

Comparative Aspects of Labor Movements

Aspects comparatifs des mouvements ouvriers

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Article abstract

Although the volume of research in the labor field is increasing all the time, there is a pressing need for more studies using a comparative approach. In this article the author outlines what he considers to be a useful framework for making comparative studies of labor movements and illustrates it by applying it to an analysis of the American labor movement with some suggestions as to its application in other countries.

Comparative Aspects of Labor Movements

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Although the volume of research in the labor field is increasing all the time, there is a pressing need for more studies using a comparative approach. In this article the author outlines what he considers to be a useful framework for making comparative studies of labor movements and illustrates it by applying it to an analysis of the American labor movement with some suggestions as to its application in other countries.

Introduction

It has become a common place observation that modern improvements in transportation and communication have produced an increasing awareness in all parts of the world of the developments that are occurring in other places. This awareness has led to both positive and negative result. The latter include the increased rivalry, suspicion and international tensions which underlie the cold war and other manifestations of mutual distrust. The former include the various forms of international cooperation in the fields of science, health and education and the stimulus to each country to understand better its own institutions and those of other countries.

This last result can be seen, in part, in the increased interest in making comparative studies in a variety of areas. This is true of the labor field as well as others.

In order to design this kind of research, a framework of analysis must be developed which enable investigators to make fruitful comparisons. It is toward this end that the discussion in this article is directed.

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What Kind of Framework

The position taken in this paper is that the most meaningful approach to a comparative study of labor movements is to treat them as one type of social movement and to utilize a theoretical framework designed for the study of social movements in general as the basis of analysis. A number of such frameworks have been advanced from time to time, many of which claim that all social movements conform to some universal pattern of development which is generally represented as cyclical in nature.¹ However, attempts to apply these universal models to actual social movements have tended to reveal serious deficiencies in them. It, therefore, seems more defensible, at this stage of development of social theory, to work with a framework which is of the life-history type but doesn't claim universal application in all of its aspects. This approach is what is attempted here. It sets forth what are believed to be the major determinants of the character of any social movement and can be used either for straight analysis or for comparative purposes. Some of the ideas which provided the basis for this approach were outlined briefly some years ago by Herbert Blumer,² and an attempt will be made in the following pages to develop a framework and to suggest how it might be applied by using it in an analysis of the American labor movement. Although the main focus will be on the American example, suggestions will be made concerning the application of various parts of the framework to labor movements in other countries.

It should be noted that the approach suggested here does not deny either the need for, or the value of, other types of studies of the labor movement which are historical or biographical in nature or which study the functioning of the movement from the vantage point of other disciplines. Nor does it suggest that some good investigations have not already been done.³ In fact, studies which try to look at the labor movement in general depend to a large extent on the data supplied by studies of narrower scope and more specific interest.

(1) TOYNBEE, ARNOLD; *A Study of History*; New York, Oxford Press, 1947.

(2) In chapter 22 of LEE, A.M.; *New Outlines of the Principles of Sociology*; New York, Barnes and Noble, 1946.

(3) For some raw materials on foreign unions see Galenson, Walter (ed.), « Comparative Labor Movements », New York, Prentice Hall, 1952. Windmuller, John P. (ed.), « Current Issues in International Labor Relations », *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Vol. 310, March 1957.

Social Movements in General

Sociologists who study social movements tend to view them as one form of collective behavior — those types of activity which are directed toward a change in the existing social order. Social movements are thought to follow a somewhat distinguishable «career» leading from their origin in a general condition of unrest resulting from a gradual change in people's values, and ending in a state of institutionalization. In their beginnings they are rather shapeless and poorly organized and the behavior involved is on an elementary level. As they develop, they acquire leadership, organization and a more defined set of values and goals. They are characterized by a pervading ideology, some shared identifications on the part of participants and a general orientation toward some form of action.

As is true of other social phenomena, social movements will be influenced in their nature and development by a variety of other social and cultural factors such as the demographic characteristics of the society in which they appear and its cultural ethos.

Drawing on the ideas presented by Blumer, the following are suggested as the important determinants of the character of any social movement:

- 1—The socio-cultural environment in which the movement emerges and develops.
- 2—The objectives toward which it is striving, and its ideology.
- 3—The nature of its membership (or participants).
- 4—The characteristics of the leadership.
- 5—The form of organization adopted.
- 6—The mechanisms through which it grows.⁴

Labor Movements as Social Movements

Utilizing Blumer's terminology, labor movements can be thought of as embracing both a number of specific social movements («systems

(4) The five, which Blumer proposes are: agitation; development of esprit de corps; development of morale; formation of an ideology; development of operating tactics. Cf: Lee, op. cit.

of organized labor ») and the general social movements out of which they develop. This allows us to view them in a wider historical and cultural perspective which can be narrowed, as desired, by treating them in phases or by areas. As general social movements, they tend to evolve in response to a gradual change in the value structures of their societies from a «sacred» to a «secular» type. Their appearance is intimately connected with the industrial revolution and the rise of modern capitalism with its associated division of labor and the emergence of the factory system. In their incipient phases they are essentially unorganized and have no recognizable leadership or membership although small organized protest groups may develop periodically in discrete areas.⁵ However, in this early period the protest will serve to alert the populace to the developments which are taking place. This both breaks down certain resistances which may exist and engenders hopes and fears which later motivate the members of specific movements.

Labor movements appear to be a product of the general unrest which accompanies industrialization. They differ in ideology depending on the value patterns which exist in the country at the time of industrialization and the nature of the historical background which has preceded this development. Their «careers» tend to follow whatever pattern of industrialization occurs in that country.

The American Labor Movement

a) Historical Development

Turning specifically to the American labor movement, its emergence as a specific social movement with organization, definite objectives and recognized leadership can reasonably be located in the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century⁶ although there is considerable justification in the contention that its significant development did not occur until the nineteen-thirties. It went through a period of slow and somewhat spasmodic development prior to «the thirties» in which Blumer's five mechanisms of «agitation, formation of an ideology», etc., are discernable, and then under the impetus of the depression and

(5) Cf: Durkheim, E. *The Division of Labor in Society*, Glencoe, Free Press, 1947.

(6) Cf: Wolman, Leo. *The Growth of Trade Unions*; New York, National Bureau of Economic Research, 1924.

in the favorable environment provided by NIRA, NLRA and other New Deal legislation there followed a period of tremendous expansion which is thought by most observers to have leveled off but which some think may continue, partly as a result of the merger of the two national federations. The movement has now reached the stage of institutionalization where unions, as institutions, are accepted by all sectors of the society including, with some notable exceptions, its traditional opponents, management. (It should be noted, however, that this acceptance for many management people is of the existence of unions, not of the principles underlying them.) In the process, unions have altered the business institutions with which they have interacted and have made a significant contribution to the more effective functioning of these organizations, a fact readily admitted by a number of management spokesmen.⁷

Union acceptance is readily demonstrated, not only in the legislation which has been passed in the area of union recognition but also in the general acceptance by most managements of the collective bargaining process and the grievance procedure with its potential appeal to arbitration, and the increasingly active role which unions are playing in a variety of community activities.

The concept of the labor movement outlined above will now be examined in greater detail, focusing on its objectives and ideology, the nature of its membership, its tactics and other characteristics. Before doing this, two cautions should be stated. First, that the labor movement is, in Hoxie's words, « one of the most complex, diffuse and protean of modern social phenomena »⁸ and therefore generalizations about it may be somewhat superficial and premature. Secondly, that since, as Dunlop⁹ observes, there has been virtually no contribution to theory in this area in the last fifteen or twenty years, plus the fact that this writer shares the convictions of Gulick and Bers¹⁰ and others regarding the serious limitations of Perlman's work¹¹ (the generally accepted

(10) GULICK, LUTHER H. and BERS, M.K. « Insight and Illusion in Perlman's Theory of the Labor Movement », *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 6, July 1953.

(7) Cf: Seidman, J., etc. « Management Views the Local Union », *Journal of Business*, April 1953 and numerous other sources.

(8) HOXIE, R. F. *Trade Unionism in the United States*, New York, D. Appleton and Cay, 1917.

(9) DUNLOP, JOHN T., in Lester, R.A. and Shister, J. (eds.), *Insights into Labor Issues*, New York, Macmillan, 1948.

(11) PERLMAN, SELIG. *A Theory of the Labor Movement*, New York, A.M. Kelley, 1928.

treatise) as far as his theory is concerned. Thus, the formulation presented below is an avowedly tentative and eclectic attempt to fill out the details of the model which has been proposed.

b) *Socio-Cultural Environment*

An important influence on the character of the American labor movement has been the social, economic and value-system characteristics of the American community. These cannot be discussed in any great detail, but some of the more important aspects should be mentioned. Their effects can be seen in the nature of the movement as described in later sections of the paper.

In the first place the United States is a large, relatively new country which is fairly isolated, and has rich natural resources. It offers a great economic potential which has been exploited by a dynamic entrepreneurial group who have been great risk takers and have been willing to adapt to new circumstances. Over a fairly short period it has experienced tremendous growth in population and facilities. It attained self-government quite early in its history and has developed a strong democratic form of government. Although primarily agricultural in the early stages of its development, it has now reached the position where the majority of its labor force falls into the employed group, the sector from which labor movements draw their membership. The work force is characterized by a diversity in origin, background and culture. There has been an increasing standard of living which has resulted in a relatively comfortable existence for the majority of the population to the point where American workers have been described as « the labor aristocrats of the world ».

The belief-system of the society stresses the tenets of the « protestant ethic »; the obligation to work on the part of all levels of the society, the success goal to be achieved through individual initiative and effort, and the importance of moral conformity. Equality of opportunity has been a by-word and the society has been characterized by an « open-class » system and by the existence of considerable mobility, both physical and social. There has been a high level of immigration until recently and this has provided a continuing supply of recruits for the bottom of the occupational ladder. There has tended to be a general anti-intellectual bias in the culture and an emphasis on action

rather than abstract thinking, which partly explains the pragmatic orientation of American unions.

c) Objectives and Ideology of the Movement

Of the two classes of specific social movement which Blumer suggests — «reform» and «revolutionary» — the American labor movement falls into the former category. Although strongly idealistic and reformist in its early stages, the movement since that time has aimed at changing certain aspects of the system without seeking to reconstruct the entire social order. This, of course, does not apply to all sections. Certain «left wing» elements decry the «collaboration» and «opportunism» of American unionism. Nor does this classification imply an uncritical acceptance of the stereotype of American unions as basically «conservative». While most American unionists accept the free enterprise system, consciously or otherwise, as a framework within which to work (particularly while it continues to «deliver the goods»), nevertheless the movement has been basically a protest against many of its features and a discontentment with and defense against much of its «modus operandi». It should also be noted that several writers have cautioned against assuming that the members of the movement will continue to accept the prevailing system, particularly in the event of another large scale depression, and others would cite the increasing involvement of unions in political affairs as evidence of a desire to bring about more radical changes in the system.

When we ask if organized labor in the United States has a clear cut philosophy or ideology, we are entering the complex problem areas of motivation and values, and the sources of data are more difficult to find and assess. To begin with we must note that, as Millis once remarked, «there are unions and unions». Secondly, particularly since unions have grown in size and become more formalized and bureaucratic, we must make certain distinctions between the philosophy and goals of the rank and file and those of the leaders. Despite these difficulties, it is possible to discern a relatively consistent and widely held ideology within the American labor movement, one of the most significant elements of which is that American unions today are, by and large, what have been referred to as «business unions». This means that the philosophy of the majority of the leaders is essentially a pragmatic one and that they place most emphasis on what some consider the «core function» of the union — namely, the maintenance of the

union as a going concern. Membership support of this position is not derived from an indigenous «manualist psychology» but rather from a desire to strengthen their bargaining position in order to improve their situation, combined with a belief in unions as a mechanism for accomplishing this end. As a result they look to the leaders to promote their best interest in two ways; first, by keeping a continual watch on management, and secondly, by striking the best bargain with the company at negotiation time. To do this the union leadership seeks two things; «job control», and maintenance of the conditions for «true collective bargaining.»

To get a true picture of even these day-to-day objectives it is necessary to realize that, in addition to pressures from the membership, the union leaders have other demands to satisfy, not the least of which are their own ambitions. The union is often in competition with other unions, and as unions become increasingly powerful and more respectable, other social institutions develop broader expectations of them. Therefore, the policies and actions of the leaders must, to some extent, be weighed in terms of their «political» consequences.

To what extent are the goals of American unions those of «all we can get» and «monopoly control», with or without management? The answer to the first is that it depends on the relationship with the company in question. If it is one of «armed truce»¹² then the answer is «yes». Under other relationships the leaders are astute enough to temper their demands to the situation and won't wait until «the maiden is on the track». Concerning the second goal, the claims of some of the alarmists¹³ regarding the dangers of union domination of the economy appear far fetched and seem to be based on the invalid assumptions of a «free market», and unions as a «seller of labor». This does not overlook the fact that unions are becoming increasingly powerful as institutions and that along with power is needed responsibility if they are to make the contribution to society which they are capable of making. It is also the opinion of many economists that although labor cannot be saddled with the major responsibility for inflation, unions are a potent force in keeping wages from falling.

(12) Cf: Harbison, F.H. and Coleman, J.R. *Goals and Strategy in Collective Bargaining*, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1951.

(13) Cf: WOLMAN, LEO. *Industry-wide Bargaining*, Irving-on-Hudson, New York, Foundation for Economic Education, 1948.

Looking beyond the « bread and butter » goals of American unions, what can be said about their broader objectives and social ideology. In the first place the majority of them have a basic « humanitarian » philosophy which stresses the social and psychological, as well as the economic, needs of the workers as having priority over increased productivity and growth of the firm.¹⁴ This calls for stressing the « integrative » in addition to the « protective » functions of the union in order to give the worker a sense of participation and so overcome the effects of the « anomic division of labor ». Organized workers wish to participate in management but they generally have no desire to take over the coordinating and other functions of the managers.

With regard to political activity, in the early stages of the movement American craft unions generally favored a « laissez faire » attitude on the part of Government but as the movement has developed the unions have found it increasingly necessary to engage in political activity to preserve conditions favorable to their operations. They operate as a pressure group within existing party structures, since their interests and philosophy are not sufficiently different, as yet, from those of other groups, to provide the basis of a « labor party ».¹⁵

An assessment of the impact of unions in the United States suggests that the changes which they have helped to bring about are more in the social than the economic sphere. The analysis which has been done in this area points to the fact that the effects stemming from union activity on important aspects of the economy such as productivity, wage levels and income distribution have not been spectacular. However, they have made a significant contribution towards enhancing the status, self-respect and independence of labor in the society and have been an important force in the area of public opinion.

d) *Membership*

The membership of any social movement can only be described in general terms and will be different at different stages of its development. We cannot, for example, limit the membership of a labor movement

(14) Cf: Golden, C. and Ruttenberg, H. *Dynamics of Industrial Democracy*, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1942.

(15) In this regard, it is interesting to note the recent announcement of AFL-CIO president George Meany to the effect that labor will form its own political party if it has to in order to obtain its objectives.

to those who are organized, since the movement derives both political and other support from several sources and « labor parties » have often contained a strong agrarian element.¹⁶ However, since the labor movement in the United States is focused in the trade unions, union membership is a relatively good indicator of both the strength and character of the movement, particularly in its later stages.

Labor organization in the United States developed slowly until the thirties but has experienced substantial growth since then. The earliest members were drawn from the highly skilled trades such as tailoring, shoemaking and printing, where these groups were in a strategic position from which to bargain, and gradually spread to the less skilled and finally to unskilled ranks. As is true of any labor movement, the membership is drawn essentially from the lower half of the socio-economic pyramid — from those who are in an employee status — but even this strata is relatively well-off when compared to depressed segments of many of the world's populations.

Another characteristic of the membership is worth noting and that is their general educational level. Because of the drive for public schools in American society, the level of literacy of the population is relatively high and this has enabled the labor movement to make considerable use of written material in their drives for organization.

Blumer states that the membership of a specific social movement is characterized by a « we-consciousness ».¹⁷ This raises the difficult question regarding the extent of class consciousness in the American labor movement. Commons has written that « the labor movement... does not appear until that group (wage earners) develops some consciousness of the separateness of its interests », ¹⁸ but this does not imply support of the Marxian model. Certainly there are many ways in which the interests of workers differ from those of management but there is lack of agreement regarding the extent of the difference and as to the direction in which our system of stratification is moving.

e) Leadership

The leadership of the American labor movement, like the membership, has changed considerably since the early days. Whereas the

(16) Cf: Hardman, J.B.S., article on « Labor Parties » in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*.

(17) Blumer in Lee, op. cit., page 202.

(18) COMMONS, J.R., article on « Labor Movement » in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*.

early leaders tended to be idealistic and often socialistic in beliefs and militant in their approach, later leaders, with a few notable exceptions, have been generally conservative in outlook and essentially pragmatic in orientation. There have been few, if any, «true believers»¹⁹ among the leadership and the leaders generally see their role as providing strategic rather than intellectual leadership. Most of the leaders have been native-born and had been employed as wage workers in the industries that they later came to represent. They worked their way up the hard way and identify strongly with the problems of the rank and file.

Two trends in leadership patterns can be observed. The first is for leaders to be younger, better educated and more «professional» in attitudes, with the C.I.O. leaders leaning more in this direction than those of the A.F.L. (although this difference has been less notable in recent years). The second is the growing centralization of authority and decision making at higher levels which encourages the employment of «experts» and the selection of leaders who can operate effectively in an increasingly bureaucratic form of organization.

f) Organization and Tactics

To attempt a description of how Blumer's five mechanisms were employed in the growth of the American labor movement would require an account of union history which is beyond the scope of this paper. It seems desirable, however, to outline some of the approaches which have been adopted and to indicate how these have changed as the movement proceeded from the original stage of unrest to its present stage of institutionalization.

To begin with, since the labor movement in this country has, from a relatively early stage, concentrated on improving the conditions of its members rather than attempting to bring about a radical change in the existing social system, the focus of their efforts has been on union-management relations. The trend of development from outright antagonism to collective bargaining has been a process of «accomo-

(19) In the Eric Hofer sense.

dition », in which social adjustments have been made to a situation of conflict.

The fact that there was an original conflict situation is easy to document. Clashes like the Homestead Steel strike and the Pullman strike are examples of one of the most bitter types of conflict short of war. Similarly, the adjustment to this type of situation can be demonstrated by citing the nature of many recent strikes in which the company has provided facilities for the strikers, and company management and union officers are on friendly terms. In the modern situation the strike continues to play an important role but is incorporated into an accepted pattern of relationships. True to this concept of accommodation, the interests of the two groups — management and labor — are still in conflict, but this conflict remains in equilibrium through the mechanisms of the contract, the grievance procedure and so on. The conflict between the two groups is never total and varies in different situations but it is attested to by both parties. The fact that labor is a cost factor to management provides a basic division in orientation since management is also responsible to both its shareholders and its customers. The definition of a fair wage depends on whether you are getting or giving it.

A general tactic employed by labor has been a gradual whittling away of the areas of management prerogative and the incorporation of more and more aspects of the work relationship into the bargaining area.

A comparison of mechanisms currently employed with those of an earlier stage shows how much these depend on the nature of the situation. Agitation is seldom employed now nor is there great stress on developing the ideology of the movement since the objectives and ideology are now pretty well taken for granted. In fact, many observers have classed this as an era of complacency and respectability as far as the movement is concerned and studies have revealed increasing apathy on the part of the membership in a situation where things are settled at high levels through industry-wide and « pattern » bargaining and management performs the functions of signing up members and collecting dues.²⁰

(20) An interesting commentary on this state of affairs is provided in an article by Kermit Eby entitled « They don't sing anymore ».

There are still some areas of considerable concern to union leaders, however. Some of these are the threat of automation, the question of whether management may be able to weaken the unions' position through political action or increased paternalism, the charges of corruption against a number of leaders and the possibilities of further organizational problems.

The merger of the two federations has run into a number of problems and although they have adopted a number of house-cleaning measures they are relatively powerless effectively to combat corruption because of the general indifference of the membership to the means employed by their unions provided they « produce the goods ».

To combat the challenge of automation, many unions have supported measures like the guaranteed annual wage²¹ in an attempt to force management to move more slowly.

The success of union candidates at the last election and particularly the defeat of most of the proposed « right to work » laws have led to speculation of increased union activity in the political arena.

All these developments raise interesting questions concerning the direction of a labor movement once it has reached the stage of institutionalization.

Application to other labor movements

The foregoing analysis has illustrated how the framework we are proposing can be used to probe the character of a particular labor movement — in this case, that of the United States. The remainder of this paper will deal with some of the questions which it suggest should be raised in analysing any labor movement and some bases of comparison between labor movements are indicated. This section is divided under the same headings as those used for the discussion of the American labor movement to make comparisons easier.

a) Socio-cultural environment

Among the social and cultural factors which are likely to affect the character of the labor movement in any country are the nature of

(21) Cf: WHITE, RODNEY F. « Some Issues Involved in Guaranteed Wage and Employment Demands », *Industrial Relations*, Vol. 10, No. 3, June 1955.

the economy of the country, the existing political system, the type of social system which exists including the system of stratification, the family and kinship structure, and the dominant value patterns of the society. For example, if there are existing regional or occupational differentials in development, standard of living or levels of income these will affect the pattern of development of the movement.

If a strong kinship system exists, such as is the case in Japan, this will be an important factor in the type of organization adopted. This has been indicated in a recent book on the subject²² and is supported by analyses which have been made of unions in Japan where close relationships between families and their places of employment have favored the growth of enterprise unions rather than larger bodies.

The existing political and governmental system of the country can have an important effect. Whether the system is basically democratic or totalitarian, what proportion of the economy is under government control and whether the ruling group in the country comes from inside or outside the country, will be key determinants.

Another important question which should be asked about any social movement concerns the stage in the country's development in which the movement first emerged. An interesting phenomena which is occurring in many parts of the world at present is the introduction of certain machinery and techniques which are products of the industrial revolution in more technically developed areas into countries which have not yet experienced many of the intermediate stages of industrial development. This itself will probably cause unrest. It also means that labor movements in these countries will not be primarily indigenous movements as was generally true for the United States but will be at least partly a product of these outside influences. In fact, it has been observed that the newly employed industrial workers in these countries are frequently in the forefront of any labor movement which develops. Also, the governments of countries being industrialized in this manner may be behind the development of labor organizations.

In countries like India where technical assistance is being provided from several countries including the United States and the Soviet Union there are likely to be influences on the labor movement of the country.

(22) ABEGGLEN, JAMES G. *The Japanese Factory: Aspects of Its Social Organization*. Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1958.

Since we have observed the telescoping of industrial development in some countries into a fraction of the time required in western Europe it seems probable that the rate of development of the labor movements in these countries will also be comparatively fast as compared to that of labor movements in countries which have industrialized over a longer period. This, however, is less likely to be the case in situations where the unions are government controlled.

Other sources of outside influence can develop as a result of war. During the occupation of Japan by the American forces, the United States government encouraged the setting up of unions patterned after the American federations and provided an important impetus to the growth of union membership there.

b) Objectives and ideology

An important determinant of the character of any labor movement will be whether it has the traditional trade union goal of improving the working conditions of wage earners or whether its major objectives are considered to be political in nature. This in turn will be determined in large part by the type of relationships which develop between the labor organizations in the country and the government, political parties, nationalistic organizations and other political groups.

The labor movement in countries where different labor organizations are affiliated with opposing political parties or religious groups will tend to differ from that of the United States where the unions are either in agreement, or follow a policy of voluntarism with regard to political issues. If the labor movement has an ideology which is either strongly nationalistic or revolutionary in character it will tend to differ significantly from one which has an essentially pragmatic philosophy. (It is interesting in this regard to note that western advisers to unions in some of the under-developed countries may encourage an anti-communist (and thus political) orientation, often against the desires of the native leadership who favor economic rather than political objectives.) The extent to which the objectives of the labor movement are in agreement with or opposed to those of the government can be a key factor. Much of the success or failure of the labor movement to attain its goals may be due to the existence or absence of legislation which either aids or inhibits its activities.

c) *Membership*

The nature of a labor movement will be affected (greatly) by the character of its membership. Although all movements will draw their members predominantly from the wage earning sector of the society, the relative position of this group may vary from that of a depressed, illiterate proletariat to the situation which exists in some newly industrializing countries today where the union membership tends to be in a relatively favorable economic position compared to the bulk of the population.

The level of education of the membership can be an important factor. In some movements the bulk of the membership may be little more than an indistinguishable mass, ready to become a destructive mob at the instigation of a rabble-rousing leader. In others the membership may possess a fairly high average education, and will read widely and debate the issues involved in the movement's objectives.

The policies and tactics which the movement adopts at any stage will depend to a considerable degree on the extent of "grass-roots" participation which exists in the movement. There is a tendency for the level of membership participation to be high at first and to slacken off if the movement is successful in becoming established and achieving its early goals. As the movement grows and organizes, decision-making tends to become centralized and a hiatus may develop between the goals of the leaders and those of the membership. Not infrequently leaders may try to "use" the movement for the attainment of their own objectives.

An important factor which may inhibit the movement's activities is the stratification pattern of the society. In countries where the society is, or has been, rigidly stratified, (e.g., India) there may be great social distance between labor and management representatives and the possibilities of bargaining relationship being established on a relatively equal footing will be remote, at least in the early stages.²³

d) *Leadership*

Although other factors such as those of the environment will probably have a major influence both in shaping the movement and deter-

(23) The history of the British labor movement indicates, however, that these social barriers can be overcome.

mining the value of the leadership, the character of the leaders themselves can be quite important. Some of the determinants of the nature of the leadership will be their origin, background and education and political sympathies. Movements which develop rapidly may not have time to develop their own leaders and so will have to rely either on persons trained elsewhere or struggle along for a period with inadequate leadership.

The political convictions and party allegiances of the leaders can be an important determinant of the objectives of the movement. If the leaders have come up through the ranks of the wage earners and have had a predominantly working background their identifications are likely to differ significantly from those who have joined the movement as a result of intellectual conviction based on a wide background of study and experience. In general, the intellectual leader is more likely to be concerned with socio-political goals than is the leader who has risen from the ranks.

The status of the union leader in the society, whether he is a paid official or playing a voluntary role and other aspects of his position in the organization can enhance or retard his activities.

e) Organization and Tactics

A factor which has a major influence on the character of any labor movement is the relationship that exists between labor organizations and other institutions in the society. This is particularly true of its relationship to the government of the country which can vary from the situation in some countries such as Egypt where the labor organizations are an arm of government or that of the Soviet Union where they are intimately connected to the ruling political party, to the situation where the government is strongly opposed to labor organizations of any kind and actively campaigns to combat their activities.

It should be pointed out, however, that it is difficult to establish criteria for distinguishing between "free" trade unions and those which are state-controlled, and differences may be largely ones of degree rather than kind. Many unions in other countries are not free either to strike or to organize, two of the activities considered by many on this continent to be functions which the unions must have if they are to operate effectively.

The tactics of unions will be determined in part by the nature of the existing labor legislation in the country concerned. The situation in some countries is such that unions oppose an increasing role of government in union-management relations because they would view this as a move which would serve to strengthen the position of the employers rather than helping to assure that conditions exist which promote effective bargaining between unions and management.

With regard to labor's tactics in its dealings with management, it should be noted that they are partly a function of role in the production process and not merely based on ideological differences. This has been demonstrated rather interestingly in the British situation where there has been considerable conflict between the unions and government boards like the Coal Board, despite strong union representation on these boards, because the boards are performing the management function.

As a labor movement becomes institutionalized there will be increasing pressures to increase its responsibility and its activities will tend to take on a more routine character. This is accompanied by increasing bureaucratization and the employment of experts in a variety of fields and often results in a decreasingly important role for the local organizations.

Conclusion

The objective of this paper has been to suggest a framework which can be used for the comparative analysis of labor movements. The descriptive materials have been designed to illustrate the method rather than to enhance the reader's understanding of the movements themselves.

It is hoped that the illustrations from a variety of labor movements will prove suggestive. No claim is made for the completeness of topics covered.

If the scheme which has been presented makes a contribution to the advancement of comparative analysis in social research, its major objective will have been accomplished.

ASPECTS COMPARATIFS DES MOUVEMENTS OUVRIERS

La façon la plus logique d'aborder une étude comparative des mouvements ouvriers est de considérer ces derniers comme un aspect du mouvement social, et d'utiliser comme base d'analyse un code théorique destiné à l'étude des mouvements sociaux en général. Plusieurs de ces cadres ont déjà été présentés, mais ils s'appliquent difficilement aux mouvements sociaux actuels. Le cadre que nous utiliserons est plutôt basé sur l'évolution historique de ces mouvements, et nous ne prétendons pas qu'il soit universel.

LES MOUVEMENTS SOCIAUX EN GÉNÉRAL

Pour les sociologues, les mouvements sociaux sont une forme d'un comportement collectif qui cherche à changer l'ordre social existant. Au début ils sont pauvrement organisés, et leurs activités se situent à un niveau élémentaire. A mesure qu'ils se développent, ils deviennent mieux dirigés, mieux organisés, et leurs buts et leurs valeurs sont mieux définis. De plus, ils s'imprègnent d'une idéologie, leurs membres ont leur identification propre, et ils s'orientent vers une forme quelconque d'action.

Ces mouvements sociaux sont influencés dans leur nature et leur développement par une variété d'autres facteurs sociaux et culturels tels que les caractéristiques démographiques de la société dans laquelle ils apparaissent ainsi que par la « cultural ethos » de celle-ci.

MOUVEMENTS OUVRIERS COMME MOUVEMENTS SOCIAUX

Comme mouvements sociaux généraux, les mouvements ouvriers tendent à évoluer en réponse à un changement graduel du « sacré » au « profane » des structures des valeurs de leurs sociétés. Leur apparition est entièrement liée à la révolution industrielle et à l'essor du capitalisme moderne caractérisé par la division du travail et l'apparition du système de la manufacture. Au début, ils sont inorganisés, sans chefs et sans membres déterminés.

Les mouvements ouvriers naquirent de l'instabilité générale causée par l'industrialisation. Leur idéologie dépend de la hiérarchie des valeurs qui existait au pays lors de l'industrialisation ainsi que de l'arrière plan historique qui précéderent ce développement.

LE MOUVEMENT OUVRIER AMÉRICAIN

a) *Développement historique.* Ce n'est qu'à la fin du XIX^e siècle que le mouvement ouvrier américain apparût comme mouvement social spécifique, mais son développement le plus significatif se fit vers les années 1930. Avant cette époque, son développement fut lent et spasmodique, puis, à la suite de la dépression et d'une législation favorable, il prit une importance considérable.

Aujourd'hui, les unions sont des institutions acceptées par tous les secteurs de la société, y compris la direction d'entreprises, et elles ont largement contribué à améliorer le fonctionnement des entreprises elles-mêmes.

b) *Environnement socio-culturel.* Le mouvement ouvrier américain a été fortement influencé par les caractéristiques sociales et économiques de la communauté américaine ainsi que par son système de valeurs.

Les Etats-Unis forment un pays grand, neuf, isolé et riche en ressources naturelles. Son potentiel économique est considérable et sa population s'est accrue rapidement en peu de temps. Il devint indépendant très tôt et son gouvernement est fortement démocratique. La majorité des travailleurs sont des employés dont l'origine, le milieu et la culture sont très diversifiés. Le standard de vie s'est accru constamment pour la majorité de la population.

Le système de croyances de la société s'appuie sur les principes de l'« éthique » protestante. Tous ont une chance égale et le système de classe n'existe pas. L'immigration a fourni continuellement des recrues au bas de l'échelle occupationnelle. Enfin, l'orientation pragmatique des unions vint de la société dans laquelle elles évoluaient.

c) *Objectifs et idéologie du mouvement.* Le mouvement ouvrier américain en est un de réforme, et il s'est employé à changer certains aspects du système sans chercher à reconstruire l'ordre social dans son entier. Quoiqu'il accepte le système de la libre entreprise, il s'est surtout appliqué à protester contre certaines de ses caractéristiques et à manifester contre la plupart de ses « *modus operandi* ».

La philosophie de la majorité des dirigeants du mouvement ouvrier est essentiellement pragmatique, et, pour eux, il est important de diriger l'union comme on dirige une entreprise. Les membres appuient cette philosophie parce qu'ils veulent réaffermir leur position dans leurs négociations et qu'ils croient que les unions sont des mécanismes capables d'atteindre ce but. Les moyens utilisés par les dirigeants syndicaux pour satisfaire les membres sont le contrôle des tâches et le maintien des conditions permettant une négociation véritablement collective.

Les unions ont aussi des objectifs plus généraux et une idéologie sociale. Les besoins sociaux, psychologiques et économiques des ouvriers ont priorité sur la productivité accrue et l'expansion de l'entreprise.

Quant à leurs activités politiques, les unions prenaient une attitude de laissez-faire à l'égard du Gouvernement, mais, en se développant, elles ont trouvé nécessaire de s'engager dans des activités politiques pour présenter les conditions favorables à leurs opérations. Mais leurs intérêts et leur philosophie ne sont pas assez différents des autres groupes pour former un parti politique ouvrier.

Leur contribution la plus significative fut dans le relèvement du status, du respect personnel et de l'indépendance des travailleurs, et dans leur influence sur l'opinion publique.

d) *Les membres.* Les organisations ouvrières se sont développées considérablement depuis les années 30. Les premiers membres venaient de métiers très spécialisés, puis s'organisèrent les moins spécialisés et finalement les non-spécialisés. Les membres sont généralement à l'aise et ont une bonne éducation.

e) *Les dirigeants.* Au début, les dirigeants étaient idéalistes, souvent socialistes dans leurs croyances et militants dans leur approche. Ils sont maintenant conserva-

teurs dans leurs points de vue et ont une orientation pragmatique. Ils s'identifient avec les problèmes des ouvriers.

Les dirigeants tendent à être choisis plus jeunes, mieux éduqués, avec des aptitudes plus « professionnelles »; et le fait que l'autorité se centralise et que les décisions se prennent à des échelons supérieurs ont amélioré leur sélection.

f) *Organisation et tactiques.* Les efforts des unions se sont surtout centralisés sur les relations patronales-ouvrières. Le passage de l'antagonisme à la négociation collective s'est fait selon un processus d'accommodation dans lequel les ajustements sociaux ont été appliqués à une situation de conflit.

Une tactique générale utilisée par les ouvriers a été de réduire le domaine des prérogatives patronales et d'incorporer dans le secteur de la négociation plus d'aspects des relations du travail.

Quoiqu'il existe certains problèmes qui touchent de près les dirigeants ouvriers, les membres deviennent plus apathiques maintenant que les conflits se règlent souvent sur une base industrielle, que les négociations se font selon un mode défini et que la direction s'occupe de faire adhérer les membres et retient les cotisations.

On constate une plus grande participation des unions à la chose politique et on peut se demander où elles s'orientent une fois atteint le stage de l'institutionnalisation.

APPLICATION AUX AUTRES MOUVEMENTS OUVRIERS

a) *Environnement socio-culturel.* Parmi les facteurs sociaux et culturels susceptibles d'affecter le caractère du mouvement ouvrier d'un pays, il y a la nature de l'économie, le système politique, le système social y compris le système de stratification, la structure de la famille et de la parenté, la hiérarchie des valeurs de la société et l'influence étrangère.

b) *Objectifs et idéologie.* Le caractère du mouvement ouvrier sera différent selon que ses buts seront ou l'amélioration des conditions de travail des employés à gages, ou d'ordre politique. Ceci en retour sera déterminé en grande partie par le mode de relations développées entre les organisations ouvrières du pays et le gouvernement, les partis politiques, les organisations nationalistes et les autres groupes politiques.

c) *Les membres.* Les membres affectent la nature du mouvement ouvrier selon qu'ils viennent d'un milieu pauvre et illettré ou d'un secteur dont la position économique est favorable. De plus, le mode de stratification de la société peut empêcher les activités du mouvement.

d) *Les dirigeants.* Quoique l'environnement peut avoir une influence majeure sur la formation du mouvement et sur la valeur des dirigeants, le caractère des dirigeants eux-mêmes peut être très important.

e) *Organisation et tactiques.* Le caractère du mouvement ouvrier est fortement influencé par les relations qui existent entre les organisations ouvrières et les autres institutions de la société, en particulier le gouvernement.

Les tactiques des unions seront déterminées en partie par la nature de la législation ouvrière existant dans le pays.

Les tactiques des travailleurs dans leurs rapports avec la direction sont en partie fonction des rôles de chacun dans le processus de production et non pas seulement de différences idéologiques.

A mesure que le mouvement ouvrier s'institutionnalise, des pressions se font pour qu'il accroisse ses responsabilités, et ses activités tendent à prendre un caractère plus routinier.

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