

THE UNION, THE KUMPADRE SYSTEM AND DUALISTIC PLANT-LEVEL INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

By

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Introduction

The question of what role trade unions in less developed countries play in the firm has not been adequately dealt with in the literature. Most studies on comparative labor movements deal with national organizations, their participation in broad issues as politics and economic development, and, to a limited extent, the furtherance of collective bargaining on a national scale.¹ More recent inquiries have been devoted to the examination of trade union strategies for industrial relations purposes.² Although these studies describe and analyze the tendencies and orientation of labor movements in Third World countries, only little concern has been given to the role of these organizations in plant-level industrial relations.³

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¹Ernest M. Kassalow, *National Labor Movements in the Postwar World* (Northwestern University Press, 1963); Walter Galenson (ed.), *Labor and Economic Development* (N.Y.: Wiley, 1959); *Labor in Developing Economies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963); Robert N. Kearney, *Trade Unions and Politics in Ceylon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); and H. Millen, *The Political Role of Labor in Developing Countries* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1963).

²Adolf Sturmthal and James G. Scoville (eds.) *The International Labor Movement in Transition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973); Jon Becken, *Collective Bargaining and Class Conflict in Spain* (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 1972); Elias T. Ramos, *Philippine Labor Movement in Transition* (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers, 1974).

³Henry Landsberger, "Do Ideological Differences Have Personal Correlates? A Study of Chilean Labor Leaders at the Local Level," *Economic Development*

This paper is an attempt to describe the role of Filipino trade unions in the worksite, the expectations blue-collar workers place upon the union, and the channels through which workers redress their grievances. It also seeks to compare the personnel practices of the firm and the terms of the collective bargaining agreement; and the patterns of industrial relations in an indigenous firm and foreign multinational subsidiary.

Data for these purposes are based on an empirical investigation of two unionized, medium size manufacturing firms in metropolitan Manila, in 1974 and 1975. One firm is Filipino-owned, the other a subsidiary of a U.S.-based multinational corporation. The former has been in operation for 20 years while the latter started as a market outlet of an American company immediately after the second World War. Both firms have a history of relatively stable labor-management relations. Unionization of the workers in the former took effect immediately after the establishment of the firm in the mid-50's, the latter in 1950 when the company became a manufacturing subsidiary.

Analytical Framework

In this paper, particular attention is given to the issue of formal and informal patterns of behavior within the firm with respect to labor-management relations. The above dichotomy is derived from the rank and file's diverse expectations, and the existence of a widespread tendency among employees to fall back on non-union benefactors despite the presence of the union.⁴ To the extent that the majority of the workers look up to the union for help and support in their day to day problems, the formal institutional role of the union is stabilized. On the other hand, the reliance of the majority of the workers upon other sources of assistance — e.g., their fellow workers, company officials and others — in resolving shop floor problems indicates the persistence of traditional, informal behavior in the firm.

and *Cultural Change*, 16:2 (January, 1968), pp. 219-43; William H. Form, "Political Unionism: Cross-National Comparison," *Industrial Relations*, 12 (May, 1973).

⁴The issue of formal-informal work organizations has been dealt with extensively in the work of George C. Homans, *The Human Group* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1950); and *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1961). The issue that is treated in this paper is slightly different from that of Homans and the Human Relations Group in that we are concerned with the role of the union in the firm, not small work group behavior.

level labor-management relations. These tendencies demonstrate that the union is only one of the institutions in the firm to which Filipino workers identify themselves with. They accept and join the union, but hesitate to entrust all of their interests to it.

This formal-informal dichotomy can shed light in the understanding of the nature of plant-level industrial relations, and the role of the union in terms of the collective bargaining-political methods of labor action.⁵ It would seem that a fairly strong formalistic behavior at the plant would be indicative of the workers' preference for the institutionalized collective bargaining function of trade unions; a tendency toward the informal mode of representation reinforces the phenomenon of political unionism. The pursuit of an economic collective bargaining function presupposes that organized labor deals directly with employers in the attainment of the union's objectives. On the other hand, the resort to political unionism entails the use of the workers collective capability through other channels, including but not limited to pressuring government agencies and cultivating mass support.

The two-fold dichotomy of union roles with the formal-collective bargaining vs. informal-political distinction, not in an *either/or* dichotomy but rather in a complementary manner, is the central thesis of this paper. It is hypothesized that labor movements in emerging economies tend to utilize a dualistic approach to industrial relations instead of relying on a singular, either political or economic course of action.

In choosing a Filipino firm and an American enterprise for the case studies, we posited that the combination of an informal-political role of the union would tend to be higher in the former than in the latter. Similarly, we expected to find stronger manifestations of the formal-collective bargaining functions of the union in the American firm than in the Filipino company. In terms of the dualistic formulation, it is argued that the union in the Filipino firm (to be referred to as Union F) would exhibit a strong-political-weak-collective bargaining orientation; the union in the American firm (to be referred to as Union A) a weak-political-strong-collective bargaining function.

⁵ Adolf Sturmhthal, "Industrial Relations Strategies," *International Labor Movement in Transition*, *op. cit.*; Solomon B. Levine, "Japanese Trade Unionism: A Model in Economic Development," *National Labor Movements in the Modern World* ed. by E.M. Kassalow, *op. cit.*

The Sample

A total of 99 blue-collar workers — 60 from the Filipino firm and 39 from the American corporation constituted the sample. Most of the workers were young (18-30 years old), although employees in the American firm were older (38.5 mean age) than those in the Filipino firm (28 mean age). Majority of the respondents in the Filipino firm had served the company for five years while a good number of employees in the American company had 16-20 years of continuous service. Nearly 70 percent of the respondents acknowledged receiving assistance in getting hired by their respective employers. In most cases, relatives were the source of employment assistance.

Unionization among the respondents was extremely high with 100 percent in the American company and 78 percent in the Filipino firm. Demographic data further indicated that the sample represented a fairly well-educated group of blue-collar workers — 40 percent with some college education and 36 percent had finished high school. The mean educational level was 8.7 years. In comparison, employees in the entire manufacturing sector in the Philippines have an average schooling of 7.4 years.⁶

The Questionnaire

The research instrument elicited the following information: level of union awareness and expectations, assessment of union presence in the plant and the status of union-management relations, grievance handling practices, recruitment and promotion systems, and the pattern of social relations among employees. The survey essentially dealt with the experiences and perception of blue-collar workers in the areas of hiring, promotion, relations with supervisors, their expectations with regard to the union, and appraisal of the union performance and the state of labor-management relations in the firm.

The questions were either close-ended or open-ended. Responses to the close-ended questions were coded according to a four-scale continuum, e.g., excellent-good-fair-bad, or a three-scale continuum, e.g., high-medium-low.

⁶In the Philippines, formal schooling requires six years in the elementary school, four years in high school and generally, four years of college. In recent years, most professional courses have required a total of five years before a degree is granted.

Union Membership and Expectations. Union membership in the firms studied was extremely high (87%). All regular workers in the American firm were members of the union. In the Filipino company, 78 percent of all the employees were union members. It may be noted that the collective bargaining contracts in the two firms provided for a union shop clause and a check-off system.

Given a very high level of union membership, we elicited answer to the question of what do Filipino blue-collar workers expect from the union. Responses to this question show that there was a preponderance (64%) on the union's ability to provide them with job protection. Another 10 percent responded that "grievance representation," was the primary goal of the union. Only nine percent of the respondents thought that the main function of the union was to raise wages. Mutual aid and social functions were indicated by 13 percent of the respondents while only two percent considered political representation as the major task of the union. In fact, in the Filipino firm, nobody considered political representation as a priority of the union. On the other hand, some 17 percent of the employees in the Filipino company indicated that mutual aid and social considerations were the primary *raison d'être* of the union. Only eight percent of employees in the American firm considered mutual aid as a vital function of the union. Overall, 13 percent of the respondents regarded the mutual aid-social function of the union as the top priority.

Of all those who required and actually asked the union for help, nearly half (49%) secured grievance representation, 36 percent approached the union for assistance in times of illness and five percent for marriage fund assistance. The grievance representation of the union in the Filipino firm is lower (43%) than in the American firm (56%). Mutual aid considerations are about the same in the two firms (35% and 37%).

The high preference for the job protection function of trade unions is sustained by blue-collar leaders. In a separate survey, a sample of local union officers, representing 22 labor organizations, indicated that the major function of trade unions is to provide the support and protection needed by their members in the shop floor.⁷

⁷"Trade Union Leaders and Attitudes Survey," conducted by this author in Metropolitan Manila. A partial result of the survey is reported in Elias T. Ramos, "Filipino Trade Unions and Multinationals," in *Foreign Investment and Labor in Asian Countries*. Proceedings of the 1975 Asian Regional Conference on Industrial Relations (Tokyo: The Japan Institute of Labour, 1976), pp. 72-87.

Table 1 below summarizes the expectations of the rank and file.

TABLE 1

Union Expectations Of Blue-Collar Workers
In Two Industrial Firms, 1975

	Percentage		
	Filipino	American	Total Combined
Job Protection	64.58	63.16	63.95
Wage Increase	10.42	7.89	9.30
Mutal Aid	12.50	7.89	10.47
Social	4.17	—	2.33
Grievance	6.25	15.79	10.47
Political			
Representation	—	5.28	2.33
None/No Answer	2.08	—	1.60
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
N =	48	38	86

Assessment of Labor-Management Relations. The rating of the degree of importance of the union in the plant is higher in the American firm (67%) than in the Filipino enterprise (58%). Workers in both firms stated that the union regard for management is high but higher in the American firm (92%) than in the Filipino company (75%). In terms of the management's attitude to the union however, employees in the Filipino company are about evenly divided among those who considered this factor "favorable" (40%) over those who claimed that the situation is "unfavorable" (40%). In the American corporation, there is an overwhelming favorable view among employees about the management. By the same token, 92 percent of the workers in the Filipino firm "distrust" the management, while 92 percent of the employees in the American establishment regard management in a very "favorable" light.

TABLE 2

**Employee Perception Of Union-Management
Relations In Two Industrial Firms, 1975**

	Filipino	American
Favorable	73.33	92.31
Unstable	1.67	2.56
Bad	25.00	5.13
Total	100.00	100.00
	N = 60	N = 39

Practices in the Firm

Apprenticeship and Hiring Methods. As mentioned, there is a significant difference in the proportion of temporary workers to the total work force between the two firms. While one-third of the workers in the American enterprise were on temporary status, only 11 percent of the employees in the Filipino firm were on similar employment arrangement.

An investigation of the patterns of recruitment, apprenticeship, and hiring procedures revealed the following differences. The American firm provided an open recruitment system, maintained a much longer period of apprenticeship and was more rigid in selecting permanent employees. On the other hand, the Filipino enterprise has a more or less closed pattern of recruitment, shorter apprenticeship program and less rigid requirements for converting apprentices to permanent jobs.

As a matter of policy, the American company either advertised in the newspapers or, as often done, merely put up a signboard in the front gate of its plant in Makati, Rizal, a suburb of Manila, whenever it needed new workers. The signboard is usually put up on the first Monday of the month or every Monday during the peak season, and anybody can drop by the office of the personnel assistant for initial interview purposes. The Filipino firm, on the other hand, did not advertise in the newspapers or at its gate for new employees except for highly technical personnel. The number of job applicants who come in either as recommendees of company personnel or those who apply directly is deemed sufficient as a source of prospective employees.

The probationary employment periods in the firms vary a great deal. The American firm requires a total of two-years of temporary employment before one becomes a permanent worker; the Filipino establishment requires only six months in general, and at the most one year. In the former, a prospective permanent employee undergoes a series of four 6-month probationary worker status. Necessarily, a worker who is recalled for a fourth consecutive 6-month temporary employment status virtually makes it to the permanent roster. Consequently, the number of temporary workers who move on to the second, third and fourth stages of apprenticeship become smaller and smaller. At any one time, however, the total number of temporary workers in Company A could be one-third of the total work force. In Company F, a probationary employee either makes it or not after six months of employment. Some workers drop out of contention for permanent status before the six-month apprenticeship program is over.

Social Network in the Plant. In order to understand the nature of social relations in the worksite, questions about the state of supervisor-employee relations, patterns of assistance seeking and grievance procedures were asked. Employee evaluation of supervisors' role was mixed, a fairly high discontent about supervisors' readiness and ability to help in time of need existed. The state of supervisor-employee relations was in itself regarded only "fair" in a four-scale continuum of "excellent-good-fair-bad." Only two percent of the respondents regarded the supervisor-employee relations as excellent and smooth. Fourteen percent of the employees interviewed classified the relationship between workers and supervisors as entirely "bad." In the Filipino firm, more workers (20%) were critical of supervisors.

The nature of social relations within each firm could be discerned from the patterns of assistance-seeking and grievance procedures. To get at these vital problems, several related questions were asked, e.g., "Have you encountered any problem in your job?" "If yes, what did you approach for help?" "Why him?" "Have you actually asked the union to assist you in any problem?" The respondents were requested to list five names whom they would approach for assistance to any job-related problems.

Responses to the foregoing questions revealed the existence of a strong *kumpadre* system in both firms. The *kumpadre* system manifests a functional extended family system, sometimes stronger than ordinary kinship ties particularly after the first degree family

...ous, by way of explaining the nature and background of the *kumpadre* system, let us digress momentarily.

The *kumpadre* system originated and is derived, structurally, from the baptismal ritual of the Roman Catholic Church. The ritual requires the designation of a sponsor, called godparent, whenever a child is baptized. The godparent (or godparents) then becomes a *kumpadre* (co-father) or *kumadre* (co-mother) of the child's parents. Under this arrangement, a child is initiated into the Catholic Church with another parent or set of parents, i.e., the *kumpadres* and *kumadres* as appointed guardians in case of disability of the child's natural parents. Moreover, the godparents and the child are supposed to develop a continuing relationship, the token of which is the child's annual visit to his godparents during the Christmas holidays and the giving of a gift to the child by the godparents. The child calls the godparents *ninong* or *ninang* (sponsor), the latter refer to the former as *anak* (like my own child). But, as in most of Latin America, where the Catholic Church's influence is strong, the *kumpadre* system in the Philippines has taken a particular drift. Instead of the godparent-child relationship, the central point of interest shifted to the relationship between the godparents and the child's parents.⁸ They develop a very close relationship with each other, exchanging news, materials or otherwise, which are not normally available to their friends. Thus, the formal baptismal ritual is utilized to expand the extended family system from the confines of blood relatives.

The demand of the average Filipino family for a respectable number of *kumpadres* as the core of its socialization process is, consequently, a reason for desiring a fairly large family size. After all, the size of a family's *kumpadre* network becomes useful not only in politics, where it is pervasive, but also in establishing references, in seeking employment and promotions. This is particularly true since the selection of godparents usually contain some elements of status seeking, i.e., that persons of higher status or greater influence in the community are normally chosen as *kumpadres* and *kumadres*. For their part, persons in relative influential positions enjoy the privilege of being the target of choices for the establishment of the *kumpadre* network in order to widen their sphere of influence and followers.

While the selection of a person of influence as a prospective *kumpadre* is a widespread practice, the establishment of *kumpadre*

⁸Arnold Strickon and Sidney M. Greenfield, "The Analysis of Patron-Client Relationships," in *Structures and Process in Latin America: Patronage, Clientage and Power Systems* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1972), Chapter 1.

relations among equals is equally popular. They are usually fostered among close friends, usually between neighbors, co-workers and townmates. The establishment of a *kumpadre* relation among equals is generally a symbol of mutual trust and confidence, and a commitment of each to assist the other in case of trouble. One's popularity is often determined by the number of *kumpadres* one has.

In many ways, therefore, the patron-client system is enhanced at least held to continue, by the prevalence of the *kumpadre* network. The inability of blood relatives to provide the necessary assistance when needed also suggests that many people will continually seek the protection that may be afforded by the *kumpadre* system.⁹

Now, let us return to the responses of the interviewees related to their assistance-seeking procedures.

Of the five names enumerated as sources of immediate assistance for problems in, and outside of, the job, "fellow-workers" were the outstanding choice consistently. "Fellow-workers" were chosen by 31 percent, 34 percent and 32 percent of the respondents in the first three categories, respectively, and by 25 percent and 23 percent in the fourth and fifth categories. The "foreman" and the "union president" were chosen as a poor second and third, in that order. Other persons designated as possible sources of help were "personnel officer," "plant superintendent" and the "shop steward." Interestingly enough, the workers' relation to the aforementioned sources of assistance, whether "fellow-workers," "foreman," "union president," "personnel officer," etc., in the majority of cases, was that of *kumpadre*. The significance of this relationship in the worksite is suggested by the fact that responses to the question about the relation indicate the following proportions of workers in the sample who have a *kumpadre* relationship: First-23%; second-17%; third-15%; fourth-15%; and fifth-14%. Following a close second to *kumpadre* was the "workmate" category. The union president's position in the social network hierarchy is dismally low, except in the first category where it assumes a second place to *kumpadre*. Of course, in a few cases, respondents indicated the name of the union president or executive vice-president but regarded their relation as *kumpadre* anyway.

⁹James C. Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia," *The American Political Science Review*, LXVI:1 (March, 1971), 91-113.

This shows that some workers regarded their union officials as sources of help for their grievances but expect such help out of a socially established informal type of relation, not on the basis of a union leader-member formal relations.

In Company F, for instance, some 44 percent of the 50 respondents, who answered the question of first preference, indicated that a "co-worker" would be their principal choice. Sixteen percent indicated that the "foreman" is their first source of help while 18 percent suggested that the "union president" is their first choice. In Company A, 40 percent of the 32 respondents chose their "co-workers" as the first source of assistance; 20 percent selected the "foreman" and only eight percent gravitated toward the "union president."

When asked what type of relations they have with these people, 18 percent of the 32 respondents in the Filipino firm acknowledged the "union president-member" relations, 33 percent indicated a *kumpadre* relationship, while only 18 percent referred to their first source of help as "co-workers." Nobody indicated a supervisor (or foreman)-worker relations. This means that the 16 percent of the employees who preferred to approach the foreman as the first source of help do so on the basis of their *kumpadre* relationship.

In the American enterprise, the *kumpadre* system is even more pervasive. About one-half (48%) of the respondents, who answered the question, indicated the primacy of the *kumpadre* relationship. Only 14 percent chose the "union president-member" relations for their immediate source of help. On the other hand, 10 percent of the respondents suggested that they have a "supervisor-employee" relations, a phenomenon absent in the Filipino firm. In other words, the *kumpadre* relation between supervisors and employees in the American firm is nil. However, a fairly strong *kumpadre* relation between supervisors and workers is prevalent in the Filipino enterprise.

It is clear from the data that there is a distinct difference between perceived relationships of blue-collar workers in the two firms as regard to their supervisors. As noted above, workers in the Filipino enterprise exhibit a higher propensity to foster *kumpadre* relations with persons of influence and authority, i.e., the foreman. In doing they establish a firmer basis for reciprocity. Employees in the American corporation are apparently inhibited from doing the same. Evidently, they regard their supervisors as their bosses. The

difference in the way employees of Company F and Company G relate themselves with their supervisors illustrates, to some degree, the element of formalism in the American establishment, and the existence of informal social network in the Filipino firm.

Tables 3 and 4 indicate the sources of assistance, and the types of relations that exist between employees and benefactors. Table 3 summarizes the relations of workers with their primary source of assistance.

Grievance Procedures. The mode of assistance seeking is first established in the popularity of the "co-worker" category as the person to approach. This was verified through a separate question regarding whom to approach in case of any specific work-related problem. In general, the responses gravitated toward the "co-worker" category (44%) as compared with 35 percent of all employees who would see the union president or steward, and a meager 6 percent who said they would favor approaching either the foreman, superintendent or the personnel officer. Still, on this question, the *kumpadre* relation is dominant with 26 percent and 22 percent in the American firm and the Filipino company, respectively.

Of all those who actually sought help, the union president was approached slightly more often (35%) than the supervisor (29%), a few others went to see either the shop steward (8%), the foreman (4%) or the personnel officer (2%). When combined, the union president-steward tandem attracted more help-seeking (43%) than the supervisor-superintendent-personnel officer combination (34%).

TABLE 3
Preferences Of Filipino Blue-Collar Workers On Whom
To Approach For Assistance In Two Firms, 1975

	Percentage									
	First		Second		Third		Fourth		Fifth	
	Fil	Am	Fil	Am	Fil	Am	Fil	Am	Fil	Am
Co-worker	44	40	43	53	53	45	52	40	33	64
Foreman	16	20	25	19	14	28	17	4	30	—
Union President	18	8	18	13	17	7	7	20	15	14
N =	50	32	40	32	36	29	29	25	27	22

TABLE 4

Relations Of Filipino Blue-Collar Workers With
Their Sources Of Assistance In Two Firms, 1975

Percentage

	First		Second		Third		Fourth		Fifth	
	Fil	Am	Fil	Am	Fil	Am	Fil	Am	Fil	Am
Union President	18	14	13	—	—	—	—	—	5	—
Foreman	3	—	19	5	11	—	14	—	14	—
Kumpadre	33	48	22	53	33	44	27	50	32	50
Supervisor	—	10	9	16	4	17	5	6	14	—
Workmate	18	5	13	—	37	—	23	33	14	43
None	32	21	40	21	27	18	22	18	22	14

TABLE 5

Perceived Relations Of Workers To Their
First Source Of Assistance In
Two Industrial Firms, Combined, 1975

	Union President	Kumpadre	Workmate
Co-Worker	10%	28%	11%
Foreman	—	3%	2%
Union President	7%	3%	—

N = 61

Role of the Union in the Plant

The web of evidence presented in the foregoing suggests that the role of the union in the Philippine industrial relations system is affected by the availability and widespread use of other channels through which the workers vent their grievances and obtain amicable settlements. The union had to compete with the operation of the *kumpadre* system in the plant. While the data tend to indicate stronger union-consciousness and a far more favorable

perception of existing union-management relations among employees in the American firm than in the Filipino company, there are significant variations between the patterns of union expectation assistance seeking and the prevalence of the *kumpang* system.

At the time of interview, the atmosphere in the Filipino enterprise was quite tense, in fact more tense than the climate in the American firm. This was partly due to the fact that union F was renegotiating its contract. Nevertheless, the representation of the union in Company F for the variety of grievances harbored and filed by workers was in fact less than those in Company A. Apparently employees in the American firm tended to rely more upon the union for grievance representation. In the Filipino enterprise the union representation of worker grievances is more diffused with a greater number of workers making use of the help of other company personnel in the resolution of their day-to-day problems.

The difference in the proportion of workers who relied on the union for help in work-related problems may be explained in two ways; first, the influence of inhibiting cultural factors such as *nakakahiya* (shame) and *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) particularly manifested by people who were sponsored in their employment by company personnel, especially by supervisors and higher company officials; and second, the perception, prevalent in the Filipino firm that the union is an adversary of the management.

The existence of a more pleasant atmosphere in the American company suggests that the management has accepted the concept of partnership in the labor relations process of the foreign manager and the general policy of the company with respect to labor relations minimized animosity against the union. The same background experience and readiness did not exist in the Filipino firm since the corporation itself grew from a small family enterprise where the owner used to have direct, paternalistic relations with the workers. During the formative stage of the union in Company F, the union negotiators would sit down with the owner of the company to talk out the problems relative to the collective bargaining agreement. That same tradition was carried on even when the enterprise became a corporation although less and less participation from the *matandang* ('old man', meaning, owner) became evident. In fact, part of the grievances of the workers in Company F was that it was becoming harder and harder to deal with management under a new set of younger managers as compared with "the old days when the old man took charge of everything!"

The erosion of intimate patron-client relations between the owner of the company and the workers explains the heavy burden placed upon the union in mutual aid and social matters. Gradually, the union assumed the tasks of a lending institution and a coordinator of mutual assistance requirements of the expanded work force.

Although the original managers of Company A were also close to the workers in the past, the degree of social intimacy that developed within the firm was comparatively weak and the worker-manager relations were kept at a fairly formal level. This seemed to be due to the foreign managers, and second, the background of a relatively heterogeneous work force most of whom were recruited from the metropolitan Manila area. In the Filipino firm, it was noticeable that the majority of the workers came from two principal regions of the country, both considerably outside of the Manila area. The owner of the company, the personnel manager and other company officials came from these same regions.

Practices in the Firm v. the Collective Agreement

The evidence tends to show that the labor relations practices in the firms revolve around patterns that diffuse the role of the union. Apparently, the union is only one of several institutions representing the interest of the workers. Supervisors and co-employees all take part in the process of resolving misunderstandings and disputes in the workplace. The workers view the role of the union as minimal considering their continued access to other channels. This phenomenon is somewhat less true in the American firm than in the Filipino enterprise although the practices between the case firms do not diverge very significantly. The predominance of the *kumpadre* system almost to the same degree in both firms somewhat neutralizes whatever differences exist between the firms regarding the rank and file's expectations of the union performance. While this factor results in the development of purely formalistic union-management relations, it serves at the same time as a forceful support for functional, if transitional, labor-management arrangements.

On the other side of the ledger is the existence of very formal, highly structured collective bargaining agreements in both case firms. The provisions governing various issues particularly those related to union recognition, management rights, the grievance procedure and so on are very precise and rigid. The formalisms, however, in the language of the collective bargaining agreements are not always reflected in the day to day worker-supervisor, union-management

relations. The practices in both firms grow out of the historical development of employee-supervisor relations and labor-management processes in each firm and often the substance and methods diverge from the established formal structures and procedures.

For example, the grievance procedures established in the collective bargaining contracts in Company A and Company F provide a total of six and three different steps respectively, defining the levels of dispute settlement. Under the Company A-Union A contract, an employee is supposed to take his grievance, first, to his section union representative who will, in turn, discuss it with the foreman; if the grievance is not settled at step 1, it is submitted in writing to the manager/supervisor, as a second step; elevated to the personnel relations manager and a committee of three from the union, for the third step; to the plant superintendent, in the fourth step; and finally to the general manager. If the grievance is not satisfactorily adjusted at the level of the general manager, it is, finally, referred to arbitration.

In Company F, the union steward takes up an employee grievance with the supervisor at the first step, the union president with the personnel manager at the second step, and finally, the arbitration machinery takes over.

It is clear that in both firms, the last step calls for voluntary arbitration. The procedures for the arbitration process, including the names of selected arbitrators in case of failure of the parties to agree on a chairman of the 3-man arbitration committee, are well-defined.

The format of the grievance procedure does not often lend itself to strict adherence on the part of the parties involved. Except in the case of disputes of profound magnitude, the practices in the firm have not conform with the multiple steps in the contract. In general, an aggrieved employee approaches either his supervisor, the plant superintendent, the personnel officer or the top union officer. In the first instance, the foreman is bypassed; in the second, the union steward. In both cases, the structure of the grievance machinery is substantially ignored.

As noted, of all those who had grievances and actually sought settlement, the union president was approached by 35 percent of the respondents while 29 percent went directly to the supervisor. While the plant superintendent was approached by only four percent, the personnel officer two percent of the aggrieved workers in the

When combined, the actual pattern of assistance-seeking for problems in the plant diverges significantly from the grievance procedure as laid down by the contract.

For lack of time and the unavailability of systematic, adequate record-keeping system, we did not have a chance to look at the filed grievances in detail. Nevertheless, the foregoing data provide an interesting clue to the mechanics of grievance settlement in the two industrial firms studied.

Conclusion

The evidence suggests that despite a very high rate of unionization among Filipino workers in the firms studied, the role of the union in plant-level industrial relations is somewhat amorphous. This phenomenon springs from the fact that blue-collar workers express different sets of priorities insofar as the trade union function is concerned. While the majority of employees interviewed consider job protection as the primary goal of trade unionism, a considerable proportion of the respondents indicated that they expect their union to take care of mutual aid problems and social activities. The function of the union is therefore held to be supportive and it is not expected to enjoy an overwhelming loyalty of the workers.

The role perceptions of workers and the patterns of assistance seeking strongly indicate the continuing hold of informal relations in the work setting. This is particularly true in the Filipino firm where the pattern of recruitment suggests community relationships. Even under highly formalistic American managers, Filipino workers exhibit the same degree of commitment to the extended family system-based relations as those employed in a Filipino enterprise. Thus, the divergence of industrial relations practices in the firm from the procedures outlined by the collective bargaining agreements is manifest. All these point to the existence of a dualistic pattern of industrial relations in the plant, a phenomenon that can be observed in both the Filipino and American firms. While there is a tendency for a greater degree of formalism in the American company than in the Filipino enterprise, the difference between the two are not significant to provide a clear-cut dichotomy of strong political-weak collective bargaining and weak political-strong collective bargaining models of industrial relations emphasis.

The dual mechanism of plant-level industrial relations, as shown, has implications for the pattern of unionism in the economy as a

whole. Firstly, it suggests that the possibilities for an entirely formalistic economic outlook are dimmed by the diffusion of the trade union role in the place where it has much stake, viz., in the worksite. Secondly, although the workers expect less than a militant political posture from the union, the union is compelled to look for a rallying cause to promote and maintain the loyalty of their members. Such a cause is essential if the union leadership is to survive the competition posed by the other sources of loyalty and channels of worker representation in the plant. Since the mutual aid function of the union is not a sufficient alternative, labor leaders are impelled to gravitate toward overt, politically important activities and concerns such as the enhancement of the workers' legal rights, political awareness, and political participation outside the worksite. Inevitably, they will increasingly appeal to the general interest of the working class in the hope of serving, indirectly, the sectional immediate interests of the union members in the plant.

The viability of trade union organization, therefore, will depend on how much mutual aid functions they could provide their members, and how much influence they could muster in the political arena to serve the general interests of the working class. At the same time, however, local unions will continue to pursue whatever form of representation they could make in behalf of their members vis-à-vis the management in the worksite.