DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 187 941 CE 025 658

AUTHOR	Greenberg, Paul D.; Glaser, Edward M.
TITLE	Some Issues in Joint Union-Management Quality of Worklife Improvement Efforts.
INSTITUTION	Upjohn (W.E.) Inst. for Employment Research, Kalamazoo, Mich.
PUB DATE	80
NOTE	95p.
AVAILABLE FROM	W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 300 S. Westnedge Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49007 ($4.00; quantity discounts available).
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Career Education; Collective Bargaining; Conference Proceedings; *Cooperative Planning; *Decision Making; Employee Attitudes; Employees; Employer Attitudes; *Employer Employee Relationship; *Human Factors Engineering; Humanization; Job Development; Job Satisfaction; Participation; Program Design; *Quality of Life; Unions; *Work Environment

ABSTRACT

This publication summarizes the proceedings of the Conference of Union Officials on Issues Related to Labor-Management Cooperation in Quality of Worklife (QWL) Improvement Efforts (March 1979) and subsequently treats issues that emerged in more detail. Chapter 1 provides a general introduction to QWL. A summary of the Washington, D.C. conference appears as chapter 2. Chapters 3-5 extend the treatment of these controversial issues--definition of QWL, objectives, structures, union and management roles, public policy implications, scope of a QWL effort, payoff, QWL in relation to union organizing, analysis of QWL failures, relationship between QWL and collective bargaining, and union and management initiatives. Chapter 3 presents the views of ten management people on issues and viewpoints expressed by trade unionists. Chapter 4 analyzes major concerns--definition and objectives, union attitudes, relationship with collective bargaining, conditions associated with success/failure, and prognosis for joint efforts--with reference to the QWL literature. Some policy implications relating to joint union-management QWL improvement efforts are developed in chapter 5. The needs for national commitment, active role of federal government, labor-management dialogue, education, and research are addressed. (YLB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED187941

SOME ISSUES IN JOINT UNION-MANAGEMENT QUALITY OF WORKLIFE IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

Paul D. Greenberg
Edward M. Glaser

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
W.E. Upjohn Inst for Employment Research
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

[redacted]

CE 025 658

W.E. UPJOHN INSTITUTE FOR EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Greenberg, Paul D 1924-
Some issues in joint union-management quality of worklife improvement efforts.

Bibliography: p.
1. Labor and laboring classes—United States—1970- 2. Work environment—United States.
3. Industrial relations—United States. 4. Organizational change.
5. Industrial organization—United States. I. Glaser, Edward Maynard, 1911- II. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.
III. Title. IV. Title: Quality of worklife improvement efforts.
HD8072.G795 658.3'142 80-14044
ISBN 0-91158-70-5 (pbk.)

Copyright © 1980
by the
W. E. UPJOHN INSTITUTE
FOR EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH

300 South Westnedge Ave.
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007

THE INSTITUTE, a nonprofit research organization, was established on July 1, 1945. It is an activity of the W. E. Upjohn Unemployment Trustee Corporation, which was formed in 1932 to administer a fund set aside by the late Dr. W. E. Upjohn for the purpose of carrying on "research into the causes and effects of unemployment and measures for the alleviation of unemployment."

The Board of Trustees of the W. E. Upjohn Unemployment Trustee Corporation

Preston S. Parish, Chairman
Mrs. Ray T. Parfet, Vice Chairman
Charles C. Gibbons, Vice Chairman
D. Gordon Knapp, Secretary-Treasurer
E. Gifford Upjohn, M.D.
Mrs. Genevieve U. Gilmore
James H. Duncan
John T. Bernhard

The Staff of the Institute

E. Earl Wright, Director
Saul J. Blaustein
Judith K. Brawer
Phyllis Buskirk
H. Allan Hunt
John R. Mekemson
Philip M. Scherer
Robert A. Straits
Jack R. Woods

THE AUTHORS

Paul D. Greenberg, for the past seven years a senior research scientist with the Human Interaction Research Institute, has been engaged in research on quality of worklife improvement, mental health service programs, and knowledge utilization. He was previously employed by the System Development Corporation, Santa Monica, California, in several management positions, including Director of Corporate Planning. Greenberg holds a Ph.D. in psychology from Northwestern University.

Edward Glaser is president of the Human Interaction Research Institute and managing associate of Edward Glaser and Associates, psychological consultants to management. He is the author of *Productivity Gains Through Worklife Improvement* and co-author of the Watson-Glaser *Critical Thinking Appraisal*. In 1978, Dr. Glaser received the Evaluation Research Society's Myrdal Prize Award in human services delivery for his innovative work in the development and testing of new change methods relating evaluation outcomes to needed modifications in the delivery of human services. He is a fellow of the American Psychological Association and the American Association for the Advancement of Science and past-president of the American Psychological Association's Division of Consulting Psychology.

FOREWORD

Quality of worklife (QWL) improvement efforts are emerging as a major area of concern in labor-management relations. By reporting the viewpoints of both trade union officials and a select group of management people on questions and concerns related to labor-management cooperation in QWL improvement efforts, the authors of this monograph have provided a useful examination of a number of complex and often controversial issues. It is published in the hope that it may inform and stimulate further union-management initiatives in cooperative problem solving, which in turn should have significant potential for improving both the quality of working life and productivity in the United States.

— Facts and observations as presented in this monograph are the sole responsibility of the authors. Their viewpoints do not necessarily represent positions of the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

E. Earl Wright
Director

Kalamazoo, MI
May 1980

PREFACE

Trade unionists from 20 international unions convened in Washington, D.C., on March 15-16, 1979, to address issues related to labor-management cooperation in quality of worklife (QWL) improvement efforts. Also in attendance were representatives from the AFL-CIO and the U.S. Department of Labor.

Through a series of small group discussions and plenary sessions the conference participants endeavored:

- to clarify the concept of QWL;
- to formulate suitable objectives for QWL programs;
- to identify workable organizational structures for implementing and monitoring joint QWL efforts;
- to stipulate appropriate union roles in QWL programs;
- to develop public policy implications of QWL; and
- to apply the principles developed in these discussions to a set of fictional case studies of public and private organizations.

The conference was jointly organized by the Human Interaction Research Institute (HIRI), Los Angeles, and the American Center for the Quality of Work Life (ACQWL), Washington, D.C., with the participation of a union advisory committee in planning the agenda.

A grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation provided for organizing and conducting the conference and preparing the conference proceedings (Greenberg and Glaser, 1979). A summary of the Proceedings appears as *Chapter 2* of the present report. (*Chapter 1* provides a general introduction to QWL).

A number of provocative and often controversial issues emerged in the conference discussions. In subsequent chapters of the present report we have extended the treatment of these issues beyond the coverage that we gave them in the Proceedings. In *Chapter 3*, to provide added perspective to the viewpoints of the union conferees, we present an analysis of the views of a small set of management people whom we invited to comment on these issues and on the viewpoints expressed by the trade unionists. In *Chapter 4* we have undertaken to provide more extensive analytic commentary on some of the major issues and to relate the issues to the QWL literature. In *Chapter 5* we develop some policy implications relating to joint union-management QWL improvement efforts.

Paul D. Greenberg
Edward M. Glaser

Los Angeles, CA
January 1980

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A number of people made significant contributions to this project. We are particularly indebted to:

- The W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, for supporting the project, and to Dr. E. Earl Wright for his participation and suggestions.
- The group of trade unionists and other participants in the March conference—too many to acknowledge individually—for their perceptive insights and candid expression of views on issues related to labor-management cooperation in quality of worklife improvement.
- The following management people, who graciously consented to comment on these issues and on the viewpoints expressed by the union conferees:

Richard Arthur, Executive Vice President, Guardian Plastics

Fred Bahl, Vice President, Personnel, Alumax

John W. Cleveland, Vice President, Human Resources, Ponderosa System, Inc.

Dr. William Greenwood, Director of Human Resources, Herman Miller, Inc.

George Hunter, Vice President, Industrial Relations, Whittaker Corporation

Dar G. Johnson, Vice President, Industrial Relations, ESCO Corporation

Howard C. Lockwood, Director, Management Development, Lockheed Corporation

James Lushina, Manager, Manufacturing Methods and Standards, Tektronix, Inc.

Donald Scobel, Manager, Employee Relations Development, Eaton Corporation

George Sherman, Vice President, Human Resources, Saga Corporation

- Project consultants, including Eli Berniker, Center for Quality of Working Life, UCLA; Professor J.B. Gillingham, Department of Economics, University of Washington (retired); Will Phillips, Will Phillips and Associates; and Dr. James Taylor, Graduate School of Management, UCLA.

CONTENTS

Foreword v

Preface vii

Acknowledgements ix

Chapter 1 Introduction 1
  Quality of Worklife 1
  What is QWL? 1
  The Demand for Improved QWL 5
  Payoffs from QWL Improvement Efforts 8

Chapter 2 Summary of Conference Proceedings 11
  Conference of Union Officials on Issues Related to Labor-Management Cooperation in Quality of Worklife Improvement Efforts 11

Chapter 3 Management Viewpoints on Issues Relating to Joint QWL Improvement Efforts 19
  Definition of QWL 19
  QWL Objectives 21
  QWL Structures 23
  Union and Management Roles in QWL Efforts 26
  Public Policy Implications 27
  Scope of a QWL Effort 28
  Payoff of QWL 30
  QWL in Relation to Union Organizing 32
  Analysis of QWL Failures 33
  Relationship Between QWL and Collective Bargaining 35
  Union and Management Initiatives 37
  General Comments 38

11

Chapter 4 Analysis of Issues and Viewpoints Regarding Joint QWL Improvement Efforts 39
What is QWL and What Are the Legitimate Objectives of a QWL Improvement Effort? 39
Union Attitudes Toward Joint QWL Improvement Efforts 42
Relationship Between QWL and Collective Bargaining 45
Conditions Associated with Success/Failure of QWL Improvement Efforts 49
Prognosis 57

Chapter 5 Policy Implications 67
Background Review 67
National Commitment 70
Government Role 70
Option #1. Public debate and national conference on QWL 71
Option #2. Analysis of characteristics of effective companies 72
Option #3. Federal government as role model 74
Option #4. Legislation 75
Option #5. Local initiatives 75
Option #6. Incentives 76
Labor-Management Dialogue 78
Education 80
Research 81
Concluding Comment 82

References 83

1
INTRODUCTION

Quality of Worklife

During the past decade, a small but growing number of organizations in both the private and public sectors have undertaken systematic efforts to improve the quality of working life (QWL) of their employees. Increasing interest in the "QWL movement" has been evident in various ways, such as the emergence of new centers created for the study and diffusion of concepts and techniques of worklife improvement, and a burgeoning literature on QWL. Particularly important is the growing interest on the part of American unions in exploring the expanding QWL field and in examining the implications of cooperating with management in undertaking joint QWL improvement efforts.

What is QWL?

Despite the accelerating interest in QWL, there remains a good deal of semantic confusion as to what the term really connotes. As noted by Walton (1979), for example:

> The planned changes called "work improvements" have appeared in workplaces in many guises—as "quality of worklife," "humanization of work," "work reform," "work restructuring," "work design," and "sociotechnical systems." (p. 89)

While Walton points out that these various terms tend to involve the same objectives and techniques, he also acknowledges that there is often confusion about what they really mean:

> Observers differ about whether work improvement is a fad or a long-term transformation in the nature of work organizations. Scientists differ in their theoretical explanations of why it works or when the conditions are right for it. Managers invariably wonder whether it has application in their organizations; and some union officials are concerned about its implications for the union as an institution. These concerns imply varying conceptions of work innovation and hence indicate the amount of confusion that exists about what improvement is. (p. 88)

Walton goes on to distinguish three aspects of a work improvement effort: (1) the techniques used to effect change; (2) the intended results; and (3) the work culture, which mediates the relationship between the techniques and the outcomes. Much of the confusion, he contends, stems from the fact that most of the work improvement labels focus too narrowly on either techniques or results. He argues that such terms as "job enrichment" and "job design" connote *technique,* while "quality of worklife" and "humanization of work" connote an *objective* that can be satisfied in many different ways, and furthermore refer only to human gains, "which in today's business environment need to be closely coupled with improved competitive performance." (p. 89)

It is the work culture, in Walton's view, that serves as the cornerstone:

> In my experience, I have found that organizations can improve business results in a humane way and improve the quality of the human experience in a businesslike manner by identifying the work cultures that promote both improvements simultaneously. Such work cultures are the links between technique and results in my three-level conception of work improvements. (p. 89)

Our own view of QWL (Glaser and Greenberg, 1979) is quite consistent with Walton's.

The essential component of any QWL improvement program is the existence of a real and ever-present opportunity for individuals or task groups at any level in the organization to influence their working environments, i.e., to have some say over what goes on in connection with their work. This, in turn, requires a climate and structure that differs from the traditional hierarchical organization. It calls for an open style of management, such that information is shared and challenges or suggestions related to improving the existing modus operandi are genuinely encouraged. It also requires expeditious, respectful and appropriate responses to inputs of those kinds. Finally, it requires that the QWL improvements not be imposed from the top down. Rather it calls for a partnership between management people and representatives chosen by nonmanagement people—or in unionized situations a coequal union-management structure—for planning, developing, and implementing the agreed-upon process and program.

. . . Such a participative and responsive style of management provides a springboard from which a large variety of improvements in the design, structure and organization of work can be developed, such as institution of a cost-savings sharing plan, division of tasks into smaller operating units, or the creation of autonomous work groups where those involved can—to the extent feasible in given situations—be active participants or even full decision makers in planning how the task might best be organized and executed, so long as agreed-upon production and quality results are achieved. Under those conditions, quality of worklife in an organization is open to "tailor-made" improvements in relation to the state of readiness, interest, mutual trust, creativity, feelings about what may be gained/lost, and ego involvement of the various stakeholders.

Proponents of QWL improvement efforts contend (with considerable empirical support), that under those conditions (which unfortunately are not commonly found), the QWL changes that evolve will be endemic to the particular

> situation, and will have grassroots support and commitment. Thus, the QWL experiment and any changes that evolve in job structure and design, job layout, material flow, tools to be used, methods and processes of production, plant layout, work environment, etc.—will be embraced as "their own" by those directly involved. (pp. I-2 - I-3)

The viewpoints of others—e.g., Bluestone (1977), Davis and Cherns (1975), Hackman (1978), Mills (1978), O'Toole (1977), Schrank (1978), Kerr and Rosow (1979)—also are relatively consistent with these, although there do tend to be varying points of emphasis. Thus, for example, Bluestone accords primacy to the human goals:

> Surely, then, the time has come for a society anchored in democratic principles to ensure that each individual at his place of work enjoys a measure of the dignity, self-respect and freedom which are his as a citizen. In his capacity as a worker he should be afforded an opportunity for self-expression and participation in the decisions that shape the quality of his working life. (1977, p. 3)

He contends that QWL improvement efforts should not be focused on organizational effectiveness goals (such as productivity improvement), but rather that such improvements very likely will flow from the altered work culture. Davis and Taylor (1979) tend to emphasize the designing or redesigning of jobs into work roles which are parts of work-systems. This may call for redesign of the organization and the *work* itself so that the desired output is achieved through the joint actions of the human being in the system (thus, the social system), and the technological system required for productive, efficient task performance. The resulting optimum arrangement may be that workers as individual operators or in semi-autonomous task groups, have greater control over their work activity, and that increased control contributes both to the achievement of their own job satisfaction goals and the performance goals of the organization.

The Demand for Improved QWL

Some of the forces that bear on the need for QWL improvement have been carefully noted by various observers. For example, Katzell (1979), O'Toole (1978), Rosow (1978), Work in America Institute (1979), and others have commented extensively on the changing attitudes toward work, as a function both of the revolution in social values and the changing composition of the work force. For instance, they point to:

- declining confidence in institutions (whether government, military, church, business or labor);
- greater tendency to question authority;
- less loyalty to work organizations;
- less willingness for workers to subordinate their personal lives to their jobs;
- less dedication to work;
- more inclination to look for alternatives to the large, traditional, hierarchical organizations;
- greater importance assigned to leisure activities;
- less willingness to accept routine jobs;
- increased expectations by employees for a greater voice in decisions affecting their work lives.

Yankelovich (1979), in the same vein, concludes that:

> A New Breed of Americans, born out of the social movement of the sixties and grown to majority proportions in the seventies, holds a set of values and beliefs so markedly different from the traditional outlook that they promise to transform the character of work in America. (p. 3)

Observing the resistance of the American workplace to change, as reflected, for example, in what he regards as an archaic incentive system that relies too heavily on economic incentives and too little on quality-of-life motivations (such as challenge, responsibility, achievement, recognition for achievement, meaningfulness of the work itself, growth, opportunity to advance, participation, diversity, and freedom), Yankelovich sounds a note of warning:

> A deep flaw in the incentive system, signified by the failure of the old incentives to catch up with the new motivations, leads inexorably to deterioration in the workplace, threatening the position of the United States as the world's foremost industrial nation. (p. 4)

Hackman (1978) concludes that millions of workers are underutilized and underchallenged, with the result that work is not a fulfilling part of their lives and they are contributing far less to the organization than they might. Recent surveys by the Institute for Social Research (1979) indicate declining job satisfaction on the part of the American work force. Bluestone (1978) argues that American workers must not be expected to continue to lead a double life, enjoying dignity, self-respect and freedom as a citizen, while being relegated in the workplace "substantially to the role of a machine-minding robot." The cost, in part, contends Rosow (1978), is likely to be worker withdrawal, resentment, lower performance, disaffection, and turnover. Additional costs may include slowed productivity growth, which in turn implies "diminished U.S. ability to compete in world markets; rising inflation and a slower improvement in the standard of living; an increased tax burden; decreased ability to support social programs; and reduced job opportunities, especially for youth, women, minorities, and older people" and ultimately "threatens the traditional concept of the American dream" (Work in America Institute, 1979, p. 2).

In citing the advantages of a system based on mutuality and trust, Harman (1979) notes the tremendous cost and inflationary impact of work stoppages, and even of traditional bargaining, and concludes:

> There is a growing awareness that the old system doesn't work well for anyone anymore. It was built on attitudes that may have been appropriate at the turn of the century but that

> are clearly inappropriate today. We must examine the extra costs generated by our tradition of adversarial relationship in the workplace—to say nothing of the needless waste of human resources and dignity—and we must move to change them. (p. B-4)

In the well-documented Report of a Special Task Force to the Secretary of HEW (*Work in America*, 1972), the authors have a good deal to say about the adverse consequences of the workplace as it is typically organized—and about strategies for constructive change. For example:

> [There are] no simple solutions to the many social problems discussed in this report, but in locating our analysis in the institution of work, we believe we have found a point where considerable leverage could be exerted to improve the quality of life.
>
> . . . .
>
> . . . Satisfaction with work appears to be the best predictor of longevity—better than known medical or genetic factors—and various aspects of work account for much, if not most, of the factors associated with heart disease. Dull and demeaning work, work over which the worker has little or no control, as well as other poor features of work also contribute to an assortment of mental health problems. But we find that work can be used to alleviate the problems it presently causes or correlates with highly. From the point of view of public policy, workers and society are bearing medical costs that have their genesis in the workplace, and which could be avoided through preventive measures.
>
> . . . .
>
> The redesign of jobs is the keystone of this report. Not only does it hold out some promise to decrease mental and physical health costs, increase productivity, and improve the quality of life for millions of Americans at all occupational levels, it would give, for the first time, a voice to many workers in an important decision-making process. Citizen participation in the arena where the individual's voice directly

affects his immediate environment may do much to reduce political alienation in America. (pp. xv-xviii)

Payoffs from QWL Improvement Efforts

In the aggregate, data from Bluestone (1978), Davis and Cherns (1975), Davis and Taylor (1979), Glaser (1976), Glaser and Greenberg (1979), Guest (1979), Hackman and Suttle (1977), Katzell et al. (1975), O'Toole (1977), Rosow (1979), Srivastva et al. (1975), Walton (1979), Work in America (1972), and others suggest that given carefully developed and skillfully implemented QWL improvement efforts based upon joint worker-management participation in the planning and implementation stages, some likely consequences are: (1) labor-management conflict will be reduced by the development of a more productive labor relations climate and settling of many potential grievances in more of a problem-solving atmosphere on the shop floor; (2) more members of the work force will contribute constructive ideas for improvement in various aspects of the plant operation and work situation; (3) tension and mistrust between management and workers will be reduced; (4) there will be a deeper sense of worker responsibility, and job satisfaction will be enhanced; (5) human resources will be better utilized; and (6) there may be improvements in employee attitudes and behaviors, leading to such consequences as increases in plant efficiency, productivity and product quality, and decreases in job-related illness or injury, absenteeism and turnover.

If these kinds of consequences do in fact occur through appreciably wider adoption of QWL improvement programming in American industry, there may be some aggregate impact on productivity (and thus perhaps an improvement in our national social and economic health in such areas as employment and balance of payments).

Potential second-order effects that often appear to derive from participation in decision making on the job include an increased sense of ego-involvement in the work and personal responsibility for the quality of one's task performance, rather than a feeling of indifference or alienation. Subtler, higher order effects appear to include increased self-confidence, and enhancement of the capacity for respectful listening to alternative viewpoints, with a tendency to employ a more problem-solving, less adversarial mode of conflict resolution. There also appears to be some indication that that type of behavioral style may carry over to some extent in other interpersonal relationships, such as with family and friends.

2

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Conference of Union Officials on Issues Related to Labor-Management Cooperation in Quality of Worklife Improvement Efforts

In the first portion of the March 1979 conference, the conferees undertook to clarify the concept of QWL. The apparent consensus was that the essence of QWL is the opportunity for employees at all levels in an organization to have substantial influence over their work environment by participating in decisions related to their work, thereby enhancing their self-esteem and satisfaction from their work. QWL was also regarded by various conference participants as implying: labor-management cooperation; restructuring the decision-making process in an organization; job redesign as a function of increased participation; increased access to information; more effective problem solving; improved physical and psychological safety and health; better job security; more opportunity for personal growth; and increased worker satisfaction by virtue of improvement in the working environment, greater recognition of the individual, added meaning to the work, and possibly economic benefits (through provision for sharing of gains or cost savings) resulting from new ways of doing jobs developed by more motivated employees.

Conferees also noted that QWL does *not* mean conventional collective bargaining, but rather goes well beyond collective bargaining in the sense that it is open-ended and continuous. Nor does it mean management of the enterprise by the work force, since some "management issues" are excluded from consideration under a QWL program. Conferees who had experience in cooperating with management in QWL improvement efforts also noted that any fears that management will use QWL programs as a device to try to effect speed-up, work force reduction, and co-opting or busting of unions have not been borne out in their experience. The general (but not unanimous) feeling, in fact, was that unions had benefited from joint QWL programs, e.g., in increased membership and improvement in the attitudes of members toward the union.

In the next segment of the conference, several major issues in labor-management cooperation in QWL improvement efforts were addressed by separate task forces. These included "QWL objectives," "QWL structures," "union roles," and "public policy implications." Appropriate general objectives for QWL programs, identified by one of the task forces, included: increasing job satisfaction, improving health and safety, improving communication, reducing the isolation of some workers, accommodating technological change more effectively, eliminating excessive or abusive supervision, tempering the adversary relationship between union and management, and (as a by-product) improved organizational effectiveness and productivity. While most of these objectives apply to most QWL programs, a given organization will tend to focus on those issues that they perceive to be problems.

A second task force sought to identify viable organizational structures for implementing and monitoring joint QWL efforts. They examined alternative strategies for the composition of a QWL labor-management committee, with particular reference to whether the labor members should come from the existing negotiating committee. They noted that this often results in labor relations people sitting on the other side and tends to preserve the adversary mode, whereas not to do so sets up a competitive relationship between the bargaining and QWL structures. They concluded that some formal structure is essential for an effective QWL program, that no one structure works best universally, and that the most effective structure is a function of the organizations involved. They also concluded that the structure must be carefully planned and not left to chance, that it must be clear that the commitment to the structure comes from the top and is supported by adequate resources, and that all appropriate levels of the union need to be involved.

The task force examining union roles in QWL stressed the need for union initiatives in the development of QWL programs. They noted the need for unions to increase their internal competence to implement QWL programs, and the need for greater sharing of information and experience by unionists who have been involved in such programs. They also observed that QWL might well be used to improve the internal operations of the union, the servicing of the membership, and the sense of commitment of the membership. Finally, they noted the importance of earned trust between union and management, and the importance of top level support from both sides, if QWL programs are to be effective.

The task force examining public policy implications of QWL recommended that there be government subsidies for QWL projects—but with no strings attached—in light of the potential of the QWL movement in the aggregate to have impact on such national problems as declining productivity growth and rising inflation.

The agenda for the second day of the conference had two principal components. In the first, the conferees again divided into small groups to analyze a series of fictionalized case studies that had been prepared by the American Center for the Quality of Work Life, and reported their analysis back to the full conference. The case studies represented a variety of public and private settings, each involving somewhat different problems. They afforded a structured opportunity for the conferees to consider alternative strategies for implementing QWL programs, and to analyze the issues that might be involved. The final session of the conference was an open forum featuring further discussion of issues highlighted by the case studies and commentary on those issues by conferees who had prior experience with QWL programs. Major issues elicited in the case studies and open forum included the following:

Scope of a QWL effort. There was considerable discussion of what constitutes the appropriate scope or boundaries for a QWL program. Some conferees took the position that no issues should be barred from consideration, while others felt that there should be specified exclusions, e.g., certain "management" matters (such as investment decisions), or those issues covered by the collective bargaining agreement. There was some consensus that the contract should not be circumvented, at least not without explicit agreement, approved by the international union, to shelter or sign off on certain provisions of the contract.

Another aspect of the *scope* issue concerned the distinction between two *levels* of participation in the decision-making process: (1) where employees are asked their *opinion* before a decision is made, and (2) where they have the opportunity to *make* the decision. The point at issue was whether trade unionists should be satisfied with the former. In general, the viewpoint of conferees was that QWL is an evolutionary process, and that to move from a totally *authoritarian* process to one in which workers play an *advisory* role represents tremendous progress and is an important evolutionary step toward greater autonomy in decision making.

Structure of QWL programs. Various aspects of how best to structure QWL programs were debated throughout the conference. One such issue, already touched on, that emerged several times was the question of who should be on a plant QWL committee. One point of view was that the QWL committee *must* consist of the members of the bargaining committee to prevent competition between the two and to insure the full involvement of the union. It was noted that other arrangements have proven effective in some settings—such as electing members from the shop—and may soften the adversary relationship that can prevail if the same cast is involved.

The role and necessary attributes of a third party also came in for a good deal of discussion. Conferees were wary of abdicating responsibility for a QWL program to a third party, and sensitive to the need for third parties to be adequately steeped in the principles and practices of trade unionism. They tended to feel that third parties should be used primarily to help get a program launched, perhaps with ad hoc reappearances as required to assist in special circumstances.

Payoff of QWL for employees. A number of conference participants pointed out that the testimonials they were hearing from other conferees about the benefits of QWL were generally expressed in terms of what the programs have done to solve *company* problems, such as productivity, abuse of sick leave, and so forth. They wondered what the evidence is that QWL programs benefit *workers.*

In response to this concern, Don Ephlin (UAW) cited the experience of the joint GM-UAW program at the Tarrytown plant. He noted that there was no attempt to use the program to raise productivity directly, and that it has not, in fact, increased. The essence of the program has been increased participation in decision making, and as a result there has been a huge drop in grievances—which can be regarded as a measure of worker satisfaction. To be sure, the company has gained also, because the plant now turns out a better quality car; but that was a by-product and not a program goal.

Similarly, John Carmichael (Newspaper Guild of the Twin Cities) pointed out that their QWL program was not stimulated by a need to solve company problems, but rather stemmed from the desire of guild members for greater involvement, and in fact was proposed by the *union* at the bargaining table and initially *resisted* by the management.

Conferees noted that it is much more difficult to evaluate QWL programs in terms of benefits to employees than it is from the company's standpoint, since such variables as worker involvement and satisfaction are much less tangible than absenteeism and productivity. At the same time, they noted the importance of unions being able to express the potential payoff of QWL programs in terms of what they can do for their *members,* and consequently the need for systematic evaluation of programs in those terms.

QWL as an organizing tool. The question of the utility of QWL as an organizing tool came in for animated debate. Some conferees contended that QWL has most often been used (by management) to *block* organizing, while others claimed that they have found QWL to be highly effective in winning over workers in organizing campaigns.

John Zalusky (AFL-CIO) pointed out that much of the heat generated by this debate stemmed from a semantic problem, i.e., failure of the protagonists to make clear whether they were talking about *external* organizing (trying to organize a nonunion shop) or *internal* organizing (trying to increase the membership where there already is representation). With regard to *internal* organizing, he contended that adding QWL programs at the initiative of the union as a way of representing workers' interests more comprehensively has clearly been effective in increasing the membership. With reference to *external* organizing, he acknowledged that companies *are* introducing QWL programs as a way of keeping unions out, but argued that unions can nevertheless use QWL as an organizing tool since they can offer it to workers as a *right*, not to be taken away at management's whim.

Analysis of QWL failures. There was much discussion during the conference of why some QWL programs fail, and in some instances do so after a period of considerable initial success. Some of the factors cited as contributing to failure included:

- inadequate support (particularly in the sense of a long-range commitment) from top level management and/or union people;
- initiation of a program without setting explicit goals, particularly regarding how the *workers* should benefit;
- imposition of a program from upper levels of the company and union without adequate consultation and preparation at the local "grass roots" level;
- fear (often at the level of first-line supervisors and local union leadership—but not infrequently at other levels as well) that a QWL program will reduce their power;
- unwillingness of management to relinquish any of their "prerogatives," hence inadequate opportunity in the QWL program to deal with significant issues;

- poor communication between management and first-line supervision;
- inadequate training of first-line supervisors and local union leadership, as well as rank and file, in the techniques of participative problem solving and related matters;
- too much dependence on the third party and inadequate planning for handover of projects to those who really should own them;
- the tendency to set up a QWL effort as an *experiment* (implying transience), as distinct from a systemic, integral part of the operation of the organization;
- failure to pay enough attention to the *processes* of worker involvement;
- inadequate dissemination of the QWL concepts and techniques from one component of an organization to the rest of the system.

Relationship between QWL and collective bargaining. One of the most controversial issues discussed at the conference—and one which arose repeatedly—was the question of what ought to be the relationship between QWL efforts and collective bargaining.

Some took the view that unless QWL is tied into collective bargaining it is simply a matter of a paternalistic management giving to unrepresented workers something that management can take away as readily as they give it. Others felt that QWL is quite viable apart from collective bargaining. Stephen Confer (CWA) drew a distinction between the collective bargaining *contract* and the collective bargaining *process*. He contended that QWL can exist apart from the contract, but not apart from the process, which is ongoing and organic, rather than something that occurs only once every three years.

Some conferees (e.g., Don Ephlin) took the position that collective bargaining should be used to establish the *mechanism* of QWL but not the *substance*, since that, in essence, gives unions the opportunity to "bargain" about issues that they can't deal with in traditional collective bargaining.

A number of conferees commented to the effect that they regard QWL and collective bargaining as related but separate, thus providing an adversary process to bargain for contracts, handle grievances, etc., and a nonadversary or cooperative process to deal with other issues. In their view, it is a *synthesis* of the two that results in workers obtaining something that they do not presently have.

Union Initiatives. Several conferees—including Peter DiCicco (IUE), Don Ephlin, and others—stressed the need for unions to take the initiative in the QWL movement. They argued that corporate managements are initiating QWL programs because circumstances have changed and the old authoritarian system was no longer working. For example, technological advances are making jobs less challenging, while at the same time the work force is becoming better educated and has greater expectations and demands for what they want to get out of work. Thus, they contend it is vital for unions to become more relevant to the problems of the membership, including their needs for more challenge, recognition, and satisfaction. To do this will require more training at all levels within the union structure, more sharing of experience at peer levels by people who have lived in QWL programs, and above all much more aggressive efforts to take the initiative in stimulating, planning, and implementing QWL improvement programs because "management will do it without us if we don't."

3

MANAGEMENT VIEWPOINTS ON ISSUES RELATING TO JOINT QWL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

In order to provide some additional perspective on the views expressed by the union conferees on various issues relating to joint QWL improvement efforts, a number of management people were invited to comment on these issues and on the viewpoints expressed by the union conferees as reflected in the summary of the proceedings of the union conference. In general, the management respondents are vice presidents or managers of industrial relations/human resources/personnel development (though one is an executive vice president and one a manager of manufacturing methods and standards) and have had a good deal of experience with QWL improvement efforts.* Following is a summary of their views, organized in terms of the issues that emerged at the union conference:

Definition of QWL

In general, the management respondents were quite comfortable with the definition of QWL that was proposed at the conference, i.e., "The essence of QWL is the opportunity for employees at all levels in an organization to have substantial influence over their work environment by participating in decisions related to their work, thereby enhancing their self-esteem and satisfaction from their work." While agreeing with this definition, one respondent noted that it is quite broad and therefore difficult to communicate succinctly to the various stakeholders, and hence may be a barrier to understanding and acceptance.

---

*The management respondents are identified individually in the Acknowledgements.

Another person also touched on the breadth of the concept of QWL, suggesting that not only does QWL mean different things to different people, but that this is often true of employees in the same organization, even those who are doing the same work. He went on to point out that physical or external environment can play a role in QWL but of a relatively minor nature, and that more critical issues are fulfilling and rewarding work, and an opportunity to participate in decisions impacting on one's work. He also suggested that one of the most important elements in the working environment, to which QWL can be responsive, is the supervisory relationship, noting that good pay and benefits, an attractive physical environment, and even interesting work, all can be negated in an environment of inept or insensitive supervision. His definition of QWL gave special emphasis to *recognition for effective performance:* "To me, QWL means an opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process, especially those decisions impacting on my own welfare and ability to perform, plus recognition in both a material and a psychological way."

Another one of the management group, while voicing no objection to the definition of QWL proposed at the conference, nevertheless noted what he regarded as some interesting omissions:

> I take no real issue with the conferees' definition of QWL. It does interest me, however, that there was no specific reference to relieving many of the unnecessary regimentations of work life. Words like "trust," "respect," and "dignity" do not appear and I feel they are an important part of what QWL is all about. On the other hand, this is, of course, implied in the conferees' definition and perhaps they did not feel a need to enumerate these qualities. It is also interesting that there is no mention in the definition of taking a look at the labor agreement itself as possibly harboring some barriers to genuine QWL achievement.

The definition offered by another respondent acknowledged the principle that an effective QWL program will have payoff for all stakeholders in the organization: "The concept of QWL is that individual satisfaction on the job and optimal productivity is only achieved when the employee is involved in the decision-making process on matters affecting his work, and that this process enhances the individual's feelings of self-worth and develops in him a greater understanding of the entire functional area in which he works and a better overall knowledge of and identification with the objectives of the enterprise."

QWL Objectives

While the management respondents generally agreed with the goals for QWL programs (p. 8) that were formulated by the conference task force on QWL objectives, they were nearly unanimous in expressing the view that a fundamental ingredient was missing—the concept of *joint* goal attainment. They contended that if QWL programs are to become a way of life and be viable over time, they must serve to promote a healthy enterprise, and that means that they must benefit all interests in the business, including labor, management, stockholders, and customers.

More specifically, they argued that improved organizational effectiveness and increased productivity must not be regarded as *by-products*—any more than any of the other objectives listed by the conferees—but rather as among the key "up front" goals that warrant managers spending time and money on QWL. (One respondent bluntly proclaimed that the union conferees ignored the cost aspects of a QWL program, and that few managers do anything voluntarily that will not potentially increase their profit position.) Furthermore, they argued, the benefits that derive from a QWL program should be measurable, and in a successful QWL program productivity measurements provide one important source of timely feedback to the group as to the effectiveness of the program.

On the other hand, while contending that productivity is not only a legitimate but an essential goal of QWL programs, they also pointed out that it must be balanced with equal concern for the other program objectives, and that great care must be taken to ensure that productivity is not allowed to become the sole objective. As expressed by one of the respondents, it is perfectly appropriate for productivity to be included in QWL goals provided:

a. that the productivity increases are not intended to be achieved at the expense of the workers, i.e., layoffs, loss of overtime, stress, and pressure.

b. that the rewards of increased productivity which are achieved legitimately are shared with those individuals who help bring about the improvement.

c. that the true goal of improved productivity is to make the organization more competitive in the external marketplace and in turn a better and more secure place to work.

It was also emphasized that increased productivity does not necessarily mean "speed-up," and that, for example, reduction in personnel turnover, in absenteeism, in personal injuries, and in return of goods—and many more things—all can bring an increase in productivity.

Finally, whereas the union conferees referred to "possible economic benefits" for the employees, the management respondents actually took a stronger position. There was apparent consensus that the fruits of increased productivity achieved through QWL should be shared with those who helped bring it about. Moreover, some argued, the economic benefits are essential—not only to the workers but to stockholders and customers alike—and without such payoffs, QWL will not be supported over time and ultimately will fail.

While there appeared to be fundamental differences between the union and management groups on the issue of productivity as a legitimate explicit goal of QWL, one management respondent suggested that the political context in which union officials operate essentially precludes their advocating productivity goals, and thus the differences on this issue may not be as great as they appear. In fact, he suggested, QWL provides "a way that responsible union officials can slide into the crucial element of productivity without committing political hari-kari."

QWL Structures

A recurrent theme during the union conference centered around the pros and cons of utilizing the existing bargaining structure as the framework for organizing the QWL program. While there was not full consensus, the majority of those who commented at the conference contended that the plant QWL committee should consist of the members of the bargaining committee in order to prevent competition between the two and to ensure the full involvement of the union.

Only one of the management people favored using the existing structure, suggesting that this facilitates communication and tends to build a much stronger organization. Most felt that the QWL committee should not have the same membership as the negotiating committee. One, for example, reasoned:

> This role is so different from the adversary role played by a negotiating committee member that I have serious reservations about their membership. I also apply this to their management counterpart. My recommendation would be that after the whole organization has been exposed to the purpose of a QWL program, they elect their peers to represent them. If they elect their present steward, it would be acceptable (in my experience they generally elect different representatives), and to prevent a competitive relationship between the QWL and bargaining structures, I would have the local union officers appointed to a membership position (president, chairman, secretary, etc.). If the management representative on the negotiating committee was looked upon as a "perpetual bastard," I would not have him on this committee. The one management person who should be a member is the top person of the operating unit. Union leaders should understand that one of management's goals will be to minimize the negative atmosphere of the historical adversary

relationship and, in fact, I believe they would like to see it completely disappear. This condition would not pose a threat to management, but labor leaders would undoubtedly feel uncomfortable.

Rather than join the debate on the relative merits of using the existing bargaining structure or creating a new framework for organizing a QWL program, one respondent cautioned against too much preoccupation with structure:

> I was most impressed with the outcome that there is no single best QWL structure and that structures must be allowed to be a function of the organization involved. My own view is that sometimes overconcern with structure can set in motion a fear and resistance to QWL before it even gets a chance to begin.
>
> . . . I am a little nervous about the emphasis many QWL practitioners are putting these days upon a master or central QWL committee. As the conferees point out, the interrelationship between this and the bargaining committee can be hairy. Such a central committee is sometimes viewed with some fear also by supervisors and middle managers, as well as by stewards and employees. I think it important we not overlook the possibility that some QWL activities may originate from either the company or the union and there can be an understanding of who will voluntarily be involved in the implementation of that activity. Then as subsequent activities develop at the origin of either the company, the union or employees, that activity can involve its own voluntary leadership. What I am trying to suggest is that QWL can emerge through a series of incremental involvements that are not threatening to managers, supervisors, union leaders, stewards or employees and can become a meaningful part of workplace relationships without the encumbrance of a formal superstructure.

With respect to the role of a third party in a QWL program, the union conferees were generally quite wary of giving him or her too much responsibility and of maintaining the third party in a key role on an ongoing basis. Apparently this attitude was based in part on the conviction that a QWL program would be more viable in the long run if there was not excessive dependence on a third party. Undoubtedly it also stemmed from a concern that most third parties are hired by management and hence may be neither knowledgeable about trade unionism nor neutral.

The management respondents were much less concerned about excessive reliance on a third party. By and large they felt that third party involvement is valuable and serves several important functions, including bringing critically needed expertise to the installation of QWL programs, playing the role of mediator and objective neutral, and providing a safety valve in the ongoing activity. One commented that third parties may well be the essential ingredient of successful QWL programs, and often are needed to maintain the momentum of a program. He also noted that they need not be "outsiders," but can be trained professionals within the organization.

Another management respondent, while agreeing with the union concern about excessive reliance on the third party, nevertheless felt strongly that ad hoc reappearances would not suffice but rather that the third party should have sustained contact with the program in order to help adapt it to changing circumstances:

> Responsibility should not be abdicated to a third party: however, a third party should be involved *forever*, with the frequency of visits established in keeping with changing circumstances. The problem with appearing only when special problems arise is that it throws the outsider into an arbitrator's role or peace-maker at best. The point that is being missed is that QWL will be a growing climate that will require guidance to help the organization move from one level to the next. The introduction of new people into the system by both the unions and management must also be monitored and nurtured. One company has had a third party assisting them since 1952 and, as I write this, he continues to contribute.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

Union and Management Roles in QWL Efforts

Apparently this issue did not elicit much interest on the part of the management respondents. At any rate, their comments were sparse and there was not much consensus among them, except perhaps on the principle that a successful program requires strong and enthusiastic support, encouragement, and guidance from the top down on the part of both union and management. Consistent with this principle, one respondent suggested that "QWL projects should begin with very serious attention on the part of management and union leadership to the question, 'What is the compelling reason to change from the way we are currently operating?' " He contended that "unless there is consensus as to the compelling reasons for change, there will be little commitment and motivation toward the program, and the objectives will not be clear enough to focus the organization on criteria for program evaluation."

One respondent qualified the requirement for top level support by noting that it may be much more productive to launch a program in the absence of ideal conditions than to wait in the hope that they may one day be fulfilled:

> The conferees repeatedly stress the importance of top level support from both sides for QWL programs to be effective. I certainly agree with this. However, I know there are some circumstances within larger companies and I suspect also within major unions that if we waited for top level support we might wait forever. My experience indicates that QWL can begin best with those people within both the company and the union who want to begin it. It can sometimes launch at local levels and eventually press both laterally and upward. Top-level support is beautiful but that should not preclude other beginnings.

One respondent emphasized that QWL improvement requires a very fundamental change in role by both union and management, and that it is vital that both understand that fact and both are prepared to make the necessary change if the program is to be meaningful:

> It is clear to me that QWL cannot survive under traditional management, nor can it under traditional unionism. Both must be willing to make substantial changes. In QWL programs, there is no place for organization power, be it held by management or the union. There can be no artificial or political constraints, at least as it relates to the QWL program. Unions, being political organizations, will have difficulty in dealing with this. It presents a real dilemma for them. QWL programs dictate a substantially narrower role for them. With QWL, unions are limited to bargaining economic and equity issues. QWL requires collaboration on increasing the effectiveness of the organization. Only how the gains are distributed can be dealt with at the bargaining table.

Public Policy Implications

The task force of union conferees that addressed itself to potential public policy implications of QWL reached the apparently ambivalent conclusion that there should be federal subsidies available to help cover start-up costs for QWL projects, but that in order to preclude government interference there must be no strings attached.

The consensus among the management respondents was a much stronger reservation about federal subsidies. In essence, they saw no role or need for government seed money. They felt that effective QWL programs will pay for themselves, that the parties involved should be willing to invest in the required start-up costs, and that spending one's own money is the ultimate measure of commitment. They also felt that there is substantial benefit to the members of an enterprise in working together toward common goals—such as improved working conditions, better job security, healthy growth, and improved profits—and that these should be the motivating forces behind the initiation of QWL programs, not some external and artificial incentive. They also expressed concern that what might start as financial support and encouragement could well end up as regulation and coercion, that "federal subsidies all too often mean federal interference, leading to inefficiency and even an atmosphere of too comfortable self-indulgence."

One respondent departed from the consensus view and strongly endorsed government subsidies for QWL projects, commenting that "the payoff downstream could be enormous." While his position appears to be diametrically opposite to that of the rest of the group, our reading was that he was looking at the issue from a different vantage point. The others adopted the perspective of a company and union that were considering launching a QWL program, and concluded that a federal subsidy was inadvisable. His comments, on the other hand, appeared to imply a *national* perspective. In short, he apparently felt that a meaningful and well-publicized program of federal incentives might well induce many organizations to undertake QWL efforts who otherwise would not do so, and that the aggregate social and economic impact that might result could potentially be great.

Scope of a QWL Effort

In general, there was a fair amount of agreement between the union conferees and the management respondents on the question of what constitutes the appropriate scope or boundaries for a QWL program.

While some union conferees argued that no issues should be barred from consideration, most felt that there should be specified exclusions, e.g., certain "management" matters (such as investment decisions), or those issues covered by the collective bargaining agreement. The union conferees also agreed that the contract should not be circumvented, at least not without explicit and formal agreement to do so.

Similarly, the management respondents typically felt that certain management decisions generally are not appropriate for consideration under QWL programs. Cited as examples of probable exclusions were long-range plans, major capital expenditures, advertising and marketing strategy, executive compensation, promotions, and new product development.

One respondent drew a distinction between decisions relating to *what* organizational goals to adopt (regarding products, services, quality, costs, etc.) and decisions concerned with *how* those goals are to be achieved. He contended that the former kinds of issues should not be within the scope of a QWL program since they are basically determined by the marketplace and are completely outside the control of the program participants, whereas the latter kinds of issues are quite appropriate for QWL programs. Another respondent pointed out that it is reasonable to expect that after several years of successful cooperation, management would be comfortable enough to remove some items from the list of exclusions.

By the same token, it was generally felt that matters covered in the collective bargaining agreement should constitute exclusions from QWL, though here too it was pointed out that after a period of time it might be expected that a provision would be written into the agreement that would permit changes in the contract in specified areas.

Given the nature of the relationship that is expected to prevail under the QWL concept, one of the respondents was uncomfortable with the idea of exclusions:

> I feel a QWL effort should not start out by limiting or excluding any issues, in conjunction with an understanding that almost everything that transpires is with voluntary and mutual concurrence. From my experience it is entirely appropriate not to alter or trespass the labor agreement at the outset. After a while, however, when the trust and cooperation levels escalate, the labor agreement should not remain sacred and untouchable. The labor agreement itself often codifies considerable suspicion, mistrust and indignity. As the relationship between management, the union and all the people in the workplace becomes more trusting and involving, the codification of the relationship, namely the labor agreement, should become commensurate with that

relationship. This obviously can not be without agreement between union, management and the represented employees.

With respect to the distinction drawn at the conference between an *advisory* role and a *decision-making* role for employees under QWL, one management respondent cautioned that participative management does not mean democratic management. He commented that management must continue to manage, and that the fundamental characteristic of true participative management is that employees are offered a structured opportunity to *influence,* not *make,* management decisions.

On the same issue, another respondent expressed strong agreement with the viewpoint of the union conferees that participation in decision making is itself an evolutionary process:

> That certainly has been my experience. In fact, I find that in the early stages, most local union leaders are much more comfortable with a consulting or advisory role. This is usually most comfortable also for supervisors and employees. The evolution of decision participation to having people in some circumstances make more of their own decisions does, in fact, take place. This is also true by "issues." Some subject areas lend themselves to the advisory process and others lend themselves to self-direction. In my view both are extremely viable for improving workplace relationships.

Payoff of QWL

A number of the management respondents undertook to enumerate the potential payoffs of QWL programs to workers, management, and unions. Their respective views are largely subsumed by the following summary offered by one of the respondents:

a. for the workers . . . financial rewards, satisfaction and fulfillment from their work, better understanding and relationships with supervision, a reduction in stress and more job security with less risk of unnecessary work stoppages and even greater promotional opportunities as the result of expansion brought on by the company's stronger competitive position.

b. for management . . . a stronger position in competitive markets, a happier more productive work force, the satisfaction which comes from being a successful innovator and leader and in general being a winner in the world's toughest "game," business.

c. for the unions . . . achieving in the highest possible way the true objectives of the founding fathers of the labor movement, i.e., a better deal for the working man, economically and in their working conditions. In other words, the payoff for unions is an opportunity to lead their constituents to the "promised land" and at the same time collect more dues from members who are earning more dollars.

Another respondent expanded on both the direct and indirect benefits of QWL for employees, as well as the potential payoff to the organization:

> To me the ultimate payoff for employees is the opportunity for worklife to become fulfilling of social individual needs. Rather than a drudgery, for worklife to become an opportunity for trust and personal respect and involvement in a wide spectrum of workplace activities is the ultimate objective of QWL. By-products of this are of[illegible] the achievement of better physical and mental health and almost always the inner desire to make a greater personal contribution to an organization that cares.
>
> I appreciate and concur with Ephlin's comment on Tarrytown. Worklife fulfillment is not an insignificant payoff and almost always leads to a reduction in what I call "counterproductivity." Counterproductivity to me is all the things a person can do to bring as little of himself or herself to the workplace (if he or she bothers to come at all). I must admit, of course, that many managers are looking for hard measures of organizational improvement. This is not unreasonable. But to me, QWL is a blend of this expectation with other human values.

QWL in Relation to Union Organizing

In brief, the management respondents generally felt that to date QWL has not been a big factor in union organizing either by companies or by unions. One respondent amplified this view with several additional observations:

> I'm sure it's true that QWL has been used as a deterrent to being organized, but when this is done for that reason alone, it is pretty certain to backfire and could, in fact, become an asset to an organizing attempt. When initiated by a union, it is predictable that it would increase membership where the union already exists. The unions obviously could one day insure that QWL be a *right* and it should be. I would only hope that management would recognize the human resources that exist in their organizations and establish QWL as a right before they are made to do so. (Unions are with us today because of a vacuum created by management. I wonder how many managers see the present vacuum?) If management does not meet those needs, then I believe the unions will, and they should.

In a somewhat similar vein, another respondent commented on the great potential of QWL for strengthening unions:

> In a union-free environment, sincere QWL involvement does reduce the likelihood of the need for unionization in the minds of many employees. In a union environment I feel that sincere QWL achievement tremendously enriches and fortifies the role of the union. Once there is QWL achievement in the union environment it is probably much less susceptible to slippage or reverting back to old styles. I also think companies that use token QWL as a device to remain union free are deceiving themselves. I guess I idealistically feel that greater worklife fulfillment and involvement are high objectives and if unions can help this achievement then they are making a significant contribution everywhere. I think the fact that in my own company we have flown a union committee from one facility to visit a union-free facility is

an example of how QWL achievement can change "mind sets."

Analysis of QWL Failures

The management respondents generally felt that the union conferees had done an excellent job of identifying the causes of QWL failures. One, in fact, suggested that the list of factors cited by the conferees would make a terrific checklist for an organization starting a QWL program.

A number of respondents proposed additions or amplifications to the list, or singled out what they regarded as the key issue(s) in determining the success or failure of joint QWL programs. Several examples follow:

- I agree with the conferees' observations. It is interesting to me that the conferees recognize that setting up QWL as an "experiment" or as a "project" can lead to failure. I think too formal a structure is what often gives QWL this "experiment" or "project" identification. I would say, in my company, our worst failure related to giving a QWL effort far too much of an initial limelight. The existence of a formal committee and the administering of a questionnaire, essentially about what people did not like, gave rise to the elevation of an employee expectation level far above what anyone in that organization (managers, union, supervisors) could possibly provide. The other major source of failure in my experience has been QWL by mandate. Somehow we must develop a way for managers, union and employees to voluntarily become involved in QWL experiences.
- It would seem to me that *the* key issue is the credibility of management. Unless the company has a long track record of high credibility in its discussions and deliberations in employee relations matters, the program of QWL is doomed from the start. What positive and constructive reason would either employees or union representatives have for entering into a program with management if they were not convinced

of management's willingness to listen and consider their points of view?

- I think the biggest cause of failure of QWL programs is the reluctance of both employees and management to tear down the barriers to cooperation. This means doing away with status symbols, such as reserved parking, incentives that apply only to management, and restrictive work rules. All members of the organization must develop a mutual trust based on the concept that each individual is basically honest and wants to do a good job. These concepts are self-policing and peer pressure will weed out the individuals who might mess-up "our company," and destroy this trust. The biggest problem will always be, who will be the first to tear out a section of their own barrier.

- The QWL failures listed by the union conferees are real; however, the list is not complete without adding "unwillingness of unions to relinquish any of their prerogatives . . . ," for this is just as likely to happen due to the frequent changes in union leadership.

  Reasons for QWL failures basically are the following:

  a. Poor plan installation, failure to use someone with real expertise.

  b. Failure to continually educate and train management, supervisors and employees, thus causing a deterioration in understanding of the goals and objectives and workings simply because of turnover and attrition.

  c. Lack of understanding of how the concept works on the part of the employees, i.e., faulty communications.

  d. Where a bonus is paid, failure to adjust the formula for major capital expenditures or other exceptional cost factors; and rapid changes in product mix where a formula that adjusts accordingly cannot be developed.

- Failures of QWL programs generally result from: (a) little attention to the compelling reasons for the program in the first place, (b) lack of top management and/or union leadership commitment and competence to manage under a new, dramatically different style, (c) hidden motives (e.g., paternalism, union avoidance), (d) inconsistencies between what management *says* (e.g., Theory Y) and what management *does* (e.g., Theory X), (e) inadequate support from third parties, training resources, productivity measurement resources, etc., (f) inequity, i.e., asking people to be more involved in the business without their receiving any return on that investment.

Finally, one of the respondents commented that it is regrettable that there is such a long list of reasons for failure of QWL projects, and suggested that what the QWL movement needs more than anything else is more success models—programs that have lasted three or four years, i.e., beyond the initial burst of enthusiasm. He also suggested that most of the reasons for failure can probably be summed up by one or more of the following:

> (1) underestimating the task in terms of time, resources or expertise; (2) the problem of sustaining any "program" after the newness wears off and the cream has been skimmed; (3) involving workers in decision making is basically contrary to the American industrial culture.

Relationship Between QWL and Collective Bargaining

On the issue of the appropriate relationship between QWL and collective bargaining, the union conferees held a spectrum of viewpoints, ranging from the position that QWL must be an integral part of collective bargaining, to the view that it is quite viable as a separate process.

There was a much more clear-cut consensus among most of the management respondents, to wit, that there should be no relationship between QWL and collective bargaining. This attitude appeared to be based on the contention that incorporation of QWL into collective bargaining would ensure that the adversary relationship carried over into the QWL program and would vitiate the program before it got started.

In the view of one respondent, management initially would resist tying in QWL with the contract, but eventually this would occur and be acceptable to both sides or the QWL program would atrophy.

For the most part, the management people felt that QWL and collective bargaining were compatible as separate processes. One respondent ~~was less~~ sanguine:

> I have serious reservations relative to the compatibility of traditional trade unionism and QWL concepts. Unionism is based upon collective precepts, where the gains for the *union* are more important than for any one of its members. QWL concepts, however, are centered on the individual.

Finally, one respondent expressed a view rather different from the others. It was his contention that while QWL and collective bargaining are compatible, they can by no means exist as separate and distinct processes, but rather that in a meaningful program they inevitably must have a profound impact on each other:

> I think the distinction that Stephen Confer makes between the bargaining *contract* and the bargaining *process* is valuable. I think the notion that cooperative relationships can be held divorced from adversarial relationships is a myth. Eventually they must touch. Even in a mature bargaining relationship, unions and managements are learning only how to handle conflict with grace. In QWL efforts, unions and managements are learning how to handle cooperation without fear. These cannot remain eternally separate. In my company we try first to establish successful ways we can interrelate with our union and our employees in nonconflict situations. This is now successfully influencing the way we look at conflict. As a "process" they become more congruent. We are reaching a point now, however, where some aspects of the labor contract are becoming a barrier. Interestingly, these are mostly provisions originally designed to protect the company against abuse. Unfortunately, this

> tends to make us an "abuse oriented" society. In one situation that I am not free to report in detail (without concurrence of all the other people involved) we have "provisionally" set aside those aspects of the noneconomic provisions of the labor agreement that reflect mistrust and abuse. The details of this particular experience are perhaps unimportant other than to point out that, to me at least, somewhere in time in a sincere QWL effort, some precepts and language of the labor agreement must come under critical scrutiny.

Union and Management Initiatives

Several of the union conferees stressed that unions must become more relevant to the needs of the membership, and noted that, among other things, this implies taking the initiative in developing joint QWL improvement programs.

By and large the management respondents endorsed this position enthusiastically. Not only did they concur that the long term survival of unions may be determined by whether they take an active role in the QWL movement, but some felt that a QWL program would probably be more successful if the initiative came from the union. One respondent even reported that, although it was his idea to install a QWL program, he arranged for it to appear that the impetus had come from the union leadership, on the premise that this would give the concept more support and credibility from the rank and file who were critical to its success.

While suggesting that where the initiative might best come from is a function of the particular circumstances, another respondent expressed excitement over the union views on this issue:

> I was really excited to see that some of the conferees feel that a thrust for QWL in a nonbargaining context could, and sometimes should, emanate from the union. In my view the thrust for QWL can be by management initiative (most common), by joint effort (next most common) and by union initiative (least common). I think all three are potentially

viable in different circumstances and can lead to cooperative and genuine achievement.

. . . It is fascinating for me to read that many of the conferees feel that unions must look inside themselves for adopting and enriching the QWL experience. That, of course, is exactly what management must also do for itself. To me that is what QWL is all about. It is a critical reexamination by the existing institutions within the workplace of the internal objectives and the objectives of their relationships. Wherever the trust might arise, in a free and voluntary work-life society a significant change in style by either management or union will eventually lead to a significant change in the dynamics of that workplace for everyone.

General Comments

Several of the management respondents volunteered an overall reaction to the union deliberations. The thrust of these comments was that they were extremely impressed with the outcomes of the conference, that many points were brought out that they themselves had not previously considered, that some very keen insights emerged, and that they are more encouraged that QWL improvement efforts may become a way of life.

4

ANALYSIS OF ISSUES AND VIEWPOINTS REGARDING JOINT QWL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

This chapter represents an effort to identify some major issues regarding union-management cooperation in QWL improvement efforts, to analyze those issues with particular reference to the viewpoints expressed by the conference participants, and to relate the issues/viewpoints to selected references from the QWL literature.

What is QWL and What Are the Legitimate Objectives of a QWL Improvement Effort?

The varied perspectives of the conference participants (perhaps compounded by the ambiguity of the term "quality of worklife") were reflected in a number of comments throughout the conference. This was particularly well illustrated in the views that were expressed with regard to similarities and/or differences between QWL and traditional labor relations. These views ranged from the conviction that QWL improvement efforts "go well beyond anything that is traditionally and normally accomplished through the collective bargaining process," to the contention that QWL is simply "more opportunity for workers to participate in decisions, *which is traditional trade unionism.*"

Other comments suggested very limited understanding of the concept of QWL on the part of some of the participants, such as the view that the collective bargaining process serves to provide solutions to grievances, whereas the QWL process resolves gripes.

Much more significant, however, was the view of the concept and purpose of QWL programs as a potential weapon in the context of the adversary relationship with management—in effect, confrontation by additional means. This perception appeared to be widely shared and to be implicit if not explicit in the discussion of many of the issues that emerged at the conference. A few illustrations may serve to make this clear.

In addressing the relationship between QWL and collective bargaining, a number of the union conferees essentially took the position that QWL affords the opportunity to have the "best of both worlds" without risk by maintaining the bargaining agreement as inviolable and using QWL as a means for eroding management prerogatives by open-ended "bargaining" on a multitude of other matters. One conferee, for example, suggested that on an issue where the union is satisfied with what is in the contract it would keep that issue out of QWL, but where the language is weak in the contract it would be willing to introduce the issue into the QWL process. "The basic principle, in other words, is that if we can't get something into the contract, we're willing to take another approach to try to get it, and QWL would be one of those approaches."

Another illustration of the adversary flavor was the emphatic rejection of increased productivity as a legitimate explicit goal of a QWL program, *coupled* (somewhat incongruously) with the insistence that the fruits of such increased productivity or cost savings traceable to the QWL effort be shared. This flavor was again reflected in the deliberations of one of the conference task forces in considering the possible need for third party assistance in initiating a QWL program. Rather than trust a "neutral" third party, this segment of the conference participants felt it safer for each "side" to have its "own" consultants. Similarly, this group advocated separate, parallel union and management training programs in preparation for a QWL effort, as contrasted with the program at the Tarrytown plant of GM, for example, where the same training program, developed by GM management staff with consultative input from the union, is made available to all personnel.

As a final illustration of the conferees' view of QWL as a program that must be risk-free, we might cite their emphasis on a variety of safeguards, e.g., no layoffs, demotions, wage reductions or speed-ups, and the option to cancel the program at any time.

While none of these components of the union "platform" are necessarily inappropriate, in the aggregate they tend to suggest a highly one-sided view of the rationale for undertaking QWL efforts. This perception is undoubtedly born of a pervasive wariness of managements' motives, and in turn presumably reflects the trade unionists' view of history. In any event, it seems to convey a posture which may not provide an adequate foundation for any deeply based cooperation with management unless there is greater evidence of significant potential payoffs for all parties—unions, workers, management, and stockholders.

In addition to the pragmatic consideration that few managements will "buy in" to a relationship that does not appear to provide for all the stakeholders to benefit in some ways, there is also some evidence that QWL programs with "bilateral" objectives are more successful. Walton (1979), for example, concludes:

> In the successful innovations, managers behave as if both economic and human values count. . . . A commitment to dual outcomes is congruent with the values increasingly held by knowledgeable people, but also it has proved to be the most practical approach to making significant advances toward either end. Consider the point negatively. When changes in the work structure do not improve the work environment from a human perspective, they will not increase employees' contribution to the business; likewise, changes in work structure that require managers to relate differently to workers but do not also benefit the business are not as likely to be sustained by those managers over time.
>
> One should not confuse a dedication to achieving both results with the assumption that meeting one will guarantee the other; morale and productivity are not necessarily linked.

> [illegible]rale can be enhanced in any number of ways. Rather, a [illegible]ommitment to dual objectives sets in motion a search for the limited set of changes that will promote both human and economic ends. (pp. 94-95)

Perhaps the real grounds for optimism lie in Walton's parenthetical note:

> Many union officials believe it unwise to be publicly committed to productivity as well as to quality of worklife goals lest the former be identified with speed-ups and other activities that achieve productivity at the workers' expense. Nevertheless, union officials often implicitly acknowledge the legitimacy of improved business results. (p. 94)

Union Attitudes Toward Joint QWL Improvement Efforts

In the previous section, in commenting on the conferees' views of the concept and purpose of QWL, we have noted the seeming wariness of many of them regarding undertaking joint union-management QWL improvement efforts on a truly mutual, cooperative basis. In general, however, it was our impression that most of the conferees were, in fact, willing to consider joint QWL programs, that a number of them had extensive experience in such programs, and that the enthusiasm of the individual conferees tended to vary quite directly with the amount of their previous exposure to QWL.

This observation is certainly consistent with our findings in a recent study in which 17 international union officials were interviewed individually with regard to their attitudes concerning cooperative union-management QWL improvement efforts (Glaser and Greenberg, 1979).

The interviews elicited a broad spectrum of attitudes toward labor-management cooperation in QWL improvement efforts. On the one hand, it was clear that some union officials are skeptical of the QWL movement, for such reasons as the following (either cited by interviewees as their own opinion or attributed to others):

- a general distrust of management, and specifically the fear that QWL is a management subterfuge designed not only to exploit workers by extracting more work from them without sharing the benefits but also to weaken union power, erode member loyalty, and thwart union organizing efforts by opening up direct lines of worker-management communication;
- the contention that workers really are not interested in quality of worklife improvements, preferring economic gains and shorter hours as the best way of making palatable the workplace that many perceive as an unfriendly environment;
- the view that there is some degree of ideological incompatibility between joint QWL efforts and collective bargaining since one implies close cooperation between union and management while the other is based on an adversary relationship;
- their relative unfamiliarity with, and consequent fear of, QWL concepts;
- their suspicion that third party facilitators of QWL start-up efforts are in management's camp.

Some respondents, in fact, rejected the idea of QWL improvement programs almost categorically, stating:

- Our contracts take care of this union's concern with QWL—we don't need special programs.
- In a time of job insecurity such as this, job satisfaction is not a primary concern.
- Compensation is most important (particularly to low income workers) . . . QWL is secondary.
- Such things as autonomous work units and flextime aren't practical in our industry.
- There are those who would like to destroy the free collective bargaining system under the guise of QWL improvement programs.

On the other hand, most of the interviewees cited a [illegible] of reasons *for* union cooperation in QWL efforts. For [illegible]

- There is a need to bring democratic values into the workplace.
- Unions are for anything that will improve the quality of their members' worklives, e.g., making work more meaningful and enjoyable.
- The long-run trend in collective bargaining is toward cooperation, particularly since handling everything through an adversary process is very expensive.
- Cooperating in QWL efforts is in the interest of unions, since the union role is enhanced, as is member loyalty, and it can be an effective organizing tool. Conversely, QWL programs can weaken unions that don't take an active part in them.
- The changing profile of the work force (e.g., more younger and better educated workers) is resulting in more pressure for improved worklife.

In general, the interviews revealed that those labor union officials who had had considerable exposure to QWL improvement efforts were much more likely to be positively disposed toward union-management cooperation in such programs than were those without such experience. This split tended to be manifest in their viewpoints regarding many specific issues. For example, the experienced group viewed joint labor-management committees as a natural extension of the union role and a practical tool for implementing QWL, while the group with little or no experience tended to be skeptical about such committees, and to regard them largely as "window dressing." Similarly, the less experienced group tended to see QWL as a new device for "speed-up," and to be wary of management's intentions, whereas the more experienced group generally perceived QWL in terms of increased employee participation and autonomy, yielding a more humanistic and satisfying workplace, and consequently a more effective organization as well as an enhanced union role.

The group with considerable experience in cooperating with management in QWL improvement efforts was favorably disposed toward expanding such relationships under certain "safeguard" conditions (discussed below). Those with little or no experience tended to dwell on the traditional adversary relationship with management and to be wary of perceived dangers in such cooperation. Nevertheless, all 17 interviewees expressed interest in further discussion of the subject with the union brothers and sisters who report worthwhile results based upon actual long term experience. The March 15-16, 1979 conference in Washington was held in response both to that expressed desire and to similar interest expressed by the Labor Leadership Group formed by the American Center for the Quality of Work Life.

Relationship Between QWL and Collective Bargaining

As noted in the conference summary, the relationship of QWL to collective bargaining was a highly controversial issue and one that yielded a spectrum of viewpoints, ranging from the notion that QWL only makes sense as an integral component of collective bargaining, to the view that it is quite viable as a separate process, with structures, relationships, and dynamics that are distinct and different from those of collective bargaining, so long as there are safeguards for maintaining the integrity of the local and national contracts between union and management.

We have already commented at some length on the fact that union leaders and representatives at all levels tend to regard QWL proposals and programs with considerable caution or even suspicion. In addition to the discussion above, see, for example, Winpisinger (1978). Regardless of whether these attitudes are objectively well founded or "correct," they are undoubtedly deeply rooted in the historical development and experience of the American labor movement and are to some degree exacerbated by the political, social and economic context of contemporary U.S.A. It would seem useful to pause here for at least a cursory examination of that backdrop.

* * * *

Historically, the American labor movement emerged in a relatively inhospitable environment. A large class of freeholding farmers, a large class of small businessmen and self-employed persons, a burgeoning big business sector later in the 19th and 20th centuries, and a growing class of professional and white-collar workers—these dominant elements in the American society held to values and views which at best tolerated the emerging labor organizations and more typically were openly and actively hostile, especially when organized labor efforts appeared to be effective. Perhaps even more significant, the American wage earner was typically lacking in any class consciousness which would serve (as in European industrial nations) as a social cement to facilitate organization and collective action by employees as such.

Over a long, difficult, and rather unsuccessful struggle of more than a century (say from the 1820s to the 1920s), the surviving labor leaders learned how difficult it was to organize workers, and once organized, to keep them organized. Samuel Gompers clearly articulated this issue in his great debate with the socialists and various other types of reformers during the 1880s and on up until his death in 1924. In brief, the primary problem was to organize and to survive as an organization.

Throughout that century, the labor movement experimented with a plethora of philosophies, programs and organizational variations, typically advanced and advocated by sincere, well intentioned and usually zealous reformers with a vision of a better society. Over the decades, there were the free land movement, the cheap credit movement, the radical socialist movement, the Knights of Labor "uplift" unionism including farmers and small businessmen as members, producer cooperatives, and in the 1920s and 30s, labor-management cooperation. But after each of these bright hopes faded away, the institution that demonstrated survival capacity was the trade union based primarily upon the process of collective bargaining with employers whereby the union developed some degree of participation in the legislation and administration of the rules of the workplace—what Selig Perlman called "job control," and what Sumner Slichter was later to call "a system of industrial jurisprudence."

The point here is simply that the labor movement in the United States is in fact the trade union movement; and the very heart of the trade union movement is the process of collective bargaining, reflected in a bargaining agreement between the parties. This is the process and the method by which the union visibly and measurably serves and protects its members and thereby insures its own survival. Employee interest in union membership in the U.S. is highly correlated with perceived tangible benefits flowing from that membership, which means that the union must regularly deliver in order to survive. Therefore, it is our intuition and judgment that most union leaders or those aspiring to be leaders will test any new idea or program by the criterion of how it will affect the union's strength and performance in bargaining with employers.

It is precisely here, we suspect, that the QWL concept encounters or raises doubts in the minds of many union leaders. Their question is: "How does it relate to, and how will it affect *in the long run,* the strength, security and effectiveness of the union in performing its *primary* function—collective bargaining (in the broad sense of that term)."

The answer is by no means clear. It seems quite possible that in some situations there may well be some intrinsic conflicts involved; if so, these possibilities need to be identified in any particular case and somehow resolved if union support is to be sustained (or created in the first place). The convinced and sincere advocates of QWL should be mindful that reformers proposing a better way have beseeched and sometimes beguiled the trade union movement for 150 years. Through this experience they have grown wary of any proposal, no matter how public-spirited its advocates, that might threaten or weaken the foundation on which the union rests—and not all that securely in the inner thoughts and perceptions of many union leaders!

This leads to a consideration of the contemporary social, political and economic context of the country which quite understandably tends to exacerbate the insecurities and fears of thoughtful union leaders.

It seems fair and accurate to say that the American labor movement currently is, and feels itself to be, in a defensive stance. Each year and each decade, union membership constitutes a smaller percentage of the total employees in the labor force. The substantial current growth of the labor force is occurring in the occupations, industries and regions where unionization has historically been least successful. Government agencies constitute the major exception to this proposition; and even here, the crest seems to have passed. Unions are winning scarcely half of the National Labor Relations Board representation elections.

Many historic bastions of union strength (coal and steel for example) have seen drastic declines in employment and/or union membership. Nor do unions appear to be enjoying high public esteem, at least as reflected in public opinion polls, although it should perhaps be noted that they do at least as well here as do the oil companies and the U.S. Congress. Furthermore, the current conventional wisdom appears to be that the political clout of organized labor has been grossly overestimated. Opposed and hostile "right wing" political action groups have been proliferating. In any event, the AFL-CIO was surprisingly unsuccessful in achieving some of its primary political objectives (e.g., the so-called Labor Reform Bill, which was designed to enhance the unions' ability to counter employers' resistance to union organizing efforts) under the current administration despite the preponderance of Democratic party members in both houses of Congress and a Democratic president.

In sum, given the historic experience, character and ideology (or lack of ideology) of the American labor movement, and the current context in which the industrial relations process occurs, it does not seem at all strange or surprising that union leaders are at least very cautious about embarking on any kind of institutional experiment which might have adverse effects on union strength and security.

There are some, in fact, who believe that QWL, considered as a movement, is incompatible with collective bargaining as it presently exists in this country. That is not, however, a view that is consistent with the experience of most union people who have undertaken serious, thoughtful and carefully planned joint QWL efforts. This experience is well summarized by Bluestone (1978):

> In recent years, an increasing number of employers have recognized the need for developing new ideas in structuring work and in relating to the workers. They have been experimenting with various forms of quality of worklife programs. In my view, it is vitally important that the union not stand aloof from these developments, but rather assert leadership as coequals with management in developing and implementing quality of worklife programs. For herein lies a meaningful opportunity to move an additional important step toward democratizing the workplace. It would be a serious blunder if the union movement failed to seize this opportunity. Moreover, improving the quality of worklife in the sense I have described is essentially an extension of the basic goals of unionism: achieving that measure of freedom for workers ordinarily denied them in managing their jobs.
>
> Quality of worklife programs which are directed toward the human development of the workers, elevating human dignity, and self-fulfillment require mutual, cooperative effort on the part of management and the union. That is why the first stage in the development of such programs should be devoted to creating a solid climate of mutual respect between the parties. It is important to understand that hard-line collective bargaining between the negotiating parties continues even while the quality of worklife program is in effect. Experience indicates that normal collective bargaining and the introduction of quality of worklife programs can exist and succeed side by side. (p. 23)

Conditions Associated with Success/Failure of QWL Improvement Efforts

Considerable attention was devoted at the conference to analyzing QWL failures, both individually and generically, resulting in a very respectable list (included in the conference summary) of factors perceived as contributing to failure. No explicit effort was made to analyze effective and viable QWL programs to identify the conditions associated with their success, although presumably the implication was that the "flip side" of many of the factors on the failure list would comprise a blueprint for success.

Efforts to identify the attributes of successful and unsuccessful QWL programs, as well as factors related to the spread of programs, have been made by many students of QWL, e.g., Glaser (1978), Rosow (1979), Walton (1975, 1979), and others.

Glaser (1978) suggests the following common reasons for failure:

- Lack of sufficient mutual trust between management and labor at the given site, which needs to be achieved if QWL improvement efforts are to be sustained.
- Loss of support from levels of management above the experimental unit—or failure to assure needed support in the first place.
- Premature turnover of project leaders.
- Disenchantment by managers in the company and/or union with what they perceive as dilution of their authority, control, or power.
- Threatened obsolescence of people's established roles, skills, or patterns of functioning.
- Arrangements that lead to higher pay for only a circumscribed segment of the work force that happens to be involved in the experiment.
- A unilateral management decision to institute a QWL improvement effort without adequate input during the planning stage from the people who would be affected by the changes—thus, lack of a grassroots constituency.
- Insufficient training of supervisors and union stewards in the philosophy and effective practice of participation in joint problem solving. (p. 9)

Glaser also identifies a set of elements that generally are involved in successful long term outcomes:

- Achieving commitment from management to an open, nondefensive style of operation which includes sincerely inviting employees to speak up, via appropriate communication structures, regarding problems or opportunities. A related element is provision of a practicable means for having members of the work force participate in the refinement and implementation of promising suggestions if they would like to do so.
- Trying (insofar as possible in the given situation) to make the job itself more challenging by structuring it so that an individual (or small work team) can "self-manage" and feel responsible for a significant, identifiable output.
- Affording opportunities for individual employees to advance in organizational or career terms.
- Training of supervisors to equip them to function effectively in a less directive, more collaborative style.
- Breaking down the traditional status barriers between management and production or support personnel—achieving an atmosphere of open communication and trust between management and the work force.
- Providing not only feedback with regard to results achieved, and recognition for superior results, but also providing financial incentives such as cost-savings-sharing where feasible.
- Seeking to select personnel who can be motivated, under appropriate conditions, to "give a damn" about striving for excellence in task performance.
- Evaluating and analyzing outcomes, including any actual or potential undesirable developments, then using such information for revised arrangements, working toward continual improvement of the operating system. (pp. 11-12)

Guest (1979) suggests that the following factors are important for the success of QWL improvement efforts:

1. For quality of worklife to succeed, management must be wholly competent in running the business as a profit-making enterprise. When management lacks organizational competence and adequate technical expertise, no amount of good intentions to improve worker-union-management communication will succeed. Workers will not be willing to become involved knowing management lacks the competence to do anything about their ideas.

2. The union must be strong. The members must trust their leadership, and this trust must exist within the framework of a democratic "political" process.

3. In most instances, management has to be the first party to initiate change, to "hold out the olive branch."

4. Quality of worklife should never be used by either party to circumvent the labor-management agreement. The rights, privileges, and obligations of both parties should remain inviolate. Dealing with grievances and disputes can be made easier through quality of worklife efforts, but at no time should management give up its right to manage nor the union its right to protect its members on matters related to wages, hours, benefits, and general conditions of employment.

5. Top management and top union officials must make an explicit commitment to support quality of worklife.

6. Even with agreement at high levels and a demonstrated concern on the part of rank-and-file employees, it is essential that middle management and front-line supervisors (and shop stewards) not only know what is taking place but also feel they have a say in the change process. Supervisors naturally feel threatened by any moves to give subordinates greater power in determining how work is to be performed. Union representatives can perceive unilateral work participation as a threat to their political position.

7. A quality of worklife program is unlikely to succeed if management's intention is to increase productivity by speeding up the individual worker's work pace or, if it uses the program as such, to reduce the work force through layoffs. Workers will quickly see such actions as unfair exploitation. This is not to say that cost savings from better quality performance, lower absenteeism and turnover, and better production methods should not be an expected consequence of the effort.

8. A program should be voluntary for the participants.

9. Quality of worklife should not be initiated with a detailed master plan. It should start on a limited scale focused on the solution of specific problems, however small. It should be flexible.

10. At each step in developing a program, all small bottlenecks or misunderstandings must be talked out and solved on the spot. If set aside simply to get on with the "important" plans, the little misunderstandings can later explode with enough force to destroy the entire program.

11. It is not enough to expose employees to the principles of effective interpersonal communication and problem-solving skills. There must be immediate opportunities available for them to use these skills in practical ways right in the job situation itself. Further follow-up action of some kind is necessary to serve as positive reinforcement to the employees.

12. Quality of worklife efforts should not be thought of as a "program" with a finite ending. There must be a built-in momentum that is dynamic, ongoing, and that can continue regardless of changes in the personnel in the organization. Once employees come to believe that they can participate and do in fact become involved in solving problems, the process gains a momentum of its own.

There is an implied warning here. Management may have the formal power to drop quality of worklife efforts

> summarily. Union officers may have the political power to scuttle such efforts. Both would be acting at their peril for, under quality of worklife, the workers will have gained a unique power to influence substantially the quality of their own lives at work. To them there is no turning back. (p. 86)

Based on a careful analysis of projects that were deemed initially successful but did not diffuse to other units in the same organization, Walton (1975) identifies 10 major factors associated with the failure to spread:

1. *Regression in the pilot project*

   Walton notes several reasons why an initially successful project may deteriorate later on:

   (a) internal inconsistencies in the original design;

   (b) loss of support from levels of management above the experimental unit;

   (c) premature turnover of leaders, operators, or consultants directly associated with a project;

   (d) stress and crises that lead to more authoritarian management, which in turn demoralizes the innovative unit;

   (e) tension in the innovative unit's relations with other parties—peer units, staff groups, superiors, labor unions;

   (f) letdown in participants' involvement after initial success with its attendant publicity;

   (g) lack of diffusion to other parts of the organization, which isolates the original experiment and its leaders.

2. *Poor model for change*

   The pilot project may remain viable but be an ineffective model for diffusion because it lacks visibility or credibility.

3. *Confusion over what is to be diffused*

   Higher management may do a poor job of formulating and communicating the diffusion policy, perhaps by stating the innovations too abstractly, or too operationally.

4. *Inappropriateness of concepts employed*

The innovative concepts may fail to be inspiring but at the same time realistic.

5. *Deficient implementation*

Arrangements may be inadequate in such areas as training, consultation, and allocation of accountability for the change effort.

6. *Lack of top management commitment*

There may not be a period of sufficiently sustained priority for the change effort to achieve diffusion.

7. *Union opposition*

Similarly, union support may be inadequate for any significant diffusion.

8. *Bureaucratic barriers*

Diffusion efforts may be frustrated by vested interests and existing organizational routines that limit local autonomy.

9. *Threatened obsolescence*

A restructured work situation requires new roles and new skills, and makes others obsolete. Often, for example, first-line supervision may perceive this need for change as a serious threat.

10. *Self-limiting dynamics*

In companies that employed the most comprehensive diffusion strategies the pilot projects tended to be self-limiting for a variety of reasons, such as resentment by others of the special attention accorded the experimental unit, and consequent resistance to adoption. (pp. 12-18)

Walton also reviewed the literature on diffusion and distilled several attributes of innovations that influence adoption rate:

- Relative advantage (Cost-benefit comparison with existing or alternative modes)

- Communicability (Ease with which the changes can be explained and their effects distinguished from other influences)
- Compatability (Congruence with existing norms, values, and structures)
- Pervasiveness (Number of aspects of the system affected by the innovation)
- Reversibility (Ease with which an innovation can be reversed without serious consequences)
- Number of gatekeepers (Number of approval channels that must be satisfied before an innovation can be adopted) (pp. 20-21)

Walton examines the projects that he studied in terms of these attributes and concludes:

> One important reason for the unimpressive rate of diffusion in the eight companies studied is that, especially in their more comprehensive form, these innovations have many attributes that make their diffusion inherently slow. Even if they offer relative advantages over existing work structures, their character and results are not highly communicable; they are not congruent with existing norms and values; their potential effect in a given work situation is pervasive rather than fractional; they are not readily reversed without incurring social costs; and too many affected parties serve as gatekeepers for the effective implementation of the innovations. (p. 21)

Finally, regarding barriers to diffusion, he concludes:

> Two problem areas deal with organizational dilemmas generated by the nature of the innovations. Work restructuring requires an increase in local autonomy, thereby threatening the power of central staff groups and some managers. It also threatens to make some roles obsolete or to eliminate the positions of some staff specialists and first-line supervisors.

These problems are not easily resolved and require imaginative solutions—solutions not yet obvious to me.

Last, perhaps the most interesting type of barrier to diffusion is the self-limiting dynamics of pilot projects. Ironically, several of these are unexpected consequences of the success of the project: The greater the attention given pilot units, the more likely are managers of peer units to be "turned off" by the example. The more successful the pioneer, the less favorable are the payoffs and the greater the risks for those who follow. The more esprit de corps and sense of being special that develops in the unit, the less generalizable it appears to others.

Some of the implications of our analysis of these and other self-limiting tendencies are apparent once the dynamics are understood: There is an advantage in (1) introducing a number of projects at the same time in the same firm, (2) avoiding overexposure and glorification of particular change efforts, and (3) having the innovative program identified with top management at the initial project stage.

As the examples of work restructuring in the larger society become more numerous, however, the self-limiting tendencies should pose less of a problem. (p. 21)

Prognosis

What, then, would appear to be the prognosis for the growth and diffusion of joint QWL improvement efforts? At one extreme, Levitan and Johnston (1973) argue that the possibilities for humanizing work are very limited due to social demands for continuing certain intrinsically unpleasant tasks and also due to the difficult or unpleasant requirements of certain technologies.

Hackman (1978) arrives at a very pessimistic prognosis for the spread of QWL improvement efforts in the 1980s. He argues that we have reached the "fork in the road" between two alternative approaches to managing human resources—"Route One" (a QWL approach), and "Route Two" (a traditional, hierarchical approach)—and in fact are even now "moving with some vigor" down Route Two. He concludes, moreover, that that direction is unlikely to change in the years to come, for several reasons:

- We know how to operate with Route Two rules, but Route One theory and practice are still primitive.
- Route One solutions require major changes in how organizations are designed and managed, while Route Two solutions fit nicely with traditional practice.
- Route One depends heavily on behavioral science knowledge and techniques, whereas Route Two depends more on "hard" engineering technology and traditional economic models of organizational efficiency. Formidable competition.
- Route One may impoverish some managerial jobs, at least temporarily, in favor of enriched rank-and-file jobs, whereas Route Two solutions enrich managerial jobs—and managers make the decisions about how organizations are to be run.
- There are few instances in which even a highly successful program has spread throughout the larger organization in which it was developed—let alone from one organization to another—with the same success. (pp. 15-16)

Finally, arguing that Route Two is much more consistent with the behavioral styles and values of managers (as well as employees), he concludes:

> . . . The whole idea flies in the face of beliefs and values about people and organizations that have become very well learned and well accepted by managers of traditional organizations. Among those beliefs are that organizations are supposed to be run from the top down, not from the bottom up; that many employees have neither the competence nor the commitment to take real responsibility for carrying out the work of the organization on their own; that organizational effectiveness should be measured primarily, if not exclusively, in terms of the economic efficiency of the enterprise;

> and that more management control of employee behavior is better management. (p. 16)

Hackman and Suttle (1977) acknowledge the possibility that additional research may enable us to create the conditions necessary for Route One innovations to catch on and spread, but are not optimistic:

> The value of this general approach now is being tested in various experiments being carried out across the country (see Chapter 7), and further support for this type of activity may be forthcoming from federal and state legislation. It is clear, however, that a full test of the value of the approach will require an investment of societal resources many times greater than presently is the case, and will involve commitment and collaboration among segments of society that presently find themselves more often in a conflictful relationship than not.
>
> Even if the resources for a large-scale and coordinated attack on quality of worklife issues should become available, there is no assurance that the outcomes of that venture would be commensurate with the resources expended. Although it is likely that significant learnings about organizations and about change would emerge from such an undertaking, it is much less clear that real improvements in the quality of worklife would be realized. Can planned change, beginning deep within functioning organizations and working upward and outward, counter the powerful influences that operate from the top down, and from the outside in? Or is it true that even our best efforts in designing and carrying out planned change can never accomplish basic alterations in how organizations function? Perhaps, for fundamental change, the focus must be at the very roots of the economic system of society, or in the political system, or in the fast-flowing river of technological development that seems, at times, to defy control by any organized segment of society.
>
> The answers to such questions cannot be known at present, because as yet we have not marshaled even modest resources

> to probe the limits of what planned behavioral science change can achieve in organizations. What does seem clear is that without further experimentation, on a broad scale and with cooperation among the many parties to the quality of worklife phenomenon, we are unlikely to find out. (pp. 457-458)

Walton's forecast, too is essentially discouraging, with a muted note of optimism:

> In conclusion, I expect relatively little diffusion of potentially significant restructuring in the workplace—over the short run. Hopefully the long run may tell a different story. (1975, p. 21)

A number of observers—e.g., see Batt and Weinberg (1978), Glaser (1976), Glaser and Greenberg (1979), Schrank (1978), and others—suggest that diffusion will be slow, and that many of the projects will not spread beyond local situations, and frequently will themselves peter out eventually.

Rosow (1979) notes some of the obstacles to diffusion:

- Managerial philosophy generally considers worker participation of limited value at any level in the organization. The predominant belief is that the costs outweigh the benefits.
- Because the art of participative management is new, top executives lack experience and know-how in dealing with it.
- The concept is viewed by executives, managers, and supervisors as a threat in terms of conventional power and authority. The problems of managing an increased conflict of ideas and sharing power are frightening to many.
- Impatience to achieve short-term economic gains while dealing with a sensitive new process that requires long-term commitments forecasts at best an uneven pathway to meaningful results.
- Unions are suspicious of the process and fear that it will weaken the adversary relationship, complicate the current

> problems of collective bargaining, and impose new problems for their memberships.
>
> - There is a shortage of talented third parties who can engender the necessary trust and bring the required know-how to introduce and maintain a participative style of working.
> - Broad-based participation threatens the framework of conventional, hierarchical organizations and is seen as topsy-turvy management, which may substitute consensus decision making for one-man rule. (pp. 177-178)

In relation to the latter point, Schrank (1978) observes:

> As I look around at the experiments in work reorganization, even in cases where they are considered quite successful they have not been replicated within the company or by other companies. Within major corporations, with the exception of Volvo, experiments in workplace redesign have not been expanded. I believe there is a strong resistance to changing the structure of the work organization if the change implies any shift in the nature of control. In our enthusiasm for a more humanistic way to run a plant or an office, we tend to forget that in the first instance the purpose of hierarchy is control. Any shift in the nature of control, whether real or imaginary, is conceived of as a threat by those who might lose some authority. (p. 222)

With respect to the prognosis for serious participation by American labor unions in the QWL movement, consideration needs to be given to satisfying certain union concerns. In the study by Glaser and Greenberg (1979), the union officials interviewed expressed relatively good consensus with regard to the conditions that they felt should be met if unions are to cooperate in QWL improvement efforts.

- Trust is needed in management's motives.
- The program must be voluntary for the local and its members, and should be locally conceived and administered.

- The union must be a full partner.
- The international union must agree to the program, and approve any contract changes.
- Employees and union should be invited to participate in planning the program.
- The contract must be maintained, and any changes need to be negotiated as collective bargaining issues.
- The bargaining parties should implement the QWL roles.
- The program must offer bona fide benefit to the workers.
- There must be no layoffs or loss of compensation resulting from the program.
- There should be an escape clause for both parties.
- A number of respondents felt that QWL programs should include cost-savings-sharing agreements. Some, however, believed that pat formulas are not very realistic, and that "each circumstance should give rise to its own mutually acceptable and jointly-worked-out solution." (p. I-16)

Even under these conditions, progress will likely be slow. Kassalow (1977) contends:

> The humanization movement will probably not make significant progress in most major industries in the United States until unions are more genuinely accepted by employers, especially in the private sector. The kind of consensus atmosphere in which work humanization efforts flourish is often lacking in this country. At present, continued experiments in individual companies and in the public sector are more realistic goals. (p. 13)

A number of practitioners and students of QWL are more optimistic regarding the prognosis for its viability and spread. Some of these viewpoints follow.

Davis and Sullivan (1979) report on the successful collaboration between Shell Canada, Ltd. and the Oil, Chemical and Atomic

Workers International Union in the technical and organizational design of a complex new chemical plant, and on the labor-management contract that was bargained in light of an organization and job design that represented an alternative to the traditional bureaucracy. In commenting on that experience and its outcomes, they conclude:

> The design process and the resulting organization design as well as the collective agreement for this nonbureaucratic chemical plant indicate that there is another path available better suited to the postindustrial era. This path is marked by a cooperative process and by the objective of a high quality of working life for all members of the organization. Once again we see a demonstration of the powerful outcomes of substantive collaboration as compared with confrontation in union-management relations. It may be that only by such collaboration will the quality of working life be truly provided for the members of organizations. (pp. 18-19)

On October 20-21, 1976 in New York City, the Work in America Institute and the National Center for Productivity and Quality of Working Life cosponsored a conference to examine some of the new forms of union-management participation and cooperation in the workplace. The summary of the conference (Loftus and Walfish, 1977) states, in part:

> The climate in American economic life today is increasingly favorable to programs of union-management cooperation that go beyond the labor contract, but do not violate its principles. Current trends include a high rate of unemployment and labor costs that constitute a substantial portion of the costs of production. Taken together, these trends provide new motivation for labor and management to cooperate in raising the level of production in order to decrease labor costs and increase job security. A further spur to union-management cooperation is the recognition that productivity can be further enhanced by improving the quality of worklife, thereby reducing the number of strikes and grievances and improving on-the-job performance.

> Unions and management are also beginning to see cooperation as a means of achieving an environment in which human development is stressed as much as productive efficiency. In such programs, workers are treated as copartners in the decision-making process, and they, in turn, respond with a growing sense of self-esteem and pride in their work.
>
> In practical terms, joint programs have been successfully undertaken to cope with alcoholism, drug addiction, and family problems; to orient new employees; to assist workers who are planning retirement; and to establish joint health and safety committees. Even in an area historically reserved to management—the discipline of employees—there has been some movement toward cooperation. In terms of the future, such problems as the movement of work and workers, the subcontracting of work, production scheduling, the handling of overtime, and the introduction of technological innovation lend themselves to solution through union-management cooperation.
>
> Other problems, such as wages, fringe benefits, and job security, however, are still more appropriately settled by confrontation collective bargaining. Although labor and management remain adversaries in these areas, this does not preclude their forming a cooperative relationship where this is to their mutual advantage.
>
> Programs for labor-management cooperation can be utilized in dealing with the day-to-day operations of a single plant; in making structural changes within a company or industry; or in planning for the economic development of an entire region. (p. 1)

As we try to "put it all together" and look ahead a bit, Rosow's forecast seems relevant—albeit on the optimistic side, relative to an appreciable number of other prognosticators who tend to view the future with much more misgiving:

> The 1980s promise excitement, challenge, and increased complexity in managing people. The twin goals of produc-

tivity and an enhanced quality of working life are attainable—but only for those managers who make the effort.

An accommodation between the organization's goals and the employee's expectations will be more difficult. People will bring a more complex and varied set of needs to the workplace. The workplace itself will impose technological and information demands upon its internal human resources. The aging of the population, the growing role of women, the increased pressures for equality of opportunity, and the rising personal expectations for decent, satisfying, and challenging jobs will all demand an effective response.

Management, labor, and government will each place greater demands upon the workplace and these will not always be harmonious. Thus, those who are most imaginative and innovative stand to gain the most in the new environment, while those who resist change at every turn are more likely to suffer problems and disappointments.

We have good cause to be optimistic. The nation is rich in its supply of human talent. . . . And our work institutions, which have contributed so much to the advancement of the national welfare, will continue to be a source of productive achievement. In the decade ahead, one of the nation's greatest challenges will be to advance the quality of working life, while at the same time nurturing a healthy work ethic and using human resources productively. (1979, pp. 186-187)

5
POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Background Review

In the preceding chapters, the attempt has been to: (1) describe the philosophy, objectives, process and structure of QWL improvement efforts, and to comment on the demand for QWL improvement as well as the efficacy of such programs; (2) summarize the viewpoints of the union conferees on a number of significant issues related to union-management cooperation in such efforts; (3) provide some added perspective by presenting the views of a small set of (ten) management people on issues identified by the union leaders; and (4) analyze some of the major concerns with reference both to the union and management viewpoints, and to the general body of QWL literature.

This concluding chapter will briefly review a number of the central points that were presented in the preceding chapters, and utilize that as background to develop a set of policy implications.

One of the points discussed at some length was the *need* or *demand* for quality of worklife improvement efforts. Here we noted the extensive observations that have been made by many people—including Bluestone (1978), Harman (1979), Institute for Social Research (1979), Katzell (1979), O'Toole (1978), Rosow (1978), Work in America Institute (1972, 1979), Yankelovich (1979) and others—with regard to forces or factors that bear on the need for QWL improvement. Those factors include the changing composition of the work force, accompanied by their altered attitudes toward work; increasing expectations of employees for a larger voice in decisions affecting their worklives; a societal incentive system that overvalues economic rewards and undervalues quality of life motivations; underutilization of the capabilities and potentialities of many members of the work force; declining job satisfaction; lower performance levels; excessive absenteeism and turnover; and declining productivity.

Evidence was reviewed from the QWL literature, as well as from testimonials by the union conferees and the management respondents, regarding the effectiveness and payoff of many QWL improvement efforts—given certain favorable conditions. Such reported outcomes were noted as enhanced employee satisfaction and fulfillment, increased mutual trust, improved employee-supervisor relationships, reduced stress and improved health, reduced counter-productive attitudes and behaviors, increased job security, reduced grievances, better utilization of human resources, a deeper sense of worker responsibility, reduced labor-management conflict, increased productivity, bolstered strength of unions in given settings, and a strengthened position of companies in competitive markets.

At the same time, there was acknowledgment of the disturbing observation by the union conferees, management respondents, and in the literature, that many QWL programs are unsuccessful in the sense that they fail to meet their objectives, decline after a period of success, fail to spread, or are terminated altogether. A great many factors or conditions were suggested as being associated with such failures—including inadequate planning, unilateral imposition of programs, insufficient training, poor communication, inappropriate motives, inequity in incentives, inadequate top level support, fear of erosion of power, failure to integrate the program or process into the mainstream of the organization, and others. In brief, we suggested that the efficacy and viability of a QWL improvement effort appears to depend heavily upon the conditions under which it is planned, implemented, nurtured, reviewed and modified to adapt to changing circumstances.

In addition to the lengthy array of factors that were cited by the union conferees and management respondents in the context of analyzing failures (as well as enumerations of conditions associated with success or failure that appear in the QWL literature), a number of problem areas were highlighted in other contexts that, if unresolved, may be expected to have significant impact not only on the viability of individual QWL programs, but on the prognosis for the QWL movement as a whole. One such problem area is the very mixed acceptance of the concept of joint union-management QWL programs on the part of labor leaders as evident, for example, in personal interviews with senior union officials (Glaser and Greenberg, 1979), and reflected also to some degree in the attitudes of union officials who participated in the March 1979 conference, as well as some management people. (Perhaps a favorable sign is the fact that in the study just cited there was varied understanding of and experience with QWL among the union officials, and there was a strong tendency for acceptance to vary with experience—which also appeared to be the case among the union conferees at the March 1979 meeting.)

We noted another problem area in connection with our discussion of the objectives of QWL programs as proposed by the conferees. In that context, we commented on the seemingly pervasive tendency of many of them to be sufficiently wary of management (again, a bilateral process), that they felt a need to preserve an adversarial orientation even in the context of talking about developing "cooperative" programs, and to seemingly be unwilling to consider QWL program objectives that would serve the interests or needs of *all* stakeholders (also noted by many of the management respondents).

As one additional example of problem areas, we might cite the complex issue of what constitutes an appropriate relationship between a QWL effort and collective bargaining. Not only is this a highly controversial issue, which yielded a spectrum of viewpoints at the conference, but it is one that appeared to permeate virtually all of the other issues. Furthermore, there are some thoughtful people who believe that cooperative QWL efforts and adversarial bargaining are fundamentally incompatible. On the other hand, clearly, there are those who do not believe that to be the case, and who can cite actual program experience (e.g., the Newspaper Guild of the Twin Cities) in which there was real change in the dynamics of the authority structure in the workplace such that it was possible for a labor-management partnership and an adversarial bargaining relationship to coexist quite successfully.

In sum, the need for bona fide, joint union-management QWL improvement efforts would appear to be substantial and the potential payoff great, but the path apparently has as many obstacles as it does rewards. Consequently, without thoughtful and participative involvement of the various stakeholder groups in planning, and concerted implementation efforts coupled with needed structures to support sustained implementation, the prognosis for substantial growth and diffusion of such joint efforts would have to be considered as guarded.

With this brief review as background, the remainder of this chapter will be concerned with outlining some recommendations derived from the state of affairs that has been summarized.

National Commitment

There appears to be a need for the establishment—or at any rate redefinition—of national public policy in the area of worklife improvement, including commitment at the highest levels of government, industry, and labor to the desirability of affording bona fide opportunities for employee participation in the problem solving and decision making that directly affect their jobs. To be optimally productive, this commitment needs to entail appropriate policy, planning, resources, accountability, and mechanisms to institutionalize the process of QWL improvement.

Government Role

In order for the above recommendation to be most meaningful, we see a need for the federal government to play a more active role in the QWL improvement movement, as it has in many other issues related to the workplace—from the right to organize and

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

bargain collectively, to occupational health and safety, to equal employment opportunity. The need and the opportunity are present for the federal government to participate in forging a coherent labor/management/public interest program that can reflect the best thinking of the respective parties rather than find itself in the position later on of seeking to impose piecemeal solutions that will mobilize resistance and evasion.

There are a number of options or choices open for constructive government initiatives, which are not mutually exclusive but rather could be interrelated segments of an integrated "system" effort. For example:

Option #1. Public debate and national conference on QWL.

The federal government, e.g., the Departments of Labor and Commerce, might appropriately stimulate the kind of public debate referred to by Davis (1979):

> What is needed for the U.S. is what Sweden went through for some three years—namely, a public debate about life in the workplace, about democracy in society and in the place of employment. The outcome of this debate was broad public consensus on which policies and actions could be developed and supported.

Our research yields evidence of interest and readiness on the part of many companies and unions to explore avenues and conditions for labor-management cooperation in QWL improvement. We therefore believe that a major national dialogue on this subject would be very timely. It might take the form of a White House conference or some equivalent thereof sponsored by the Departments of Commerce and Labor, National Association of Manufacturers, Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, and AFL-CIO (plus major unaffiliated unions such as UAW). At such a conference, to which individuals, groups and organizations/centers/institutes having significant knowledge about QWL improvement efforts would be invited, and perhaps through the work of ad hoc task committees following an initial meeting, issues related to joint union-management QWL efforts can be explored in depth. One probable result would be an agreed-upon means for facilitating such efforts under conditions that are likely to yield desirable results for all stakeholders.

As one illustration of a particularly controversial issue that might be addressed in this fashion, there is need for public debate as to whether or not a single agency or entity should be designated to centralize and coordinate the presently confusing melange of disparate government activities related to productivity and quality of working life improvements. Such an agency would need to be structured with sufficient clout and resources so that it could be tasked with a number of critical functions relative to QWL improvement, including: representing the government in tripartite joint business, labor and government deliberations such as outlined above; stimulating legislation and executive action that may be found helpful, not constraining; conducting and supporting research and evaluation; synthesizing and promoting utilization of state-of-the-art knowledge; and in general spearheading federal initiatives to facilitate (not regulate) productivity and worklife improvement.

Option #2. Analysis of characteristics of effective companies

One way to assess the possible presence of common qualities or modus operandi of organizations that have a long-sustained objective record of relative superiority in economic performance together with high morale and job satisfaction on the part of personnel involved is to undertake what chemists might call a qualitative and quantitative analysis. To illustrate, the Department of Commerce recently identified eleven large U.S. companies that seemed to meet the above performance criteria. Top management representatives from those companies were invited to come together to explore similarities/differences in their management principles and operational practices. Their "qualitative and quantitative analysis" revealed a number of important commonalities which were agreed upon by all conferees. Elsa Porter, Assistant Secretary, Department of Commerce, then prepared the following Statement of Philosophy which emerged from two meetings of the selected industrial organizations.

We believe that the economic vitality and competitiveness of our firms are being sustained and improved by the commitment of our managers to leadership principles and practices which merit broader understanding and acceptance.

The principles derive from basic morality and common sense: respect for the dignity of workers; concern for their health, safety, and economic security; pride in the quality of our services or products; responsibility to our shareholders to protect and increase their investment.

The practices attempt to carry out these principles in both old and new ways. They vary in technique but they have, in common, efforts to bring out the best in people, to develop their skills, to encourage their creativity, to involve them in decisions that affect their work, and to give them a stake in the organization. The result is cooperation, mutuality, teamwork, and trust which in turn yield all of us, managers and workers, increased social and economic benefits. These efforts are entirely compatible with traditional collective bargaining and can, in fact, serve to strengthen it.

We believe that these efforts speak directly to the President's concerns about lagging U.S. productivity and a national "malaise." We do not agree that American workers today are wanting in spirit, talent, or energy. They have demonstrated in our firms that they respond exceedingly well to leadership which trusts and respects them and offers them opportunities to contribute their talents.

We believe it is in the national interest for government, business, and labor leaders to study the importance of this direction in managerial leadership on the productivity and competitiveness of U.S. firms and industrial sectors. We offer our experience as a starting point, recognizing that some of us have only begun a transitional process and all have much to learn.

The major difference we perceive between the old and new directions is the degree of mutuality in management's relationships with workers, unions, consumers, and government. We recognize that differences exist among us. However, we see it as our responsibility to manage conflict as constructively as we can, by communicating more effectively, by seeking to identify mutual goals, and by developing new mediating structures. Leadership today requires ethical principles that guarantee a basis for trust. We believe such efforts are needed not only at the level of the firm, but at the national level as well, between business, labor, and government.

We hope the effort we propose would therefore have two outcomes: (1) diffusion of knowledge about management practices which have proved to be economically and socially positive at the level of the firm; and (2) a better understanding of how activities involving business, government, and labor can be improved.

We strongly recommend that this analytic process be continued, and that it be expanded to involve many other companies, including smaller ones. The value of such a process would also be enhanced by a comparative analysis of the characteristics of groups of companies that vary rather widely in terms of the degree to which they meet the above criteria concerning economic performance, morale and job satisfaction.

With appropriate dissemination of the findings derived from this process, coupled with technical assistance to organizations that may desire help in adapting the findings to their own situation, we believe that this overall strategy would support the two key objectives identified in the last paragraph of the above statement of philosophy.

Option #3. Federal government as role model

As one component of an overall program to participate actively in the QWL movement, the federal government should consider making an effort to serve as a role model for the private sector through an organized attempt to introduce QWL improvement efforts in its "own house." It might begin by encouraging development of local initiatives involving the several categories of local stakeholders in the various departments and agencies, and move toward a coordinated effort to implement QWL programming throughout the federal establishment in a responsible and systematic manner, including a meaningful research and evaluation component.

Option #4. Legislation

If there is to be increased governmental involvement in sponsoring initiatives to improve the quality of working life in the American workplace, one of the potential vehicles may be a legislative agenda. Clearly, there is ample precedent for certain types of federal intervention in the workplace, as witness laws and regulations relating to such areas as the minimum wage, length of work week, unemployment compensation, old-age security, occupational safety and health, equal employment opportunity, etc. The Wagner Labor Relations Act, designed to guarantee workers the right to organize and to bargain collectively, was passed in 1935. Analogous legislation, supporting the right of employees to have voice in decisions on matters related to their work, may be a logical extrapolation and the time, almost half a century later, may be nearly ripe, or at least appropriate for debate. Similarly, many other objectives and measures may be suitable candidates for such a legislative program, such as protection against the perturbations caused by technological change, review of *disincentives* to work, and so on.

Option #5. Local initiatives

Government efforts to promote QWL improvement need not be limited to federal initiative. Some cities, such as Jamestown, New York (see Glaser, 1978), have demonstrated noteworthy success in assuming a catalytic role to encourage labor-management cooperation for both QWL improvement and increased productivity. In Jamestown, the results included a renascence of business activity, with major increase in employment.

Option #6. Incentives

As another component of the recommended multithrust initiative in QWL improvement, the federal government might well devote increased effort to the development of incentives to stimulate: (a) the initiation of more QWL programs in the private sector (and more thought needs to be given with regard to appropriate incentives in the public sector as well), along with (b) more research addressed to improving the conceptual and methodological base for such programs. A range of incentive strategies should be considered, such as tax advantages, cash subsidies, technical assistance, mobilizing evidence of the apparent impact of QWL improvement efforts on organizational effectiveness, appeal to social conscience, etc. Further, an incentive program should be designed that can have payoff not only to management, stockholders, and the public, but to employees at all levels and to unions as well.

As one step in this direction, the Lundine Bill, H.R. 8065, was passed by Congress in modified form in October 1978, as an amendment to the CETA legislation. Termed the Labor-Management Cooperation Act of 1978, its basic aim is to stimulate joint labor-management initiatives in improving the quality of working life and organizational effectiveness. More specifically, its stated purposes are:

- to improve communication between representatives of labor and management;
- to provide workers and employers with opportunities to study and explore new and innovative joint approaches to achieving organizational effectiveness;
- to assist workers and employers in solving problems of mutual concern not susceptible to resolution within the collective bargaining process;
- to study and explore ways of eliminating potential problems which reduce the competitiveness and inhibit the economic development of the plant, area or industry;

- to enhance the involvement of workers in making decisions that affect their working lives;
- to expand and improve working relationships between workers and managers; and
- to encourage free collective bargaining by establishing continuing mechanisms for communication between employers and their employees through federal assistance to the formation and operation of labor-management committees.

In support of the last objective, the legislation requested about 10 million dollars for fiscal year 1979, and "such sums as may be necessary thereafter." At this writing, while these funds were authorized, they were not appropriated in FY 79. Further, opposition can be anticipated on three grounds: (1) Eligibility for contracts or grants that may become available under this Act is limited to situations where the employees are unionized. Such favored treatment of unionized situations with regard to eligibility for financial support from public funds when most workers in the United States do not belong to unions is likely to arouse criticism. (2) Many people feel that if QWL improvement efforts constitute "good business" or mutual benefits for companies, unions and employees, they should undertake such programs on their own initiative, without federal subsidy. (3) Many would prefer not to see further government "encroachment" in the workplace.

We believe the Labor-Management Cooperation Act of 1978 is a potentially significant step toward the provision of incentives for initiatives in QWL improvement. For example, whereas large firms and strong unions with adequate resources may not need government incentives to undertake QWL efforts and many companies and unions are disinclined to invite government involvement in any case, for smaller companies such an incentive may be attractive. We would advocate expanding eligibility under the Act to include all work situations where management and employees are interested in experimenting with QWL improvement efforts, rather than restricting it to settings where the employees are unionized—but with safeguards to meet the understandable union concern that such support not be misused to undermine unions or union organizing activities.

Labor-Management Dialogue

Since there are significant areas of agreement (and also disagreement) about the purposes, conditions, and modus operandi for union-management cooperation in QWL improvement efforts among union officials themselves, among corporate top managers, and between union and management officials, we see a need for more meetings such as the March 15-16 conference, expanded to include labor and management, and augmented as appropriate by expert consultants. This kind of forum, coupled with others such as labor-management committees, affords the opportunity for mutual education, problem solving, and the development of trust to take place in a nonadversarial environment.

The major issues that surfaced in the March 15-16 conference might well become the agenda items for an initial joint labor-management conference on quality of worklife. Following is a brief recapitulation of these issues:

- *Definition of QWL*
  What does QWL mean and what does it not mean?
- *QWL objectives*
  What are appropriate objectives for joint QWL improvement efforts?
  How might both humanistic and organizational effectiveness goals become legitimate objectives of joint QWL efforts in the eyes of all parties?
  Should improvements in productivity/cost savings achieved through joint QWL efforts be shared, and if so, how?
- *QWL structures*
  What are the most practicable ways of providing for participation by workers in matters that affect the quality of their worklives?

Are there important guidelines that apply to the composition of union-management QWL committees? For example, should the membership be the same as the negotiating committee?
What are the appropriate roles and attributes of third parties?

- *Union and management roles in QWL efforts*
  How should union and corporate leadership at various levels be involved in joint QWL efforts?
- *Public policy implications*
  What are the implications of the QWL movement for public policy?
  Should unions and corporations push for federal subsidies to support joint QWL efforts, such as authorized by Congress under the Labor-Management Cooperation Act of 1978?
- *Scope of a QWL effort*
  What kinds of matters should be included in/excluded from joint QWL efforts?
- *Payoff of QWL*
  What are the potential payoffs of joint QWL efforts—to workers, unions, management, stockholders, the nation?
  How might these payoffs be optimized?
- *QWL in relation to union organizing*
  To what extent, and how effectively, are QWL programs being used by management to block union organizing and by unions to facilitate organizing?
- *Analysis of QWL failures and successes*
  What are the major factors that seem to have contributed to the failure of some QWL efforts to flourish and to spread?
  Conversely, what conditions appear to be associated with the success/viability/diffusion of other QWL improvement efforts?
  What are the significant risks or threats to unions, management, or workers in undertaking QWL improvement efforts?
  What safeguards may be required?

- *Relationship between QWL and collective bargaining*
  What appear to be the most viable relationships between QWL and collective bargaining? For example, should the collective bargaining process and agreement be used to achieve QWL objectives or should an alternative vehicle be used?
  Are collective bargaining (implying an adversary relationship) and QWL (implying a cooperative relationship) compatible?
- *Union and management initiatives*
  What initiatives should unions and managements be undertaking—singly or jointly—in relation to the QWL movement?
- *Research and evaluation*
  What research and evaluation thrusts might significantly enhance the effectiveness and spread of QWL improvement efforts?

As suggested above, this kind of dialogue might be facilitated by the equivalent of a White House conference of management, labor, government, and representatives of the public to work together to propose ways in which legitimate QWL improvement efforts might constructively be furthered. In an "all win, nobody loses" framework, such a conference (or conferences) also might profitably explore differences and similarities between the government and private sectors regarding development and implementation of QWL programs.

Education

It seems clear from observation, as well as from the literature, that to many managers the QWL style of management does not "come naturally." As previously noted, Hackman (1978) for example, points out the intrinsic resistance to this mode of operation, contending that "the whole idea flies in the face of beliefs and values about people and organizations that have become very well learned and well accepted by managers of traditional organizations." (p. 16)

Many corporate and union managers will need help to develop the viewpoints and skills to enable them to adapt to the changing values and expectations of the work force, to manage in a participatory style, and to work cooperatively with each other on matters of joint interest that do not violate the collective bargaining contract. More comprehensive and integrated programming should be developed in universities (e.g., business and management schools, industrial relations institutes) in the principles and techniques of QWL improvement in general and cooperative problem solving and decision making in particular. To meet these objectives undoubtedly will require tighter coupling between the campus and the workplace, including more emphasis on continuing education program offerings for both business and union executives, as well as complementary programs combining academic research-supported information and case presentations, and on-site management training for future managers in all kinds of organizations.

As noted by the conferees, there is also a need for unions to increase their internal competence to participate in QWL improvement efforts on a coequal basis with management. This in turn implies a need for more orientation and training in QWL concepts and techniques at all levels within the union structure, greater sharing of information and experience by unionists who have been involved in QWL programs (such as the Newspaper Guild of the Twin Cities, UAW/GM-Tarrytown, UAW/Harman International-Bolivar, and others), along with efforts to take the initiative in stimulating and developing joint QWL improvement programs.

Research

It is essential that a more extensive and more coherent program of research and technology assessment be undertaken (perhaps jointly sponsored by the Department of Labor and Commerce) relevant to quality of working life improvement. One objective of such a program should be to analyze and distill current "best practice" into a state-of-the-art monograph on QWL. A

ERIC

programmatic research effort should also provide for systematic, longitudinal assessment of a reasonably broad spectrum of QWL improvement efforts, including evaluation of alternative QWL models. Assessment should include: baseline status, direct and indirect impacts on organizational effectiveness and on people, and factors (e.g., product, technology, organizational structure, personnel profile, management climate, incentives, and worklife changes) associated with QWL program effectiveness, viability, and diffusion.

Concluding Comment

In brief, then, it seems clear that the prognosis for the growth and diffusion of effective and viable joint union-management QWL improvement efforts would be substantially enhanced by the kind of comprehensive action program outlined above, including such measures as the development of national public policy in the area of worklife improvement, a more sharply focused government role (with respect to fostering public debate, offering incentives, serving as role model, etc.), increased labor-management dialogue, a more active role for universities, and a more intensive research effort.

REFERENCES

Batt, W.L., Jr. and Weinberg, Edgar. "Labor-Management Cooperation Today." *Harvard Business Review*, January-February 1978, 96-98, 100-104.

Bluestone, Irving. "Creating a New World of Work." *International Labour Review*, 1977, 1-11.

Bluestone, Irving. "Human Dignity Is What It's All About." *Viewpoint*, 1978, 8(3), 21-24.

Davis, L.E. Personal communication, 1979.

Davis, L.E. and Cherns, A.B. (Eds.) *Quality of Working Life*. New York: Free Press, 1975.

Davis, L.E. and Sullivan, C.S. "A Labor-Management Contract and Quality of Working Life." *Journal of Occupational Behaviour*, 1979, 1(1), 18-19.

Davis, L.E. and Taylor, J.C. *Design of Jobs* (second edition). Santa Monica, CA: Goodyear Publishing Company, 1979.

Glaser, E.M. *Productivity Gains Through Worklife Improvement*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1976.

Glaser, E.M. "Productivity and Quality of Working Life Issues." (Paper prepared for the symposium, "Work in America: The Decade Ahead," presented December 13, 1978, in San Francisco by the Work in America Institute, Inc.)

Glaser, E.M. and Greenberg, P.D. *Quality of Worklife Programs: A Preliminary Technology Assessment*. Los Angeles: Human Interaction Research Institute, 1979. Final Report to the National Science Foundation, Grant No. ERS77-06495 A03.

Greenberg, P.D. and Glaser, E.M. *Proceedings of the Conference of Union Officials on Issues Related to Labor-Management Cooperation in Quality of Worklife Improvement Efforts*. Los Angeles: Human Interaction Research Institute, 1979. Report of conference held in Washington, DC, March 15-16, 1979, prepared for the C.S. Mott Foundation, Grant No. 78-406.

Guest, R.H. "Quality of Work Life—Learning From Tarrytown." *Harvard Business Review*, 1979, 57(4), 76-87.

Hackman, J.R. "The Design of Work in the 1980s." *Organizational Dynamics*, Summer 1978, 3-17.

Hackman, J.R. and Suttle, J.L. *Improving Life at Work: Behavioral Science Approaches to Organizational Change*. Santa Monica, CA: Goodyear Publishing Company, 1977.

Harman, Sidney. "A Peace Plan for Workers and Bosses." *The Washington Post*, April 15, 1979, B-1, 4.

Institute for Social Research. "Job Satisfaction Has Decreased, Study Shows." *ISR Newsletter*, 1979, 7(2), 10-11.

Kassalow, E.M. "White-Collar Unions and the Work Humanization Movement." *Monthly Labor Review*, May 1977, 9-13.

Katzell, R.A."Changing Attitudes Toward Work." In Kerr, Clark and Rosow, J.M. (Eds.) *Work in America: The Decade Ahead*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1979, 35-57.

Katzell, R.A., et al. *Work, Productivity, and Job Satisfaction*. New York: The Psychological Corporation, 1975.

Kerr, Clark and Rosow, J.M. (Eds.) *Work in America: The Decade Ahead*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1979.

Levitan, S.A. and Johnston, W.B. "Job Design, Reform, Enrichment—Exploring the Limitations." *Monthly Labor Review*, 1973, 96, 35-43.

Loftus, J.A. and Walfish, Beatrice (Eds.) *Breakthroughs in Union-Management Cooperation*. Scarsdale, NY: Work in America Institute, Inc., 1977.

Mills, Ted. "The Name That Isn't There." Paper presented to Centre International de Recherches Et d'Etudes en Management, Montreal, Canada, June 8, 1978.

O'Toole, James. *Work, Learning and the American Future*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977.

O'Toole, James. "The Changing Nature of the Workforce and Its Values." Paper presented at the symposium "Work in America: The Decade Ahead," sponsored by the Work in America Institute, Inc., December 14, 1978, San Francisco.

Rosow, J.M. "Changing Attitudes to Work and Life Styles." Unpublished paper, October 1978.

Rosow, J.M. "Quality-of-Work-Life Issues For the 1980s." In Kerr, Clark and Rosow, J.M. (Eds.) *Work in America: The Decade Ahead.* New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1979, 157-187.

Schrank, Robert. *Ten Thousand Working Days.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1978.

Srivastva, Suresh, et al. *Job Satisfaction and Productivity: An Evaluation of Policy-Related Research on Productivity, Industrial Organization and Job Satisfaction: Policy Development and Implementation.* Cleveland, OH: Case Western Reserve University, 1975.

Walton, R.E. "The Diffusion of New Work Structures: Explaining Why Success Didn't Take." *Organizational Dynamics,* 1975, 3, 3-22.

Walton, R.E. "Work Innovations at Topeka: After Six Years." *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science,* 1977, 13(3), 422-433.

Walton, R.E. "Work Innovations in the United States." *Harvard Business Review,* 1979, 57(4), 88-98.

Walton, R.E. and Schlesinger, L.A. "Do Supervisors Thrive in Participative Work Systems?" *Organizational Dynamics,* Winter 1979, 24-38.

Winpisinger, W.W. "In the Real World, We Have to Eat." *Viewpoint,* 1978, 8(3), 2-7.

Work in America. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1972.

Yankelovich, Daniel. "Work, Values and the New Breed." In Kerr, Clark and Rosow, J.M. (Eds.) *Work in America: The Decade Ahead.* New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1979, 3-26.