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Article abstract

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What Do Workers Want?

Attitudes Towards Collective Bargaining and Participation in Management

**John Richards
Gary Mauser
and
Richard Holmes**

This article analyzes an exploratory survey, conducted in Vancouver, on public attitudes towards industrial democracy.

Industrial democracy is a frustratingly imprecise expression¹. Nightingale (1982, p. 4) identifies the essence of the idea as «a substantial reallocation of power over major organizational decisions to employees at lower hierarchical levels». We use it here to cover all arrangements, including but not restricted to collective bargaining, whereby non-managerial employees exercise a significant measure of control within their respective

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* Editor's note: a technical appendix reporting the estimated coefficient values for six polychotomous logistic distributions is available upon request from the authors

¹ In analyzing industrial democracy, NEWTON (1977) employed a useful three-dimensional schema. The first dimension is the *level* at which worker authority is exercised. At the lowest level workers may participate directly in making shop floor decisions affecting the organization of work. In North America most discussion on extending industrial democracy has turned around the introduction of greater worker autonomy at this level (e.g. QWL). At the highest level workers can participate indirectly by selecting representatives to the firm's board of directors. Intermediate level participation can also exist (e.g. joint labour-management committees at a plant level). The *degree* of industrial democracy over any specific management function may range from non-existent, in the case of a unilateral exercise of authority by the financial owners, to absolute in the case of «worker-controlled» firms. A third dimension is *scope*. Are all management decisions subject to industrial democracy, or only those in particular domains? For example, during the 1970s, the health and safety policy of firms became in certain provinces, most notably Saskatchewan and Québec, a matter to be decided in labour-management committees composed of equal numbers of employees and managers. Provincial statutes required firms to establish these committees.

firms (Bean, 1985, p. 158). In Britain and North America industrial democracy has primarily taken the form of collective bargaining. Another important form has been the evolution of institutions whereby employees participate in the exercise of the management function and thereby blur the employer-employee distinction (Landier, 1981; Kochan, 1986).

In both Britain and the United States aggressive conservative critics of unions and declining union density have catalyzed debate on the desirability of collective bargaining as the basis of industrial relations. Due presumably to the less ideologically charged nature of Canadian political debate and to more stable union density ratios, Canadian discussion of these issues has been much more complacent. Writing on the future of Canadian industrial relations, Crispo (1982, p. 533) concludes, «I would neither advocate, nor predict, any profound changes in the system unless the environment within which it operates is radically altered». Weiler, (1980, p. 301ff.), a second representative analyst, concludes that participatory institutions are ultimately incompatible with collective bargaining. As Riddell concluded in guarded prose suitable for a royal commission, «Canadian industrial relations research... seems more concerned with the operation of the existing collective bargaining system than with issues relating to fundamental change and reform» (Riddell, 1986, p. 47).

Our purpose in this article is not to defend directly the «participation thesis»² (which, with qualifications, we support) but to explore what workers want by asking them directly. On matters as important as industrial relations, it is vital to know what workers believe as well as what experts conclude to be best. Do workers desire more influence over managerial decisions than they actually exercise? Does collective bargaining satisfy their desire for control over their work environment? These are complex questions, and we stress that the present survey, conducted in Vancouver, is ex-

² In summary there are probably two fundamental arguments in favour of the «participation thesis». The first is an evolutionary argument that parallels the growth of political democracy and industrial democracy. If people want to participate more actively, they should be able to do so. The second is that employee participation in management may enhance productivity of the economy. In any advanced industrial economy the skill and knowledge of workers constitute a vast supply of «human capital». The efficiency gains of participation in management to workers as suppliers of human capital are the same that prompt those who supply finance to buy equity and not merely debt. The most recent substantive comparative review of participative elements within the Canadian industrial relations system and that of other industrial countries is a background volume to the Macdonald Commission prepared by RIDDELL (1986). See also NIGHTINGALE (1982) and KOCHAN (1984).

ploratory³. With that important caveat, this study examines four hypotheses: 1) a demand exists on the part of workers to participate in management more extensively than at present, 2) the extent of this unmet demand is as pronounced among unionized workers as among nonunion workers, 3) a high level of support exists for a particular innovation, codetermination,⁴ and 4) the desire for greater influence at work is independent of attitudes towards unions and collective bargaining.

In outline, we shall proceed as follows. In the second part we examine hypotheses 1-3 through the use of scaling and logistic regression analyses. In the third part we examine the final hypothesis by means of a factor analysis.

WHAT DO WORKERS WANT?

Borrowing the methodology of a survey of British workers (Heller, 1979), we posed a series of questions to compare actual and desired levels of influence. We divided management decisions into three categories: personal decisions (e.g. hours of work, job duties, holiday scheduling), administrative decisions (e.g. hiring and firing, selection of supervisors) and major policy decisions (e.g. financial investment and planning, introduction of new technology). For each category of decision we invited respondents to describe their actual and desired situation by choosing from a four-element continuum ranging from «no influence» to «complete control».

³ The survey was conducted by telephone interviews in the spring of 1985 on a representative sample of adults in the greater Vancouver region. The sample was selected using probability sampling techniques, and 335 completed the interview. Interviews were conducted by students at Simon Fraser University: Liz Bell, Fred Berenbaum, Vic Farmer, Ian Foster, David Fraser, Peter Godman, Robert Langmaid, Frank Parker, Anne-Marie Sleeman, and Paul Wilson. We gratefully acknowledge their many hours of work. Some important caveats are in order. First, the issues involved in the questions are complex, so that subtle changes in wording might make large differences in how people respond. To have greater confidence in the inferences drawn from this study, the results of alternative question wording should be examined. Second, the study was conducted by relatively inexperienced student interviewers. Despite their best intentions, they may have biased the selection of respondents. Third, while the survey was designed to be representative of attitudes in the Vancouver region, it may not be generalizable to all of Canada. Finally, surveys can, at best, assess only imperfectly the degree of conviction by which people hold their positions. It is easy to say yes or no to hypothetical questions.

⁴ In a narrow sense «codetermination» refers to the West German industrial relations practice, initiated by the British occupation administration after World War II, whereby employees of large firms select half the members of their firms' supervisory level boards of directors. (West German firms have a two-board structure. The supervisory level board selects the managing board). More generally, codetermination refers to any industrial relations system under which both employees and financial owners select members of boards of directors.

Hypothesis # 1: an unmet demand exists on the part of workers to participate in management more extensively than collective bargaining permits.

Hypothesis # 2: this unmet demand is as pronounced among unionized workers as among nonunion workers.

Table 1 summarizes average responses for actual and desired influence over the three categories of decision. The partitioning subsets are formed by the individual dummy variables used in the logit model discussed later. This table reports the mean of «equal interval scaling», calculated by assigning an integer value from 0 to 3 to each level of response in the four-element continuum. Unfortunately, this scaling method, while simple and popular, implies a cardinal influence scale or an equal scale distance between elements. Frequently respondents treat the intervals at the extremes of a psychological continuum differently from those in the centre, and this can invalidate inferences from such measurements (Edwards, 1957). Accordingly we also scaled responses using Thurstone's method of «successive intervals». This method (not shown) assumes that respondents' judgments are normally distributed and that the distance between elements may be perceived to be unequal⁵. The results of the second method confirmed the first inasmuch as the ranking of results remains identical.

As can be readily seen from Table 1, desired levels of influence are much larger than actual levels of influence over all categories of decision. Perhaps surprisingly, this is as true for unionized workers as for non-union workers.

Further, workers consistently want more influence over personal than over administrative decisions, more over administrative than major policy decisions. A number of studies on labour participation in Europe (Bean, 1985) draw similar conclusions, that workers are most interested in controlling immediate work conditions as opposed to higher levels of corporate decision making. This does not subtract from the importance of employee participation of higher levels. A persistent obstacle to expansion of shop floor democracy has been worker suspicion that any such experiments constitute management attempts to manipulate: to weaken worker commitment to collective bargaining through the union, to increase productivity without corresponding increased worker benefits. Successful experiments in shop

⁵ A readable description of this scaling technique is given in GREEN (1954). See TORGERSON (1958) for a mathematically rigorous treatment. Briefly, it involves transforming the cumulative distribution of responses over the elements of the continuum into standard normal variates within each subset and for each category of decision, actual or desired. Scale scores are then derived from the means of these standard normal variates.

floor democracy usually require co-operation between union and management (Kochan, 1984). In effect employee participation in management at higher levels is necessary for its success lower down.

Table 1
Average Level of Actual and Desired Influence at Work,
by Union Status, Age, Education, Gender and Provincial Political Preference*

		<i>Total, all workers (n = 261)</i>	<i>Non-Union (n = 96)</i>	<i>Union (n = 156)</i>	<i>19-25 years (n = 57)</i>	<i>Over 25 years (n = 199)</i>	<i>High school or less (n = 89)</i>
Personal	actual influence	1.273 +	1.388	1.073	1.175	1.307	1.101
decisions:	14. desired influence	1.798	1.850	1.726	1.857	1.792	1.678
Administrative	actual influence	.864	1.032	.594	.596	.949	.596
decisions:	15. desired influence	1.385	1.516	1.179	1.298	1.408	1.148
Major policy	actual influence	.660	.829	.392	.439	.722	.404
decisions:	16. desired influence	1.224	1.323	1.083	1.193	1.232	.989
		<i>More than high school (n = 169)</i>	<i>Female (n = 102)</i>	<i>Male (n = 144)</i>	<i>Social Credit (n = 64)</i>	<i>Liberal/ NDP (n = 88)</i>	<i>Conservative (n = 37)</i>
Personal	actual influence	1.361	1.107	1.375	1.373	1.111	1.351
decisions:	desired influence	1.865	1.689	1.868	1.873	1.795	1.811
Administrative	actual influence	1.006	.718	.947	1.119	.584	1.027
decisions:	desired influence	1.519	1.284	1.441	1.547	1.318	1.432
Major policy	actual influence	.798	.495	.775	1.000	.382	.730
decisions:	desired influence	1.358	1.107	1.306	1.477	1.068	1.324

* These questions were posed only to those who are currently working for a wage or salary, or who have done so in the last five years. Provincial political preference is the respondent's vote in the 1983 provincial election.

+ Cells display the mean response (actual and desired influence) for each subset of respondents: «no influence» (0), «a little influence» (1), «a lot of influence» (2), «complete control» (3). For example, since the values in the second row are in all cases larger than those in the first row, we can say that the typical worker, regardless of social characteristics, desires more influence over personal decisions at work than he has at present. The numbers (14 - 16) serve to identify three questionnaire items used in the factor analysis displayed in Figure 1 below.

Use of a logistic regression model permits a more rigorous analysis of the first two hypotheses, and a means of identifying the partial effects of the five variables — union status, age, education, gender and provincial political preference — on the distribution of responses over the levels of in-

fluence. We used a polychotomous logit model⁶. Table 2 shows the change in probabilities arising from changes in the value of individual regressor variables. It also illustrates the difference between the distribution of actual and desired influence for individual regressor values. This difference has an intuitive meaning as a measure of frustration, an idea to which we shall return. This table gives conditional probability distributions for each of three influence levels («no influence», «a little influence», «a lot of influence» or «complete control»); it also includes the base case values of the regressors suppressed in the logistic regression. The probabilities in Table 2 are obtained using mean values for all regressor variables other than the one whose impact is being measured. For example, two respondents «average» in all respects except gender can be expected to respond to questions about influence over decisions at work differently. The first distribution under «Gender» (.301 .427 .272) is the estimated distribution of responses of women with respect to actual influence over personal decisions. The partial effect of gender can be seen by comparing with the analogous conditional distribution for men (.210 .384 .406). Adjusting for differences in education and other variables, we would expect only 27% of women to report exercising «a lot of influence or complete control» over personal decisions, whereas 41% of men would be expected to give that response.

6 Such a model assumes responses are distributed according to the logistic distribution, a distribution which explains the probability of any response to be a function of z , a linear combination of independent variables, in our case the five characteristics by which we were able to distinguish respondents — union status, age, level of education, gender, and political preference (vote in 1983 provincial election). The cumulative probability function of this distribution, as a function of z , is a logistic curve, hence the distribution's name. With suitable transformation the log of the «odds» (i.e. the ratio of probabilities) of any pair of outcomes can be shown to be a linear function of the independent variables. When the dependent variable is polychotomous, the usual classical linear regression model (CLR model) is inappropriate for three reasons:

- i) the error term is heteroscedastic and therefore ordinary least squares estimators are inefficient;
- ii) it is necessary to make an unrealistic assumption of a discontinuity in the linear functional form at the boundaries of the dependent variable;
- iii) the linear model ignores interaction effects.

The logit model overcomes all three of these problems. If we denote possible outcomes by subscripts 1, 2 or 3 with respective probabilities P_1 , P_2 , and P_3 , then the conditional logits are $L_1 = \log(P_2/P_1)$ and $L_2 = \log(P_3/P_1)$. The conditional logits are simply the logs of the odds ratios. These definitions imply the third conditional logit $L_3 = L_2 - L_1$. We estimate the following equations:

$$L_1 = \log(P_2/P_1) = X\beta_1 \quad (1)$$

$$L_2 = \log(P_3/P_1) = X\beta_2 \quad (2)$$

From (1) and (2) and the condition that $P_1 + P_2 + P_3 = 1$, we obtain:

$$P_2 = e^{X\beta_1} P_1 \quad (3)$$

$$P_3 = e^{X\beta_2} P_1 \quad (4)$$

$$P_1 = 1/(1 + e^{X\beta_1} + e^{X\beta_2}) \quad (5)$$

Table 2
Effect of Individual Regressors on the Estimated Probability Distributions
of Responses over Levels of Influence

		No influence	A little influence	A lot of influence/ complete control	No influence	A little influence	A lot of influence/ complete control
Union status:		non-union			union		
Personal	actual influence	.257	.310	.433	.213	.553	.234
decisions:	desired influence	.027	.260	.713	.013	.328	.659
Administrative	actual influence	.470	.254	.277	.550	.357	.093
decisions:	desired influence	.118	.453	.429	.160	.474	.366
Major policy	actual influence	.583	.270	.147	.677	.263	.060
decisions:	desired influence	.185	.474	.341	.211	.483	.306
Age:		19-25 years			over 25 years		
Personal	actual influence	.244	.527	.229	.243	.376	.381
decisions:	desired influence	.021	.292	.687	.020	.286	.694
Administrative	actual influence	.698	.238	.064	.465	.307	.223
decisions:	desired influence	.196	.519	.285	.121	.445	.434
Major policy	actual influence	.774	.168	.058	.587	.297	.116
decisions:	desired influence	.240	.472	.289	.186	.479	.335
Education:		High school or less			More than high school		
Personal	actual influence	.263	.461	.276	.235	.374	.391
decisions:	desired influence	.055	.263	.683	.011	.298	.690
Administrative	actual influence	.614	.272	.114	.459	.310	.232
decisions:	desired influence	.218	.501	.281	.099	.427	.473
Major policy	actual influence	.729	.213	.058	.564	.300	.137
decisions:	desired influence	.266	.529	.205	.159	.437	.404
Gender:		Female			Male		
Personal	actual influence	.301	.427	.272	.210	.384	.406
decisions:	desired influence	.042	.300	.658	.012	.276	.713
Administrative	actual influence	.600	.277	.123	.454	.310	.236
decisions:	desired influence	.181	.491	.328	.106	.435	.459
Major policy	actual influence	.741	.202	.057	.535	.317	.148
decisions:	desired influence	.239	.537	.224	.163	.425	.412
Provincial political preference:		Social Credit			NDP		
Personal	actual influence	.305	.344	.351	.264	.440	.297
decisions:	desired influence	.044	.350	.606	.014	.271	.714
Administrative	actual influence	.473	.321	.206	.659	.215	.127
decisions:	desired influence	.186	.409	.405	.112	.563	.326
Major policy	actual influence	.510	.273	.217	.722	.238	.040
decisions:	desired influence	.222	.329	.450	.182	.626	.192
		Liberal/Conservative					
Personal	actual influence	.128	.402	.469			
decisions:	desired influence	.011	.224	.764			
Administrative	actual influence	.292	.443	.265			
decisions:	desired influence	.105	.319	.576			
Major policy	actual influence	.512	.287	.201			
decisions:	desired influence	.141	.366	.493			

In assessing union status, we find the highest probability of union worker's actual influence to be «a little» over personal decisions and «no influence» over both administrative and major policy decisions. After adjusting for the effect of other variables, non-union workers differ with respect to personal decisions; their influence over this category of decision is most likely to be «a lot of influence/complete control». If one compares the probabilities of «a lot of influence/complete control» for actual influence, one finds them lower for union members by .019 ($= .433 - .234$) in the category of personal decisions, lower by .184 in administrative decisions, and lower by .087 in major policy decisions. The analogous differences are smaller for desired influence: .054, .063, and .035 respectively. Since union members report much less actual influence than non-union workers but only slightly less desired influence, this implies higher frustration for the unionized with respect to control of their work environment.

As a crude «index of frustration» we have used the mean absolute difference between the actual and corresponding desired probability at each level of influence. The results are shown in Table 3. With respect to personal decisions, for example, union members have a «frustration index» 51% higher than do the non-unionized ($= [.283 - .187] / .187$). Clearly union members are more frustrated with respect to all three categories of decision. For administrative decisions union members have an index value 11% higher; for major policy decisions 17% higher. The difference in frustration is largest by far with personal decisions, reflecting the relatively low frustration of the non-unionized in this domain.

The young (19 - 25 years) have much less actual influence over all three categories of decision than those over 25. But their desired influence distributions are similar to those for the over 25 years. As a result the young have substantially higher levels of frustration than the older age group: 47% in the personal category, 40% in administrative, and 33% in major policy.

Education beyond high school produces both greater actual and greater desired influence. The more educated group are less frustrated than the less educated — particularly with regard to personal decisions — but the frustration index is more similar across education levels than would be the case were the effect of education restricted to the actual influence distributions. With respect to personal, administrative and major policy decisions the index is respectively 36%, 10%, and 14% higher for the less educated.

Female workers have substantially less actual influence across the board than have their male counterparts. They are correspondingly more frustrated, although the fact that they also desire somewhat less influence tends to reduce the differentials in the frustration index: 25% for personal decisions, 20% for administrative, and 35% for major policy.

Table 3
Index of Frustration*

	<i>Non-Union</i>	<i>Union</i>	<i>19-25 years</i>	<i>Over 25 years</i>	<i>High school or less</i>	<i>More than high school</i>
Personal decisions	.187	.283	.305	.207	.271	.199
Administrative decisions	.235	.260	.335	.229	.264	.240
Major policy decisions	.265	.311	.356	.267	.309	.270
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Social Credit</i>	<i>NDP</i>	<i>Liberal/ Conservative</i>	
Personal decisions	.257	.205	.174	.278	.197	
Administrative decisions	.279	.232	.191	.365	.207	
Major policy decisions	.335	.248	.192	.360	.247	

* The index is the mean of the absolute differences between the actual and corresponding desired probability at each level of influence. The range of this index is from zero (were the two distributions identical) to two-thirds (which would arise, for example, were all actual probability on «no influence» and all desired probability on «a lot of influence/complete control»).

Although the causal connections must be complex, provincial political preference is clearly related to both actual and desired influence over all three categories of decision. NDP supporters exercise less actual influence, over all categories of decisions, than do supporters of the other parties. They also are more humble in their desires for administrative and major policy influence. NDP supporters desire however as much control over personal decisions. The ranking of frustration index values is, for all categories of decisions: NDP highest, Liberal/Conservative intermediate, Social Credit lowest. The NDP — Social Credit differences are respectively 59%, 91%, and 88% for personal, administrative and major policy decisions. The Liberal/Conservative frustration values are closer to those for Social Credit than for the NDP.

In summary, unionized workers are more frustrated than non-unionized; the young are more frustrated than the old; the less educated are more frustrated than the well educated; women are more frustrated than men; NDP supporters are more frustrated than Liberal/Conservative supporters who in turn are more frustrated than Social Credit supporters. The

most frustrated (index values above .300) are the young over all three categories of decision; NDP supporters over administrative and major policy decisions; union members, women, and the less educated over major policy decisions. The most satisfied (index values below .200) are Social Credit supporters over all three categories; and Liberal/Conservative supporters, the well educated, and non-union workers over personal decisions.

Hypothesis #3: there exists a high level of support for codetermination.

In the survey we posed questions about a particular reform, codetermination. As with the participation thesis in general, we are not attempting to defend codetermination relative to other innovations such as works councils, quality circles, etc. We wanted however to introduce a fairly specific proposal to render the idea of employee participation in management less abstract to respondents.

We introduced to respondents several of the standard arguments for and against codetermination. One economic argument in favour is that workers thereby obtain more and better information about their firm, which enables to adopt a more entrepreneurial perspective, considering the long run implications for the firm of their demands. A second argument in favour is that codetermination requires managers to pay more attention to the implications of management decisions on their workers. Our respondents overwhelmingly think codetermination would increase workers' access to relevant information about their firms, and that this would increase efficiency (Table 4, statement #17). Overwhelmingly they also think firms «would operate better because managers would take workers' interests more into account» (#19).

A conservative counterargument suggests that employees have no interest in efficiency and that the presence of their representatives in the board room would block the ability of managers to make efficient decisions, lower firm profits and, ultimately, wages (Furubotn, 1978). A large majority of respondents reject this argument (#18). Finally, some left-wing critics of codetermination fear it as a form of «class collaboration» that will sap worker commitment to collective bargaining for maximum wages. As with the right-wing objection, this argument is rejected by a large majority (#20). The proportions are not reported, but union workers reject it as consistently as do the non-unionized.

Table 4
Attitudes towards Codetermination*

Questionnaire preamble: Today, workers have some influence on decision-making through unions and collective bargaining. Recently, some have proposed that workers also elect representatives to company boards of directors. I'm going to read four statements about this idea. For each would you say whether you agree or disagree.

	Agree	Disagree	<i>Don't know</i>
17. The company would operate more efficiently because workers would be better informed about the company.	90%	9%	1%
18. The company would be less profitable because the worker representatives would prevent managers from making efficient decisions.	22	75	3
19. The company would operate better because managers would take workers interests more into account.	83	15	2
20. Having worker directors would weaken the willingness of workers to bargain hard for wage increases, and this would make workers worse off.	15	79	7

*These statements were posed to all respondents, whether or not they were working. (n = 332)

Table 5 contains the results from questions on support for political change to enable codetermination. Overall nearly five out of six in the sample think workers on the boards of large companies would be a «good thing» (# 22). This is somewhat higher than the result (71% «good thing», 14% «bad thing») obtained by Gallup in 1977 in a national survey using a question with the same wording⁷. Surprisingly, support for this idea extends fairly uniformly across supporters of the different political parties. Division of the sample according to the electoral choices in the 1983 provincial election produces only minor variations. Predictably Social Credit supporters favour the idea somewhat less than supporters of the NDP, but the differences are not large. Female workers favour the idea somewhat more than male workers; unionized workers somewhat more than the non-unionized.

An important supplementary question to pose is the degree of participation at the board level that people want workers to exercise. To those who thought codetermination a «good thing» we asked their opinion on the appropriate proportion of directors workers should select (# 21). Do they want worker representatives restricted to a nominal proportion? Do they

⁷ «7-in-10 Approve Worker Reps on Board of Directors», *The Gallup Report*; Toronto, The Canadian Institute of Public Opinion, 1977.

Table 5
Support for Codetermination, by union status and provincial political preference

22. In general do you think it would be a good thing or a bad thing if workers in large companies were able to elect members on the board of directors? (posed to total sample, n = 333)

	<i>Good thing</i>	<i>Bad thing</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
total sample	82%	15%	4%
union status			
union	88	9	3
non-union	79	18	3
provincial political preference			
Social Credit	83	16	1
NDP	90	10	0
Liberal/Conservative	78	16	6

21. What proportion of directors do you think workers should be able to elect? (posed to those answering «good thing» to #22, n = 272)

	<i>Under 10 percent</i>	<i>A third</i>	<i>A half</i>	<i>A majority</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
total sample	29%	46%	18%	6%	2%
union status					
union	29	44	17	10	1
non-union	30	47	16	6	2
provincial political preference					
Social Credit	36	40	19	4	0
NDP	27	48	15	7	3
Liberal/Conservative	22	58	18	2	0

want parity? What support exists for the radical idea that workers dominate, and be able to elect a majority of board members? Overall, and for all identified groups, the mode is that workers select one third of board members. (This corresponds to the fraction employed in codetermination laws in several European countries.) Three in ten want only nominal worker representation of less than ten per cent; one in four want workers to achieve parity or majority status. Predictably, a higher proportion of Social Credit supporters want nominal worker representation than do supporters of the NDP. If we eliminate those wanting only nominal worker representation (29% of 82%), there is still a majority, four out of seven, in favour of codetermination.

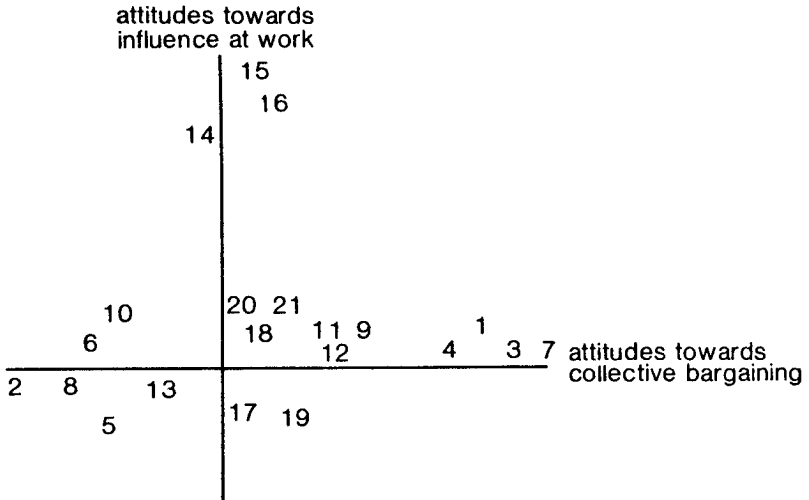
STRUCTURE OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION IN MANAGEMENT

The fourth hypothesis states that there exists no consistent statistical relationship between attitudes towards collective bargaining and participation in management. This final hypothesis was examined by conducting a factor analysis.

Hypothesis # 4: the desire for influence at work is independent of attitudes towards unions and collective bargaining.

Figure 1

The first two factors in the analysis of the structure of public attitudes
 (Numbers refer to numbered questionnaire items in tables.
 Question # has been omitted because dichotomous variables
 are not permitted in factor analysis.)



A relatively simple factor structure with four factors emerged that accounted for the vast majority of the variance⁸. Two factors stood out as by far the most important: attitudes towards collective bargaining and desire for influence at work. The second in importance (in terms of ability to explain variance) is shown running vertically in Figure 1. It opposes questions about worker's desired participation in management with all other questions in our survey. The first factor, running horizontally in Figure 1, distributes the remaining questions along a continuum of attitudes towards unions and collective bargaining, extending between a cluster of pro-union beliefs (e.g. #7: «Without unions workers would have little protection against favouritism by management.») to an anti-union cluster (e.g. #2: «Union demands often contribute to unemployment.»). The questions pertaining to influence at work are clustered tightly on the vertical axis, independent of attitudes towards collective bargaining. In other words, employee participation issues are not ideologically linked with either pro- or anti-union attitudes.

We report the results of questions on attitudes towards collective bargaining in Table 6, for the total sample and by union status. While all the methodological caveats emphasized in note 3 must be kept firmly in mind, these results obviously suggest ambivalent public attitudes towards unions and current collective bargaining practices. As expected, union members give more favourable responses, but they too are far from satisfied.

However critical people may be of union leaders (question #4), questions #3 and #7 suggest that a majority do subscribe to some idea of countervailing power, according to which unions are necessary to counter the power of employers in determining wages and working conditions, and

⁸ Factor analysis approaches the study of survey results by seeking common themes, or factors, that underlie responses to different questions. The first step is to correlate answers to questions. Next, a variety of statistical methods may be used to identify themes or factors among the questions. These methods differ primarily in what value are used in the principal diagonal. However, if there really are any clear themes, nearly all factoring methods yield pretty much the same results (NUNNALLY, 1978; HARMAN, 1976). Here we factor analyzed the data using several different methods in an effort to identify the basic structure. First, a principal-components analysis was conducted, with unities placed in the principal diagonal. Next, additional principal-component factor analyses were conducted employing a variety of communality estimate (e.g. squared multiple correlations). Finally, an iterative approach was used to estimate the communalities. The resulting factor structures in each case were rotated orthogonally (using the Varimax method) to achieve «simple structure». The results were found to be approximately the same regardless of method of factor analysis adopted: the first two factors accounted for approximately two or three times as much variance as any other variable. In the result illustrated in Figure 1 the first factor accounted for 41% of the variance, while the second factor accounted for 23%, the third factor accounted for 14%, and all subsequent factors accounted for the remaining 22%.

to prevent employer favouritism. The majority also favour public sector workers retaining some rights to strike (# 11 and # 12). Question # 2 implies that a majority — even within the subset of union members — think unions responsible for «classical unemployment», forcing wage rates above market clearing levels. Question # 5 suggests disagreement with the principle of the union shop. (Responses on this issue would be expected to vary considerably depending on wording. A more pro-union response would have been elicited with an alternate wording, e.g. «Given that a majority of workers have democratically chosen to form a union, those workers who disagreed should be free to decide whether or not to join.») Similarly seniority, a principle embedded in most collective bargaining agreements, does not enjoy majority support (# 6). Employer intervention in any way in his employees' decision to unionize has been a fundamental unfair labour practice. It does not apparently enjoy majority support (# 8), even among union members. Labour law defines procedures whereby particular unions obtain and lose the legal monopoly on exercise of the collective bargaining function for particular sets of workers. Question # 10 suggests present procedures lack popular support. The final question in this table (# 13) illustrates a general willingness to accept government overriding the collective bargaining process.

CONCLUSION

In summary we found widespread ambivalence towards collective bargaining as currently practised. Second, the results obviously support the four hypotheses: that an unmet demand exists to participate in management, this unmet demand is as pronounced among unionized as among nonunion workers, a high level of support exists for codetermination, and the desire for influence at work is independent of attitudes towards unions and collective bargaining.

We have stressed throughout that we are reporting an exploratory survey whose results, for many reasons, should be treated with caution. Although our responses to questions drawn from national surveys (e.g. # 22 and several not reported) were distributed similarly to national results, these results may be unique to British Columbia, since the survey was limited to respondents in that province. It is also possible that our results are due to peculiarities in the wording of the questions. This of course is a hazard of survey studies. Furthermore, we have not offered any theoretical defence of the «participation thesis».

Table 6
Attitudes Towards Unions and Collective Bargaining, by Union Status*

	<i>Total sample</i> (n = 335)		<i>Union workers</i> (n = 96)		<i>Non-Union workers</i> (n = 156)	
	<i>agree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>disagree</i>
1. The growth of unionism has made our democracy stronger.	59%	41%	65%	35%	56%	44%
2. Union demands often contribute to unemployment.	64	34	54	45	68	30
3. When it comes to determining wage and working conditions, the employers' power needs to be balanced by unions.	71	29	81	20	65	32
4. Union leaders usually represent the best interests of their members.	44	55	56	43	37	63
5. Every worker should be free to decide whether or not to join the union where he works.	89	11	82	19	91	8
6. In a case of layoffs the best person should be kept on the job regardless of seniority.	71	24	66	32	76	19
7. Without unions workers would have little protection against favouritism by management.	66	32	79	20	58	39
8. Employers should have a say in the decision by their workers to unionize.	61	37	57	39	65	34
9. During strikes and lockouts union members should be allowed to picket sites other than their own place of work.	26	74	35	65	22	78
10. At present it is too difficult for unionized workers to get rid of their union if the majority don't want it.	75	16	69	24	79	11
11. In general public sector workers - such as teachers, bus drivers and civil servants - should continue to have the right to strike.	60	38	77	23	54	43
12. Public sector workers in essential services - such as policing, firefighting and nursing - should continue to have the right to strike.	56	42	69	31	54	43
13. The government should be more willing to legislate an end to strikes and lockouts that cost the economy a great deal.	75	18	69	29	84	15

* Percentages may not sum to 100% due to omission of «don't knows». Reported results have been aggregated from a four-element range extending from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Results in the first two columns are from the total sample; the remaining results are from the subset of the sample who are currently working for a wage or salary or have done so in the last five years.

That said, all the techniques employed — simple tabulation of sample responses, alternative scaling methods, and logit regression analysis — suggest extensive frustration with the status quo and a desire for more employee participation in management. Since the level of frustration is at least as high among the unionized as nonunionized, unions do not currently appear to be meeting this demand.

This unmet demand is important in any prediction of the evolution of industrial relations in Canada. The factor analysis suggests that this demand for participation is not a proxy for either pro- or anti-union attitudes; it is an independent phenomenon. It can be used as the basis of anti-union strategies by management and conservative politicians. But it can equally serve as a basis for new union demands to increase the scope of union activities beyond traditional collective bargaining.

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Que veulent les travailleurs? Leurs attitudes vis-à-vis la négociation collective et la participation à la gestion

Cet article analyse une étude de recherches, effectuée à Vancouver, sur le comportement du public en général en matière de démocratie industrielle. La démocratie industrielle est une notion fort imprécise. Nous l'utilisons pour englober toute forme d'entente, y compris, mais non uniquement, la négociation collective au moyen de laquelle les travailleurs du rang exercent certaines mesures de contrôle notables à l'intérieur des entreprises. En Grande-Bretagne et en Amérique du Nord, la démocratie industrielle a d'abord pris la forme de la négociation collective. Une autre forme importante de contrôle consiste dans l'évolution des institutions qui permet aux salariés de participer aux fonctions de gestion.

Le résultat des recherches repose sur quatre hypothèses: 1) les salariés veulent participer à la gestion de l'entreprise plus que présentement; 2) l'ampleur de cette revendication, qui n'est pas satisfaite, est aussi prononcée chez les travailleurs syndiqués que parmi ceux qui ne le sont pas; 3) on insiste beaucoup sur une innovation particulière, la cogestion; 4) le désir d'un plus grand contrôle en milieu de travail est indépendant des attitudes envers les syndicats et la négociation collective.

Les deux premières hypothèses comportent une série de questions qui comparent les degrés de pouvoir actuel et recherches se rapportant à trois catégories de questions: décisions personnelles (horaire de travail), décisions administratives (engagements et congédiements), décisions politiques importantes (investissements).

Pour toutes les catégories, le travailleur type désire beaucoup plus de pouvoir qu'il n'en dispose présentement. Cela est aussi vrai des travailleurs syndiqués que de ceux qui ne le sont pas. Comme on peut s'y attendre, les salariés veulent obtenir plus de pouvoir en matière de décisions personnelles que de décisions administratives et plus de pouvoir en matière de décisions administratives que de décisions politiques.

Les recherches retiennent cinq caractéristiques des répondants: le statut syndical, l'âge, la scolarité, le sexe et l'option politique au niveau provincial (leur choix aux élections de 1963). Nous utilisons un modèle logistique pour expliquer l'effet de chaque caractéristique individuelle sur la disposition des degrés de pouvoir actuel et désirés relativement à quatre éléments allant de l'inexistence du pouvoir au contrôle absolu. En général, les cinq variables expliquent mieux le pouvoir que l'on détient actuellement que celui que l'on recherche. Plusieurs observations méritent d'être notées. La syndicalisation affaiblit la probabilité d'exercer beaucoup de pouvoir sur les décisions administratives et les décisions politiques majeures, et cela même en tenant compte de l'effet des autres variables. Cependant, les travailleurs syndiqués souhaitent tout autant que ceux qui ne le sont pas, exercer certains pouvoirs sur de telles décisions. On peut tirer une conclusion semblable en ce qui a trait à l'âge. Présentement, on se rend compte que les salariés plus âgés exercent plus de pouvoir que les jeunes sur les décisions administratives et politiques majeures, mais l'âge a généralement un effet peu marqué sur le pouvoir que l'on recherche. La scolarité a, en règle générale, un effet significatif tant sur les degrés de pouvoir dans le présent que sur ceux que l'on recherche pour l'avenir. Les plus scolarisés possèdent et veulent plus de contrôle que ceux qui le sont moins. Les hommes exercent plus de contrôle que les femmes, particulièrement en ce qui concerne les décisions administratives et les décisions politiques importantes. Les femmes souhaitent avoir un peu moins de contrôle que les hommes sur les décisions, mais l'effet du sexe sur le pouvoir que l'on recherche est moins marqué sur le pouvoir que l'on désire que sur celui dont on dispose présentement. La conclusion évidente que l'on peut tirer des préférences politiques c'est que les adhérents du Nouveau parti démocratique exercent moins de contrôle et cela d'une façon significative, sur les décisions administratives et politiques majeures que les adhérents aux autres partis. Les différences dans la répartition du pouvoir entre celui dont on dispose présentement et celui que l'on désirerait obtenir pour l'avenir sont à peu près inexistantes, cependant.

Nous avons mis au point un indice de frustration simple pour mesurer la différence qu'on peut percevoir entre le pouvoir ou le contrôle qui s'exercent présentement et ceux qui sont recherchés. En résumé, les travailleurs syndiqués se sentent plus frustrés que les salariés non syndiqués, les jeunes plus que les personnes âgées, les moins scolarisés plus que ceux qui le sont davantage, les femmes plus que les hommes, les partisans du Nouveau parti démocratique plus que les adhérents aux partis conservateur ou libéral qui, de leur côté, le sont plus que les partisans du Crédit social. Ceux qui s'estiment les plus frustrés sont les jeunes pour les trois catégories de décisions, les membres du Nouveau parti démocratique en ce qui a trait aux décisions administratives ou politiques importantes, les syndiqués, les femmes et les moins scolarisés pour ce qui est des décisions politiques majeures. Les plus satisfaits sont les

partisans du Crédit social pour les trois catégories de décisions, les adhérents aux partis conservateur et libéral, les plus instruits et les travailleurs non syndiqués pour ce qui concerne les décisions qui les touchent personnellement.

Pour rendre l'idée de la participation des employés à la direction moins abstraite pour les répondants, nous avons posé une série de questions sur la cogestion. En général, presque cinq personnes sur six dans l'échantillon estiment que la présence des travailleurs au sein des bureaux de direction des grandes entreprises serait une bonne chose. C'est un peu plus que le résultat obtenu lors d'une enquête Gallup en 1977 au cours d'un sondage à l'échelle nationale alors qu'on avait exactement posé la même question. Chose surprenante, l'appui à cette notion se répartit uniformément parmi les adhérents des différents partis politiques. Les travailleurs syndiqués sont plus réceptifs à cette idée que ceux qui ne le sont pas. Parmi ceux qui estimaient que la cogestion est une bonne chose, un peu plus que le quart d'entre eux préféreraient une représentation ouvrière nominale (moins que 10 pour cent des membres du bureau de direction) presque la moitié optaient pour le tiers; un peu moins que le quart d'entre eux voulaient que les travailleurs aient le contrôle ou la majorité dans les bureaux de direction.

La quatrième hypothèse fut examinée au moyen d'une analyse de facteurs: deux facteurs ressortent et expliquent la plus grande partie de la variance. Le deuxième facteur (compte tenu de sa capacité d'expliquer la variance) consiste dans le désir d'avoir plus de contrôle en matière de conditions de travail. Les réponses qu'on a données au contrôle qu'on recherche sont sans connotation avec les autres questions soumises lors de l'enquête. Le premier facteur répartit les questions qui restent selon un «continuum» d'attitudes à l'endroit des syndicats et des négociations collectives pouvant aller d'un ensemble de convictions pro-syndicales (sans syndicat, les travailleurs n'auraient que peu de protection contre le favoritisme de la direction) jusqu'à un ensemble de propos anti-syndicaux (les revendications syndicales favorisent souvent le chômage). Ces questions démontrent beaucoup d'ambivalence à l'endroit des négociations collectives telles qu'elles se pratiquent même chez les travailleurs syndiqués.

Même si ce sondage n'est qu'exploratoire et qu'il faut en considérer les résultats avec prudence, on peut retenir que la frustration existe à l'endroit du *statu quo* et de la volonté d'une participation plus forte à la gestion. Les revendications en matière de participation à la gestion sont importantes lorsqu'on veut prévoir l'évolution des relations professionnelles au Canada. Ces revendications en faveur de la participation ne sont pas un substitut aux attitudes pro-syndicales ou anti-syndicales; il s'agit d'un phénomène indépendant. Il est possible que l'on s'en serve comme source de manoeuvres anti-syndicales chez les employeurs et les hommes politiques conservateurs. Il est également possible qu'elles soient à l'origine de nouvelles revendications en vue d'étendre le champ d'activité syndicale au-delà des négociations collectives traditionnelles.