciements, de fixation des taux de salaires, de partage des bénéfices et qui approuve les programmes de production et de mise en marché.

Les observateurs bien informés du système yougoslave font remarquer que, si l'autorité politique considère qu'un conseil prend des décisions qui ne sont pas sages, elle n'hésitera pas à intervenir et à procéder à ses propres ajustements en matière de salaires et de prix. Les profits qui restent après déduction des impôts sont alloués aux salaires, aux investissements et aux logements ouvriers. Cependant, si une société fonctionne à perte, il se peut que les taux de salaires soient abaissés. On a tendance à choisir les membres du conseil parmi les techniciens et les spécialistes plutôt que parmi les travailleurs du rang. Les représentants ouvriers au sein des conseils s'intéressent moins aux questions de production et de financement, de vente et d'investissement qu'à la paie et aux conditions de travail.

Les conseils ouvriers dont la formation a été préconisée par les employeurs et les syndicats suédois dès le début de la décennie 1920 se sont vu déléguer ou ont assumé un pouvoir décisoire plus limité. En 1946, la SAF (Confédération des employeurs suédois) et la LO (Confédération générale du Travail) ont conclu sur les conseils ouvriers un accord qui prévoyait l'établissement de conseils dans les usines comptant un minimum de vingt-cinq travailleurs (en 1958, ce minimum fut porté à cinquante travailleurs) à la seule fin de discuter ensemble les questions relatives à la productivité et d'échanger des informations. On n'a pas étendu aux conseils ouvriers le pouvoir de négociation non plus que celui de prendre des décisions.

En Suède, syndicats et employeurs ont critiqué les réalisations de ces conseils. Les syndicats se sont plaints que les conseils avaient failli à l'obligation qui leur était faite de tenir les quatre réunions annuelles prévues à l'accord et que l'information donnée par les employeurs aux travailleurs était à la fois maigre et embellie. De leur côté, les employeurs ont reproché à certains représentants

ouvriers de négliger de transmettre l'information à tous les employés. La plupart des conseils ont confiné leur activité à l'exercice d'un rôle de consultation. La plupart des pays d'Occident qui ont tenté l'expérience de la participation à la gestion se sont inspirés du modèle suédois.

Un troisième modèle, qui tient le milieu entre les systèmes yougoslave et suédois, c'est la cogestion établie par voie législative en Allemagne de l'Ouest après la deuxième guerre mondiale. Les travailleurs participent aux prises de décision à l'intérieur de commissions de surveillance et de conseils du travail. Les représentants ouvriers ont un droit de vote égal à celui des représentants de la direction pour la désignation du directeur du travail au conseil d'administration. C'est principalement dans les industries du charbon et de l'acier que la participation à la gestion a pris le plus d'ampleur en Allemagne de l'Ouest. Dans les industries du charbon et de l'acier, la commission de surveillance est formée de cinq représentants des employés, de cinq représentants des employeurs et d'un président neutre choisi à l'extérieur de la société. Dans quelques firmes, la commission de surveillance peut compter de quinze à vingt-et-un membres. La commission de surveillance ne se substitue pas à l'autorité des actionnaires. Sa fonction consiste à passer en revue toutes les activités commerciales et à surveiller les décisions du conseil d'administration.

Dans les industries du charbon et de l'acier, le directeur ouvrier est élu aux conseils d'administration par le vote majoritaire des travailleurs et des représentants de la direction aux commissions de surveillance. On choisit généralement un ancien chef syndical, mais il doit nécessairement être acceptable aux deux parties. Les conseils d'administration comprennent aussi les directeurs technique et commercial, et quelques autres directeurs, tous désignés par les actionnaires.

Les conseils du travail sont formés de représentants de toutes les catégories de travailleurs, qu'ils soient ou non membres d'un syndicat. Le conseil exerce pour partie une fonction de consultation, mais il s'occupe aussi de beaucoup des questions qui, ici au Canada, sont propres à l'activité syndicale, telles que les taux de salaires aux pièces et les primes, les heures de travail, les pauses ainsi que de l'hygiène professionnelle et de la sécurité. Sa fonction principale est de conseiller l'administration sur la façon d'établir la collaboration entre le personnel et la direction et d'assurer la discipline.

Tout jugement sur la cogestion doit tenir compte du contexte européen. Même s'il est puissant au niveau national, le mouvement syndical en Allemagne de l'Ouest est relativement faible au plan local. Il est trop tôt pour juger dans quelle mesure les syndicats et les conseils du travail peuvent coexister harmonieusement. Les travailleurs du rang considèrent principalement les conseils du travail et les commissions de surveillance comme des mécanismes utiles pour rehausser le statut et favoriser l'avancement des quelques travailleurs qui y sont élus ou nommés. Quant aux employeurs, ils ont reproché aux conseils de ne pas contribuer suffisamment à l'accroissement de l'efficacité de leurs entreprises.

La participation des travailleurs aux décisions par l'entremise du système de négociation collective est le constat de la revendication historique des travailleurs dans leur volonté d'obtenir une autorité égale à celle des employeurs dans la détermination des salaires et des conditions de travail. Elle confirme aussi la mutualité

des intérêts entre travailleurs et employeurs. Mais à l'encontre de l'approche scientifique de la « pseudo harmonie industrielle », elle met en relief l'état de conflit entre les travailleurs et les propriétaires concernant le partage des richesses produites grâce à leur effort commun. Contrairement à l'approche marxiste, la négociation collective ne cherche pas à remplacer la direction par des conseils ouvriers. Elle reconnaît à la direction une fonction spécialisée. L'harmonie industrielle est toujours quelque chose de contingent. Même si une espèce de guérilla et certains conflits armés prédominent quelquefois, les rapports collectifs du travail se déroulent en grande partie au jour le jour et d'année en année d'une façon ordonnée et pacifique.

Le dynamisme de la négociation collective réside dans le conflit résultant de deux catégories de besoins, d'aspirations et d'insatisfactions qui s'opposent : ceux des travailleurs et ceux des employeurs. La négociation collective procure aux travailleurs l'occasion de participer à l'évolution sociale. Toute convention collective nouvelle, qui représente un accommodement entre ce que veulent les employeurs et ce que souhaitent les travailleurs, établit un ordre neuf et un ensemble de règles destinées à régir la façon de se comporter à l'usine .

On n'y trouve nulle volonté bien enracinée d'exiger la participation aux conseils d'administration. L'idée en est préconisée par ceux qui substituent des formules toutes faites genre « tout le pouvoir au peuple » à l'examen systématique des méthodes capables de permettre aux travailleurs d'apporter des améliorations à leur milieu de travail, par ceux qui s'accrochent à un concept vaguement exprimé de « démocratie industrielle » en tant qu'un des instruments valables pour établir un nouvel ordre économique et social et, enfin, par ceux qui cherchent délibérément un système chimérique de représentation dans le but d'enfoncer un coin entre les travailleurs et les syndicats.

De toutes les options possibles, la négociation collective offre aux ouvriers canadiens les meilleures occasions d'accroître le degré de leur participation à la direction. Les travailleurs canadiens rejettent la révolution comme moyen d'accroître le contrôle ouvrier. La cogestion est une idée emballante, mais elle reste un concept qui offre peu, si encore elle offre quelque chose, comme formule de participation des travailleurs à la direction. Les comités consultatifs patronaux-ouvriers traitent de questions sans véritable importance. Quant à la participation à la direction par le moyen de la démocratisation de l'industrie, elle a surtout consisté dans une tentative des employeurs en vue d'éviter la syndicalisation et elle n'a engagé les travailleurs qu'à un niveau purement consultatif.

L'engagement des travailleurs dans la participation à la direction par le truchement de la convention collective présuppose que les travailleurs continuent d'étendre le champ de la négociation à l'ensemble des sujets qui touchent aux gains, aux conditions de travail et à la sécurité de l'emploi. En même temps, le mouvement syndical devra accentuer ses efforts pour rejoindre les non-syndiqués et faire pression dans le sens d'une transformation économique et sociale portant sur un front plus vaste pour le bien de la collectivité dans son ensemble.