MEMBERSHIP PARTICIPATION
IN UNION AFFAIRS**

1. Attitudes and Characteristics of Union Members


Inquiry into some of the more general attitudes influencing the political opinions of Detroit members of the UAW in 1952, led to the conclusion that "about one-third of the union members can be considered loyal, interested, active union participants," while about one-fourth "exhibit weak ties to the union." The most active members tend to be the most interested politically.


Father Purcell's thesis—that there is a dual allegiance to company and union and their respective objectives—is thoroughly documented in this volume. He bases his conclusions on a random sample of 303 interviews with production workers employed by Swift and Company. In Chapter 9, entitled "How the men participate in Local 28," he concludes that any improvement in participation will have to take account of race and sex factors.


This monograph on a local union of the Teamsters in St. Louis is primarily concerned with the communication from members to leaders insofar as it brings to leaders information about members' attitudes. Rose found that loyalty to the union did not imply disloyalty to the employer.


*Compiled by A. H. Chairman, Assistant in Research.

**Items from this list should be ordered directly from the publisher. Addresses are given in connection with each reference.
Based upon a survey conducted "to determine membership reactions to the policies and procedures of" a local union. In attempting to prove that the union official's judgment of membership reactions is not infallible, the differences between the attitudes of the union members and the attitudes of their union officers is made apparent.

2. Rank-and-File Participation


This study of apathy and the democratic process in the government of a British union allows a student of industrial society to observe rank-and-file attitudes toward, and participation in, the local union abroad.


The authors examine shop society, its affairs, and its interests. They relate the shop to the union local in terms of formal and informal participation. Their feeling is that participation in formal union affairs may not be the only measure of awareness and interest in union affairs on the part of the membership.


The issue of power distribution is discussed in terms of a single union. Lipset and his colleagues analyze the origins of the persistent two-party system of the ITU, the environmental forces which aided its development and support its continuation, and the operational components which comprise it. In analyzing patterns of participation within the total organizational and institutional framework, the whole question of the prospects for democratic conduct within the private governments of an advanced industrial society is illuminated.


Of the six major areas covered, the one most germane to our interests is the main structure of union government. A low incidence of membership participation in their unions is found to be the case in Britain as well as in the United States. Roberts estimates that local union attendance at meetings is usually between three and fifteen percent, with a heavy concentration between four and seven percent.

The development of functional union democracy in industry is seen to be of paramount importance. Criteria are posited, which if met, suggest a healthy state of democracy within a particular union. One of the main obstacles to union democracy—the decline in membership participation in decision-making—is discussed at length. Examples of remedial measures taken by some unions to overcome this obstacle follow. As a result, certain difficulties involved in finding panaceas are thrown into clear relief.


Steele finds many factors which might be the causes of low membership participation, for example, other calls on members' time and the unattractiveness of the meeting. He cites one major factor opposing participation: the nationally oriented collective bargaining of the industry which separates the local union and the individual from some of the most vital union problems which affect them.


A report on the results of a comparative study of four local unions—two active and two inactive—to determine both the individual and the organizational components of participation. The authors conclude that the active member differs from the inactive in personality characteristics, as well as in what he does. Active unions were also found to differ from inactive ones in several respects.

3. Interaction of Attitudes, Characteristics, and Participation


The author recognizes the general decline in democratic decision-mak-

^1 An excellent compendium of that part of the published industrial relations literature which has thrown light on the problems and nature of trade-union government may be found in "Trade-union government, its nature and its problems, a bibliographical review, 1945-55" by Daisy L. Tagliacozzo, *American Journal of Sociology*, May, 1956. pp. 554-581.
ing and participation in unionism. Three democratization pressures—
from management, the public, and the membership—working on union
leaders are discussed. Membership pressure and the methods by which
the bureaucracy deals with these pressures are explored in considerable
detail.

The author's prime concern is to ferret out the factors which motivate
those members who participate in union activities when the union-
management relationship is relatively good and there is less objective
justification for general anti-management attitudes. She does this on
the basis of case studies of three union locals.

Sayles, Leonard R. and George Strauss. *The local union: its place in the
1953. 269 pp. $3.50. See especially Part IV, pp. 167-263.

In this study interest is primarily focused on the impact of collective
bargaining upon local leadership and member-participation. Some fac-
tors that affected participation are isolated, such as homogeneity of the
work group, its prestige in the plant community, and the importance
and nature of the job. In Chapter 15, workers' ambivalence toward
union membership is seen to make the attainment of union democracy
more difficult.

Seidman, Joel, Jack London, Bernard Karsh and Daisy L. Tagliacozzo.
The *worker views his union*. Chicago 37. The University of Chicago
Press (5750 Ellis Ave.). 1958. 300 pp. $5.75.

This volume probably constitutes the most comprehensive and defini-
tive study of the local union. The authors carefully examine six mid-
western, but quite different, local unions. Their five concluding chap-
ters are therefore of fairly broad application. Attention is focused on
the attitudes of workers toward the union and its leading activities as
well as toward company and job. The basic problems of developing
workers' interest and participation in union affairs are clearly pre-
sented.

Shepard, Herbert A. "Democratic control in a labor union." *The American
Journal of Sociology* (1126 E. 59th St., Chicago 37), January,
1949. pp. 311-316. $1.25.

In this study of the Toronto district of the Amalgamated Clothing
Workers, it was found that a change in the social character of the
membership might be accompanied by changes in the pattern of partici-
pation and threaten democratic control.