MULTI-PLANT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING*

1. Extent and Problems


Includes discussion of policy-making procedures and problems in connection with collective bargaining relationships. Evidence cited by the author suggests "the conflict in management opinion on the subject of the desirable area of collective bargaining, the problems that exist in attempting to maintain company-wide uniformity in policies along with bargaining on a plant basis, and some of the problems that must be faced if multi-plant bargaining is undertaken. The information from a considerable number of companies indicates, however, that these problems can be met reasonably well, if they are approached with frankness and willingness to face all the factors involved."


In comparing trade union and management objectives, the author states, "The longer unions operate, the more thoroughly they realize that they cannot achieve the workers' desires through collective bargaining at the single-plant level." He attributes this broadening scope of collective bargaining in part to the fact that "The union functions, wholly independently of the employer, in the community, the state, and the nation" and "evolves policies at each level."


Includes discussion of collective bargaining problems based on the author's experience in the Pacific Coast pulp and paper industry. He states that "the best results have always been obtained where authority has been delegated to the branch management" as far as possible.

*Items from this list should be ordered directly from the publisher. Addresses are given in connection with each reference.

In discussing the area of wage determination the author states that "The growth of unionism is revealing the unsubstantial character of wage scales based on 'prevailing local rates.'" On the basis of the studies analyzed in his paper, he concludes that "For much of American industry, the real unit of wage-policy formulation and wage determination is no longer the locality or the company" since "National unions will oppose local wage determination in industries producing for a national market and pricing on a national basis."


Statistical analysis of 3,376 agreements negotiated in 1950 showed that multi-plant agreements constituted one-eighth of the total number and covered nearly two-fifths of all the workers included in the group. Multi-employer bargaining was found in one-fifth of the industries and covered one-third of the workers.


A discussion by the Counsel of the CIO Rubber Workers of the legal aspects of multi-plant bargaining.


Points out that "company-wide bargaining has many of the same characteristics and poses many of the same problems, though in modified form, to be found in industry-wide systems." States that both company-wide and multi-plant bargaining rest "on the assumption that, at least as regards the more important aspects of labor relations policy, there is one voice, and only one speaking for management..." which is an essential difference from multi-employer bargaining.


Discusses "the influence of the national office in bargaining at the subordinate levels," some factors which foster national control, and some of the effects of this control. The author points out "the existence of a
close relationship between the economic variables of the market place and the locus of control over collective bargaining within the union." He believes that economic bargains concluded by top leadership are likely to be sounder than those depending on rank and file approval, though he feels this may be sociologically undesirable.

2. Specific Company Experience


An account of the experience of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company with company-wide bargaining.Enumerates some of the problems which arise out of both company- and industry-wide bargaining.


A case study of corporation and union policies, programs, and strategies and of the resulting union-management relationship. Of particular interest is the description of the highly centralized process of policy-making on both the union and the management sides.


Contends that the existence of a company-wide contract in the Colgate-Palmolive-Peet Company helped to reduce grievances to a minimum.


The first two of these case studies discuss techniques for keeping collective bargaining relationships at the plant level active, although both
companies engage in multi-employer bargaining. The third discusses
the elements which have made for satisfactory union-management rel-
actions at both the company and the plant level in a medium-sized paper
company which has engaged in company-wide bargaining since 1937.

Tilove, Robert. Collective bargaining in the steel industry. Philadelphia
75 cents.

Considers the impact of company-wide bargaining, with special refer-
ence to the U.S. Steel Corporation, on the industry, especially in the
field of wage uniformity.

United States 81st Congress, 2nd session. Senate. Committee on Labor
and Public Welfare. Labor-management relations in the Bell Tele-
phone System; hearings before the Subcommittee on Labor-Manage-
1015 pp. $2.25.

———Report No. 139. Labor-management relations in the Bell Tele-
phone System, report ... pursuant to S. Res. 140 (81st Congress,
1st session). ... 1951. 48 pp. On request.

Of particular interest in the hearings is the testimony of the executives
of various telephone companies on the pattern of decentralized col-
lective bargaining in the system. The committee report based on these
hearings sets forth majority and minority views as to the desirability of
system-wide bargaining in the telephone industry.

United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Bul-
letin No. 1063. Collective bargaining in the meat-packing industry.
30 cents.

An analysis of 50 collective bargaining agreements covering 269 plants,
including six master agreements. Of interest are the comparisons made
between collective bargaining on a company-wide basis by the “Big
Four” and with the smaller packing concerns.

Harper & Brothers (49 E. 33rd St.). 1951. Chapter 18. “The prob-
lem of bigness.” pp. 219-225. $3.50.

Discusses the relation of the Chicago plant of Inland Steel Company
to the parent corporation. Although collective bargaining is on a plant
basis, five policies which no local plant is allowed to write into a con-
tact are stated. The author feels that a successful “balance between
central control and local autonomy” has contributed to harmonious
labor-management relations.