

Factions in British and American Unions – A Comparative Structural Approach

Le factionnalisme dans les syndicats en Grande-Bretagne et aux États-Unis

Malcolm Warner and J. David Edelstein

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Article abstract

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Factions in British and American Trade-Union Organizations:

A Comparative Structural Approach

Malcolm Warner and J. David Edelstein

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INTRODUCTION

In our increasingly organizational society, factionalism within voluntary organizations is an important part of the overall political process. This is most evident within political parties, where the outcomes of ideological struggles and contests for leadership, often largely determine the choices available to an electorate. However, trade unions, professional associations and other membership organizations are often the arenas for political struggles, the outcomes of which directly or indirectly affect the overall political process. American associations of anthropologists, historians and other professionals have recently been agitated by differences over the South East Asian

WARNER, M., Organizational Behaviour Research Group, London Graduate School of Business Studies, ENGLAND.

EDELSTEIN, J. D., Department of Sociology, Syracuse University, U.S.A.

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war. Blacks in American trade unions have formed caucuses to win full-time posts, and otherwise extend the struggle for equality into the unions, have formed caucuses to win full-time posts, and otherwise extend the struggle for equality into the unions.

On the basis of a broader conception of politics, trade unions in Britain and the United States have seen struggles of minority occupations for greater representation in their councils, or for adjustments of wages in their favour. And ostensibly apolitical union office-seekers periodically accuse incumbents of too soft a policy in the pursuit of wage demands, at times with direct impact on attempts by government to regulate wages. Indeed, it might be difficult to find a factional struggle in any moderately large membership organization without a rather obvious external political implication. In order to shed light on the nature of factionalism we shall consider here the kinds, causes and consequences of factionalism in one particular type of organization, that is trade unions. We hope to give special attention to British-American differences in factional organization and style, anchoring the analysis in the general theme of opposition in organizations, and their « internal conflict situations. »¹

THE MEANING OF FACTIONALISM

Intra-organizational Conflict and Factionalism

One critical test we can apply to organizations, be they states, local governments, clubs or trade unions, is the manner in which they deal with conflict and disagreement within their own boundaries. As has been pointed out, « If we are able to characterize the attitude which is adopted towards conflict, we have done much to characterize the entire organization ». This is most obvious if the object of inquiry is a state. It would be possible to include much that is essential to the understanding of Nazi Germany, for example, in a discussion of just this one point. When the test is applied to a private association, however, there is less agreement that the test is equally meaningful or, indeed, relevant at all. There is, in fact, a widespread assumption of unity inside private associations. This assumption appears to rest on the belief that, since most such associations are « voluntary » in the sense that membership or non-membership is

¹ See for example the definition of « faction » in Henry Pratt FAIRCHILD (ed.) *Dictionary of Sociology*, London, Routledge, and Kegan Paul, 1964, p. 113 as « developing within communities and established organizations out of internal conflict situations ».

presumed to be a matter of individual choice, the basis for conflict is absent.²

The role of intra-organizational conflict within national trade unions is of particular importance, and it may be seen as essentially related to the whole question of democracy within such organizations. Conflict can be seen as a phenomenon characteristic of all organizations, in varying degrees, forms, and contexts.³ Indeed, there is generalised anxiety over conflict in organizations, sometimes concerning its presence and often its absence.

Conflict is not always welcome in organizations, whatever form it takes. In trade unions, for example, « Leaders justify the non-existence of internal democracy with two powerful arguments. First, they point out, unions are organized for political or industrial conflict with non-union groups. Success in this struggle requires a unity not unlike that of the State in its foreign policy. Second, union members as a group reflect a greater homogeneity of background and interests and hence less basis for internal conflict than do the citizens of a nation ». ⁴ Yet it is the latter of these arguments which is only relatively true, and normally unrelated to the former. In fact, there may be a cleavage of political interests between leaders and members.

Further, it is clear that there are many lines of conflict in a union. There are, for example, differences of interest between groups with different seniority, between different age-groups, between groups in different plants, different places and different tasks, etc. We do not suggest that all these are equally important, or even that all represent conflicts: « However, where difference of interest does exist at all in any degree, there is a potential of conflict. This conflict, which takes the form of *factionalism*, is, to paraphrase the words of James Madison in his famous

² Lloyd FISHER and Grant McCONNELL, « Internal Conflict and Labor-Union Solidarity », in (ed.) A. KORNHAUSER et al, *Industrial Conflict*, New York, McGraw Hill, 1954, p. 132.

³ See for example Claggett C. SMITH, « A Comparative Analysis of Some Conditions and Consequences of Intra-Organizational Conflict », *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Cornell, Vol. 10, No. 4, March 1966, pp. 504-529.

⁴ C.P. MAGRATH, « Democracy in Overalls : The Futile Quest for Union Democracy », *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Cornell 12, 4, July 1959, p. 511.

discussion of faction, rooted in the nature of organization (if not in the nature of man) »⁵

Some consider factionalism, *if they indeed consider it at all* (as it is relatively neglected in the sociological and political science literature compared with the concept of say, party, or elite) as a problem of internal conflict which must be solved if the organization is to survive. Some consensus must exist if the organization is to be capable of action. There are various ways in which this necessary consensus may be achieved. These may be summarized under three headings; (1) devices to secure a homogeneous membership, (2) suppression of dissent, and (3) the institutionalization of conflict.⁶ It is the second and third of these factors with which we will most concern ourselves, and they do vary, as we will demonstrate, from one political culture to another, and especially, as we shall see, where factions are concerned.

Organizations consequently usually try to control the spread of deviance. One such form is a *taboo on the formalization of factions*.⁷ But permissiveness vis-à-vis factions does not *necessarily* lead to disruption, or even divisiveness. The organized expression of conflict may be necessary to *maintain the relationship* of the members of the faction to the organization.⁸ The alternative may be a breakaway organization, or expulsion of the members singly.

The strength of a movement, or collectivity, depends of course, to some degree on the homogeneity, if not always of membership, often of intention or goals. Factions, 'fractions', and such, are often seen as diminishing the pursuit of selected goals.

The response of the external environment is also an important factor to consider because factions may be discouraged when there are very active threats to the organization, without undue internal restrictions

⁵ FISHER & McCONNELL, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-133. « Faction » was originally used to refer to what has been later called « party » — for example, in the early politics of the United States. It had a similar usage in eighteenth century England, in the time of Burke. As political parties became more organized, factions became more or less fluid conflict groups within them.

⁶ FISHER & McCONNELL, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

⁷ Amitai ETZIONI, *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations*, Glencoe, Illinois, Free Press, 1961, p. 245.

⁸ Lewis COSER, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, London, Routledge, and Kegan Paul, 1956, p. 47.

actually having to be enforced. But, on the other hand, in some cases internal dissent may be positively encouraged by hostile outside interests.

Opposition and Factional Organization

Electoral opposition may, under very special circumstances, involve neither factions nor parties. As in postal votes in some professional associations⁹ a stable party system in unions is a rarity. Nevertheless, factions occur more widely than many would like to admit. A recent analysis by anthropologists has argued along the following lines:¹⁰ Factions are political conflict groups; with members recruited by the leader, on diverse principles. Conflict, it continues, produces at least two factions; if there is no conflict, faction is 'latent social structure'. The analysis adds that factions may be institutionalized in varying degrees, according to the society involved. Another view has looked at 'action-sets' as a more meaningful mode of analysis.¹¹ These have a degree of organization, but are nevertheless not quite definable as groups. They can however be dubbed interactive quasi-groups, for they are based on interacting sets of people. The focal point is a specific individual, but unlike the groups, the organization may be diffuse. He interacts with another member, but the latter does not necessarily have to interact with other members. The interaction is in a « series of action-sets » which makes the faction, and is not necessarily based on principle, only transaction. This latter view is less applicable to trade unions than the first, because union factions are organized to a minimal degree.

Barbash divides the forms of political organization to be found in unions into six types:¹² first, the party which he defines as open, permanent and formal; the best illustration of this would be in the Lipset *et al* study of the Typographers' Union; second, the club which can be defined as permanent but less formal and open — this is really a modification of the first type; third, the caucus which can be seen as permanent or temporary, informal and somewhat open. These are very

⁹ See J. David EDELSTEIN, « An Organizational Theory of Union Democracy », *American Sociological Review*, Washington, Vol. 32, Feb. 1967, pp. 24, 27.

¹⁰ Richard M. NICHOLAS, « Factions: A Comparative Analysis », in (ed.) Michael BANTON, *Political Systems & the Distribution of Power*, London, Tavistock, 1965, pp. 21-62.

¹¹ Adrian C. MAYER, « The Significance of Quasi-Groups in the Study of Complex Societies », in (ed.) Michael BANTON, *The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies*, London, Tavistock, 1970, for a broad anthropologist's view of political competition.

¹² Jack BARBASH, *American Unions: Structure, Government and Politics*, New York, Random House, 1967, pp. 131-133.

common in American unions although less so in British. An excellent example of a national caucus can be found in the U.A.W. (The United Automobile Workers) and meets each year at a Convention and is open to general membership, often serving as an outlet for membership criticism. The fourth kind is the work group, in which members unite on the basis of common skill. The fifth is the pressure group alliance which unites local interest groups, for example, the local American trades councils. The sixth type is the under-cover organization based on a more or less secret type of organization. A notable example of this is the Communist Party cell which consists of members of the Party operating within a particular union. Barbash goes on to define factionalism as « the term by which union leaders generally refer to the organized special interest groupings within the union ». ¹³

We shall use the term 'faction' to mean at least a *somewhat organized, special-purpose political group within a larger organization*. This seems to more-or-less encompass its conventional meaning. A local branch or other recognized, stable unit of a larger organization might very well support a faction, or engage in activities which a faction might undertake, without itself being a faction or a part of faction. Any individual member or sub-unit of the organization could engage in factional activity, which would mean activity in support of a faction or its aims. Loosely speaking, any political activity of a controversial nature, or in support of some sub-group, could be called 'factional', but in the absence of an organized faction we would prefer to equate factional with political. In unions and professional associations, where goals are so often economic in the crudest sense, Lasswell's definition of politics as the process through which it is decided who gets what, when, where and how, is particularly appropriate. ¹⁴ A « party » would then be a particular kind of faction: one which is stable, and appeals to the general electorate (ordinarily) for support.

SOURCES AND SUPPORTING STRUCTURES OF FACTIONALISM

Factionalism in Federal Organizations

Factionalism in federations of national trade unions is quite common in the western world. ¹⁵ Major political and industrial policy has often

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 131.

¹⁴ See Harold D. LASSWELL, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How*, Glencoe, Illinois, Free Press, 1951, pp. 1-2.

¹⁵ N.B., The undoubted intervention of foreign government, (such as the Soviet after the Revolution), labour international, and even specific foreign unions such as many American ones (in the cold war period) in union federation affairs as a factor stimulating factionalism.

been debated within the national unions in advance of, and decided at, meetings of trade union federations. It is true that factionalism is usually quite different in organizations consisting of subordinate organizations, rather than members. Factionalism in federations is usually based on coalitions of national unions, each dominated by its leadership and throwing its full weight (based on the practice of block voting) to one side or another. However, in some countries there are structural peculiarities within the federations which permit a closer link to factionalism in which the individual activist or secondary leader may participate. In others, including Britain, where this is not the case, an impending decision by the Trade Union Congress or the Labour Party can be the occasion for intense factional struggles within some of the national unions. One may also speculate that mass media coverage of expressions of important political differences within a federation may sometimes contribute to the politicization of the public, including trade union members, which in turn may affect a factional situation within a national union. Finally, the internal politics of a national union are sometimes related to its external relationships, federal and otherwise, in fairly complex ways, as we shall illustrate later.¹⁶

In general, factionalism and even its supportive organizational structures are seldom to be entirely explained in their own terms. It has been suggested that : « decision-making processes (in labour federations) retain more heterogeneous and involve more levels in the organization in (a) smaller labour movements, (b) industrial relations systems without or (with) less formalized machinery for national socio-economic policy-making, and (c) cases of considerable ideological tradition and deep historical roots of the labour movement and the political system in general. »¹⁷

¹⁶ Where there is no definite knowledge of causality, we may argue that factionalism refers to activities in one body calculated to lead to, or with a strong possibility of leading to, the organization of some opposition or subgroups within another union.

¹⁷ *Op cit.*, p. 199. In this respect it is interesting that the national unions in the American Federation of Labour successfully reduced the representation of the inter-union city federations at the Federation's conventions, and limited their powers in other ways, in 1890's and early 1900's. C.F. Lloyd ULMAN, *The Rise of the National Union*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1968, pp. 378-387.

Other factors which may be relevant in the breakdown of the control a national union holds over its representatives to a labour federation are the absence of the practice of block voting, or the presence of uninstructed delegates to the Federation's convention. This, in fact, occurred in the American Federation of Labour at the turn of the century, and enabled the Socialist Party to gain considerable support for its resolutions among delegates to the A.F. of L. 's conventions.¹⁸

Competition for Membership

Unions often compete against one another, either for membership or for political hegemony within the labour movement. In Britain and the United States, only the exceptional circumstances of a possible incipient breakaway group to a rival union (or for the formation of a rival union), could competition for members be called factional in itself, and even then, this might be problematical. More common is the struggle for political leadership of national trade union federations or labour parties, involving a struggle over policy and control over the elected or appointed position. « Factionalism » usually implies a struggle over policies or scarce resources (including leadership posts) *within* an organization, and one may ask under what conditions competition among national trade unions or their leaders is likely to lead to factions internal to the respective national unions, or at least one of them.

On the American scene, there have been important examples of factions which eventually broke away from their national unions: the formation of the C.I.O. in the 1930's involved such transfers of local unions and members, to a certain extent. (Such developments have not been seen in Britain, even in the case of the *Minority Movement* in the late 1920's.)

Union factionalism based on competition between unions or union federations would ordinarily be short-lived, since a split, a change of affiliation or an expulsion of the proponents of the other organization would ordinarily occur fairly soon. However, in large Italian workplaces there is institutionalized competition between the three major trade union federations — Communist, Socialist and Catholic dominated — for re-

¹⁸ Philip S. FONER, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, Volume III, 1900-1909, New York, International Publishers, 1964, p. 431.

presentation on the works councils. Thus, the competition is intra-organizational, in the sense that it takes place within the workplace.¹⁹

Indirect Intra-Federal Influences, via the Mass Media

The leaders of one national union no doubt ordinarily exert little direct factional influence on another, without some structured means of direct contact with their members. However, some leaders such as Walter Reuther of the United Automobile Workers of America were held in great esteem by members of other unions, and no doubt, for many members in greater esteem than their own leaders. One might at least suspect a tendency toward the broad diffusion of the political views of prominent labour leaders to union members, via the mass media. Rarely, there might be an institutionalized means for such a leader to receive an invitation to address members of another union from rank-and-filers in that union, as in the Durham Mineworkers, where each branch casts three votes annually for speakers to be invited to the next annual gala. Clement Attlee and Michael Foot, representing right and left Labour points of view, were among the four invited speakers in 1955²⁰ in spite of the fact that the leadership of the Durham region was firmly in the right-wing camp. Labour Members of Parliament rather than leaders of other national unions are usually invited, although the latter are not excluded. The Durham galas have been described as the largest meetings of unionists and their families in the world, with 250,000 claimed in attendance in 1960.²¹

Probably, knowledge of most political differences within the labour movement through the mass media reaches the members of national unions with the coverage undoubtedly more comprehensive in Britain than the United States. For example, on 22 May 1969 the press reported the support of President Nixon's proposed Safeguard Anti-Ballistic Missile by the AFL-CIO executive council by a vote of nineteen to five, with three abstentions, with mention of the names of the dissenters.²²

¹⁹ Walter GALENSON, *Trade Union Democracy in Western Europe*, Berkeley, Cal., University of California Press, 1961, p. 5.

²⁰ *Souvenir of the Durham Miners' Association Seventy-Seventh Annual Gala*, Durham, Durham Miners' Association, 1960, p. 29. In 1959, Aneurin BEVAN, M.P., and Christopher MAYHEW, M.P. and Arthur BLENKINSOP, M.P., appeared.

²¹ *Durham County Advertiser*, Durham, July 22, 1960, p. 1. Those invited to the 1961 gala included Hugh GAITSKELL and Michael FOOT, prominent right and left wing Labour Party leaders at that time.

²² Victor RIESEL, « Labour Backs Safeguard ABM », *Post-Standard*, Syracuse, N.Y., 22 May 1969, p. 7. RIESEL's columns are nationally syndicated.

And, on 25 May 1970, the *New York Times* reported on its first page : « The head of one of the nation's largest trade unions broke today with the leadership of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations and condemned the Vietnam and Cambodian war policies of the Nixon Administration ». Jacob S. Potofsky, the leader in question, was president of the 417,000 member Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and a member of the AFL-CIO executive council. On the same day, newspaper advertisements appeared on the West Coast signed by 451 union officers, taking a similar position. Such public controversy within the American labour movement is, however, uncommon and no doubt can seldom be reflected directly in the internal politics of the national unions. However, it may at times provide a setting favourable to factional disputes.

Factions and Temporary Extra-Labour Alliances

Most union factionalism which extends beyond the boundaries of particular national unions is still within the bounds of the labour movement, loosely considered to include socialistic and other groups primarily oriented toward workers or unions as their field of activity. However, at times politicians outside the labour movement and the government have played important roles. This was true in 1969 when the West Virginia miners struck, apparently spontaneously, against unsafe conditions in the mines and a failure of the mine owners and government to establish and maintain adequate safety standards. Their main spokesman became Congressman Ken Hechler, of West Virginia, who was ungrudging in his identification with the striking miners, and who attacked the national union leaders as well as the mine owners. Hechler aligned himself with the newly established faction supporting executive board member Yablonski for the presidency of the union against the incumbent, Boyle.²³ Yablonski claimed intimidation and violence by the union leadership against himself and his supporters, and appealed to the Secretary of Labor for an investigation. Upon his defeat in the national referendum he claimed fraud, and again asked for government intervention. He was murdered in December 1969 and within a few months grand juries had indicted a former local official of the miners' union, along with four others, on an accusation of organizing the killing. Yablonski's supporters accused the Secretary of Labor of lying and outright misrepresentation after the murder, and of not pressing the investigation.²⁴

²³ See *Union Democracy in Action*, New York, No. 37, Feb. 1970, p. 4.

²⁴ *New York Times*, New York, 27 May 1970, p. 29.

A nationally syndicated columnist pointed out that the Democratic head of the Senate Labor Committee, which had \$265,000 appropriated for an investigation of the events surrounding the election campaign and murder, was « clearly taking it easy on the squalid UMW hierarchy to avoid offending his friends in organized labour. He is heavily dependent upon the unions which had given his re-election priority over all other Congressional candidates this year ». ²⁵

A West Virginia medical doctor who had campaigned successfully for state and federal mine health and safety legislation, and who later supported Yablonski's try for the mine unions's presidency, ran in the May 1970 West Virginia Democratic Congressional primary, « banking on the 30,000 miners and family members of voting age in his district to help give him a majority in the contest . . . » ²⁶

Thus, the most important rank-and-file revolt in the Mine Workers in decades involved a Democratic Congressman, and the Secretary of Labor of the Republican administration, and perhaps the leaders of the AFL-CIO either actively in support of, or passively in opposition to, the revolt.

Factional Implications of Occupational Sub-Groups

It has been argued that occupational groups could not be the basis for a sustained internal democratic political life within a union, since « those interest groups which were in a minority could never hope to have their policies adopted ; » and further, that « it is likely that industrial unions must be dictatorial if they are to survive » in order « to arbitrate interest conflicts which cannot be settled by simply counting which interest group has more members » ²⁷

Occupational diversity can be a problem even in a professional association, as shown in a recent discussion within the American Psychological Association : « We (the academic psychologists) are beset on three sides, by professional psychologists who want APA to serve their

²⁵ Jack ANDERSON, « Labor Ally Delays Mine Union Probe », *Post-Standard*, Syracuse, N.Y., 30 May 1970, p. 4. ANDERSON's columns are nationally syndicated.

²⁶ « Pathologist Prospects — for Votes » (unsigned) *Medical World News*, New York, 8 May 1970, pp. 24-25. Reprints of this article were circulated nationally by mail shortly before the primary, along with an appeal for funds for the candidacy of H.A. WELLS, the doctor in question.

²⁷ Seymour M. LIPSET, Martin TROW, and James COLEMAN, *Union Democracy*, Glencoe, Illinois ; Free Press, 1956, pp. 307-308.

social causes, and by professional managers and communications specialists, who wish to govern us in the name of ‘scientific management’ . . .

At present, there is a move, apparently without serious opposition, to further open the rolls of APA . . . Without contesting these moves, one may note that a consequence will be that research scholars will become an even smaller minority within APA. Under these circumstances, can a democratic structure work? When issues arise where the professional psychologist’s interest is opposed to that of the academic psychologist, is it fair that a bare majority prevail? . . . If our interests truly diverge (a point on which I am not convinced), perhaps the time has come for APA to become a looser federation. »²⁸

While occupational diversity can probably not easily be the basis for an internally democratic organizational life, it is nevertheless often the basis of transient factional activity. Where it receives formal recognition through representation of sub-groups, for example on executive committees, it may even contribute at times towards the democratic process. At any rate, differences in perceived occupational interests are often reflected in factional activity. « Diversity based on skill interests is seen most directly in the local union because it is closest to the job. The tyre builders in the American Rubber Workers have been described as ‘a strong united work group in the plant and within the union . . . they chose their elected officials upon the basis of service to the tire-builders not the union’. In the Transport Workers Union of the New York City transit system, George Taylor has reported : « the craftsmen did not think that the leadership was adequately defining their particular interest . . . » « . . . Women members in a meatpacking local organized to oust a male president who they felt had agreed too readily to eliminate their job opportunities. In an auto local, the night shift workers provided the margin for the defeat of an incumbent officer because he called union meetings at a time when they could not attend . . . In the Musicians Union a large West Coast local seceded from the national union in protest against the use of record royalties to support unemployed musicians . . . »²⁹

²⁸ Jane LOEVINGER, Statement in « APA and Public Policy : Should We Change our Tax-Exempt Status » *American Psychologist*, Washington, Volume 25, 7 July 1970, pp. xv-xvi.

²⁹ BARBASH, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-128.

There has been at least one important instance in Britain where leftwing politics and occupational interests have combined, within a national union, with great effect on collective bargaining and, less clearly, on the union itself.³⁰

Factionalism within unions often thus reflects the influence of competing external organizations or forces, particularly those with structures penetrating or overlapping those of the individual unions. The fact of ideological penetration has been noted,³¹ and offered as an explanation for democracy in the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, with the suggestion that, in general, a stable organizational democracy may be sustained by competition among external political forces, (a) « the organization itself is non-partisan but provides only an opportunity, of a forum, within which contending positions may be heard » ; (b) « the issues themselves are not matters of life and death » to the organization ; and (c) particularly where « a mechanism of structured conflict seems to be the only method » for determining the outcome of the ideological competition. An important aspect of such structure is the right, supported by values and traditions, to further a policy through the available mechanism. The major difficulty with this approach is in the relatively unspecified supportive organizational forms which deserve greater emphasis in a society where democratic norms are assumed.

While occupational heterogeneity is probably not the optimum condition for a stable democracy in unions it often plays a positive role in the usually difficult climate for democracy found in such organizations.³² In the absence of a broader politicization of the membership, a moderate degree of heterogeneity or a clear-cut differentiation without sharp clashes in interest often seem to play an important second-best role. Certainly, factional tendencies would often be becalmed without them. The struct-

³⁰ See Philip S. BAGWELL, *The Railwaymen*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1963, pp. 349-350, on the Vigilance Committee in the National Union of Railwaymen.

³¹ John G. CRAIG and Edward GROSS, « The Forum Theory of Organizational Democracy : Structured Guarantees as Time-Related Variables », *American Sociological Review*, Washington, Vol. 35, No. 1, February 1970, pp. 19-33.

³² Professional associations might very well be included in this generalization, although it applies less broadly to them. A lack of participation and opposition in such organizations has somewhat different roots than in trade unions. We would speculate that professional associations with important collective bargaining functions for employee-members, on the other hand, would tend to be more democratic than either manual unions or non-bargaining professional associations.

ural, ideological or normative bases for the avoidance of splits due to heterogeneity are beyond our scope here.³³

EFFECTS OF FACTIONALISM

Observability and Factions

It may be the role of a group or faction within an organization is to make *observable* that which has been ignored. Public opinion affects decision-makers to the degree that it is observable.³⁴ The more observable a dissident group is, the greater its chance to pursue effective opposition. An overt, organized faction may have this quality. But the more observable it is, the more it may appear as an attack on union solidarity. Phenomena like factions may be one of the forms Merton seeks when he asks how unorganized interests may make their orientations observable. Ephemeral, as compared to basic interests, are more likely to involve unorganized, expressive than instrumental behaviour. Factions may also have another consequence. Groups with strongly held views may have a quite considerable effect on the opinions of the members, where the latter hold their views weakly.³⁵

The removal of a proscribed organization, or formal group, will not necessarily dispose of the problem it posed. As Merton further remarks :³⁶ « any attempt to eliminate an existing social structure without providing adequate alternative structures for fulfilling the functions previously fulfilled by the abolished organization is doomed to failure ». This theorem, which Merton considers basic, has implications for the problem of opposition in unions. It affects not only factions, but also amalgamated units of unions, or unions themselves which have been submerged into larger unions. Certainly, to change structures requires an understanding of the complexities of organizations, whether or not the theorem is an overstatement. Of course, a great deal hinges on the word « adequate ».

Observable Factionalism in British and American Unions

Dissenters are « typically part and parcel of any mass membership organization » and « individual union members or even informal groups

³³ Among the formal mechanisms often used in trade unions are occupational or industrial representation on national executive committees, and autonomy in the acceptance of collective bargaining agreements.

³⁴ Robert K. MERTON, *Social Theory & Social Structure*, Glencoe, Illinois, Free Press, 1957, p. 353.

³⁵ See *Ibid.*, p. 333.

³⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 81.

of members frequently contend that their specific job grievances are not being pressed vigorously, their suggested contract demands neglected and their candidates for office (perhaps of their particular religious or ethnic origin) spurned by the union leadership ». ³⁷ However, such expressions of discontent need not lead to either the formation of nationally organized internal factions or opposition to national leaders in elections. Lipset has stated that : « actual opposition to the re-election of national leaders is almost non-existent among most European unions » ³⁸, even when attempts are made to change union policies at national conferences. Neither the British nor the American union movements correspond to this picture, but differ however in contrasting ways.

It is alleged that factionalism in British unions is almost invariably only semi-organized, or covertly organized, or at least restrained in organizational techniques ; ³⁹ on the other hand, factions have been observed to be organized openly and formally in many American unions. While the typical election of an American top official is uncontested, five out of fifty-one large American blue collar and semi-white collar unions had defeats of top officers during the 1949-66, and another five had defeats of second-ranking officers. Among thirty-one blue collar British unions with 15,000 or more members, fifteen elected their top officers to permanent posts. However, one of the remaining unions defeated its top officer and another its second-ranking officer. Very few British vacancies for the top officer were uncontested, and the typical filling of a vacancy involved a much closer vote in the United States. Thus the American unions as a group can be characterized as having had an occasional revolution during 1949-66, while the British had fairly regular competition. In neither country was the mean closeness of periodic elections high, but for those British unions which held periodic elections the mean was higher than the American.

American Factions : some recent illustrations

As has been recently observed : « Several American institutions, among them universities, business, church and government, have been

³⁷ Peter HENLE, « Some Reflections on Organized Labor & the New Militants », *Monthly Labor Review*, Washington, July 1969, p. 20.

³⁸ Seymour M. LIPSET, « Trade Unions and Social Structure : II », *Industrial Relations*, Berkeley, Vol. 1, No. 2, April 1962, p. 92.

³⁹ See Benjamin C. ROBERTS, *Trade Union Government and Administration in Great Britain*, London, Bell, 1956, pp. 243 ff. A partial but apparently inconsistent example is USDAW. See Christopher NORWOOD, M.P., « Secret Caucus Rule in USDAW », *Voice of the Unions*, London, May 1969, pp. 145-163.

confronted by disruptive protest intended to force changes in policies or procedures. Until recently, labor unions, which traditionally have been viewed as economic protest organizations, have been spared as a target of such protest.»⁴⁰ Although expressions dissent have typically taken the form of rejections of contracts or the voting out of union leaders, a recent form of dissent involves Black workers forming organizations outside normal union channels.

A brief discussion of the nature of organized factionalism in terms of such new movements will help to illustrate the presence of at least some of the factors described earlier. Of course, in the U.S. the situation has long varied greatly from union to union. If the well-known formal two-party system of the Typographers (ITU) discussed at length by Lipset, Trow and Coleman in *Union Democracy* (1956) seems exceptional, we wonder what a British observer might make of the 'Black Power' caucus in the United Automobile Workers.⁴¹

Further illustrations of the degree of organization in such caucuses in American unions is provided in another recent example,⁴² — the rise of the Black workers' organized union groups based on the necessity, in their view, to fight union bureaucracy. Their leaders insisted that they were not an exclusively Black organization, yet they offered what such workers wanted and they decided to go about the task, not by excluding whites, but by controlling the caucus for their own interests. Their activities in Detroit were a direct challenge to Walter Reuther of the United Automobile Workers' Union (U.A.W.). The caucus in fact grew out of the Trade Union Leadership Council (T.U.L.C.) ten years ago, which was revived after the Black leaders had called a meeting and sent letters to Black activists to form an organization intended to be separate from the « vicious Racist Extremists », like the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (D.R.U.M.), although it was noted that there were more Black workers outside picketing the meeting hall of the Ad Hoc Committee, than all the Blacks inside it.

One school of thought still is reasonably optimistic about the possibility of continued cohesion within the American Labour movement.⁴³ It

⁴⁰ HENLE, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁴¹ *New York Times*, 1 October 1968.

⁴² Charles DENBY, « Black Caucuses in the Unions », *New Politics*, New York, Vol. 7, No. 3, Summer 1968, pp. 10-17.

⁴³ Ray MARSHALL, *The Negro and Organized Labor*, New York, Wiley, 1965, p. 117.

believes that the Negro-labour split will probably continue, but in the long run will become less intense « because Negro leaders realise their dependence on the Labor Movement and discriminating unions will be subjected to increasing regulation by the Federal Government, the Courts and the AFL-CIO. » It believes that the trends in these directions are clearly visible and that although some blacks have been estranged from the labour movement, there is no strong possibility of them forming all-black organizations 'for bargaining purposes'. They « appear to believe that the best chance for a solution to their problems is not to secede, but to exert maximum pressures within the mainstream of the Labor Movement ». This view seems the most reasonable, but the long run is not yet here, and in the short run much depends upon the rate of unemployment and the economic situation generally. It is necessary to add : « As recent events have demonstrated, the rise of new, more disruptive groups of dissidents in various arenas of American life, does not always follow predicted paths ». ⁴⁴

Factional Terminology

Another illustration of the way in which American factionalism operates, in contrast with the British, can be seen in the terminology of a recent call to a « National Rank and File Action Conference » (held in late June 1970 in Chicago), which was intended to defend trade unions against « attacks from government and corporations, to defend the right to bargain and strike, to defend the membership right to ratify contracts, to build rank-and-file power, to get labor moving to take the offensive against racism, inflation and corporation attack for economic well-being of all, to end the war — to get out of Asia, etc. ». What is particularly interesting is not so much the substance of the Conference, but in the pamphlet advertising it, the criteria of qualification to attend. It stated that any trade unionist who represents not merely a local union or its committee but « a group of workers organized in any form of rank and file committee or caucus (such as a Black caucus, Puerto Rican, or Chicago caucus, women's or youth caucus, tax committee, peace committee, committee for the right to vote on contracts, etc. » ⁴⁵ can attend, as well as any worker representing such groups as unorganized or unemployed workers and any full-time trade union leaders who support the goals

⁴⁴ HENLE, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

⁴⁵ Pamphlet, *A Call to a National Rank & File Action Conference*, Chicago, June 1970, pp. 1-2.

outlined in the call to action. This reference to organized internal groups, most no doubt in opposition to their unions' policies if not to the officials themselves, pinpoints the unique way in which openly organized factions operate in its American context. It is extremely unlikely that such a sentence could appear even in an unofficial Shop Stewards' publication in Britain. The term « caucus » would rarely be used, and indeed the reference to any worker representing a group of unorganized workers would seem rather odd or out of place. However, the interunion character of the conference, unusual in the United States, has similarities to the British national shop stewards conferences. On the basis of the foregoing recent American examples, it would be unreasonable to characterize factions as comparatively unstructured conflict groups.⁴⁶ We must not however, go *too* far in the opposite direction in failing to draw a relative distinction between parties in union politics, and less organized or less stable forms of opposition. Any treatment of the problem must deal adequately with groups which *are* comparatively structured, thus recognizing the full range of possibilities.

British Factionalism : some characteristics illustrated⁴⁷

Factions in British unions are manifest in these less organized and less overt ways : —

1. Loose communications networks of like-minded, usually politicized, officers and activists, each participant establishing his own sub-network via the use of letters, telephone and occasional personal contact. (May overlap with 3).
2. Communications networks sometimes co-ordinated by members of outside political parties or groups, for example Communists, left-wing or Gaitskellite members of the Labour Party during 1959-60. (May overlap with 3).
3. Shop stewards movements, usually left-wing, often including members of various unions.
4. In a few instances, unpublicized but not entirely covert meetings of full-time officials, say during annual or semi-annual meetings of full-time staff.

⁴⁶ See NICHOLAS, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-62.

⁴⁷ c.f. Roderick MARTIN, « Union Democracy : An Explanatory Framework », *Sociology*, Oxford, Vol. 2, No. 2, May 1968, p. 214. ff.

British Miners : a case study

The case of the British Mineworkers, in our view, is a good example to illustrate the difference between British and American factionalism even among fairly politicized unions. In spite of the fact that the different regional governments have been controlled by Communists, ex-Communist leftists, and orthodox Labour leaderships in competition with each other for national posts, little national factional literature has existed since at least 1946 even during contests for the national presidency and general secretaryship. Open coalitions of like-minded regional leaderships in support of national candidates would, according to an interview with a national leader, have been considered illegitimate by the membership. This is in spite of the fact that some regions were obviously dominated by those of different political persuasions, with different policies advocated for the national union.

Instead, there were isolated covert attempts to provide publicity in the form of literature ostensibly unrelated, in timing, to the coming elections. With one possible exception, it is extremely doubtful that even these received much circulation outside the authors' regions. The exception to this absence of campaign literature was the publication of Laurence Daly's *The Miners and the Nation*, during his election campaign in 1968. It is significant that the defeated candidate subsequently protested this as an unfair attempt to influence the election.

The absence of open factions or national election campaign literature is especially significant in the light of the fact that the national rule book contains no prohibition against electioneering of any kind; and that no one prominent in the union — left, right or centre, has made an issue of the apparent ban on election literature.⁴⁸

It must not be assumed that this reflects the wishes or practice of all sections of the Mineworkers union. *The Derbyshire Miner*, official newspaper of the Derbyshire region, has printed prominently displayed election addresses of candidates for full-time regional office, and the Scottish regional journal has also given space to candidates. The relatively free dissemination of literature occurs in most wards in the elections for the rank-and-file executive council of the regional officer.

⁴⁸ The early post war minutes of a sub-committee of the National Executive contain a proposal for the circulation of election addresses in a specific national election. No positive action on this recommendation was found in the N.E.C. minutes, and it appears it was not effectuated.

In Durham, on the other hand, even organized canvassing is prohibited in favour of candidates for full-time regional office (and perhaps others), by rule.

It should be clear that there is no uniformly accepted set of organizational norms concerning the circulation of literature in the Mineworkers. Nor is there a general acceptance of permanent status for their full-time national officials, in spite of the fact that permanence has been the rule since 1889.

In the Mineworkers and the Engineers as in most British unions, extraunion literature of a political-factional nature circulates freely. An occasional, small independent miners' paper of militant leftist hue has circulated, primarily in Yorkshire. Copies have seemed typically difficult to obtain, and the paper has lived an almost fugitive existence, no doubt for want of financial support and regularized channels for circulation. But there are other means of publicity. A manifesto apparently representing the views of a group of left-wing miners was published in the *Voice of the Unions*, and sets out a broadsheet for industrial democracy. One important section of this publication deals with the Mineworkers and industrial democracy. The manifesto proposes a rank-and-file national executive committee, but also argues that, in the last analysis, democracy depends on the people at base and on the shop floor finding ways to act together to make the structure work; that the branches should form action committees and joint action committees with other branches to consider what must be done in the pit, in the union, and in the local community.⁴⁹ There are also specific proposals for the reorganization of the coal industry with union participation.

Perhaps unofficial norms against factionalism may be subverted, or even break down completely, when competition becomes fierce. In the most recent election of the president in the British Mineworkers, the winner was accused (apparently without denial) of having sent a large staff of campaigners into regions outside his own, while the official newspaper of the Scottish region urged support of its candidate for the presidency in bold headlines. Such changes in practices may be irreversible, at least in this union.

⁴⁹ See for example: « A Programme for Action » (published in *Voice of The Unions*, London, Christmas, 1969).

The legitimacy of an open display of political programmes, and the exercise of such rights by the regions and by individual miners, has not led to open factions or even an effective circulation of factional literature on a national scale.

Communist and Anti-Communist Factions in British Unions

This discussion would not be complete without a consideration of the role of specifically Communist and anti-Communist factions, and of such external organizations. Whether or not polarization centering around such groups has been warranted, from the point of view of either right or left-wing unionists, superficially at least it has appeared to have dominated the political struggles in certain unions at certain times. The Communists have often been the best or even only organized left-wing group in some unions, and have thus been in a position to take advantage of militant or left-wing sentiment to achieve elective office. Presumably, in response to this, organizations have been formed to operate within unions to counter what they claimed to be an organized attempt of the official international Communist movement to dominate the labour movement. In addition to these special anti-Communist groups, the official federations of national unions have at times intervened. This applies to both Britain and the United States, but the struggle has been more prolonged in the former.⁵⁰ The mass media have of course often exaggerated the role of the Communist Party, particularly in unofficial (or wildcat) strikes.

The persistence with which the official Communist Party has played a role in British intra-union politics can only be understood in the light of the organizational weakness of the non-Communist left, and what may be characterized as the common British (but not American) view among workers that the Party is the left-wing of the working class and socialist movement — i.e. still within an acceptable range of deviation. The weakness of the non-Communist left is international, although not universal, and probably stems ultimately from the ubiquitous presence of the Communist countries and the cold war. But some additional explanation is required for the relative lack of intra-union organization of left-Labour socialists, more popular than the Communists, such as those centering around *Tribune*.

⁵⁰ See Henry PELLING, *The British Communist Party*, London, Black, 1958, for the broad background, pp. 1-25 esp.

Perhaps our statement that Communists are considered a part of the working-class movement in Britain is an overstatement, but the fact is that anti-Communism as such is not socially acceptable among most groups of unions. For example, the behaviour of a union member publicly arguing at a branch meeting that a candidate should not be elected to union office because he is a Communist would probably, we believe, be regarded as eccentric and socially unacceptable. At any rate, it « just isn't done » in most local situations. This has not been the case in the United States, and not simply since the cold war. The greater British tolerance of dissent is no doubt a factor, but a tolerance of supporters of the Conservative Party is not particularly great in many unions, for example the Mineworkers.

As long ago as 1928, the T.U.C. attacked the influence of such organizations in the unions and the 1929 Congress warned them of disruptive Communist activities. At that time the Party was trying to set up breakaway organizations through the tactic of the « Minority Movement, » whose aim was to set up contacts in this country for the « Red International of Labour Unions ». (R.I.L.U.) This tactic failed and a consequent tactic of infiltration led the T.U.C. in 1934 to counter the Communists, particularly in the Trade Councils. At that time the Communist Party was trying to secure affiliation to the Labour Party under the guise of the « United Front » campaign. A similar « United Front » policy was pursued from 1939 to 1941 for the purpose of « stopping the war », and after 1941 for the purpose of « winning the war ». There were also similar attempts in the immediate post-War period.⁵¹ Two policy statements on the trade unions and Communism were published by the T.U.C. in 1948, and there was considerable activity via official union channels during the 'cold-war' years to challenge Communist influence within trade unions.

One anti-Communist counter-organization, Common Cause, has been quite active⁵² backing anti-communist factional activity. It was organized in England in 1951, although it had been founded in the United States in 1947 by a wealthy American, Mrs. Natalie Wales Paine, with

⁵¹ See The Trades Union Congress, *The Tactics of Disruption: Communist Methods Exposed*, London, 1948, pp. 5-6, and the Trades Union Congress, *Defend Democracy: Communist Activities Examined*, London, 1948, pp. 1-2.

⁵² See Clive JENKINS, « The Common Cause », *Tribune*, London, 25 September, 1964. See also Mark FORE, *G.M.W.U. - Scab Union*, Solidarity Pamphlet, London, No. 32, 1970, p. 5, p. 9, on the background of « Common Cause ».

the help of Lord Malcolm Douglas-Hamilton, the Tory M.P. for Invernesshire. At this time the General Secretary was Dr. C.A. Smith, who at one time had been Chairman of the Independent Labour Party. In 1954, the Association of Cinema Television & Allied Technicians put a motion on the agenda of the Labour Party Conference, asking that membership of the Common Cause be declared incompatible with membership of the Labour Party because the group of that organization had tried to influence balloting at the A.C.T.T. Annual Conference. The Common Cause Advisory Council of 39 contained 13 persons of Labour or union connections. At the end of 1956, following internecine disputes, Dr. Smith resigned and most of the Labour-connected people with him. At this point, Sir Hartley Shawcross joined the Advisory Council. It was reported in May 1969 that Common Cause was acting as the channel by which money from industrial sources was passed to the Industrial Research Information Services, an anti-Communist body organized by former trade unionists with Jack Tanner, former leader of the then A.E.U., as President. Also connected with the Common Cause was Jim Matthews, an ex-official of the N.U.G.M.W., but there is still allegedly an American link via directors of J. Walter Thompson Ltd., and The Readers Digest Association, etc.

I.R.I.S. concentrates its activities on exposing Communists and militants in the trade union movement in its publication, *I.R.I.S. News*. It had been condemned by the T.U.C. in 1960 as an organization which « appears mainly to be devoted to influencing union elections ». ⁵³ The organization had been set up in 1956 and according to this source its manager for the first few years was James Nash, who then became head of the Research and Publicity Department of the National Union of Seamen. Jack Tanner has been mentioned, but another one of Tanner's co-directors was Stanley James, formerly an assistant General Secretary of the National Union of Seamen. Also involved are Ray Gunter, ex-Minister of Labour, and Tom Williamson, ex-General Secretary of the G.M.W.U. The I.R.I.S. offices originally were situated in Maritime House, the N.U.S. Headquarters, and a lot of its activities have been concentrated on Communist infiltration of the Seamen's union. *I.R.I.S. News* is still published and concentrates on « exposing » to trade union members, candidates whom they believe to be Communists, Trotskyists, candidates supported by these, or fellow travellers in coming union elections.

⁵³ See Paul FOOT, « The Seamen's Struggle » in (eds) Robin BLACKBURN and Alexander COCKBURN, *The Incompatibles : Trade Union Militancy and the Consensus*, London, Penguin, 1967, pp. 178-179.

BRITISH AND AMERICAN DIFFERENCES COMPARED

Culture, Contra-culture and Organizational History

There are a number of difficulties in the attempt to explain behaviour on the basis of culture. One is that fact that the explanations tend to be circular — common values and norms are frequently assumed from behaviour, and continuities presumably transmitted through social learning are assumed on the basis of what may be simply an adaptation to a self-continuing existential situation. In modern societies the degree of consensus on any question or practice tends to be exaggerated by social commentators. And finally, when the concept of culture is applied (perhaps implicitly) to life within a large organization, which differs substantially from the total society, probably too much is assumed concerning the capacity of the organization to envelope the individual in its unique system without administratively controlled sanctions. Even proponents of the idea of organizational culture have recognized that it is less dependent upon personality development and more on the « tribulations and rewards of adult behavioural requirements. »⁵⁴

With specific reference to the working classes of Britain and the United States, Mann has argued after a survey of the evidence on their political and economic attitudes : « Their compliance might be more convincingly explained by their pragmatic acceptance of specific roles than by any positive normative commitment to society. »⁵⁵ He also argues that « working-class *individuals* (our emphasis) . . . exhibit less internal *consistency* in their values than middle class people ; »⁵⁶ and that « the working-class is more likely to support deviant values if those values relate either to concrete everyday life or to vague populist concepts than if they relate to an abstract political philosophy. »⁵⁷ Furthermore, there are some important general objections to the idea that values integrate and legitimate modern social structures.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Daniel KATZ and Robert L. KAHN,, *The Social Psychology of Organizations*, New York, Wiley, 1966, pp. 56-57, 65-66.

⁵⁵ Michael MANN, « The Social Cohesion of Liberal Democracy », *American Sociological Review*, Washington, Vol. 35, No. 3, June 1970, p. 435.

⁵⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 432.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 432.

⁵⁸ One of the more important for our present purpose is that : « Most general values, norms and social beliefs usually mentioned as integrating societies are extremely vague, and can be used to legitimate any social structure, existing or not. » *Op. cit.*, p. 424.

The most basic relevant argument to date with respect to British-American differences in political culture, with emphasis on the psychological orientation toward social objects⁵⁹ has been that while there are no important British-American differences in perceived ability to « do something about an unjust law, »⁶⁰ the British have greater expectations of « serious consideration in a government office and by the police. »⁶¹

From data such as this, it is generalized that the British are more accepting of the independent authority of governmental institutions. It is this basic fact which is translated into a description in terms of a greater British « deference. » Historically, it is argued, the English « . . . had an elaborate set of rights dating at least from the seventeenth century . . . These legal rights were enforced, not by political means, but through the independent courts of law. For our purposes the important historical development is that the political rights acquired by Britons in the nineteenth century did not come into conflict with the idea of an independent governmental authority limited by some higher law. The notion of the independent authority of government under law has continued to exist side by side with the notion of the political power of the people. The old authoritarian institutions and symbols were not replaced by democratization, but continued to coexist with the new institutions »⁶².

If anything, confidence in the administrative authorities was increased, « by adding a new force for the enforcement of the rules of law. »⁶³

One problem which arises immediately from the apparent greater confidence in government administrators and the police which has been labelled deference, is, is it deserved? Are there objective bases for greater consideration of the citizen? If so, is this properly called deference? This is certainly a problem in the area of trade union government, where the British union officials would appear to be more restricted in their powers, most honest financially, and more committed to general social ideals. The truth could very well be rather complex: the British may have both a deserved respect (as compared to Americans) for administrative authority

⁵⁹ Gabriel A. ALMOND and Sidney VERBA, *The Civic Culture*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 13.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 177.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

in unions and government, where fairness of such administration is concerned, and they may have a generalized, irrelevant respect (for example, toward aristocratic titles and institutions). Would a dishonest union official be treated more tolerantly by British unionists? Would an open dictator have more control over his membership? This seems highly unlikely; the answer lies in the opposite direction.

Lipset has attempted to explain the harsher measures often taken in American unions to suppress opposition, largely in terms of prevalent American values, as we have seen. American workers are potentially more rebellious because they are less deferential. At the same time, Americans and their union leaders in particular place a greater value on income, conspicuous consumption, and success. The American union leaders receive higher salaries than the British, relative to their members, and on the whole have both more motivation to retain their offices and more need to suppress opposition through constitutional and other means. While in both countries the top officers are seldom removed from office, in Britain this is made more tolerable by the greater participation of rank-and-filers in duties which, in the United States, would be performed to a greater extent by the much more numerous full-time officials. The British willingness to perform unpaid work is presumably related to the greater prevalence of what Lipset calls 'aristocratic' values in the society,⁶⁴ including an orientation toward service, while the American norm is that work should be paid for. Thus, greater American rebelliousness requires, and begets, greater suppression. The opposite side of the coin is that British deference is reflected in a willingness to accept permanent, full-time, top (and other) officials, which most British unions, in fact, have. Finally, the American governmental system sets the example of strong presidential rule, which most unions and other voluntary associations have, constitutionally and in practice.

We cannot do justice to this line of reasoning here, as it may apply to union factionalism. Instead, we shall simply suggest some considerations which lead to other interpretations of the differences in factionalism between the two countries. Some are of minor importance, and we reserve judgement on an overall interpretation.

The question of whether « the British », or just the working-class and lower-class British, are generally deferential toward those of higher

⁶⁴ See LIPSET, *op. cit.*

authority or social status, is secondary to how much this applies within the labour movement and among union activists in particular. To a considerable extent, British working-class sub-culture has been penetrated by the contra-culture of the Labour Movement, in the sense that the normative system has emerged from and centred around, a theme of conflict with the values of the surrounding dominant culture, based upon the frustrating, conflict-laden situation in which the movement (and perhaps the working-class as well) finds itself.⁶⁵

There is a continuum, conceptually, from sub-culture to contra-culture, with the latter more a social-psychological than a sociological concept. In most of the examples provided, the value of the contra-culture has a functional value for the *individual*, often reducing a sense of strain and frustration induced by the cross-pressures of conflicting demands upon him. Unfortunately, the term contra-culture, interpreted social-psychologically, assumes too much to be fully appropriate to the group phenomena we are discussing.

Thus, perhaps the ideologically-supported egalitarianism of the labour movement, reflected in the relatively low salaries of British full-time union officials, might be interpreted as having arisen in reaction against the inegalitarian values and social structure of the society. In the United States, the group identity and solidarity of the working-class appear to be weaker, and stresses on workers would probably manifest themselves in more individualistic ways.

Whether or not it is appropriate to discuss deference and competitiveness as aspects of culture, sub-culture or contra-culture, the organizational norms with respect to competition for office, including high office, within most British unions have much in common, and may be characterized as follows: —

(1) *Any union member has the right to be considered for any union office, on his own merits, without too many obstacles being put in his way.* In some unions, knowledge of the industry and union must be demonstrated in a formal test before candidacy is permitted, but these seem to be objective and, where used, have not resulted in a dearth of candidates. The National Union of Railwaymen is an example.

⁶⁵ See Michael J. YINGER, « Contra-Culture or Sub-Culture », *American Sociological Review*, Washington, October 1960, pp. 628 ff.

(2) *Any union member, including a candidate for office, may belong to any outside political party, outside union reform movement, provided it is a working-class group.* This norm is, in fact, violated by a number of unions, originally under pressure from the Trades Union Congress during 1949-50. Occasionally official Communists have been barred from eligibility, in some instances because election to the top post would require presence in the union's delegation to the Labour Party Conference, which bars Communists. However, it is doubtful that this has much to support, even among activists in the unions in question. By and large, in British unions it is reasonably unusual for a member publicly to advocate, at a local union meeting, that a candidate be opposed because he is a member of the Communist Party. In most unions such behaviour would be regarded as socially unacceptable and perhaps eccentric. This has not been the case in the United States.

(3) *Organized internal factions are unnecessary, unfair, and probably conspiratorial.* Factions are seldom barred constitutionally, but the common presence in the rules of restrictions on the circulation of campaign literature probably reinforces this norm against formal factions.

(4) *Finally, there is no harm done if a man tries for high office but gets comparatively few votes.* He may eventually build a national reputation in this way, and get elected. But a man should not run for too many different kinds of office, if some of these are somewhat specialized, since a man cannot be qualified for everything. These norms plus the constitutionally prescribed relative ease of nomination in British unions, and voting systems which, in effect, encourage minor candidacies, help explain the fact that the mean number of candidates for vacant top posts in Britain during 1949-66 was much greater than the number in the United States.

In spite of the intervention of the Trades Union Congress on the Communist issue in the post-World War II period, it might be argued that not only the members but also the constitutions of the unions make an underlying apolitical assumption, where union elections are concerned. It is not unusual for branch-level rules to state that, when a vacancy occurs on an executive committee, the previously defeated candidate with the next highest votes shall assume office. The prevalence of permanent full-time elective posts also seems to support the apolitical assumption.

Factions and Permanency of Officials

A full perspective on the significance of the institution of « permanent » full-time officials is beyond the scope of this article, but the

cause and consequences of such a role seem important for explaining differences in the degree of factionalism. In Great Britain 86 of 127 unions affiliated to the Trades Union Congress in 1952 had general secretaries with permanent tenure.⁶⁶ Lipset has suggested that this situation, as well as the similar one in Sweden, is more likely in societies in which deferential values, such as strong respect of superiors, are more prevalent.⁶⁷ On the other hand, while permanent top officers would no doubt be repugnant to the large majority of American workers, in theory and often in practice (as in the NUM) the chief British officers have far less power than the American union president. In theory the British general secretary is a salaried employee and a servant of the union, and may perhaps be regarded as a civil service worker to a certain extent.

One curious bit of evidence for the view of full-time officials as civil servants is the « no canvassing » rule in elections in some unions. This means not only no printed literature but no open attempt to influence voters. This parallels the quite common rules governing the appointment of local government officials and teachers. An « Application for Engagement as Principal Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, or Lecturer in Training Colleges (of the) London County Council » stated :— « Canvassing members of the Council or any Committee or any body of managers or governors . . . or obtaining from any such member a letter of introduction of recommendation, will disqualify an applicant ».⁶⁸

What makes the matter ludicrous is that there is sometimes no written examination which might take the place of someone's subjective judgement. In Cardiff the injunction against canvassing applies to contact initiated by a teacher-applicant with those who will pass judgement upon him. Practically speaking, « you're damned if you do and damned if you don't », and the most effective *sub rosa* campaign often determines the victor. There can hardly be a prohibition against dropping in to a public house for a drink, whether or not it is in one's own locality — nor can one's union friends be criticized for doing so. One must not, of course, admit having sent them.

⁶⁶ Victor L. ALLEN, *Power in Trade Unions*, London, Longmans, 1954, pp. 73-99, 215. The unions studied had 98.8% of the total affiliated TUC membership in 1952. The membership belonging to unions with permanent secretaries was 74% of the total belonging to TUC unions.

⁶⁷ Seymour M. LIPSET, « Trade Unions and Social Structure : I, » *Industrial Relations*, Berkeley, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1962, pp. 75-89.

⁶⁸ Form EO/TS40TC, Education Officer's Department, London, n.d.

Many years ago, when Sam Watson first became an Area official in the N.U.M. in Durham, he jocularly said that he had won because some of his friends had done more and better « canvassing » in local pubs and working men's clubs than had his opponents. This occasioned an investigation, during which he was asked whether he had in fact sent three friends as canvassers. He replied that this was untrue: that the number was five. Somehow he survived — the matter was dropped. The point is that the inherent contradiction between the values of nonpartisanship and practical politics seem to have never been resolved, and to have remained to plague the conscience.⁶⁹

The permanence of full-time posts has been defended on the basis of a regard for the welfare of union leaders as evidenced by the discussion at the NUM Annual Conference on resolutions favouring periodic elections of officials. The main argument seems to be that it is inhuman to turn out an official who may be advanced in years and who cannot return to the pits without great hardship. After all, shall a servant of the union be granted less protection than any union man would want for himself, with respect to tenure?⁷⁰

No simple assumption regarding the effects of permanency on the resolution of the succession crisis are in order. Our research in progress shows a negligible, but positive relationship between permanence and the closeness of elections to fill top vacancies in 30 of the largest manual unions in Britain (biserial $r = .11$), with 15 unions electing to permanent posts. The conclusion is obvious, that permanence does not necessarily lead to less effective electoral opposition, but so many other factors are operating simultaneously that one must be cautious regarding the effects of permanence *per se*. It does appear, however, that under favourable circumstances the permanence of full-time officials *can*, as in the British

⁶⁹ Based on interviews with Sam WATSON and a staff worker in the Durham area in 1961.

⁷⁰ Naturally this argument has greater weight among those who are themselves full-time officials. Nevertheless, there is a genuine problem here, and it might be well worth making some financial provision for older officials who might be defeated, as the price for obtaining regular elections. There might then be a readier use of the right of « competitive discharge » in unions already having regular elections.

Mineworkers,⁷¹ offer the lower-ranking full-time officials enough security to allow them to compete, unabashed, for vacancies at higher levels.

The effects of permanence on the prevalence and continuity of factions is another matter. *It seems reasonable to hypothesize that a more frequent use of the electoral machinery for important posts offers more opportunities for factions to function, while an infrequent and irregular use provides less motivation for their maintenance.* This may be so, but one must return to the basic fact that the Britain unions electing high officers periodically do not, in the whole, have openly operating internal factions. One must suspect that differences in the prevalence of factional organization between those electing permanently and periodically are not overwhelming. Thus it can hardly be said that the less extensive and less open factions in British unions results substantially from the prevalence of permanent posts.

In summary, the existence of permanent posts seem to indicate, along with other aspects of British unions, a less political view, or a civil service view of full-time office, although permanence itself is controversial in some unions. Permanence may depress factionalism to some extent, but it can hardly explain British-American differences in this respect. Permanence is not associated with less competition for vacant posts in Britain. Both permanence and restrictions on factional communications in elections are explicitly supported by longstanding provisions in the rules of British unions. Whatever the origin of these rules, they are obviously legitimate and self-perpetuating, as are most facets of formal organization, and their prevalence in the union movement offers further support. They may or may not be supported by most union members, but if they are it may be more because « they are there » than because they are consonant with more basic attitudes of values.

Organizational Norms in American Unions

The American situation is much more heterogeneous, with generally a sharp break between the older and the newer unions. Many union constitutions bar political subversives from membership, while others outlaw internal factions, or give the president the power to expel or take severe measures against factionalists. On the other hand, many American union constitutions not only have no such clauses, but lack the usual

⁷¹ See J. David EDELSTEIN, « Countervailing Power & the Political Process in the British Mineworkers Union », *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, York University, Canada, Vol. IX, No. 3-4, September and December 1968, pp. 255-287.

British proscription against the free circulation of campaign literature. On the other hand, appointed full-time officials, national or otherwise, often engage in pro-administration electioneering without, apparently, encountering strong opposition from ordinary members or activists. But it must be admitted that the powers of the American union president are so great as to make it almost impossible to prevent such use of his office. The Landrum-Griffin Act of 1959 establishes certain rights for minority candidates — such as space in the union newspaper — and theoretically limits the expenditure of union funds for campaign purposes. Union membership lists for mailings are often made available to opposition factions, by court order if necessary, and it is taken for granted that sizeable contributions from supporters of a faction may be necessary. No doubt the local unions would allocate funds to support candidates in union elections without membership objection if it were not illegal in principle.

British Tolerance

It may be that the leaders of minority political tendencies in British unions are somewhat accepting of anti-factional norms because these offer them a certain amount of protection, or at least subject them to little abuse. The absence of large numbers of appointed full-time staff in British unions deprives the top officers of a campaign weapon ordinarily available in American unions of at least moderate size, and other abuse of the administrative machinery is more limited in Britain as well.

However, it may also be that a greater general British tolerance of political dissent is reflected within unions in a better treatment of political opposition. We may thus be faced with the paradox of tolerance supporting restraint on all sides. This is an uncomfortable position to defend, since one might as well argue the opposite point. Nevertheless, there is some evidence for a greater tolerance of dissenters in British society.⁷²

CONCLUDING REMARKS : TOWARDS AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

We can conclude that there is a lack of appreciation among British unionists and industrial relations experts of what Americans usually mean

⁷² See Herbert H. HYMAN, « England and America : Climates of Tolerance and Intolerance — 1962 », in Daniel BELL (ed), *The Radical Right*, New York, Doubleday, 1963, pp. 227-257. HYMAN argues that the greater British tolerance is due to self-restraint on the part of elites, rather than to differences in basic personality structure. According to HYMAN, this is due more to a compact among elites not to use unfair or demagogic methods than to basic personality structure of the British people (or at least, he argues, this is the minimum required assumption).

by union factionalism.⁷³ It would usually be assumed that the faction would have (a) a name, (b) a known and admitted leadership, (c) publications, often including a newspaper, (d) a membership much broader (if possible) than simply the leading lights or full-time officials, and often (e) open or invited meetings. Probably some meetings would be open and some would be closed (limited to members or friends), although it is difficult to picture keeping secrets on strategy at an Auto Workers' Convention.

A scheme for analyzing factions in terms of their dimensions would include : –

1. The degree of continuity at the national level.
2. Openness versus convertness.
3. The size and exclusiveness of membership (perhaps this is not independent of 2 and 4).
4. The degree to which they include rank-and-filers or others lower down the hierarchy.
5. The degree to which they are issue-orientated (degree of politicization).
6. The degree of linkage of local (if any) and national (if any) factionalism.
7. The degree of legitimacy, in both constitutional and normative terms.
8. And related to 7, the extent of limitations on the functioning of factions (or of freedom from restrictions on meetings, flyers of all types, use of mass media and perhaps courts (governments)). It is conceivable that an entirely legitimate and open faction might be required to utilize only officially approved channels of communication (such as the union-provided election addresses).

⁷³ For an earlier discussion of this lack of appreciation, see J. David EDELSTEIN and Malcolm WARNER (with William F. COOKE) « Patterns of Opposition in British and American Unions », *Sociology*, Oxford, Vol. 4, No. 2, May 1970, pp. 145-163. The article discusses the extent of electoral opposition for top posts in 31 British, and 51 American unions of manual workers and reveals great differences between and within two countries, with more competition or opposition than might have been expected. An examination of organizational differences between the two sets of unions leads to the conclusion that most of the formal differences might be expected to generate more opposition in the British cases than in the American. While there are somewhat more defeats of incumbents in American unions, there is significantly more opposition in British unions as measured by the closeness of electoral contests, for vacant posts in particular.

Probably no simple generalization is warranted concerning the effects of union factionalism on the overall social process, either in terms of collective bargaining or politics more broadly. It is probably best to emphasize that changes in union leaderships seldom have as great an impact on collective bargaining as factional leaders claim, or as employers or workers hope or fear. This has been attributable, in Britain and the United States, to the constraints of the situation, especially the limited strength of the unions as against the employers; the usual willingness of left-wingers in power, including Communists, to reach accommodations which will allow them to retain office for its own sake or for political advantage on the national scene; the broad consensus among unionists on immediate demands upon both employers and government: the absence of a social crisis sufficient to engender severe political instability; and the infrequency with which national union leaderships do in fact change. This is not to say that factions are unimportant; they are often the vehicle for focusing attention on employees' grievances and for the adjustment of union demands, usually without a change in leadership.

Since such changes have often been of great importance to the workers immediately concerned, sometimes workers in an entire industry, the short-term or visible impact on the society is not the only criterion for significance in the social process.

This is not to deny that intra-organizational factionalism may be involved in rare but major changes in the nature of the labour movement, such as the rise of industrial unionism in the United States, the formation of a Labour Party, or the domination of a labour movement by a particular political tendency. The active participants in such factional struggles have often believed, as have political activists in all spheres, in their capacity to influence, perhaps determine, national political directions. The fact that organizational politics cannot be separated from national politics in such matters does not prove them wrong.

LE FACTIONNALISME DANS LES SYNDICATS EN GRANDE-BRETAGNE ET AUX ÉTATS-UNIS

Dans notre société de plus et plus institutionnalisée, les factions à l'intérieur des associations volontaires jouent un rôle sans cesse grandissant dans l'ensemble du processus politique.

Une analyse critique que nous pouvons appliquer aux organisations, qu'il s'agisse de l'État, des gouvernements locaux, des clubs ou des syndicats, est la façon dont

elles disposent des conflits et des désaccords à l'intérieur de leurs cadres. Le rôle des conflits de rivalité interne chez les syndicats est d'une importance et d'un intérêt majeurs, et on peut le considérer comme essentiellement relié à toute la question du fonctionnement de la démocratie à l'intérieur de ces associations. Quelle que soit la forme qu'il revête, l'état de conflit n'est jamais bienvenu au sein des associations. En outre, il est évident qu'il y a plusieurs séries de conflits possibles dans un syndicat. Certains considèrent les factions comme une affaire de rivalité interne qu'il faut régler si l'on veut que l'association survive. En conséquence, les associations s'efforcent généralement d'enrayer l'expansion du déviationnisme considérant ainsi comme sujet tabou la formation de factions.

Dans des circonstances exceptionnelles, l'opposition qui s'exprime par le jeu des élections peut ne comporter ni factions ni partis. Dans une étude récente, des anthropologues ont posé le problème de la façon suivante : les factions sont des groupes de rivalité politique dont les leaders recrutent des membres au nom de principes variés. Selon un autre point de vue, les considérer comme des « courants » en action offrirait un mode d'analyse autrement plus significatif. Nous devrions utiliser le mot « faction » pour signifier au moins quelque chose d'un peu organisé, un groupe politique qui recherche un objectif précis à l'intérieur d'une organisation plus vaste. L'existence de factions dans les centrales et les syndicats est très courante dans le monde occidental. La Confédération suisse des syndicats possède une structure qui permet une certaine participation dans la prise de décision sans passer par le truchement des syndicats. On a attribué en partie cette formule nouvelle de participation aux décisions à des factions parmi les syndicats à l'intérieur de la Confédération où l'on décèle trois nuances diverses en matière d'orientation idéologique. En général, cependant, les factions, même lorsqu'elles tendent à s'appuyer sur des structures institutionnalisées, peuvent rarement s'expliquer par elles-mêmes.

Les syndicats bataillent souvent les uns contre les autres, soit pour obtenir l'adhésion des membres, soit pour s'assurer l'hégémonie à l'intérieur du mouvement ouvrier. Sur la scène américaine, on rencontre nombre d'exemples de factions qui se détachent éventuellement du syndicat. Les factions fondées sur la concurrence entre syndicats ou entre centrales syndicales ont ordinairement la vie courte, puisqu'une scission, un changement d'affiliation ou l'expulsion des propagandistes de l'association rivale ne tardent pas à se produire.

Sans doute, les dirigeants d'un syndicat n'exercent-ils que peu d'influence directe sur la création des factions au sein d'un autre s'ils ne disposent pas de moyens de contact sur ses membres. Les factions syndicales qui dépassent les frontières de certains syndicats déterminés demeurent dans les limites du mouvement syndical. Elles sont formées des groupes socialistes ou autres dont l'activité est d'abord orientée vers les travailleurs et les syndicats.

On a prétendu que les catégories professionnelles ne pouvaient pas engendrer une action politique qui soit démocratique et soutenue au sein d'un syndicat. Pourtant, la diversité des postes peut faire problème même à l'intérieur d'une association professionnelle. Même si la diversité des postes ne peut pas facilement être à l'origine d'une action démocratique institutionnalisée, elle est souvent à l'origine d'une lutte temporaire entre des factions. Il y a eu au moins l'exemple important d'un cas en Angleterre où la politique de gauche et des intérêts professionnels se sont

combinés à l'intérieur d'un syndicat, et ont eu une influence sur la négociation collective et, d'une façon moins évidente, sur le syndicat lui-même. L'existence de factions au sein des syndicats reflète donc souvent l'influence d'organisations ou de forces externes qui sont en concurrence, en particulier celles dont les structures s'insèrent dans celles des syndicats pris individuellement ou les chevauchent.

Un bref exposé sur la nature des factions organisées en tant que mouvements aide à illustrer la présence de quelques-uns au moins des facteurs précédemment décrits. Des illustrations supplémentaires du degré d'organisation de tels clans dans les syndicats américains en fournit un autre exemple récent, soit la montée des groupes syndicaux formés de travailleurs noirs qui se fondent sur la nécessité, selon leur point de vue en tout cas, de combattre « la bureaucratie syndicale ».

Dans les syndicats britanniques, les factions se présentent sous une forme moins organisée et moins évidente. Ce sont :

1. des réseaux de communication flous constitués de dirigeants et d'activistes de même mentalité qui sont ordinairement politisés ;
2. des réseaux de communication qui sont parfois coordonnés par les membres de groupes ou de partis politiques extérieurs ;
3. de mouvements de délégués d'atelier appartenant généralement à la gauche ; et,
4. plus rarement, des réunions de permanents convoquées sans publicité mais qui ne sont pas tout à fait secrètes.

Cet exposé ne serait pas complet si nous ne considérions pas le rôle des factions proprement communistes et anticommunistes, qu'elles soient internes ou externes. Que la polarisation autour de tels groupes soit ou non justifiée de la part des syndiqués de gauche ou de droite, il semble que, en surface du moins, elles aient dominé les luttes partisans dans certains syndicats à différentes époques. On ne peut comprendre qu'à la lumière de peu d'organisation de la gauche non-communiste la persistance du rôle du parti communiste officiel dans les rivalités syndicales internes en Grande-Bretagne.

Il est fort difficile de tenter d'expliquer un comportement en se basant sur la culture. Une des raisons en est le fait que les explications ont tendance à ne pas sortir d'un cercle vicieux : on prend pour acquis que les normes et les valeurs communes dérivent du comportement et on présume que les courants de pensées se transmettent par l'éducation sociale en croyant qu'il ne s'agirait que d'une simple adaptation à une situation existentielle immuable. L'argument fondamental le plus pertinent à signaler au sujet des différences de culture politique en Grande-Bretagne et aux États-Unis c'est que, en plaçant l'accent sur l'orientation psychologique en vue d'objectifs sociaux, alors qu'il n'y a aucune différence importante entre eux dans l'aptitude à « réagir à une loi injuste », les Britanniques ont de meilleurs espoirs d'« être écoutés sérieusement des officines du gouvernement ou de la police ». Il se pourrait que la réalité soit plus complexe : les Britanniques (comparativement aux Américains) ont un respect méritoire pour l'autorité administrative tant celle des syndicats que celle du gouvernement, lorsque l'impartialité d'une telle administration est en cause, et ils peuvent marquer, d'autre part, un respect généralisé et immérité, par exemple, pour les titres aristocratiques et les institutions. Lipset a tenté d'expliquer les moyens plus violents utilisés par les syndicats américains pour supprimer

l'opposition par les valeurs américaines dominantes. L'esprit de rébellion plus marqué des Américains exige et suscite une répression plus forte. L'envers de la médaille, c'est que la déférence anglaise se reflète dans la bonne volonté avec laquelle les Britanniques acceptent les fonctionnaires permanents et à plein temps des hautes sphères ou d'autres niveaux qu'on rencontre dans les syndicats.

Qu'il soit ou non pertinent de traiter de la déférence ou de l'agressivité en tant qu'aspects de la culture, de la sous-culture ou de l'anti-culture, les normes institutionnelles, en ce qui concerne la course aux postes, y compris les postes de commande au sein de la plupart des syndicats britanniques, ont beaucoup de choses en commun, et on peut ainsi les caractériser :

1. Tout membre d'un syndicat britannique a le droit de postuler n'importe quelle fonction syndicale selon les capacités qu'il se croit sans qu'il soit mis beaucoup d'obstacles sur sa route.
2. Tout membre d'un syndicat, y compris des candidats à la direction, peut appartenir à un parti politique extérieur, à tout mouvement de réforme syndicale extérieur, pourvu qu'il appartienne à la classe ouvrière.
3. Les factions internes et structurées sont jugées inutiles, inéquitables et on les assimile presque à des complots.
4. Enfin, il ne résulte aucun tort du fait que quelqu'un pose sa candidature à un poste élevé et qu'il ne reçoive que peu de votes.

Il paraît normal que l'usage fréquent des élections pour accéder aux postes importants fournisse davantage d'occasions aux factions de fonctionner alors qu'une utilisation rare et irrégulière de ce mécanisme affaiblit les motivations d'y recourir. En résumé, l'existence des postes permanents, de même que d'autres aspects du syndicalisme britannique, semble indiquer que l'on considère les postes à temps plein moins sous l'angle de la politique que du *fonctionariat*, même si la permanence elle-même est controversée dans certains syndicats. En conséquence, il se peut aussi que, d'une façon générale, l'esprit de tolérance plus marqué des Britanniques se traduise au sein des syndicats par une meilleure acceptation de l'opposition politique. Nous pouvons ainsi être en présence du paradoxe de la tolérance qui sert partout de support à la contrainte.

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