Relations industrielles
Industrial Relations

Unions as Complex Organizations : Strategy, Structure and the Need for Administrative Innovation
Les syndicats en tant qu'organisations complexes

Malcolm Warner

Volume 30, numéro 1, 1975

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/028583ar
DOI : https://doi.org/10.7202/028583ar

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Éditeur(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0034-379X (imprimé)
1703-8138 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Warner, M. (1975). Unions as Complex Organizations : Strategy, Structure and the Need for Administrative Innovation. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, *30*(1), 43–59. https://doi.org/10.7202/028583ar

Résumé de l'article

L'article suivant se propose d'étudier les syndicats en tant qu'organismes bureaucratiques ou en voie de bureaucratisation à partir d'un certain nombre de facteurs d'appréciation qui s'appliquent à l'entreprise privée.

À cause de leur origine, de leur caractère d'associations volontaires et de leur place dans la vie sociale et politique, les syndicats se présentent comme un type d'organisation fort complexe. Aussi, s'est-on interrogé pour savoir dans quelle mesure ils pouvaient être bureaucratisés.

Pour déterminer la tendance à la bureaucratisation Weber a aligné les caractéristiques suivantes : division prononcée du travail, tracé distinct des lignes d'autorité, définition précise des fonctions, réglementation impersonnelle, recours à un personnel permanent recruté selon des normes de qualification technique, autonomie des employés dans la sphère de leur compétence, exécution du travail en faisant abstraction de toute opinion et de tout sentiment personnels, obtention assurée de l'avancement au fur et à mesure que progresse la carrière.

Les syndicats ont pu être lents à s'engager dans cette voie, mais la tendance existe, plus ou moins marquée selon l'ampleur des organismes. Suivant Wilensky, la forme la plus apparente de bureaucratisation dans les syndicats consiste dans la spécialisation du travail à tel point qu'un vieux permanent pouvait dire : « Autrefois, je faisais de tout, aujourd'hui, je ne me hasarderais pas à interpréter une convention collective dans un domaine autre que celui qui me concerne ».

À partir de ces préalables, l'auteur a essayé de dégager les caractéristiques maîtresses des association professionnelles et des syndicats en considérant que ceux-ci exercent une activité que peut se comparer avec celles des entreprises ordinaires et que, par conséquent, il était possible de recourir à la même méthodologie. Cette méthodologie, mise au point par D. S. Pugh et ses associés, considère les organisations administratives en regard des cinq aspects suivants : la spécialisation, la standardisation, la formalisation, la centralisation et la configuration.

Par*spécialisation*, on entend la division du travail à l'intérieur de l'organisation et le partage des responsabilités entre les différentes fonctions ; par*standardisation*, le degré auquel on recourt aux techniques de rationalisation du travail ; par*formalisation*, le degré d'utilisation des communications écrites internes et externes ; par*centralisation*, la structure de fonctionnement du processus de décision ; par*configuration*, le contenu de la structure de l'organisation comme le nombre d'employés et le nombre de niveaux au sein de la hiérarchie.

Les principaux résultats de l'étude confirment l'hypothèse que le fonctionnement des groupements s'occupant du secteur des relations professionnelles peut se comparer à celui des entreprises industrielles. Far ailleurs, lorsqu'on compare entre eux les différents types de syndicats (syndicats de métier, syndicats industriels, syndicats de cols blancs) et les associations à caractère strictement professionnel, on découvre qu'ils se différencient surtout par le nombre d'employés. D'autre part, les variantes que l'on observe entre les diverses associations dépendent de leur importance. Plus le nombre des employés est considérable, plus la bureaucratisation est forte.

En considérant les divers aspects énoncés ci-dessus, on se rend compte que le seul qui donne des signes de bureaucratisation plus grands dans les syndicats que dans l'entreprise privée, c'est celui de la*formalisation.* On peut en conclure que le degré de contrôle des décisions par la direction y est plus grand.

Cette étude a aussi permis à l'auteur de faire un certain nombre de constatations au sujet des problèmes d'administration dans les syndicats britanniques. Il y a découvert que, même si l'administration est généralement à point, on n'y recourait guère, par exemple, aux procédés d'analyse des systèmes, de budgétisation programmée, de planification stratégique, etc.

L'utilisation de ces méthodes scientifiques permettrait aux syndicats de mieux planifier leur activité, d'optimiser l'allocation de leurs ressources, de diffuser à travers la chaine hiérarchique le processus des décisions, d'obtenir une participation plus efficiente des personnes placées à la base de la ligne hiérarchique, de mieux harmoniser les buts recherchés par l'organisme syndical. De même, l'établissement de prévisions budgétaires aiderait les syndicats à faire leur recrutement d'une manière plus systématique, à prévoir leurs besoins futurs en personnel, à mettre en vigueur au besoin un système de formation en milieu de travail.

En réalité, nous n'avons trouvé dans aucun des syndicats auprès de qui l'enquête a été faite d'analyse des systèmes rigoureuse. Si nous avons constaté que, en règle générale, les syndicats sont administrés d'une façon très satisfaisante et qu'on y dépense de fortes sommes à des fins de vérification, les recours à la budgétisation programmée en longue période est à peu près inexistant. Les prévisions budgétaires ne s'étendent pas au-delà d'une année. Pour ce qui a trait à la recherche d'une meilleure utilisation des ressources, même si certains syndicats parmi les plus importants se préoccupent de fournir de meilleurs services à leurs membres, on n'a guère rien entrepris de systématique dans ce sens. C'est la même chose en ce qui touche la planification stratégique. On se rend compte que les secrétaires généraux sont surchargés de besogne et qu'un effort sur ce point devrait être une priorité pour les syndicats. En matière d'analyse coûts-avantages, on n'est pas plus avancé. Sans doute n'est-il pas possible, compte tenu de la nature de l'activité syndicale, d'arriver à des chiffres précis, mais l'utilisation de cette méthode permettrait de « raffiner » un peu celle du bon vieux*pifomètre.*

Le recours à ces méthodes scientifiques ne devrait pas d'autre part avoir pour conséquence de saper le caractère démocratique et représentatif des syndicats, mais, au contraire, de le renforcer. Il peut en outre en augmenter leur puissance et accroître le pouvoir de négociation de leurs membres et rendre ainsi plus efficace le syndicalisme. Il est amusant de constater enfin que les syndicats, qui sont si favorables à la planification économique, se soient tellement laissés distancer par les entreprises dans l'organisation et la modernisation de leur propre administration.

Unions As Complex Organizations

Strategy, Structure and the Need for Administrative Innovation

Malcolm Warner

This paper reports the attempt to extend the theory and method to the organizational structure of occupational interest associations in order to remedy the lacuna in this important area of comparative research namely trade unions and similar bodies.

INTRODUCTION

The present paper reports the attempt to extend the theory and method to the organizational structure of occupational interest associations in order to remedy the *lacuna* in this important area of comparative research namely trade unions and similar bodies. Earlier conceptualization by colleagues and myself served to guide the direction of empirical investigation to some degree. We believe this offers a framework of analysis within which the organizational problems of trade unions and professional organizations could be discussed. Although the data is drawn from a British setting, the inferences drawn from it are intended to lead to broader generalization.

Trade Unions are of course, a very special kind of complex organization. This no doubt can be related to their historical background, the broad interests they represent, their voluntary nature and their general position in society and politics. The range of their activities and resour-

WARNER, M., Professor, Henley/ Brunel University, Joint Graduate Programme in Management Studies, The Administrative Staff College, Henley-on-Thames, England.

* This article is based on research carried out in collaboration with Lex Donaldson, at the London Graduate School of Business Studies. The project was financed by the Social Science Research Council programme grant under the direction of Professor Derek Pugh.

ces, both being vast, has raised questions as to the degree to which they are necessarily « bureaucratized ». Wilensky has observed :

> « The emergence of the staff expert in large-scale organizations, public and private, has been seen as the epitome of the bureaucratic trend in the modern world. Weber's classic account of the ideal-type bureaucracy emphasized these characteristics :
>
> 1. Minute division of labour and a clearcut hierarchy of authority : the offices are clearly defined, have regular activities, governed by impersonal rules, and are set off by fixed, official jurisdictional areas.
> 2. The offices are filled by full-time, appointed officials. The officials are recruited on the basis of technical qualifications ascertained through formal, impersonal procedures (e.g. tests).
> 3. The technical specialists who fill the offices are autonomous within their sphere of competence.
> 4. They are politically neutral professionals whose performance of duty is independent of personal sentiments and opinions.
> 5. Such faithful performance of duty is assured by the rewards of stable careers ; regular salary, expectation of promotion, more responsibility, salary advance, secure tenure, and a pension ... However the fact that unions are big does not mean that unions are bureaucratized. » [1]

Whether or not these conform to the « ideal type » which is supposed to characterize « bureaucracy » ; the trend to rationalization of the means of administration may be there. As Wilensky points out, the unions may have been slow to have developed these, but we would still argue that there is a recognizable element of bureaucracy. How far this is the case is another question. How does it relate to the size of organizations ? What particular managerial problems does it produce ? How far does demorcracy act as a constraint on efficiency ?

In the American case, Wilensky gives prominence of *functional specialization* as a major characteristic of the process he is attempting to describe. This is certainly true of the bigger unions as he observes : « The bureaucratization process goes forward most clearly in the national headquarters of a few large unions. One clue to it is the frequent, sometimes nostalgic, recollections of functionaries who have been around since the early days. The functions have been more clearly defined, » says one.

[1] WILENSKY, Harold L., *Intellectuals in Trade Unions,* Glencoe, Illinois, The Free Press, 1956, p. 243.

« More and accurate records are kept of the work of the Department ». (Questionnaire.) An old-timer in another union : « In the old days . . . I'd get into everything. Now things are different. We're really big business — specialized. I wouldn't dare try to interpret a contract today — except my section of it ! » [2]

One of the main problems which face unions is that compared with other types of organizations (such as firms) even the large ones are relatively small in terms of the number of staff they employ and it is this set of problems as they relate to size which we will now consider. Careful analysis of the internal workings of the British trade unions we have investigated (including the large ones) showed that administrative characteristics can be seen as a function of their size. [3]

In the study which has been attempted, we have tried to look at the administrative characteristics of trade unions and professional associations which we have called as a group 'occupational interest associations' in terms of the measures which have been developed from the study of business and other organizations. We may summarize the main approach as follows : we argue that occupational interest associations are sufficiently similar in their administrative activities to be compared with other work organizations — that they have an administrative superstructure or what some people have loosely called a bureaucracy. We have attempted to apply the methodology developed by D.S. Pugh and associates which breaks down the administrative features of organizations into specialization, standardization, formalization, centralization and configuration and the previous research investigated the relationship between contextual variables such as size and the five above primary structural variables. In measuring these administrative characteristics of trade unions, for example, and relating them to the size of the staff and also the membership such research has not intended to give one organization good marks or bad marks, but simply record the relationship between the variables one with another so as to provide comparative measures of their structure. This has been carried out in order to compare the scores achieved in business and other organizations studied by the pre-

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 244.

[3] The sample studied consisted of three large unions and three small ones, plus one professional association. See Malcolm WARNER and Lex DONALDSON, « Dimensions of organization in occupational interest associations : Some preliminary findings ». Paper to Third Joint Conference on the Behavioural Sciences and Operational Research, London, December 1971.

vious research, that is manufactuirng organizations etc., with an entirely, ostensibly different type of organization that is the occupational interest group. [4]

In the most detailed series of comparative studies of bureaucracy to date Pugh and his associates have conceptualized the various constituents of bureaucracy under five headings. [5]

1. *Specialization* : the division of labour within the organization, the distribution of official duties among a number of positions.
2. *Standardization* : the extent to which there are procedures, their specificity and standardization and the existence of the techniques of rationalization (e.g. work study, costing systems).
3. *Formalization* : the extent of *written* communications, such as documents, handbooks and records.
4. *Centralization* : the vertical distribution of decisionmaking.
5. *Configuration* : the 'shape' of the role structure, as measured by a variety of separate indices, of which two mainly concern us here :
   a. *Size* – number of employees
   b. *Vertical Span* – number of levels in the hierarchy – « flat v. tall » hierarchies

In the « Aston » schema, so called because the initial research was developed by Pugh and associates at the University of Aston in Birmingham each of these « primary dimensions » has been operationalized into a set of scales and sub-scales, which record how bureaucratized the organization under study is on each of these quantitative measures of bureaucratization. An organization which scored highly on all or most of the four primary dimensions (Specialization, Standardization, Formalization and Centralization) would thus be considered to be highly bureau-

[4] See, for the most recent discussion : John CHILD, « Predicting and Understanding Organization Structure », *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No 2, 1973, pp. 168-185.

[5] See D.S. PUGH, D.J. HICKSON, C.R. HININGS and C. TURNER, « Dimensions of Organization Structure », *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 1968, pp. 65-105.

cratic. Using separate measures of the different aspects allows an investigation of how far bureaucracy is in fact *unitary* i.e. whether a high level of one aspect of bureaucracy, necessarily implies a high level of any other. Here we are concerned only with the following scales : Functional Specialization, the degree to which given functions are performed by someone who does nothing else ; Overall Standardization, as defined above ; Overall Formalization, as defined above ; Overall Centralization, the lowest level in the hierarchy at which action on given decision is normally initiated ; Autonomy, a subscale of Centralization, which is the degree to which decisions have to go above the Chief Executive to a higher body for prior approval ; and two indices of Configuration : Vertical Span, the number of levels in the hierarchy, and Size, the number of employees.

Research on large samples of organizations has now established that these analytically independent dimensions in fact fall into two clusters : the first which has been labelled « Structuring of Activities » and which comprises Specialization, Standardization, Formalization and Vertical Span, all positively correlated, either moderately or highly, and a second cluster which mainly comprises Centralization and has a *negative* correlation with the first cluster, of varying magnitude. [6] The relationship of these structural variables to a number of contextual variables has been examined, and a consistent relationship found with Size or organization : the Structuring of Activity variables have a high positive correlation with Size, and the Centralization variable has a moderate to low negative correlation with Size. Theoretically, these findings have been interpreted as the substitution of impersonal mechanisms of control in large organizations for the direct personal control held to be only possible in small organizations.

These results have been replicated in a succession of studies in a variety of different sorts of organizations : manufacturing, service and local government — and in a variety of locations the West Midlands, the United Kingdom as a whole, the United States of America and Canada.

METHOD

It is an idiosyncratic feature of the methodology developed by Pugh and his colleagues that it is based upon answers by a few informants to direct and specific questions about relatively indubitable features such as the presence or absence of a designated procedure or documents etc.,

[6] These are summarised in CHILD, *op. cit.*

rather than by aggregating the responses of a large number of members of the organization to rather thematic questions and inferring the structure. [7] It is not widely appreciated that most of the questions used are about what happens in *practice* rather than the « abstracted empiricism » of the definition-of-the-situation depicted in the 'formal' organization. Inquiries about Functional Specialization, for example, related to the presence of at least one person who was concerned exclusively with a function like recording and control of financial resources in the organization. The items refer not only to the presence of organizational features, such as procedures, but their actual implementation. In seeking to extend this methodology to occupational interest associations, the general analytic schema for the comparative study of organization of all levels which was developed by Pugh *et al,* from Bakke, [8] had to be reinterpreted only in its operational details. This involved interpreting what such concepts as 'workflow' and 'operative' meant in the new, industrial relations context. Interviews carried out, involved the gathering of qualitative material, greatly assisted the final decisions as to how to interpret the above concepts.

THE REFERENTS OF ITEMS

The problems involved in applying items previously developed for use in manufacturing, service, retail and local government organizations were less severe than might have been expected. This reflects the way the items were originally designed to be sufficiently « context-free » to allow comparative research across all organizations and countries. The basic structure of the research instrument was preserved, and only a limited number of items had to be re-interpreted to be meaningful in the industrial relations settings. All in all only marginal changes were needed to make the sets of items analytically germane, and immediately comprehensible to the officials of the occupational interest associations in question.

The main findings of our study suggest that the occupational interest associations are directly comparable with, say, business firms using these common measures and that the findings of the earlier study are replicated.

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[7] See for example, Richard H. HALL, « The Concept of Bureaucracy : An Empirical Assessment », *American Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 69, No. 1, 1963, pp. 32-40.

[8] See E. Wight BAKKE, *The Bonds of Organization,* New York, Harper, 1950.

One interesting finding is that taking different types of trade union (craft, general, industrial, white collar) and a professional association, we find that the main relationships were related to the differences in the numbers of employees (paid and full-time) that these organizations had, rather than stemming from the fact that they were different in terms of type of organization, that is say being a professional association as opposed to a craft union. The main differences were related to the fact of employing a very small number of people at head office and other centres, as opposed to having over 500 people on the pay-roll. Thus the degree to which administrative procedures in the union were formalized for example, and for that matter standardized and specialized, depended on whether the unions were big or small within the range of total people employed by such organizations.

If indeed there was a relative degree of bureaucracy in terms of structuring of activity, we consider that this was a way of administering increasing size in the same way as it is a feature to be found as much in all kinds of organization and not just trade unions and professional associations. Overall standardization is also slightly smaller for occupational interest associations as opposed to other kinds of organizations. The most dramatic change we note is on formalization where occupational interest associations as a whole have scored higher than say business firms. Differences on centralization are somewhat reduced but trade unions and professional associations are distinctly higher. We conclude that trade unions and professional associations seem to be more centralized and abundant in paper controls and manifest fewer rules and procedures and are less specialized along functional lines than other types of organizations. We argue that we might interpret this as indicating that relative to organizations of the same size occupational interest associations have more control exercised by their lay committees, which is affected directly by the appropriation of a large amount of their decision-making and more generally by a larger paper flow through which a pervasive control of the organization is maintained. [9]

While these aspects of occupational interest group structure might be modified by consciously reducing them in the interests of administrative efficiency, this may not necessarily work because of the representative

[9] See WARNER and DONALDSON, *op. cit.*, also J. CHILD, R. LOVERIDGE, and M. WARNER, « Towards an Organizational Study of Trade Unions, » *Sociology*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1973, pp. 71-91.

rationale which is embedded in union government and relates to the fact that they are democratic organizations. This is not to say, however, that a cost-benefit analysis cannot be applied to certain procedures so that one might investigate just how much membership control one might be sacrificing against an increase in so-called managerial efficiency, and a trade-off could be made between the two. [10]

PROBLEMS OF UNION ADMINISTRATION

Although union administration has in many ways been brought up to date, we have rarely come across in our study of selected British trade unions concepts and practices which are common in industry, such as systems analysis, programme budgeting, cost effectiveness and strategic planning, for example. We intend here to comment on several of the gaps that have seemed apparent even in the large union organizations investigated, and to make some suggestions based on these points of omission.

Any organization should look at itself from time to time to make sure that its aims and policies match each other. In addition, it should examine whether the problems it faces now that it has grown can reasonably be tackled by the sort of procedures which grew up in the past when, in fact, the problems it faced were on a smaller scale. Businesses have found that they have to plan their activities in a rather more specific and explicit manner now that they have grown to giant size and to monitor their progress from time to time in order to ensure some regularity of evaluation. In order to do this, some attempt at developing and making operational a budgeting system to optimize resource allocation has to be thought-out. Furthermore, there is a necessity for those at lower levels in the organization to share in the decision-making as to how this may be best done. [11]

Once this budget has been developed it may also help lower participants to develop a clearer set of expectations concerning their anticipated

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10 This has never been attempted, at least, to the present writer's knowledge.

11 This section draws considerably on an analysis of American trade union administration for its analytical framework, but modifies them in attempting to see how far it fits the British cases examined. See Derek C. BOK, and John T. DUNLOP, *Labour and the American Community*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1970, pp. 138-188.

performance. A system of management by objectives is an ancilliary of this process and a consultation with lower participants from time to time to mutually set goals can help the efficiency of the union. Clearer planning can better structure a culture within the union so that the goals of the union and those who work within it can be better harmonized. The development of a manpower budget within union administration would also help the union to recruit more systematically, to relate the background of present staff to expected future manpower requirements, and provide in-house training if necessary for participants at various levels within the union as well as better ways of finding new sources of recruitment.

One cannot pretend that the techniques developped by large businesses which are seeking to maximize profits can be readily applied whole-sale to trade unions and professional associations, although several of the principles which have been developed in management science can be adapted for union use, particularly to large unions. While one may readily endorse the necessity for a representative rationale in the running of unions as well as an administrative one, one cannot disregard the need for increasing efficiency. [12]

In the unions that we examined, we did not find any, *including the very large ones,* which carried out some of the practices described earlier in the above discussion. We certainly did not find any rigorous and continuing use of systems analysis in any of the trade unions or professional associations we looked at and we would argue that there might be a case for developing this aspect. We had heard that certain unions had had consultants in to look at the administration of the union, but this in many cases had raised problems because the outsiders did not find the idiosyncratic practices readily understandable. Next we found that the administration of union accounts was in many cases very satisfactorily carried out and indeed many unions spent a great deal of money on the auditing procedures used, but it was difficult to find any example of budgets that extended more than one year and in some unions the budget was very notional indeed. We would think that this might be an area which unions could develop and which might result in programme as well as manpower budgets being discussed and established.

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[12] See J. CHILD *et al, op. cit.* for an extended discussion on the conflict between administrative and representative rationales.

When we came to look at cost effectiveness, we found that some unions had begun to think about this although the smaller ones had not made very much progress in this direction. Even in the case of the larger unions although there was great anxiety to give the best value possible to their members, there were many obstacles to developing a comprehensive programme of cost effectiveness.

Lastly, the problems of strategic planning had not been satisfactorily tackled to the degree that corporate planning has been in large business concerns and one cause of this was that trade union officials, particularly general secretaries, were so overworked that they had even less time than top executives to sit down and think as to where they and their organization might be going in ten years time. We would think that it would be a priority for unions to look at this aspect of their activities and to set aside some time in the year for a full discussion of their goals and strategy and how their structure might be best related to future needs in the context of the 1980s. Whilst short-term pressures may be considerable and extremely diverting, nonetheless a more rational approach to them might well stem from a more considered view of future strategy and structure. [13]

One approach which might be followed to examine new organizing possibilities is a rough cost-benefit analysis. Under the heading of benefits, one might break the items down into direct economic benefits such as increase in gross fee revenue, then indirect economic benefits such as maintaining wage levels of members by bringing workers employed by competing employers into the union, and lastly social benefits and the political strength which extra members in the union will bring to the organization. On the other hand, the costs are for example the following : to start with the marginal increments in organizing costs such as hiring new organizers and paying for extra printing of publicity material, then the cost of extra staff for servicing new members, and lastly the risk of infringements of the Bridlington Agreement as other unions react to one's organizing offensive. This sort of approach on the whole may not produce precise quantitative figures, but rough estimates may be calculated, and may refine existing rules of thumb criteria which are used. Any economist in the research department of a union worth his salt should be able to devise an approximate cost-benefit schedule for the executive committee's purposes in estimating where marginal organi-

[13] See BOK and DUNLOP, *op. cit.*, pp. 160 ff.

zation should be considered. It will on the whole make for a more conscious and more systematic consideration of organizing opportunities and the allocating of union resources as opposed to an *ad hoc* type of appraisal. Target areas should be developed with an overall plan for the forthcoming year, and the increments in membership should be monitored on a three-monthly basis to see if these are matching up to the proposed membership budget as this new instrument might be dubbed. Planning budgets may be developed for different occupational groups within the union as well as by region and although the problem of making estimates is not easy, some planning is better than no planning. [14]

Having emphasized the relationship between these structural variables and the size of the union as measured by the number of paid full-time employees of the organization, we may conclude that the limitation of applying modern management techniques may be limited by the upper limit encountered in the sample, that is that the biggest union that we looked at which was a general union, employed no more than 518 or so people (the smallest union employing no more than 15). The other types of organizations looked at in the earlier study employed from 241 to over 25,000 employees in one study and from 108 employees to 9,778 in another. It is clear that some of the business firms which were looked at there were smaller in the number of people employed than the largest union, but nonetheless it is probably likely that such refined techniques as strategic planning and manpower budgeting and so on were probably not used in these organizations. Given the number of staff which were employed in trade union and professional associations examined, one cannot infer that they performed any better or any worse than might have been expected in relation to their size, except in the sense that there was slightly more paperwork as we have described above which we think is probably related to their representative rationale and the intended goal of membership participation and control which unions explicitly pursue. [15]

On the other hand it does not seem to us necessarily conflicting or contradictory for unions to attempt to apply certain administrative tech-

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 166.

[15] All the unions we studied were 'democratic bodies, which held elections for top posts for example, although the professional association appointed its officials, it's representative bodies were elected. See Lex DONALDSON and Malcolm WARNER, « Bureaucratic and Electoral Control in Occupational Interest Associations », *Sociology*, (forthcoming, early 1974).

niques particularly if they are large enough within the range of staff size which we found in our union sample and which exists in the total universe of British trade unions. The application of systems analysis, programme budgeting, manpower budgeting, cost effectiveness and strategic planning may not necessarily undermine the democratic or representative goals of the union, but on the contrary may strengthen them. This can occur in a number of ways, not only by making the union more efficient and providing services to members at lower cost, but also in making the union as a total system more responsive to the membership. It may also increase the overall strength of the union and therefore the bargaining power of its members by recruiting more efficiently and extending the domain of the occupational interest group as a whole.

We consider that forward planning in relation to financial budgets and manpower budgets would be one place where unions could start. It is ironic that whereas unions have been particularly enthusiastic about economic planning as a whole, they have fallen far behind firms in relation to their own internal corporate planning, and we think that there would be no contradiction with the manifest aims of trade unions and professional associations if they were to develop some interest in this direction. This may enable them to reconsider the relationship between strategy and structure and provide a better ultimate service to their members. [16]

DISCUSSION

It seems to us that Centralization is the institutional manifestation of the democratic and political ethos of occupational interest associations on a 'national' basis of organization. [17] This had led to an emphasis on direct control by the national bodies, the conferences or councils, their executive bodies and or sub-committees, on which sit the elected lay representatives. It is these « representative institutions » ; to use the Webbs' phrase [18] which provide close supervision of the officials by the laity. And complementarily, (and it may be for this reason) there is little use made of the managerial techniques of rationalization : work study, costing, budgeting, stock-control, and complex inspection systems. How far is this due to something inherent in the task of these organizations, and how far to simple repugnance of « efficiency » techniques as treating people as things ? It is difficult to say, but there is one striking exception to this generalization, and this is in the collection, collation

[16] C.f. BOK and DUNLOP, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-160.

and auditing of monies, particularly incoming subscriptions the occupational interest associations have highly developed rules, procedures and paperwork. The Rules of Association of most unions contain detailed regulations about collecting, banking and auditing of funds, the specificity of which reads like a parody on Weberian bureaucracy. These rules were also required for exogenous reasons, that is conditions of registration under the 1971 Trade Union Act « which legalized combinations in restraint of trade ». The Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies has to see a copy of the rules, and certain details regarding the safeguarding of members fund must be guaranteed. [20] Thus the elaborate rule-making and constitutionalism is partly due to internal factors, and partly to external ones. Significantly, where we have encountered computerization it has been in this area of work. Indeed, a recent T.U.C. Report [21] on Trade Union use of computers argued that « As unions grow, either individually or by merger and, as important as their Servicing functions generally expand, and become more complex, then the amount of data or 'raw' information to be processed will tend to become unmanageable except by the use of electronic data processing. Hence there will be during the 1970's, an increasing requirement by trade unions for computer facilities ». One relatively well-known on-going example is the 'check-off' whereby the employer deducts subscriptions at source and sends them directly to the union headquarters together with a print-out of members. A complementary use of computers by the unions themselves is to maintain a detailed up-to-date listing of members by branches, this enables a check to be made on the financial returns made by the branches. This analogous to accounting devices, such as till-records, which are used by commercial firms to check that all income flows to the firm. This development has received criticism as leading to reduced personal contact between member and association, for previously a collecting steward would typically go round all the members in his branch or place of

17 This was due to the early development of the nationally-elected executive committee's powers.

18 Sidney and Beatrice WEBB, *Industrial Democracy,* London, Longmans, 1897.

19 See Benjamin C. ROBERTS, *Trade Union Government and Administration in Great Britain,* London, Bell, 1956, p. 15.

20 *Ibid.,* p. 19.

21 This is discussed in *Industrial Relations Review and Report,* (London), No. 9, June 1971, pp. 10-12. The report was an internal one prepared for the T.U.C. Production Committee and it claims that computers can even « reinforce » union democracy.

work, and exchange information whilst gathering the « subs ». [22] Not all Shop Stewards, however, collect monies and indeed there is sometimes a division of labour as between the different types of stewards. [23]

Whatever the emotional overtones of « business techniques », rules, files and computers *are* in use by unions. And indeed today, even the use of such techniques as work study are not opposed by the organizations examined, many of which undertake programmes of education for their members in these methods, so that their representatives can negotiate with management from *within* the world-view of the human engineer. Despite this accommodation, none of the organizations sampled were specifically using work-study on their own employees.

On the « out » side of cashflow, there is also a very tight control with little authority to spend money being delegated to officials by the national committees. The data suggested that trade union officials, even senior ones, were very unlike managers in this respect. Historically, this has been the consequence of the problems of malfeasance and embezzlement which unions experienced in the nineteenth century. It can be argued that the modern, or « New Model » form of union organization, dating from the 1850's was a specific attempt at organizational design to deal with these problems. The organizational strategy which was formed then as a response to these problems also seems to have perpetuated in a relatively unchanging way. Whereas in business firms there is delegation of authority over resources, concomitant with systems to monitor whether this authority is exercised wisely and efficiently, by checking on the ratio of outputs produced to inputs, for example profit produced to capital used, there do not appear to be any corresponding measures of output in use in occupational interest associations. While they are concerned with not losing money, gaining members, and increasing their service to members : – there is no set of quantitative indices, no operationalization of goals and ordering of one sort of goal with another. Instead these issues are considered and debated by the national committee without arriving at a solution, that is consistent over time, and the officials are left to implement the specific directives of their governing bodies, rather than to exercise discretion within a framework of a generally defined cost-benefit matrix. We are not saying that officials do not influence the

22 See ROBERTS, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

23 Geoffrey GOODMAN and Terry WHITTINGHAM, *Shop Stewards in British Industry,* London, McGraw Hill, 1969, p. 4.

decision of the governing body ; clearly they do, and we might wonder whether they exercise a pressure for a more consistent and delegatable type of control of the kind outlined here. Certainly Weber saw the officials as exerting this kind of pressure for systematization and rationalization.

Occupational interest associations may indeed be said to be multi-goal bodies, and it is this which prevents their full development along the lines of business enterprises. They are less rationalized because of their lower-level of differentiation in terms of their function in the wider society. The societal variables may be as important as the organizational ones here, as we know that American unions of comparable size are more 'rationalized' and 'business-like' in their organisation, [24] and better serviced in terms of the full-time officer/member ratio. [25] If they were really « business unions », seeking to maximise the profit on the service they sold to their members, they would be perhaps more fully assimilated to the business pattern of organization, in British society at least. But they are not, they retain political functions in that they have not fully resolved the conflicting demands placed on them by their members in terms of their concern for material or ideal interests, in spite of writers like Goldthorpe *et al* [26] who have stressed the instrumental orientation to work and to the union, by the so-called 'affluent worker'. In terms of the Parsonian schema of the fourphase of problems, occupational interest associations straddle both the adaptation and the goal attainment functions of society. In other words they not only perform specific services, but also provide an opportunity for the expression of demands for control and power. As labour relations become more bureaucratized, the need for 'expressive' leadership [27] may well grow. One General Secretary, answered in reply to questions about whether they had an inspection. « We have the best inspection system of all ; the members are our inspection system and if they don't like what we're doing they soon let us know ! » They exemplify the way making organizations self-governing checks the trend of differentiation in society.

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24 BOK and DUNLOP, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

25 Seymour Martin, LIPSET, « Trade Unions and Social Structure : I » *Industrial Relations* (Berkerley), Vol. 1, No. 1, 1962, pp. 75-89.

26 John H. GOLDTHORPE *et al, The Affluent Workers,* Cambridge, C.U.P., 1968.

27 See Amitai ETZIONI, *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations,* Glencoe, Illinois, The Free Press, 1961, p. 115.

Les syndicats en tant qu'organisations complexes

L'article suivant se propose d'étudier les syndicats en tant qu'organismes bureaucratiques ou en voie de bureaucratisation à partir d'un certain nombre de facteurs d'appréciation qui s'appliquent à l'entreprise privée.

À cause de leur origine, de leur caractère d'associations volontaires et de leur place dans la vie sociale et politique, les syndicats se présentent comme un type d'organisation fort complexe. Aussi, s'est-on interrogé pour savoir dans quelle mesure ils pouvaient être bureaucratisés.

Pour déterminer la tendance à la bureaucratisation Weber a aligné les caractéristiques suivantes : division prononcée du travail, tracé distinct des lignes d'autorité, définition précise des fonctions, réglementation impersonnelle, recours à un personnel permanent recruté selon des normes de qualification technique, autonomie des employés dans la sphère de leur compétence, exécution du travail en faisant abstraction de toute opinion et de tout sentiment personnels, obtention assurée de l'avancement au fur et à mesure que progresse la carrière.

Les syndicats ont pu être lents à s'engager dans cette voie, mais la tendance existe, plus ou moins marquée selon l'ampleur des organismes. Suivant Wilensky, la forme la plus apparente de bureaucratisation dans les syndicats consiste dans la spécialisation du travail à tel point qu'un vieux permanent pouvait dire : « Autrefois, je faisais de tout, aujourd'hui, je ne me hasarderais pas à interpréter une convention collective dans un domaine autre que celui qui me concerne ».

À partir de ces préalables, l'auteur a essayé de dégager les caractéristiques maîtresses des association professionnelles et des syndicats en considérant que ceux-ci exercent une activité que peut se comparer avec celles des entreprises ordinaires et que, par conséquent, il était possible de recourir à la même méthodologie. Cette méthodologie, mise au point par D. S. Pugh et ses associés, considère les organisations administratives en regard des cinq aspects suivants : la spécialisation, la standardisation, la formalisation, la centralisation et la configuration.

Par *spécialisation,* on entend la division du travail à l'intérieur de l'organisation et le partage des responsabilités entre les différentes fonctions ; par *standardisation,* le degré auquel on recourt aux techniques de rationalisation du travail ; par *formalisation,* le degré d'utilisation des communications écrites internes et externes ; par *centralisation,* la structure de fonctionnement du processus de décision ; par *configuration,* le contenu de la structure de l'organisation comme le nombre d'employés et le nombre de niveaux au sein de la hiérarchie.

Les principaux résultats de l'étude confirment l'hypothèse que le fonctionnement des groupements s'occupant du secteur des relations professionnelles peut se comparer à celui des entreprises industrielles. Par ailleurs, lorsqu'on compare entre eux les différents types de syndicats (syndicats de métier, syndicats industriels, syndicats de cols blancs) et les associations à caractère strictement professionnel, on découvre qu'ils se différencient surtout par le nombre d'employés. D'autre part, les variantes que l'on observe entre les diverses associations dépendent de leur importance. Plus le nombre des employés est considérable, plus la bureaucratisation est forte.

En considérant les divers aspects énoncés ci-dessus, on se rend compte que le seul qui donne des signes de bureaucratisation plus grands dans les syndicats que dans l'entreprise privée, c'est celui de la *formalisation*. On peut en conclure que le degré de contrôle des décisions par la direction y est plus grand.

Cette étude a aussi permis à l'auteur de faire un certain nombre de constatations au sujet des problèmes d'administration dans les syndicats britanniques. Il y a découvert que, même si l'administration est généralement à point, on n'y recourait guère, par exemple, aux procédés d'analyse des systèmes, de budgétisation programmée, de planification stratégique, etc.

L'utilisation de ces méthodes scientifiques permettrait aux syndicats de mieux planifier leur activité, d'optimiser l'allocation de leurs ressources, de diffuser à travers la chaine hiérarchique le processus des décisions, d'obtenir une participation plus efficiente des personnes placées à la base de la ligne hiérarchique, de mieux harmoniser les buts recherchés par l'organisme syndical. De même, l'établissement de prévisions budgétaires aiderait les syndicats à faire leur recrutement d'une manière plus systématique, à prévoir leurs besoins futurs en personnel, à mettre en vigueur au besoin un système de formation en milieu de travail.

En réalité, nous n'avons trouvé dans aucun des syndicats auprès de qui l'enquête a été faite d'analyse des systèmes rigoureuse. Si nous avons constaté que, en règle générale, les syndicats sont administrés d'une façon très satisfaisante et qu'on y dépense de fortes sommes à des fins de vérification, les recours à la budgétisation programmée en longue période est à peu près inexistant. Les prévisions budgétaires ne s'étendent pas au-delà d'une année. Pour ce qui a trait à la recherche d'une meilleure utilisation des ressources, même si certains syndicats parmi les plus importants se préoccupent de fournir de meilleurs services à leurs membres, on n'a guère rien entrepris de systématique dans ce sens. C'est la même chose en ce qui touche la planification stratégique. On se rend compte que les secrétaires généraux sont surchargés de besogne et qu'un effort sur ce point devrait être une priorité pour les syndicats. En matière d'analyse coûts-avantages, on n'est pas plus avancé. Sans doute n'est-il pas possible, compte tenu de la nature de l'activité syndicale, d'arriver à des chiffres précis, mais l'utilisation de cette méthode permettrait de « raffiner » un peu celle du bon vieux *pifomètre*.

Le recours à ces méthodes scientifiques ne devrait pas d'autre part avoir pour conséquence de saper le caractère démocratique et représentatif des syndicats, mais, au contraire, de le renforcer. Il peut en outre en augmenter leur puissance et accroître le pouvoir de négociation de leurs membres et rendre ainsi plus eficace le syndicalisme. Il est amusant de constater enfin que les syndicats, qui sont si favorables à la planification économique, se soient tellement laissés distancer par les entreprises dans l'organisation et la modernisation de leur propre administration.