

Shop Steward Performance: A Constrained-Decision Analysis

E.G. Fisher and Yonatan Reshef

Volume 47, Number 1, 1992

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/050741ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/050741ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0034-379X (print)

1703-8138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Fisher, E. & Reshef, Y. (1992). Shop Steward Performance: A Constrained-Decision Analysis. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 47(1), 25–41. <https://doi.org/10.7202/050741ar>

Article abstract

In managing their activities as workers and as shop stewards, stewards face various constraints. Using the results of a questionnaire, we identify which constraints seem to exert a greater influence on steward role performance. For instance, the issue being grieved seems to affect grievance resolution rates at step one. Key constraints investigated in regression analysis include: the nature of the parties' relationship, role loads for stewards, training, and gender.

Shop Steward Performance A Constrained-Decision Analysis

**E.G. Fisher
and
Yonatan Reshef**

In managing their activities as workers and as shop stewards, stewards face various constraints. Using the results of a questionnaire, we identify which constraints seem to exert a greater influence on steward role performance. For instance, the issue being grieved seems to affect grievance resolution rates at step one. Key constraints investigated in regression analysis include: the nature of the parties' relationship, role loads for stewards, training, and gender.

Labig and Greer (1988: 19) lamented that their "review of the grievance initiation literature reflects the lack of common foci and absence of theoretical frameworks across studies". The framework of constrained decision making may fill some of this void. It focuses on how constraints influence professional practitioners when they seek to achieve certain (performance) goals.

Constrained decisions are central features of economic analysis, strategic planning, and time management. In consumer theory, an economic unit maximizes utility subject to a number of constraints (e.g., technology, tastes, relative prices, and a budget). Firms engaging in strategic planning consider environmental constraints (e.g., economic, technological, and legal) and internal constraints (e.g., the power and reward structures, organizational politics, and its culture) (Fry and Killing 1989). In time management, various activities are carried out subject to a number of key constraints (e.g., time, priorities, the number of individuals available, and their knowledge, abilities, and skills). Professional practitioners – such as personnel managers, negotiators, and shop stewards – can be viewed as making constrained decisions in managing their activities (Fisher 1991).

* FISHER, E.G. and Y. RESHEF, Associate Professors, Faculty of Business, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada.

** We thank the union participating in this study for its kind assistance, the three national representatives, and 43 stewards involved in pre-testing. A special thanks for assistance goes to Fritz Bauer and Todd Reed. We thank Alex Kondra, James C. Robb, and anonymous referees for their valuable comments. Research funds were graciously supplied by the Central Research Committee at the University of Alberta.

This study investigates and identifies: (1) what stewards perceive to be role constraints, (2) how stewards perform their roles, and (3) how the constraints and stewards' behaviours relate to their role performance. The results presented below may assist unions in identifying key issues to address in selecting, orienting, training, and assisting stewards.

CONSTRAINED DECISION MAKING

We hypothesize that a shop steward seeks to meet certain objectives subject to several constraints. In seeking to be reselected or to retain influence among peers, each steward presumably must be perceived as satisfying certain role performance expectations. A key function of training is to convey performance expectations to stewards (PSAC 1983). Performance expectations and, therefore, most steward objectives flow mainly from the roles stewards carry out. Wheeler and DeAngelis (1982) identified the following as the major roles of stewards: disseminating information, providing leadership for the rank and file, and representing the union and its members' interests vis-a-vis management, especially through participating in grievance handling.

Performance expectations, consequently, include: (1) informing members and promoting union objectives among the membership, (2) providing leadership, (3) advancing members' interests in the union and with management, (4) effectively carrying out the union's watchdog role on the collective agreement, (5) providing competent representation to aggrieved bargaining-unit members, and (6) seeking to negotiate with management deals which benefit the union and its members (PSAC 1983). Along with these organizationally based objectives, a personal objective can be self-enhancement (e.g., promotion within the union or employer hierarchy (Labig and Greer 1988)).

The priority given to such objectives can change over time. Indeed, Peck noted that stewards' objectives tended to shift from chiefly advancing the group's self-interests, initially, to enhancing one's own self-interests (e.g., in union politics) later on (1963: 113-120, 150, 321-322). Thus, stewards with longer service might behave differently from more junior stewards.

METHODS

A questionnaire was developed to elicit information concerning what stewards perceived to be the major constraints that they faced in carrying out their objectives as stewards. Three national representatives assisted in its development, and it was pre-tested with a training class of 43 stewards.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first section dealt with demographic and other information, including the nature of the union-management relationship and the ease of communicating with members. The second section addressed training and grievance experience at various levels of the grievance machinery. It also elicited information concerning major constraints which stewards perceived they faced. The final section focused largely on four areas: (1) perceived personal behaviour in carrying out the various roles of being a steward, (2) how often various kinds of issues typically were resolved at step one, (3) stewards' reported rates for resolving grievances at step one, and (4) perceived approach in dealing with supervisors. The last section elicited additional information concerning operative constraints (e.g., the issue being dealt with).

The questionnaire addressed several key issues for future research. Labig and Greer (1988) had called for research on success rates in handling grievances at the first step, particularly concerning the issue at hand, as well as on the impact of the parties' relationship and gender on steward role performance.

Sample

The stewards who were surveyed belonged to a national union in Canada's public sector which has some 5000 stewards. Between June and December 1987, 339 shop stewards provided useable responses to the 1250 questionnaires distributed. The union controlled their dispersal. Two nation-wide postal strikes may have reduced the response rate (27.1 percent).

The union is organized along government departmental lines and decentralized across Canada. However, it negotiates on behalf of occupational bargaining units cutting across departments. The break down of stewards according to job categories was as follows: administrative support – 37.6 percent, foreign service and administrative – 4.3 percent, scientific and professional – 6.0 percent, technical – 18.1 percent, and operational – 34.0 percent.¹

The representativeness of the sample was checked against two available demographic items. Two-thirds of the sample were male, which

1. Unfortunately, comparative statistics were not available for the allocation of the union's membership across these categories either for the 1970s (e.g., in Lemelin 1978) or 1980s.

is virtually the same as for the union's members. Respondent ages ranged from 21 to 64 years with a mean of 39.2 years, which is less than for the overall membership (43 years).

Steward Profile

Responding stewards averaged slightly over five years of service and 12 years' education. On average, they were responsible for four collective agreements covering some 132 co-workers and had 4.6 co-stewards. The high number of agreements reflects the organization of most Canadian public-sector employees along occupational or craft lines.

Responding stewards indicated a fair amount, as well as a wide range, of training and experience. Yet, their experiences were confined mainly to the initial steps of the grievance procedure and labour-management consultations, as required under many of the agreements they administer. The mean hours of steward course work was 42. Only 22 stewards had had no course work (or 6.5 percent of respondents).²

KEY PERCEIVED CONSTRAINTS

Respondents were asked to indicate the three most difficult items which they viewed as constraining them in carrying out their roles as shop stewards. Table 1 lists the constraints in descending order according to the number of times they appeared in stewards' short lists.

Two major constraints stand out. One is "members' apathy", which is endemic to democratic institutions like unions (Chaison and Rose 1989: 148-151). The other is dual responsibilities and work loads in a relationship whose underpinnings are adversarial (Table 1). Dual roles are reflected in Table 1 in "the load of being both a worker and steward", ranked second, and an "inability to satisfy both the union and management", ranked seventh.

Four constraints were perceived by 20 percent to 30 percent of the respondents to be primary constraints: the complexity of collective

2. On average, while serving as stewards (mean tenure of 61 months), respondents had spent some 25 hours reading the collective agreement(s); attended 14 meetings at step one, 10 at step two, and 6 at step three; and read 33 grievance decisions, 16 appeal decisions, and 18 adjudication awards. They also averaged attending 0.7 adjudication hearings, with 63 percent (213) having never attended one, and 17.5 labour-management consultations, with 21 percent (72) having never participated.

agreements (30 percent), what members seem to expect of stewards (29 percent), how management and supervisors treat stewards (23 percent), and a lack of adequate training (22 percent).

TABLE 1
Perceived Key Constraints on
Shop Steward Role Performance

Constraint	Rating of Constraints Among the Three Most Difficult ^a (Number of Responses)				
	1st	2nd	3rd	Row Total	Percentage ^b of Sample
Members' apathy (i.e. non-involvement in union)	151	57	48	256	76%
Load of being both a worker and a steward	34	36	34	104	31
Complexity of the collective agreement(s)	17	39	46	102	30
Members' expectations	18	36	44	98	29
Management and supervisors' treatment	23	34	20	77	23
Lack of adequate training	37	18	19	74	22
Inability to satisfy both the union & management	10	17	22	49	15
Lack of authority to act	5	24	17	46	14
Lack of support by higher union officials	8	14	17	39	12
Members' criticism	7	16	16	39	12
Steward role is not clearly defined	3	15	16	33	10

a Respondents were asked to list only the three most difficult items.

b There were 339 total responses.

Some of the perceived lack of authority to act (Table 1) may arise because certain matters referred to stewards fall outside the collective agreement. These issues are governed, for example, by external statutes (e.g., public-service, superannuation, and occupational-health-and-safety acts).³ Most are to be referred to other union officials for handling (PSAC 1983).

3. Full-time, paid union staff, rather than stewards, handle matters under the relevant public service act or other external statutes. This was explained to one of the coauthors during pre-testing of the survey questionnaire.

PERCEPTIONS OF ROLE PERFORMANCE

A majority of responding stewards do not perceive their role as being radical or anti-management. The bulk "always" (45 percent) or "often" (40 percent) lead by example by upholding the terms and conditions of the collective agreement. One-half "never" (27 percent) or "seldom" (23 percent) "back up members, even if they are contravening the collective agreement". This response rate may reflect the generally legalistic nature of public servants. Nevertheless, roughly one-third reported that they at least "sometimes" advocate self-help measures (e.g., work-to-rule, slow-downs, and wildcat strikes) to members as a way to uphold labour contracts.

Concerning the union's watchdog role, the bulk of stewards (82 percent) indicated that they "closely watch bargaining-unit members and management to make sure that the collective agreement is being upheld". A majority, however, say they generally tend not to get involved in members' problems without being asked.

Constraint of Style

As to style of dealing with supervisors, stewards reported the following perceived tendencies. Generally, they "sometimes" drove a hard bargain; "seldom" gave management a hard time; nearly "always" got to the facts and dealt with the issue at hand; "often" resolved the problem as quickly as possible; and "seldom" sought to win the case at all costs.

In short, stewards said that they generally took a very pragmatic approach, adopted a commensurately accommodative style, and relied upon the underlying facts to attempt to resolve grievances in the first step. A very small minority acted to the contrary. Overall, four percent stated that they persistently badger management, while ten percent said they persistently attempt to win at all costs. Such an inclination could stem from the steward's personality, the circumstances – a poor union-management or steward-supervisor relationship, or both.

Constraint of the Parties' Relationship

Responding stewards characterized the parties' relationships as lying between "not good and not bad" and "somewhat good". This probably mirrors the fact that the public sector includes many professionals and other "white-collar" groups (Ponak and Thompson 1989). It also undoubtedly reflects the manner in which the agreement-administration process was conducted in the past. Open, honest

dealings oriented towards mutually resolving problems build trust, while conflict-laden interactions aimed solely at achieving victory will tend to sour the parties' relationship (Labig and Greer 1988).

Constraint of Issue Grieved

The nature of the issue grieved seems to affect how often a matter will be resolved at step one of the grievance-handling procedure. Least often resolved, according to respondents, are discharges, followed by other disciplinary matters. The rates are slightly higher but, like discipline, still "sometimes" for: pay matters, work scheduling, working conditions, and duties and responsibilities. Occupational-health-and-safety (OH&S) matters appear to be resolved "often" at step one.

Statutory support for OH&S undoubtedly improves the frequency of early resolutions of those matters. In contrast, most discharges presumably occur after a case has been built against the dismissed individual and, consequently, are bound for adjudication or resolution at a higher level. Thus, a number of collective agreements do not provide for step-one consideration of discharge cases. This includes the applicable master agreement (article M-38-19). However, a number of disciplinary matters undoubtedly arise spontaneously, and some of these should be resolvable at step one. The remaining matters (i.e., pay, work scheduling, working conditions, and duties and responsibilities) clearly are much more routine than disciplinary matters, especially discharges.

Step One Success Rates

Stewards handled a mean of at least 2.7 grievances per year.⁴ They apparently counted both informal and formal procedures as step one.⁵ Given constraints like style, the parties' relationship and the issues grieved, the stewards' average reported success rate was 50 percent at step one. Roughly 7 percent resolved grievances at step one 100 percent of the time, while some 12 percent of the sample recorded a 0 percent success rate. Since the union controlled the distribution of the survey questionnaires, it was not possible to gather independent

4. The number of step-one meetings is used as a lower-bound estimate for grievances formally handled (i.e., 13.64 step-one meetings per steward/5.08 mean years as steward).

5. Of 59 individuals responding that they had attended no step-one grievance meetings or hearings, 32 did not answer the question concerning their step-one success rate. The average for the remainder was slightly over the sample's success rate of 50%. Significantly, eight 0% success-rate responses were offset by eight responses of 100%. The remaining 27 responses, consequently, were taken at face value and included in our statistical analysis.

measures of step-one resolutions. Thus, no inferences can be drawn about possible biases.

ANALYSIS OF ROLE PERFORMANCE

Performance indicators for five key steward functions are analyzed relative to the items identified above as constraining steward role performance. The functions involve (1) steward-member relations, (2) informing members, (3) initiating grievances on their behalf, (4) steward-management relations, and (5) grievance handling – particularly at step one.

Table 2 describes these five dependent variables and the independent variables used in regression analysis. Also described are reliabilities for the additive scales. Four of the reliability measures (Cronbach's alpha) are moderate (i.e., .53 to .57), while five are high (i.e., .60 or higher). Given the exploratory nature of this study, the four moderate scales should serve as a useful basis for future research to improve upon.

Table 3 presents means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations for all variables in the analysis. The relatively low intercorrelations among the scales which serve as independent variables indicate their relative independence.

Independent Variables/Constraints Concerning Stewards

Two key sets of steward constraints serve as independent variables. They are (1) stewards' dual roles as workers and stewards and (2) their interpersonal and leadership skills, education, training, and experience. Stewards' dual roles are measured through their perception of role loads (ROLELOAD), the number of coworkers they represent (COWORKERS), and the number of collective agreements they deal with (#COLLAGT).

These three dual-role variables relate to the literature on role conflict. The steward clearly is caught in a tug-of-war between competing demands and expectations from management as worker and the union as steward (Rizzo et al. 1979). This dilemma is exacerbated for a new steward who may require some time to acquire the requisite skills. Such adjustment difficulties, in turn, may result in greater stress and less effective performance – at least in the short term (Pinder and Schroeder 1987).

TABLE 2

**Descriptions and Reliabilities of Scales
and Items in the Analysis**

<i>Scale/ Item</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Cronbach's ALPHA</i>	<i>Items^a</i>
MBRS	Steward-member relations	.65	*1. Members push me too hard. *2. Members unfairly criticize me. *3. I have troubles getting members to see things my way.
INFO	Information dissemination	.70	1. I inform members about the contract; grievance procedures; and union policy. 2. I call meetings with members to clarify issues. 3. I tell my members what the union is doing.
INIT	Steward's grievance initiation	.60	*1. I wait for members to approach me before taking any action on a grievance. 2. I solicit individual grievances prior to members' coming to me. 3. I get involved in my member's problems without being asked.
MGT	Steward-management relations	.53	1. Management allows me enough time for my steward job. *2. I have trouble getting management seeing things my way.
STEP	Ability to resolve grievances at step 1		1. I am successful in resolving grievances at step 1_% of the time.
RLNP	Perceived quality of work place relationship		An item ranging from 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good).
ROLELOAD		.57	1. The amount of work I am asked to do as steward and as worker is fair. *2. I don't have enough time to get everything done as a steward and as a worker.
COWORKERS	Number of co-workers steward represents		
#COLLAGT	Number of collective agreement(s) for which a steward is responsible		

TABLE 2 (cont.)

<i>Scale/ Item</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Cronbach's ALPHA</i>	<i>Items^a</i>
STYLE	Stewards' performance style	.62	1. In my dealing with supervisors I try to: a. drive a hard bargain b. give management a hard time c. win the case at all costs.
ADHERE	Stewards' adherence to the collective agreement	.56	1. When I become involved in a grievance I look first at the collective agreement. 2. I closely watch fellow bargaining-unit members and management to make sure that the collective agreement is being upheld. 3. I lead by example by upholding the terms and conditions of the collective agreement.
AGE	A steward's age in 1987		
GENDER	A steward's gender		1= Male 2= Female
EDUC	A steward's total of pre- and post-education years		
TRAINING	A steward's training level	.75	1. I've had some __ hours of stewards' course work. 2. I've spent some __ hours reading the collective agreement. 3. I've read some __ grievance decisions. 4. I've read some __ appeal decisions.
TENURE	Time spent as a steward (months)		
COMMUN	Perceived ease of communication members		An item ranging from 1 (very difficult) to 4 (very easy).
SUPPORT	Getting help from union officials	.55	1. Component staffers usually assist me in handling grievances. 2. It's easy to get help from union regional representatives.

a All items reported above are measured on a 1 (very low) to 5 (very high) Likert-type scale, unless otherwise reported.

* Items recoded to conform with above ordering (i.e., "1" substituted for "5" and so on).

TABLE 3
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for All Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
1. MBRS		-.41	-.37	-.08	-.10	-.01	.06	-.02	.25	-.20	-.08	-.16	.01	.11	.26	.30	.10	-.04	
2. MGT			.41	.14	.05	.07	-.07	-.06	-.18	.32	.19	.16	.04	.06	-.52	-.24	-.14	-.02	
3. ROLELOAD				.14	-.02	.01	-.09	-.05	-.15	.10	.21	.12	-.09	-.12	-.25	-.18	-.14	-.06	
4. TRAINING					.24	.20	.09	.11	.05	.01	.12	.43	-.19	.20	.05	-.04	.35	.07	
5. TENURE						.21	.10	.19	.15	-.24	-.06	.13	-.17	.10	.25	.05	.29	.02	
6. INFO							.10	.49	.10	.06	.17	.17	.06	.08	-.17	-.18	.18	-.11	
7. INIT								.17	.32	-.07	.03	-.01	-.20	.08	.09	-.03	.07	.03	
8. ADHERE									.11	.10	.09	.03	.11	.02	.03	-.10	.07	.14	
9. STYLE										-.06	-.09	-.12	-.17	.10	.16	.07	.10	-.01	
10. STEP											.01	.01	.11	-.03	-.27	-.13	.01	.01	
11. SUPPORT												.09	.05	-.08	-.18	-.07	.10	-.08	
12. AGE													-.23	.05	-.09	-.08	.06	.01	
13. GENDER														-.01	-.05	-.02	-.02	.07	
14. COWORKERS															.01	.07	.22	.10	
15. RLNP																.30	.02	.03	
16. COMMUN																	.05	.08	
17. #COLLAGT																			.03
18. EDUC																			
Mean:	6.87	6.14	6.34	13.51	63.47	11.49	6.27	12.11	6.71	50.55	7.43	39.18	1.31	131.61	2.45	1.85	4.09	12.17	
SD:	2.73	2.25	2.45	3.52	53.50	2.09	2.30	1.96	2.32	33.99	2.04	8.60	.47	305.44	1.22	.86	4.68	4.63	

Interpersonal and leadership skills, education, training, and experience are measured respectively through the following variables: the steward's style (STYLE), approach to adhering to collective agreements and leading by example (ADHERE), education (EDUC), training (TRAINING), and length of service as steward (TENURE). Additionally, interpersonal and leadership skills may be partially conditioned by age (AGE) and gender (GENDER). Relationships with members and the union are estimated through the difficulty of communications with members (COMMUN) and support from regional representatives and component staffers (SUPPORT). COMMUN also may reflect stewards' interpersonal skills.

Hypotheses

The following kinds of relationships are expected:

Hypothesis 1: A better union-management relationship (RLNP) should be positively related to steward-performance measures.⁶

Hypothesis 2: A lighter ROLELOAD also should be positively related to variables measuring steward role performance.

Hypothesis 3: Role-performance measures should be positively related to the following: STYLE, adherence to agreements (ADHERE), TRAINING, easier communications (COMMUN), union SUPPORT, and AGE and TENURE – both proxies for greater maturity.

Hypothesis 4: Greater complexity means that larger numbers of COWORKERS and collective agreements (#COLLAGT) generally should be negatively related to role-performance measures.

Results

Results of the multivariate regressions are reported in Table 4.

Perhaps most importantly, the nature of the parties' relationship (RLNP) appears to have a statistically significant, strongly positive influence on: (1) steward-management relations (MGT), (2) the steward's success rate in resolving grievances at step one (STEP), and (3) his/her ability to inform members.

Similarly, a more comfortable role load appears to reduce the amount of stress on the steward, making it easier to relate to members

6. This hypothesis is partially based on one of the co-author's three-year experience essentially as a chief shop steward in a relatively good relationship between a faculty association and university administration.

(MBRS). Steward-management relations also tend to improve as the steward's role load diminishes.

TABLE 4
Standardized Regression Coefficients for Variables
Measuring Perceived Steward Role Performance

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables				
	MBRS	INFO	INIT	MGT	STEP
RLNP	.05 (.75)	.17 (2.69)***	-.02 (-.25)	.36 (5.74)***	.24 (3.05)***
ROLELOAD	.29 (4.00)***	-.07 (-1.05)	-.06 (-.74)	.29 (4.44)***	.08 (.93)
COWORKERS	-.06 (-.89)	-.02 (-.38)	.12 (1.62)	.11 (1.70)	-.01 (-.18)
#COLLAGT	.00 (.03)	.08 (1.24)	-.01 (-.07)	-.13 (-2.04)**	-.01 (-.13)
STYLE	-.06 (-.92)	.07 (1.07)	.23 (3.24)***	-.08 (-1.23)	-.06 (-.78)
ADHERE	.06 (.79)	.32 (4.81)***	.19 (2.49)***	-.02 (-.29+)	.02 (.22)
AGE	.20 (2.53)***	.09 (1.32)	.02 (.31)	.03 (.44)	-.05 (-.59)
GENDER	-.03 (-.36)	.04 (.62)	-.19 (-2.54+)**	.12 (1.95+)**	.12 (1.48)
EDUC	.20 (2.99+)**	-.15 (-2.50+)**	.09 (1.21)	.01 (.11)	.01 (.04)
TRAINING	-.08 (-1.12)	.24 (3.63)***	-.06 (-.83)	-.01 (-.15)	-.05 (-.57)
TENURE	-.22 (-2.62)***	.06 (.76)	-.03 (-.35)	.05 (.70)	.02 (.25)
COMMUN	.16 (2.40)**	.09 (1.43)*	.08 (1.07)	.05 (.79)	.07 (.96)
SUPPORT	-.03 (-.45)	.05 (.83)	.03 (.45)	.08 (1.31)	.03 (.43)
R ²	.23	.36	.15	.37	.11
Adjusted R ²	.17	.32	.09	.32	.04
F	4.16***	8.07***	2.48***	8.21***	1.58*

* Significant at .10 level.

** Significant at .05 level.

*** Significant at .01 level.

(t-statistics in parentheses)

+ Two-tailed t-test.

Improved or easier steward-member relations are also associated with: older and better educated stewards, easier communications with members, and shorter tenure. Greater age and education apparently command greater respect among members and may reflect a better ability to deal with others. MBRS and COMMUN are distinct variables (zero-order correlation of .30). Taken together, they indicate that members seem to be less pushy and critical whenever communication with them is perceived easier.

The phenomenon of deteriorating steward-member relations as the steward serves longer is consistent with the revised steward goals which Peck observed over steward's careers (1963). However, longer service may simply mean that stewards better understand and more frequently present management's case to aggrieved members.⁷

Predictably, disseminating information to the membership (INFO) becomes easier as the steward acquires more training. This impact of training conforms with one of its key objectives (PSAC 1983). It is not surprising that greater efforts to inform members are also associated with greater steward involvement in watching over and upholding the collective agreement(s) (ADHERE).

Interestingly, more educated stewards (EDUC) disseminate less information to members, while being able to better relate to them (MBRS regression). This seems to imply that more educated stewards spend more time dealing with members' problems at the expense of keeping them generally informed. However, there is virtually no intercorrelation between educational level and steward STYLE (e.g., problem solver).

An aggressive, advocative style and watchdog approach (ADHERE), as well as being male, are related to stewards' initiating grievances (INIT) regardless of members' desires (Table 4). This intuitively appealing result may indirectly reflect greater male assertiveness, as a rule.

As expected, steward-management relations improve as communications become easier with union members (COMMUN) and diminish as the number of collective agreements increases (MGT regression). More labour contracts could place increased pressures on management to grant stewards release time to deal with grievances and to proceed more slowly towards resolving grievances for fear of establishing bad precedents. Moreover, as the number of collective agreements increases, the number of managers with whom the steward interacts could increase, thereby exacerbating steward-management relations.

7. One co-author has experienced this as chief steward. A key reason for explaining the case against the member is to avoid wasting the member's and steward's time.

CONCLUSION

Many industrial-relations decisions are made on the basis of perceptions. Included are decisions on whom to elect, appoint, or permit to volunteer as steward, and, in some cases, which steward to approach to handle a member's grievance. The perceptions unveiled here and their analysis may assist unions in: identifying traits for selecting stewards, informing potential stewards about role constraints, developing steward orientation materials, designing training courses, and better assisting stewards.

Our findings concerning role conflict suggest that steward effectiveness in relating to members and management can be fostered by providing more time for them to perform their duties as union representatives. While training can ease the adjustment to stewardship, its main impact on role performance may be greater information dissemination. Most importantly, greater conflict in a union-management relationship may lead to fewer resolutions at step one, lower quality steward-management relations, and a lesser ability to disseminate information. Stewards generally reported that they adopted a rather pragmatic approach to resolving grievances with supervisors. Regression analysis suggests that women may adopt a less aggressive, more problem-solving approach than males. Of note, the issue being grieved also can influence a steward's capacity to resolve grievances.

Roles filled by stewards in Canada and the United States are essentially the same. Stewards may, however, deal with more agreements in the public sector than the private sector. Because the results are based on a limited, though apparently representative, sample and rely upon stewards' self-reported perceptions, our findings are somewhat exploratory and tentative. We hope they will foster future research, as will the broadly applicable constrained decision-making framework they are rooted upon.

REFERENCES

- CHAISSON, Gary N. and Joseph B. ROSE. 1989. "Unions: Growth, Structure, and Internal Dynamics." In John C. Anderson, Morley Gunderson and Allen Ponak, eds. *Union-Management Relations in Canada*. 2nd ed. Don Mills, Ont.: Addison-Wesley Publishers, 125-154.
- FISHER, E.G. 1991. "Constrained Decision Making" and "The Industrial Relations System". Working Papers. Edmonton: The University of Alberta.
- FRY, Joseph N. and J. Peter KILLING. 1989. *Strategic Analysis and Action*. 2nd ed. Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc.

LABIG, Chalmer E. Jr. and Charles R. GREER. 1988. "Grievance Initiation: A Literature Survey and Suggestions for Future Research." *Journal of Labour Research*. Vol. 9. 1-27.

LEMELIN, Maurice. 1978. *The Public Service Alliance of Canada: A Look at a Union in the Public Sector*. Los Angeles: Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California Los Angeles.

PECK, S.M. 1963. *The Rank-and-File Leader*. New Haven: College & University Books.

PINDER, Craig C. and Klaus G. SCHROEDER. 1987. "Time to Proficiency Following Job Transfers." *Academy of Management Journal*. Vol. 30. 336-352.

PONAK, Allen and Mark THOMPSON. 1989. "Public-Sector Collective Bargaining." In John C. Anderson, Morley Gunderson and Allen Ponak, eds. *Union-Management Relations in Canada*. Don Mills, Ont.: Addison-Wesley Publishers. 373-406.

PUBLIC SERVICE ALLIANCE OF CANADA (PSAC). 1983. *Steward's Handbook*. 2nd ed. Ottawa: Public Service Alliance of Canada.

RIZZO, John R., Robert J. HOUSE and Sidney I. LIRTZMAN. 1979. "Role Conflict and Ambiguity in Complex Organizations." *Administrative Science Quarterly*. Vol. 15. 150-163.

WHEELER, H.N. and A.J. DEANGELIS. 1982. "Steward Performance: A Behaviorally Anchored Description." *Labor Studies Journal*. Vol. 6. 286-301.

La performance des délégués syndicaux Une analyse de décision sous contrainte

Une recension des publications portant sur le recours aux griefs démontre l'absence de thèmes et de cadres théoriques communs parmi les différentes études sur la question. Le cadre théorique que constitue l'étude de la décision sous contrainte pourrait partiellement combler ce vide. Ce cadre est centré sur la façon dont les contraintes influencent les praticiens professionnels lorsqu'ils s'efforcent d'atteindre certains objectifs.

Cette étude sonde et identifie: 1) ce que les délégués syndicaux perçoivent comme étant des contraintes affectant leur rôle. 2) comment les délégués syndicaux jouent leurs rôles et 3) comment les contraintes ainsi que les comportements des délégués sont reliés à leur performance. Les perceptions que l'on dévoile dans cette étude ainsi que leur analyse pourraient aider les syndicats à identifier certaines caractéristiques personnelles dans le cadre de la sélection des délégués, à renseigner les délégués potentiels au sujet des contraintes affectant leur rôle, à élaborer de la documentation visant l'orientation des délégués, à concevoir des cours de formation ainsi qu'à mieux aider les délégués.

Les résultats de notre étude concernant les conflits de rôle suggèrent que l'efficacité du délégué dans ses rapports avec les membres du syndicat et la gestion peut être accrue si on fournit au délégué plus de temps pour qu'il remplisse ses fonctions en tant que représentant syndical. Alors que la formation peut faciliter l'adaptation à l'exercice du rôle de délégué, l'impact

principal qu'elle exerce sur la performance peut consister en une plus large diffusion de l'information. Ce qui est le plus important, c'est que des relations patronales-syndicales plus conflictuelles peuvent aboutir à la solution de moins de griefs à la première étape, des relations entre des délégués et la gestion de qualité moindre et à une capacité réduite pour ce qui est de la diffusion de l'information. Les délégués ont généralement fait part qu'ils adoptaient une approche plutôt pragmatique dans la résolution de griefs avec les superviseurs. L'analyse de régression suggère que les femmes adoptent une attitude moins agressive et plus orientée vers la solution de problèmes que les hommes. À noter aussi que la nature même de la question qui fait l'objet du grief peut aussi influencer la capacité du délégué à le régler.

Les rôles joués par les délégués au Canada et aux États-Unis sont essentiellement les mêmes. Cependant, les délégués peuvent avoir à s'occuper de plus de conventions collectives dans le secteur public que dans le secteur privé. Les résultats de notre étude sont quelque peu exploratoires car ils sont fondés sur un échantillon limité, quoique apparemment représentatif, et reposent sur les perceptions telles que rapportées par les déléguées. Nous espérons que ces résultats ainsi que le cadre théorique portant sur la prise de décision sous contrainte susciteront d'autres recherches.

VIEILLIR EN EMPLOI

Préface, Gilles LAFLAMME — *Présentation*, Claude RONDEAU — *Vieillir en emploi: un choix inscrit dans l'avenir démographique du Québec*, Jacques LÉGARÉ, Nicole MARCIL- GRATTON et Yves CARRIÈRE — *Les incidences du vieillissement au travail: une perspective écologique*, Hélène DAVID — *Les pratiques de gestion en matière de vieillissement*, Gilles GUÉRIN — *Les relations employeurs-syndicats: les responsabilités ignorées... un lourd passif*, Jean CARETTE — *Pratiques en matière de gestion de la main-d'œuvre vieillissante*, Pierre-Marc BÉDARD, Maurice FORTIN, Marcel BERNARD — *Commentaires*, Marcel CÔTÉ, Claude GINGRAS, Claude RIOUX — *Les perspectives syndicales relatives à la main-d'œuvre vieillissante*, Lorraine PAGÉ, Yves PARÉ, Lise POULIN — *Commentaires*, Michel BLAIS, Michel DÉCARY, Lise POULIN SIMON — *Table ronde: Le rôle de l'État et les politiques étatiques*, Ghislain DUFOUR, Gérald LAROSE, Gaston CHARLAND — *Le défi politique du vieillissement de la main-d'œuvre au Québec*, André BOURBEAU.

ISBN 2-7637-7271-4

1991, 199 pages, 21 \$

LES PRESSES DE L'UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL
Cité universitaire, Ste-Foy, Canada, G1K 7P4
tél.: (418) 656-5106 télécopieur: (418) 656-3476