Reversing the decline? Trade union strategies in Britain during the 1980s

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DURING THE 1980s

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the responses of British trade unions to declining aggregate membership during the 1980s and early 1990s. It describes the development of union services, contributions policies and organising strategies, looking in particular at the implementation of organising campaigns at the local level. Drawing on interviews with union full-time officials, and an analysis of documentary and statistical material, the thesis shows that during this period union organising campaigns consisted of more than empty pronouncements by national leaderships. There was clear evidence of an attempt to prioritise organising activity at the local level, although there was an unevenness in the extent to which organising activity was effectively prioritised, both between and within unions. Whilst some recruitment gains were made as a result of the organising campaigns, such initiatives were insufficient in themselves to halt the decline in membership, since unions faced severe difficulties in consolidating recruitment gains and in winning recognition from employers in the adverse economic and political climate of this period.

The findings are discussed in the context of the literature on union growth and union strategy. Some support is found for the view that union growth was largely constrained by environmental factors in the short term, although it was an open question as to whether union organising strategies could exert a significant independent influence on aggregate membership levels in the longer term, by extending union organisation into new job territories. In this respect, the limited achievements of the union organising campaigns by 1991 were only to be expected, and could not necessarily be taken to imply their failure in the longer term.

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2 1 APR 1992

CONTENTS

PART FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Trade Union Organisations:

ACTSS	Association of Clerical, Technical and Supervisory Staff
AEU	Amalgamated Engineering Union
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations
AMMA	Assistant Masters' and Mistresses' Association
APEX	Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff
ASTMS	Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staff
AUEW	Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers
BALPA	British Air Line Pilots' Association
BIFU	Banking, Insurance and Finance Union
COHSE	Confederation of Health Service Employees
CPSA	Civil and Public Services Association
EETPU	Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Union
EMA	Engineers' and Managers' Association
FTAT	Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades Union
FUMPO	Federated Union of Managerial and Professional Officers
GMBATU	General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union
GMWU	General and Municipal Workers' Union
IPCS	Institution of Professional Civil Servants

IPMS	Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists
MATSA	Managerial, Administrative, Technical and Supervisory Association
MSF	Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union
NALGO	National and Local Government Officers' Association
NCC	National Co-ordinating Committee
NCU	National Communications Union (Engineering and Clerical Groups)
NGA	National Graphical Association (1982)
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUPE	National Union of Public Employees
NUT	National Union of Teachers
SOGAT	Society of Graphical and Allied Trades 1982 (SOGAT)
SRB	Special Review Body
STE	Society of Telecom Executives
TASS	Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Section
TGWU	Transport and General Workers' Union
TSSA	Transport Salaried Staffs' Association
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UCATT	Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians
USDAW	Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers

Other Abbreviations:

AA	Automobile Association
ABTA	Association of British Travel Agents
ACAS	Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service
BEC	Building Employers' Confederation
BSAS	British Social Attitudes Survey
BTEC	Business and Technician Education Council
CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission
GCHQ	Government Communications Headquarters
IPM	Institute of Personnel Management
LRD	Labour Research Department
NACAB	National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux
NES	New Earnings Survey
NJIC	National Joint Industrial Council
RAC	Royal Automobile Club
UFS	Unity Financial Services
WIRS	Workplace Industrial Relations Survey
YTS	Youth Training Scheme

DECLARATION

This thesis is the original and independent work of Edward John Snape. None of the material contained in this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other university, polytechnic or college.

STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION
&
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Between 1979 and 1989, British trade unions lost over three million members. This decline was all the more significant when compared to the rapid growth of the previous decade (see Appendix 1), and is usually explained in terms of the adverse political and economic climate of the post–1979 period. The political climate moved against the unions in 1979, with the election of a radical Conservative government committed to the reduction of union power. The economy also took its toll on union membership, as the deep recession of 1979–81 led to major job losses in the unions' traditional strongholds in manufacturing. This led many to talk in terms of the "crisis" of trade unionism (Towers, 1989b).

Some commentators have suggested that the severity of the "crisis" was often overstated. Kelly (1987a, 1988) notes that the decline in union membership was small compared to that of earlier periods, whilst the losses were concentrated in the private manufacturing sector, with the public sector and services being much less affected. The coverage of collective bargaining and the institutions of workplace industrial relations survived the early 1980s surprisingly well (Millward and Stevens, 1986; Batstone, 1984; Terry, 1986). Furthermore, whilst the decline in the number of strikes is often regarded as a clear indicator of union weakness after 1979, it could also partly reflect less

of a need to use sanctions, given the steady real wage growth after 1982 (McIlroy, 1988: 206-7).

Whilst the above views are a necessary corrective to those who were predicting the demise of the union movement, the view that there was no cause for concern and that nothing needed to be done was losing credibility as the decline in membership continued into the mid and late-1980s, in spite of the economic recovery. Thus, increasingly, union leaders began to reassess the role and functions of unions, and a debate on union strategy developed (see for example: Carter, 1986; Clay, 1987; Edmonds 1984; 1986a; 1986b; 1986c; Graham, 1986; Jewison, 1984; Lloyd, 1986; Mortimer, 1988).

In fact, the concern with union strategy pre-dates the onset of falling membership. At its 1979 Congress, the TUC passed a motion calling for a review of:

> "how developments in the role, structure and services of the TUC could best be co-ordinated with similar developments by unions in order to mobilise the strength of the trade union Movement as a whole in implementing agreed strategies"
>
> (TUC, 1981b:4)

Following consultation with affiliated unions, the General Council established a "TUC Development Programme" in 1981 to consider developments in union finances and services and in the role of the TUC.

However, the developments of the early 1980s gave a new urgency to such discussions. By 1983 it was becoming clear to many that the unions had to do rather more than simply ride out the worst of the recession and wait for better times. In that year Labour suffered a heavy electoral defeat, and the prospect of a return to a more favourable political climate appeared remote. Also, the economy was by now beginning to move out of recession, and employment was increasing, but union membership continued to decline as the new jobs were concentrated in sectors of low union density and amongst groups which lacked a strong tradition of union membership.

The 1983 Congress saw the emergence of the so-called "new realism". Realising that they could not depend upon the return of a pro-union Labour government to deliver them from their difficulties, unions would have to find their own solutions to falling membership, and leaders such as Frank Chappell of the EETPU and Alistair Graham of the CPSA, championed a more conciliatory approach towards the Conservative government and towards employers.

In response to motions passed at Congress on union strategy and services, the General Council published a consultative document on "TUC Strategy" in March 1984. This outlined the challenges facing the union movement, and sought to stimulate a debate on the future role and functions of trade unions. Whilst notions of compromise and new realism were to some extent overshadowed by subsequent events at GCHQ and in the 1984-85 miners'

strike (Macintyre, 1984), these debates remained important in pointing towards a need for a strategic approach. Thus:

> "While the changes that have taken place in the past in union organisation and union methods have been substantial and far-reaching, they have occurred as fragmented and uncoordinated responses to gradually changing circumstances. The pace of current changes will not afford the luxury of gradualism. Unions must, as far as is possible, plan change. The task for each union is to build a sensible, flexible strategy to enable it to adapt to the changing economic and industrial environment"

> (TUC, 1984: 41).

The TUC was to play an important role in stimulating and co-ordinating responses. This was taken further with the Special Review Body, set up after the 1987 Congress partly as a fudge to avoid confrontation on the issue of no-strike deals but also as an attempt to come to terms with the challenges facing the union movement. However, it was of course up to individual unions to determine their own strategies, and particularly during the late 1980s, several unions launched new initiatives on recruitment and retention, services and benefits, and on contributions (Industrial Relations Services, 1987a). There was some suggestion of more strategic thinking amongst union leaderships, and of attempts to win support for such initiatives within their unions. Thus, in September 1987 the GMB produced a discussion document *"New Directions for the year ahead"* aimed at communicating the union's key priorities to full-time officials and senior lay activists. The TGWU followed suit in 1988 with its *"Forward with the T & G"* document, approved by the 1989

Biennial Delegate Conference, and setting the union's organising and campaigning priorities for the following two years.

This thesis reviews developments in these areas, and discusses the coherence and effectiveness of union strategies during this period. The thesis examines attempts to implement such strategies at local level, focusing on the role of local full-time union officials, seen by Kelly and Heery (1989) as occupying a critical position in union organising efforts, particularly if unions were to extend their organisation to new job territories. The research focuses in particular on the experience of a sample of nine unions, chosen to reflect something of the diversity of experience during this period. (Appendix 2 provides a comparison of membership trends for the nine unions).

Aims Of The Thesis

In examining the experiences of trade unions, the thesis considers the following questions:

1. What were trade unions doing to try to cope with the challenges of the 1980s and early 1990s? Thus, our first aim was simply to describe the responses of unions to the membership "crisis".

2. To what extent were such responses having an impact at the local level, and in particular were unions able to mobilise their local full-time officials behind their organising initiatives? Earlier writers had identified

local officials as a key group if organising initiatives were to be implemented, so that our second aim was to examine the extent to which union initiatives amounted to more than empty pronouncements by union leaders and headquarters.

3.   How effective were the various initiatives in promoting union growth? The mobilisation of the union behind an organising campaign, for example, may be a necessary but not a sufficient condition for effective organising.   Our third aim was thus to assess the effectiveness of union initiatives in dealing with membership decline. Given that our research was completed by 1991, it was unlikely that we would be able to assess the long-term impact of the initiatives, but nevertheless we aimed to provide at least a preliminary assessment.

4.   To what extent did union responses appear to be consistent with a coherent view of union strategy? Our aim here was to assess the significance of our findings in terms of the wider debates on union strategy.

We chose to focus on what might be termed "internal" growth strategies, rather than on growth through merger. We made this choice for three principal reasons. Firstly, union mergers had already been the subject of considerable research in both the UK and the USA in recent years, and we preferred to focus our study on the less well-researched initiatives aimed at

internal growth. Secondly, discussions of the "crisis" of trade unionism had pointed to the decline in aggregate membership, something which the merger strategy does not directly address. Finally, although mergers represent an effective and highly cost-effective means of securing additional members for some unions, Mason and Bain's (1990; 1991) survey shows that unions themselves saw recruitment campaigns and the seeking of recognition from employers as their "top priority" strategy in the bid to reverse membership decline in the late 1980s. Only 7 per cent of unions cited mergers as their most important strategy, compared to 48 per cent and 32 per cent for the other two approaches respectively. (We discuss the question of alternative approaches to declining membership at greater length in chapter 4.)

Structure Of The Thesis

In this section, we provide a brief overview of the structure of the thesis. There are five parts. Part one introduces the study, setting out the aims and the research methodology.

Part two places union strategies in context by examining the literature on union growth, union objectives and the theory of collective action. Within this, chapter 3 summarises the literature on union growth and decline, thus attempting to provide an explanation for declining membership after 1979. Economic and structural factors, including employer attitudes to union recognition are found to be important, but it is not clear from the existing literature to what extent union organising strategies are able to exert an

18

independent influence on union growth. This question then becomes a major concern of the rest of the thesis.

Chapter 4 provides an explanation for the emergence of organising initiatives in the 1980s, in terms of a satisficing view of the union's organisational objectives. It reviews the consequences of membership decline, outlines the alternative strategies available to unions, and explains why we choose to focus on internal growth strategies in this study. Chapter 5 concludes the review of the relevant literature with an explanation of the rational-choice theory of collective action, drawing out several important implications for union strategy which are developed in subsequent chapters.

Part three of the thesis examines the costs and benefits of union membership. Chapter 6 shows how, in spite of the continuing decline in the significance of traditional cash benefits, unions attempted to develop their provision of services to members, particularly by providing a wider range of discount benefits, in an attempt to increase their ability to recruit and retain members. Chapter 7 reviews the debates on union contributions, and in particular the argument that higher contributions were needed if unions were to significantly increase the level of services offered to members. The chapter shows that unions were constrained in this, but that a more innovative approach to contributions policy might offer a way of increasing available resources without deterring price-sensitive members from joining.

Part four discusses union organising strategies. Chapter 8 examines the scope for union recruitment activity during the late 1980s and describes the development of organising initiatives. Chapters 9 and 10 look at the implementation of organising campaigns, and find that whilst there was some evidence of a prioritisation of organising activity amongst officials, the results were often disappointing in terms of membership growth. Chapter 11 discusses the reasons for this apparent lack of success in more detail, through an examination of the experiences and views of local full-time officials.

Finally, part five provides a summary of the findings of the research and a discussion of their implications for the development of union strategies.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to describe and justify our research methodology. We begin by discussing the rationale for our methodology and for the particular techniques used in the collection of data, in terms of the debates in the methodology literature. Subsequently, we describe our data collection methods and research timetable in more detail.

The research aimed not only to describe and account for the initiatives launched by unions, but also to examine their implementation at local level. Several writers had suggested that local full-time officials were likely to play a key role in union recruitment campaigns, particularly if unions were to break into new job territories (Kelly and Heery, 1989). However, much of the early research on union campaigns in this period took a national-level perspective, comparing the initiatives of the various unions at national level (see for example Waddington, 1988b; Towers, 1989b; 1989c; Mason and Bain, 1991). Kelly and Heery (1989) and Watson (1988) studied the work of local full-time union officials, and whilst they refer to recent developments in union strategies they were concerned to develop an overall picture of the job of the full-time official, and thus did not examine the new initiatives in detail.

This thesis aimed to fill a gap in the literature by focusing on the new initiatives on recruitment and retention as perceived by those local full-time officials who have direct daily contact with the membership and lay activists. In particular, we aimed to explore the issues involved in implementing the new recruitment and retention initiatives at local level. This involved examining the impact of such initiatives on the work patterns of local officials, to discuss whether or not unions were able to prioritise recruitment activity amongst their officials. Our concern was not simply to describe changing work patterns in statistical terms, but also to explore the attitudinal and behavioural issues involved in developing a "recruitment culture" within unions. In addition, it was felt that by taking a local-level perspective, focusing on implementation rather than strategy design, we could more effectively evaluate the effectiveness of such campaigns.

As we explain below, we opted for a largely qualitative methodology, with focused in-depth interviews as the principal research method, along with the analysis of documentary evidence. We do, however, make some use of quantitative analysis by way of corroboration in the analysis of recruitment and retention campaigns, whilst our analysis of union benefits and contributions relies largely on quantitative evidence drawn from surveys. Much of our analysis is based on a comparison of nine unions, although we also present a more detailed case study of one particular recruitment campaign

The Research Design: Rationale and Limitations

In this section, we discuss the underlying rationale for the research methodology and the choice of particular research methods. We begin the section with a general discussion of the reasoning behind our choice of research methods. We then focus in particular on three key issues: the choice between quantitative and qualitative research methods, the implications of the validity and reliability of evidence for the choice of research methods, and the generalisability of research findings.

(a)   The Choice Of Research Method

In designing our approach to the research, a decision had to be taken on the breadth of the study and on the appropriate methods of data collection. One possibility was a detailed case study, perhaps involving participant observation of a single recruitment campaign. This option was seriously considered since it promised to provide in-depth, contextualised data at first hand. However, this was eventually rejected as our primary research method. We felt that valuable insights could be gained by comparing the experience of unions recruiting in different sectors, adopting a variety of approaches. Thus, we chose a comparative approach, so that a single case study was considered inappropriate.

Having decided to compare the experiences of several unions, we felt that participant observation would not be an efficient method of data collection, and we considered using either a postal self-completion questionnaire or

face-to-face interviews. The chief advantage of the questionnaire is that it enables a large sample of responses to be collected, with a minimum use of resources. Data is typically in standardised, pre-coded format, and so can be subjected to quantitative analysis. However, we rejected this approach in favour of in-depth, face-to-face interviews for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the face to face interview is likely to yield a higher quality of data in that direct communication is possible, and any misunderstandings can be dealt with. The interviewee can ask for clarification on questions and on the definition of terms, whilst the interviewer is able to probe in order to seek clarification and explanation of answers. This is likely to result in greater validity, in the sense that the responses are more likely to accurately reflect the phenomena under study than in the case of postal questionnaires.

Secondly, if the interview has a flexible structure, as in the case of our research, the interviewer may return to particular topics later in the session, perhaps in a slightly different form, in order to seek corroboration. Answers may be probed, and examples may be sought in support of assertions, and once a rapport has been established, the interviewee's answers may be gently challenged. In this way a skilled interviewer may assess the truthfulness and credibility of the answers given, in a way which is much less feasible with the postal questionnaire.

Thirdly, the interviewer may be able to glean useful information on the mood of the interviewee from the tone of voice, pauses and body language. Such information is in itself data, and it also assists the interviewer, providing signals on when to probe.

Fourthly, interviews provide the opportunity to develop a rapport with the interviewee. This may improve the latter's motivation to co-operate, so that responses are more considered. This is critical when dealing with complex attitudinal and behavioural questions, particularly where a "political" dimension is involved, and we are seeking to penetrate beneath official viewpoints. In our interviews, most clearly enjoyed the opportunity to speak at length on such issues, and many were thankful for the opportunity "to have their side of it aired for a change".

Fifthly, where the answers sought are likely to vary considerably from case to case, it may be difficult or even impossible to devise a questionnaire which is meaningful to all respondents, at least without it becoming extremely complex and lengthy, and thus unsuitable as a postal questionnaire. This appeared to be the case in our own research, given the diversity of unions, with differing memberships, structures, initiatives, and official policies.

Sixthly, open-ended questions during an interview provide the researcher with the opportunity to question his own concepts and ideas more freely

than with a structured questionnaire. Whilst some open-ended questions are possible with the latter, questionnaires require a higher degree of pre-conceptualisation from the researcher, who must determine the exact questions, probes and sometimes even response frames in advance. There is thus a much greater risk of imposing inappropriate and meaningless concepts on the respondent than with interviews.

Finally, the TUC were currently conducting a survey of the workloads of officials, and this dealt in part with the effects of the new emphasis on recruitment and retention. Therefore, it seemed pointless to duplicate this work, and we draw on the findings of their survey to provide corroboration for our own conclusions (TUC, 1989).

Of course, interviews are in no sense a perfect research method. Given the cost of conducting face to face interviews, sample sizes are typically much lower than for postal questionnaire-based studies. Indeed, the very cost of interviews may in itself be seen as a major disadvantage. There is an element of subjectivity, in so far as the interviewer is able to lead his interviewee and thus bias the responses, and the answers given may be biased by the interviewee's loss of memory or by post-hoc rationalisation and selective recall, particularly where the latter has an interest in presenting what he feels to be a favourable impression of himself and/or his organisation. However, given our earlier comments, and the safeguards provided by the use of corroborative evidence, we felt that the in-depth,

face-to-face interview was the appropriate method for much of our research.

(b)   Qualitative And Quantitative Research

Researchers in the social sciences and in other disciplines have long recognised the basic distinction between "quantitative" and "qualitative" research. Quantitative research involves taking pre-existing concepts, and attempting to measure them, often using a sample of cases or observations, with the aim of testing a hypothesis and then making some form of generalised conclusion about the population represented by the sample.   In contrast, qualitative research tends to focus on a smaller number of cases, or perhaps even a single case study, usually examined in greater depth and in context, with the aim of developing an understanding of the key concepts and relationships revealed by the cases.

There has been considerable debate on the usefulness, and indeed the validity of each of these approaches.   Those favouring the quantitative approach may dismiss qualitative methods as being non-scientific, subjective, insufficiently rigorous and non-generalisable.   Qualitative researchers may retaliate by characterising quantitative research as superficial, as being capable of saying little about cause and effect relationships, and as often involving arbitrarily-defined variables which may have no meaning to the research subjects (see, for example, Halfpenny

27

(1979) on the contrasting characterisation of qualitative and quantitative data).

In the literature on sociological research methodology, the debate on quantitative versus qualitative research has often been framed in epistemological terms (Bryman, 1984). In this view, quantitative methods are associated with "positivist" or "empiricist" approaches to social research, whilst qualitative methods are seen as being "naturalistic", "ethnographic", "interpretivist" or "constructivist". In the former the emphasis is on scientific objectivity, measurement and rigorous testing, whilst the latter involves attempting to see the world through the eyes of the research subject, with whom the researcher may become closely involved, the collection of rich contextual data, and possibly the discovery of the novel or the unexpected. Thus, the debate is one about the appropriate basis for the study of society, with the choice of research method seen as reflecting a deeper philosophical viewpoint on the relative importance of determinism and human agency. The implication, of course, is that one or other approach is correct.

Alongside this epistemological debate, however, others have seen the choice between quantitative and qualitative approaches as a purely technical question, involving nothing more than choosing the appropriate technique for a given research task (Bryman, 1984; Spencer and Dale, 1979; Banks, 1979). This could be called the "horses for courses" view of

research methodology. For example, a quantitative approach, such as a representative-sample survey with pre-coded response frames, might be used where the information sought is very specific and is familiar to the respondent and where the researcher has some prior knowledge as to the range of likely responses. A more qualitative method, such as in-depth interviewing or participant observation, might be used where the researcher has less prior knowledge of the area and where concepts are less well defined.

The view of the choice of method as being a technical question has led to the common assumption that qualitative methodologies are appropriate for exploratory analysis in novel research settings, involving the development of concepts and the formulation of hypotheses. Indeed, to many this is an essential step in the research process, as theories which are derived inductively, or "grounded" in qualitative data (Glaser and Strauss, 1968), are likely to be superior to those derived deductively from a priori propositions. Thus, Spencer and Dale argue that where a purely quantitative methodology is used, based on the researcher's own pre-defined concepts and theories:

> ".... it is not only possible but common to find research which is largely meaningless. (For example, measuring people's attitudes to objects of which they are both ignorant and uncaring; or using an aggregate of individual scale scores to make statement about social collectivities)."
>
> (1979: 702)

The appropriate role for quantitative methods is then seen as coming at a later stage, perhaps following on from an exploratory study using a qualitative approach, and involves the testing of hypotheses, once valid concepts have been developed which can be operationalised and measured.

As Bulmer (1984) points out, this view of qualitative research as being suitable for exploratory research and quantitative research for hypothesis testing, amounts to an acceptance of the positivist view, with an insistence on the ultimate need for "objective" and "scientific" hypothesis testing by rigorous quantitative methods. Similarly, calls for "triangulation" , whereby qualitative data collected from interviews must have their reliability checked by reference to data from other sources, also reflects a positivist philosophy (Halfpenny, 1979).

However, the view that qualitative research is only suitable for exploratory work has been challenged. The notion of triangulation itself admits the general usefulness of qualitative research in a variety of settings, so long as care is taken to ensure reliability. Hickson describes how qualitative research, based on "a deliberately selected sample under controlled conditions "(1988: 140), can be used to test hypotheses drawn from the academic literature. Bulmer (1979) outlines the process of "analytic induction", first formulated by Znaniecki, whereby the essential characteristics are abstracted from a given case to form a concept or a

working hypothesis, which is then tested against a relatively small number of other cases. When contradictory evidence is encountered, the working hypothesis may be reformulated, or the concept re-defined, to take account of this. Thus, by an inductive process, concepts and hypotheses can be developed and refined through contact with the data, a process which brings to mind the idea of "the exception that proves the rule".

Similarly, the idea that quantitative research is concerned exclusively with hypothesis testing, and lacks any inductive, insight-generating aspects has also been challenged. Bryman (1988) quotes the work of Blau (1964) and Lipset (1964), both of whom maintained that their quantitative analysis and survey work often produced unexpected results and new insights. It appears that the clear-cut dichotomy between discovery and hypothesis testing may break down in practice. Bulmer (1979) even suggests that the quantitative-qualitative distinction itself is blurred, since most so-called qualitative research contains an element of head counting when developing insights, and, as Crompton and Jones point out, " quantitative data always rests on qualitative assumptions" (1988: 72).

What emerges from this discussion of quantitative and qualitative research, then, is that the crude identification of the former with testing and the latter with discovery is overdrawn. Furthermore, in spite of earlier epistemological debates, there is considerable support for, and merit in, using a combination of research methods.

What of our own research design? The present research is a combination of exploration and hypothesis testing. Whilst something was known about the nature of the new recruitment and retention initiatives emerging from union centres, and about the work patterns of local full-time officials in the recent past, rather less was known about the issues raised in attempting to prioritise and co-ordinate recruitment and retention activity within a union and about the effectiveness of the new initiatives. Thus, the key aim of the research was to develop insights and understanding in the latter two areas.

Certain hypotheses relating to our key aim were derived from the literature. We set out to test these, and this gave the research a specific focus. However, we sought not to close off the opportunity for the development of theory, so that we treated these as working hypotheses, and we developed additional insights as the research progressed.

The research aim thus appeared to warrant a strong element of qualitative research. Recruitment and retention initiatives had, according to our prior knowledge, been initiated at the central or national level of many unions. This reflected the problem of declining or stagnant membership levels as perceived at that level of the union. What was not known was the extent to which this view of the problem, its consequences and the appropriate response, was shared by local full time officials, who, we were told, were likely to be a key group in implementing the response. Thus, it was essential for us to explore the issues through the eyes of local full-time

32

officials, so that their viewpoint and reported experiences could be compared with the espoused policies of the national union. Clearly, we needed to allow our respondents at least some scope to define their own issues and problems, so that an open-ended response method was appropriate. Hence our choice of the semi-structured interview, rather than the precoded survey, as our principle research tool.

However, our methodology did not rule out quantitative analysis completely. The initial questions on our interview schedule, dealing with the work pattern of the official, involved a pre-coded response frame, since previous research findings (of both a qualitative (Watson, 1988) and quantitative (Kelly and Heery, 1989) nature) had established clear categories and patterns of work, and we were interested in comparing our own findings with those of earlier studies. In addition we made extensive use of quantitative material from secondary sources for corroborative purposes.

One final point on the use qualitative data, is that there is a dilemma in the analysis and presentation of such data (Dunkerley, 1988: 90). On the one hand, there is a desire on the part of the researcher to conceptualise and interpret, in an attempt to move beyond the purely descriptive. On the other hand, however, is a wish to avoid being overly-subjective and introducing a biased interpretation which has little relationship to the understanding of the research subjects themselves. Clearly, it is a question of balance. In our own analysis, we seek to minimise the risk of personal

bias by quoting the respondents at length and also by seeking corroboration of our interpretations from external sources where possible.

(c)   Validity, Reliability And The Choice Of Method

In discussing research findings, we may be concerned with both "validity" and "reliability" (Adams and Schvaneveldt, 1985: 77-98). Validity refers to the extent to which the research instrument adequately measures the phenomena under study. We have seen that in the case of in-depth interviews, our chosen research method, bias may come from both the interviewer and the interviewee. We suggest, however that other methods are also subject to problems of validity, and that these may be more serious than in the case of interviews.

Thus, face to face interviews compare favourably with postal questionnaires in this respect, in that with interviews the interviewer can provide clarification on misunderstood questions and, in a less-structured interview, can ask open-ended questions and avoid forcing responses into inappropriate or meaningless categories. Such arguments have led some researchers to suggest that less-structured research methods may have advantages in terms of validity (Adams and Schvaneveldt, 1985: 226; Banks, 1979).

Reliability refers to the extent to which the responses gained from a subject would be consistent if measurement was repeated. The key test of

reliability is replication of the study, and social scientists often emphasise the desirability of replicability in research. However, the more unstructured the research approach, the less likely that a study could be effectively replicated, given the uniqueness of each data-gathering encounter. This means that it becomes very difficult to test the reliability of the findings with less-structured research methods. Bresnan therefore suggests that there is a trade-off in research between yielding valid insights and replicability:

> "A more reactive and unstructured type of approach is a double-edged sword: On the one hand, it yields valuable information and insights in a way in which a more pre-planned and structured approach does not; on the other, you lose the benefits of a more or less exactly comparable database..."

(1988: 47)

Similarly, Banks sees social research as involving a trade off between "objectivity" defined as the ability of readers to check and challenge the result of the research, for example by referring to sources or replication, and "precision", meaning the degree of "accuracy of the description of what people do" (1979: 567-69). Thus, at one extreme participant observation may achieve a high degree of precision, but it may lack a high degree of objectivity, whilst at the other extreme an analysis based on the content of literary sources, for example, may have the reverse characteristics. This trade-off often arises because of the sheer complexity of social behaviour, such that social research cannot strictly be compared with those natural

sciences such as chemistry, where it is provide to achieve high levels of both precision and objectivity in experimental work.

The implication, according to Banks, is that there is no method of social research which is ideal in all situations. The choice of research method then becomes a technical, or even pragmatic matter. Research aims and non-methodological factors such as resource availability and research access become important in the choice of method. This harks back to our earlier discussion on the shortcomings of a purely epistemological approach to research design, and suggests that research is a question of achieving a balance between often conflicting objectives.

One way to achieve such a balance is to use multiple sources of data and research methods. Thus, to reduce the risk of individual interviewee bias, we used multiple respondents from each union, and checked their responses for inconsistencies. Also, we compared our interview findings with material from other sources, including documents and secondary statistical material. This use of material from multiple sources is, as we have seen referred to as "triangulation" and aims to cross check data in search of corroboration (or contradiction).

The desirability of using multiple data sources was reinforced by our research aims, which involved locating the views and reported experience

36

of local full-time officials within the context of the broader industrial relations environment and union policies.

(d)   Generalisation

Rather than conduct a large postal survey of union officials, we chose to focus our attention on a small sample of unions and officials, and also to present a brief case study of one particular recruitment campaign. As we have seen, our rationale in choosing such a research design was to develop a deeper understanding of the issues, as opposed to measuring a pre-defined variable or testing a prior hypothesis for the whole population of union full-time officials. We felt that the latter approach, whilst tempting in terms of the apparent rigour and certainty of any findings derived from such a method, would be unlikely to yield sufficiently meaningful insights, given our chosen research aims.

Our approach therefore involves what Mitchell (1983) refers to as "scientific, causal or logical inference", whereby we attempt to arrive at conclusions about causal linkages between characteristics revealed by the data. This is the process of concept and theory development referred to earlier. This can be compared with what Mitchell refers to as "statistical inference", where a representative sample is studied in order to make inferences about the likely characteristics of the population from which the sample is drawn.

Under the former, the selection of cases for study is not necessarily a search for "typicality" in terms of the population since the aim is to develop insights rather that describe the population as a whole. Thus, cases may be chosen on the grounds of their likely interest. This is related to the notion of "purposive sampling" (Dixon, Bouma and Atkinson, 1987: 140), as explained below.

The clear limitations of our research design, at least in terms of the chapters on recruitment and retention, is that we cannot make what Yin (1984) refers to as "statistical generalisations" about the population as a whole. What we are able to do, however is to develop and test working hypotheses within the limitations of our data, and to make "analytical generalisations" in terms of concepts and hypotheses which could then be used to try to make sense of other cases. Again, the point is that the choice of research methodology involves trade-offs, and what we lose in statistical generalisability, we gain in quality and depth of understanding.

Research Methods

In this section, we describe in more detail the main methods of data collection used in the research.

(a)   Interviews with a Sample of Local Full-time Officials

Given the research aims, as set out above, it should not be surprising that

the core of our empirical research consisted of interviews with a sample of local full-time officials, drawn from different unions.

Table 2.1 lists the unions from which our sample of local union officials were drawn. Several points can be made about our choice of unions. In order to gain an insight into experience in a range of different types of unions and sectors, we selected a sample of unions to give a mix of the following characteristics:

Public and Private Sector

Production and Services

Blue-Collar and White-Collar Unions

Above and Below Average Union Density

Expanding and Contracting Sectors.

Whilst aggregate union membership declined significantly after 1979, the experience of unions varied considerably, and we chose a sample to reflect this diversity of experience. (Appendix 2 provides a comparison of membership trends for the nine unions.)

Finally, we chose to concentrate on larger unions for two reasons. Firstly, whilst our aim was not necessarily to develop a statistically representative sample of unions and officials, by choosing those unions which organise a majority of union members, our findings would be more likely to be of

TABLE 2.1: Unions From Which The Sample Of Full-time Officials
Were Drawn

Union	Characteristics	Membership, 1989 (000's)
Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU)	Private Sector. Production. Mainly blue collar. High density. Contracting sector.	742
Banking Insurance & Finance Union (BIFU)	Private Sector. Services. White Collar. Low density. Expanding Sector.	170
Electrical Electronic Telecommunication & Plumbing Union (EETPU)	Private & Public Sector. Production. Blue & White collar. High density in core areas. Mix of expanding and contracting sectors.	367
General Municipal & Boilermakers Union (GMB)	Public & Private Sectors. Services and Production. Majority blue collar. High and low density. Expanding and contracting sectors.	823
National & Local Government Officers Association (NALGO)	Mainly Public Sector. Services and production. White collar. High density. Stable sector.	751
National Union of Public Employees (NUPE)	Mainly Public Sector. Services and production. Blue collar. High density. Stable sector.	605
Transport & General Workers Union (TGWU)	Public and Private Sector. Services and production. Mainly blue collar. High and low density. Expanding and contracting sectors.	1271
Union of Construction Allied Trades & Technicians (UCATT)	Public & Private Sector. Production. Mainly blue collar. Mainly below average density. Fluctuating employment levels.	258
Union of Shop Distributive & Allied Workers (USDAW)	Private Sector. Services. White and blue collar. Low density. Fluctuating employment levels.	376

general interest. Our sample of unions accounted for 53 per cent of aggregate union membership in 1989. Secondly, the larger unions tend to have more officials based in our chosen regions, and hence are more accessible to a regionally based study such as ours.

In order to minimise the risk of our findings being subject to the idiosyncrasies of particular individuals, we did two things. Firstly, we selected at least two officials from each union, and secondly, we drew our sample from different regions so as to avoid a single-region bias to our findings. However, an important limitation of our study is that, largely because of cost, we were unable to conduct interviews with officials working in the lower unemployment, faster-growth areas of the south and south east of England.

Table 2.2 gives details of our sample by union and by location. It was not always possible to interview an official from each union in every region, but in all cases an official was interviewed in the North East of England and in at least one other region.

Thus, we make no claim to have chosen a rigorously representative sample, either of unions or of full-time officials within unions. Our nine unions are a "purposive" rather than a "representative" sample (Dixon, Bouma, and Atkinson, 1987: 140), chosen to reflect a diversity of types rather than to represent the population as a whole.

TABLE 2.2: Sample of Full-time Union Officials by Union and Location

Union	Number of Full-time Officials			
	North East England	North West England	Yorkshire	Total
AEU	3	2	–	5
BIFU	1	1	1	3
EETPU	1	1	–	2
GMB	1	–	2	3
NALGO	1	–	1	2
NUPE	1	–	1	2
TGWU	1	2	–	3
UCATT	1	1	2	4
USDAW	1	1	1	3
TOTAL	11	8	8	27

The interview schedule is included in Appendix 3. The interview was of the "focused interview" form (Adams and Schvaneveldt, 1985), in that whilst we had a set of questions to be answered, and whilst the rough sequence of the schedule was adhered to, we encouraged extended responses, using probes and asking for examples where appropriate.

Considerable thought was given to the sequencing of questions in the interview schedule. We began the interview with questions about the work patterns of full-time officials, obviously a subject of considerable direct interest to the respondent. A pre-coded response form was handed to respondents for these questions to provide a coding frame for the

responses and to ensure comparability across respondents and with earlier studies. However, an open-ended response was encouraged, and respondents were probed for reasons behind their responses. The interview then moved on to look at the issue of recruitment, beginning with the role of full-time officials and going on to look at difficulties experienced in recruitment and retention and the experience of recent campaigns. The interview then moved on to the development of services and benefits.

Union contributions were left until near the end of the interview, largely because we expected this to be a relatively sensitive area amongst full-time officials, given that they may be in the front line for member's complaints about increases, which may well take the form of semi-serious comments on the fact that contributions are spent largely on the salaries of officials. We therefore felt that this issue was best dealt with once a degree of trust and rapport had been established, and once respondents had been given the opportunity to discuss the benefits of union membership. At the end of the interview, we asked the respondent for any further comments, either on substantive issues, or on the interview and the research project itself.

Thus, the main emphasis was on the collection of qualitative material, although there was an attempt to quantify a limited number of variables. At all stages of the interviews respondents were invited to explain their responses at length.

All interviews were carried out on an individual basis, and usually lasted around two hours, with the shortest around ninety minutes and the longest over three hours. In some cases, we made return visits or follow-up telephone calls to check on detailed points or to get an update on the progress of particular initiatives. Thus, whilst our sample of officials was relatively small, a large amount of detailed data was gathered.

(b)   Interviews With National And Regional Level Union Officials.

Early in the research, we interviewed a national-level official of the TGWU, the GMB and the TUC. The aim here was to explore trends in strategic thinking at the centre in more detail than was possible through published sources (see below). We explored the rationale for the recruitment and retention initiatives, and discussed the issues raised by attempts to co-ordinate campaigns from the centre. In the case of the TGWU and GMB, this was followed-up with in-depth interviews with regional officials with particular responsibility for organising. This allowed us to follow-up the issues raised at national level, and provided us with a regional perspective.

The national level interviews also allowed us to explore developments in TUC policy, and particularly the issues raised by the Special Review Body.

The interviews were of a semi-structured nature, using a checklist of interview points and probe areas. These checklists were specially prepared

for each interview, following a survey of the academic literature, media coverage and union journals. The aim was to discuss the issues raised by such secondary sources in more detail, to seek corroboration, and to explore the rationale behind key initiatives. Interviewees were also asked to provide copies of any relevant documents, such as conference reports, recruitment literature, internal discussion and briefing papers, research documents, etc.

Given that our primary interest was in the implementation of recruitment and retention issues at local level, we concentrated our resources on interviewing a sample of local officials, rather than interviewing national officials of all our nine unions. However, something of a national perspective for each of these other unions was provided by a review of union literature, journals and also by correspondence and telephone conversations with officials at national level (see below).

(c)   Secondary Sources

A variety of secondary sources were used in the research, with three aims in mind: Firstly, to provide basic information on union recruitment and retention initiatives, debates on union strategy, and trends in union membership and finance.   We thus sought to become familiar with the major national initiatives prior to our interviews. Secondly, TUC and other survey results, and other material were used to provide corroboration for the data collected in interviews. Finally, given their importance in the

debates on union strategy, we made detailed studies of union benefits, services and contributions, based largely on secondary survey data. In this section we briefly describe the main sources of secondary data, of both a quantitative and a qualitative nature.

We kept a systematic log of union recruitment and retention initiatives for the entire period of the research, drawing on press and media sources as well as on our interviews and union literature. Our aim was to develop a reasonable overview of developments in the field. This analysis was categorised by union (all union and staff associations were included, not just our sample of nine), and covered the following broad topics:

Union membership

Union finances and management

Union strategy debates

Recruitment and retention initiatives

Developments in benefits and services

Union contributions

Union rivalry and co-operation

Union mergers

We also logged material on the TUC, and in particular on the Special Review Body and other initiatives.

This was supplemented by a review of union journals and annual reports, including the TUC Annual Report, which provided particularly useful information on special initiatives and union strategy. In a few cases, we followed up a particularly interesting initiative by post and/or telephone, to seek further details.

Background statistical information was drawn from a variety of sources, including the Certification Office, the TUC, the Department of Employment and ACAS. Sources are acknowledged in the body of the thesis. The TUC also gave us access to the raw data from some of their annual financial surveys, which we used in our analysis of union benefits and contributions.

In addition to the above, we also collected a large amount of documentary evidence when conducting our research interviews. Systematic requests were made for the following types of material during all our interviews with both local, regional and national officials:

* Recruitment leaflets, brochures and posters etc.

* Membership application forms.

* Leaflets outlining membership benefits, services and contributions.

* Recruitment campaign briefing documents and packages.

* Relevant union training materials.

* Representatives' and branch officials' handbooks and briefings.

*   Copies of monitoring documents (officials' time sheets, membership monitoring forms, etc).

*   Any other reports or documents referred to during the interviews.

Thus, we left each interview with a package of material. We found such material invaluable in checking detailed points of information, and in providing additional information on target groups and campaign issues. Of particular interest was the fact that many unions produced customised recruitment and campaign literature for specified target groups. Having systematically analysed such material between interviews, we were able to raise any issues arising from the analysis, either on return interviews or in interviews with other officials of the same union. In several cases, we gained access to internal reports, research, briefings and correspondence, which proved to be extremely valuable in the research. This included minutes and reports of officials meetings and seminars, strategy discussion papers, membership and lay activists survey reports, amongst other items.

(d)   Link-Up Case Study

Finally, we draw from many of the above sources to present a case study of the TGWU's Link-Up recruitment campaign. The aim in presenting such a case study is to provide an analysis of the implementation of a nationally co-ordinated recruitment campaign, with particular emphasis on the relationship between central co-ordination and local implementation, on the selection of recruitment targets, the mobilisation of full-time officials and lay

activists behind the campaign, and the monitoring and evaluation of the campaign. The case study thus provides us with some important insights into some of the problems and the effectiveness of such campaigns.

The case study draws on a variety of interviews and documentary sources. This included interviews with a national official responsible for the co-ordinating committee, Regional Organisers in three regions of the union, and local TGWU officials (the latter form part of our sample of local full-time officials, as referred to above). Documentary sources included recruitment leaflets, briefing packs and materials for full-time officials and lay activists, and internal TGWU reports and briefing documents. Finally, a systematic analysis of the union's journal was carried out, covering the whole period 1986-91. This provided reports on local campaigns, recognition bids and other news items related to the campaign and to recruitment and retention generally.

The Research Timetable

The research was conducted according to a broad timetable, as outlined in Table 2.3. Thus, whilst the interviews with the sample of local officials are in a sense the core of the research, these took place towards the latter part of the fieldwork phase. This was a deliberate part of the research design in that it was important to have a reasonably detailed knowledge of the various recruitment and retention initiatives prior to the local interviews, so that the latter could be focused mainly on issues of implementation,

monitoring and evaluation of the initiatives. Interviews were in some cases followed up on several occasions so as to gain some understanding of developments over time. This was particularly important in the case of the TGWU Link Up case study, where interviews spanned almost a four year period, with follow-up visits on up to three occasions.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we have set out our research aims and methodology, and provided the rationale for our choice of research methods.

TABLE 2.3: The Broad Phases of the Research

Research Phase	Duration
Literature survey – union growth, strategy and theory.	September 1986 to August 1987.
Systematic monitoring of media and union journals and other literature for union initiatives.	September 1986 ongoing.
Interviews with national- and regional-level union officials (GMB, TGWU, TUC)	Initial interviews September 1987 to March 1988, with follow-up interviews ongoing.
Collection and analysis of statistical material on union services, benefits and contributions.	Mainly 1988–1989.
Interviews with sample of local full-time officials.	Mainly June–August 1989-90 (with some follow-up interviews).

The methodological debates point to the usefulness of qualitative research in developing insights. However, we rejected the crude view that qualitative research can be used only for discovery, whilst qualitative research is useful solely for the testing of prior hypotheses. Our aim was to use both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain insights and to test and develop working hypotheses.

In selecting our interviews no attempt was made to choose a statistically representative sample. Our sampling was purposive rather than random, with the aim of providing analytical rather than statistical generations.

PART TWO

UNION STRATEGY IN CONTEXT

CHAPTER 3

UNION GROWTH,
THE BUSINESS CYCLE AND STRUCTURAL CHANGE

Introduction

What factors determine the level and density of union membership? Clearly, an answer to this question is necessary in order to put union strategies into their proper context and to enable us to assess their likely impact. The question can be approached in two ways. Firstly, we may try to explain the change in union membership and density over time, by applying econometric techniques to time-series data. Secondly, we may adopt a cross-section approach, attempting to account for the pattern of union membership across industries, establishments or individuals at a given point in time.

In this chapter, we review the major studies in each of these areas for the United Kingdom. We find that whilst much of the decline in membership and density during the 1980s was attributable to short-term economic or political factors, the unions faced a more gradual but longer-term challenge in the form of structural changes in the labour force. We discuss the implications of these findings for union growth in the future, and whether there appears to be an independent role for union strategies in influencing union growth.

We conclude that the models provide at best only a partial explanation of union growth and density, so that one cannot necessarily rule out a role for union strategy in influencing not only the incidence of growth (i.e. which particular union gets the members), but also the aggregate level of union growth.

Business-cycle (time-series) Models

Most of the early business-cycle models use time-series data to explain the annual proportionate rate of change in aggregate union membership. Following pioneering work in the USA (see for example, Ashenfelter and Pencavel, 1969), Bain and Elsheikh (1976) estimated such a model for the UK, using data for 1893-1970. A typical result is given in Table 3.1. Their findings support the view that union growth is positively related to the business cycle.

Their interpretation of these results is as follows. Price inflation is said to contribute to workers' propensity to unionise via a "threat" effect. As inflation threatens to undermine real pay, so workers are more likely to seek union membership to protect their living standards. Price inflation also encourages employers to feel less inhibited about conceding union recognition and pay increases. Bain and Elsheikh find, however, that the impact of price inflation on union growth moderates beyond a threshold inflation rate of around 4 per

cent per annum (reflected in the P.St term in the equation). Their argument here is that people tend to become "numbed" to the effects of accelerating inflation beyond a certain level; with an increase from 2 to 3 per cent having more of an impact than an increase from 19 to 20 per cent, for example.

TABLE 3.1: Bain & Elsheikh (1976: 106): A Typical Result for the UK, Using Data for 1893-1970.

$\Delta Tt =$ 6.0406 + 0.5831. ΔPt - 0.3861. $\Delta P.St$ + 0.4684. ΔWt - 0.3506. $Ut-1$ + 0.4028 . $Ut-2$ - 0.2029. $Dt-1$

(4.3187) (5.8599)　　　(2.6856)　　　(4.1814)　　　(1.3254)　　　(1.6119)　　　(5.4005)

R2adj = 0.7018　　D.W. = 1.6352

(Figures in parentheses are 't' values).

Where:	ΔTt	is the annual proportionate change in union membership.
	ΔPt	is the annual proportionate change in retail prices.
	$\Delta P.St$	is a variable which shifts the slope of the relationship between prices and union growth for higher values of P. S is a dummy variable which takes a value of 1 where $P \geq 4\%$, and 0 where $P < 4\%$.
	ΔWt	is the annual proportionate change in money wages.
	$Ut-1$, $Ut-2$	is the unemployment rate, lagged by one and two years respectively.
	$Dt-1$	is the level of union density, lagged by one year.

The positive impact of wage inflation on union growth is said to reflect a "credit" effect, as workers give unions the credit for winning increases in money wages, thus affecting their propensity to unionise.

The unemployment rate, lagged by one year, has a negative impact on the rate of union growth. This may reflect a dampening effect on the opportunity to unionise, as employers' bargaining power is enhanced in a slack labour

market. It may also reflect a tendency for unemployed workers to allow their union membership to lapse, the lag being understandable in this respect. The latter interpretation is supported by the finding that unemployment lagged by two years has the reverse sign when included in the same equation, suggesting that the rate of change of unemployment is important as a determinant of union growth.

The level of union density, lagged by one year, is included as an indicator of the "saturation effect" (expect a negative coefficient) and of an "enforcement effect" (expect a positive coefficient). The results show a negative coefficient, implying that the saturation effect dominates. Thus, it becomes increasingly difficult to recruit as the more readily unionised sectors and workers are organised first, and this outweighs the possibility that higher density, by increasing union bargaining power, may increase union growth by raising the benefits of joining.

Following Burkitt and Bowers (1978), Elsheikh and Bain (1979) successfully add the rate of change of real profits to the above list of explanatory variables, finding a positive effect on the rate of union growth, which they attribute to a general "business prosperity" influence. They find, however, that the rate of change of labour productivity, Burkitt and Bowers' other suggested addition to the model, is not significant.

Several other studies provide similar results for the UK, including Hines (1964), Burkitt and Bowers (1978), Pedersen (1978), Elsheikh and Bain (1979), Smith (1980), Booth (1983) and Sapsford (1986). In addition, Hines (1969) and Bain and Elsheikh (1982) have estimated such models at the industry level. The studies vary in their exact specification, and also in the dependent variable used. Most follow Bain and Elsheikh (1976) in using the proportionate rate of change in membership, although Booth, for example, uses density. (See below for a discussion of these differences.)

In a more recent study, Carruth and Disney (1988) provide an alternative specification of the business–cycle model for the period 1896–1984. Using the absolute annual change in the logarithm of membership as their dependent variable, they find that price inflation has a positive effect on union growth, but that wage inflation has a negative effect, in contrast to the findings of many earlier studies. When both the price and wage inflation variables were replaced by a real wage variable, the result was a significantly negative coefficient. This may perhaps be explained in terms of a lack of dissatisfaction during periods when real wage growth is favourable, thus undermining workers' propensity to seek union protection. Thus, even though Bain and Elsheikh prefer to include money rather than real wages in their original model, Bain and Price (1983: 16) note that slow and at times negative real wage growth may account for much of the rapid union growth

57

during the 1970s. Carruth and Disney's findings are consistent with the view that rising unemployment inhibits union growth, and that union density exerts a saturation effect on membership. They also find a positive relationship between employment and union growth.

The Carruth and Disney (1988) equation performs better than either the Bain and Elsheikh (1976) or the Booth (1983) models, particularly in terms of its ability to predict the downturn in membership after 1979. They attribute this partly to the superior specification of their model, and also to their use of an alternative definition of union density, which excludes unemployment from the potential union membership figure.

Table 3.2 presents a summary of the findings of this literature. This is intended to convey the spirit of the findings of the business-cycle research, rather than to provide the precise details of any particular specification. Clearly, there is strong support for a "business-cycle" explanation of short-term variations in the rate of union growth, with evidence of a net saturation effect of union density.

Within this literature, there has been some controversy over the contribution of political variables to union growth. In their original study, Bain and Elsheikh (1976) included several socio-political variables in their model, such

TABLE 3.2: What do the "Business-Cycle" Models of Union Growth
Tell Us? A Summary Statement

(Dependent variable is usually annual proportionate growth in membership).

Variable	Impact on Union Growth	Interpretation[1] of Effect
Rate of Change of:		
Prices	Positive	"Threat" effect
Money Wages } Real Wages }	Positive or Negative[2]	Positive "credit" or negative "dissatisfaction" effect
Real Profits	Positive Effect	Business Prosperity
Level of:		
Unemployment[3]	Negative	Lapsed membership and bargaining power effects
Union Density	Negative	"Saturation" effect outweighs the "enforcement" effect

Notes :

[1]   Based mainly on Bain and Elsheikh (1976) and Bain and Price (1983).

[2]   Much of the literature finds a positive effect for money wage growth. However, Carruth and Disney (1988) find a negative impact for money wage and real wage growth, and for certain industries Bain and Elsheikh (1982) also find a negative impact for real wage growth.

[3]   Changes in the level of unemployment also appear to influence union growth.

as the percentage of "labour supporters" in the House of Commons, dummy

variables for the war years (presumed to be more favourable to trade union

growth because of the climate of regulation and arbitration), and a measure of public attitudes to trade unions derived from the Gallup polls. In all cases, these variables gave unsatisfactory results (insignificant and/or unexpected signs). Whilst they admit that this does not necessarily imply that socio-economic variables are unimportant (there may be problems of multicollinearity, and the particular variables used may be poor proxies of underlying socio-economic conditions), nevertheless they conclude that it is not necessary to include socio-political variables in their model for the UK (1976: 86).

Interestingly, this was not so when the model was applied to the United States and Australia, where dummy variables were necessary to take account of the impact of government action on union growth. Bain and Elsheikh attribute this to the strongly "voluntarist" tradition in British industrial relations, whereby, it is claimed, union growth has been determined by economic factors rather than by the law and government action (1976: 86).

However, later studies have found that political variables are significant for the UK. Carruth and Disney (1988) find that the presence of a Conservative government tends to reduce union density (represented in their equations by a dummy variable), whilst Freeman and Pelletier (1990) suggest that changes in the framework of labour law appear to have had an impact on union

density in the UK. These later results may point to a growing government impact on the industrial relations climate in more recent years. In this respect it is perhaps significant that Bain and Elsheikh's original study contained no data for the period after 1970, and that in Bain's own later accounts of union growth, he places great emphasis on political developments in the 1970s and 1980s (Bain and Price, 1983: 18-22).

Criticisms of the Business-Cycle Models

The business-cycle models have been criticised on several grounds, and it has been claimed that they provide at best only a partial explanation of union growth and density. In this section, we briefly review these criticisms.

There has been some debate as to what is the appropriate dependent variable in such models. Bain and Elsheikh (1976) use the proportionate rate of change of membership as their dependent variable, on the grounds that this reduces the likelihood of statistical problems arising out of having a time trend in the variable. They further argue that a proportionate rate of change is intuitively more appealing than an absolute rate of change, although Booth (1983) argues that there is no theoretical reason for the dependent variable to be a rate of change.

Bain and Elsheikh (1976: 58-60) reject union density as their dependent variable for three reasons. Firstly, they claim that to use density would be to constrain the relationship between membership and potential membership to be strictly proportional. In fact, this is not necessarily so if potential membership also enters the equation as an independent variable (Booth, 1983: 388-9). Secondly, they argue that the measurement errors in the time series for potential membership, which has been pieced together from several different series, means that to use density as a variable runs a high risk of serious autocorrelation. Again, however, this argument may be questioned, since measurement errors are likely in all the variables used, so that this does not necessarily lead us to reject the use of density in particular (Booth, 1983: 389). Finally, they claim that to use density involves a risk of spurious correlation, since potential membership (the denominator of density) includes unemployment, which is itself included as an independent variable. However, Booth (1983: 389) finds that the correlation is low and that no serious problem arose from the use of density.

Thus, it is by no means clear that density is an inappropriate dependent variable, and Booth (1983: 380) argues that it is in fact preferable to membership, since it excludes the direct effect of the level of employment on the level of membership. What is clear from the above is that researchers have not yet reached agreement on what is an appropriate dependent

variable, and that many have not been convinced by Bain and Elsheikh's argument in favour of the annual proportionate of change of membership. Thus, Booth (1983) uses union density in a logistic transformation of the form ln[D/(1−D)] in order to restrict possible values to lie between zero and one. In contrast, Carruth and Disney (1988) use the absolute annual change in the logarithm of membership.

A second criticism of the business−cycle models is that there are severe theoretical shortcomings in much of the literature. Thus, Richardson (1977) criticises Bain and Elsheikh (1976) for what he sees as a lack of properly articulated theory, with an ad hoc approach to interpretation, and with no consistent model of union, worker or employer behaviour.

Such studies could, however, be seen within the framework of a demand and supply of union services model, with the estimating equations being interpreted as reduced forms (Bain and Elsheikh, 1976; Hirsch and Addison, 1986: 29−38). The independent variables would thus represent the various costs and benefits of unionisation from the point of view of the individual worker and of the union supplying the services. A complicating factor here, however, is that the variables may have some of their impact on membership because they influence the willingness of employers to resist unionisation, so that union growth is not determined by the behaviour of workers and unions

alone. Even those who accept that the variables in the model reflect the costs and benefits of unionisation make no attempt to estimate the structural demand and supply parameters, probably because many such variables are ambiguous proxies for both demand and supply-side factors (Hirsch and Addison, 1986: 35).

A third area of criticism concerns the stability of the results. Whilst Bain and Elsheikh (1976) rejected structural shifts in their model, subsequent work has cast some doubt on the long-term structural stability of the models (see, in particular, Pedersen, 1978 for the UK and Moore and Pearce, 1976; Sheflin, Troy and Koeller, 1981 and Fiorito, 1982, for the USA). However, Carruth and Disney (1988: 9) find that the only year for which a Chow test is failed by their model is 1920, hardly surprising given the special circumstances surrounding an immediate post-war boom, whilst Pedersen's (1978) test of the Bain-Elsheikh model identifies shifts around 1922 and 1945, again suggesting structural breaks during periods of marked change. Thus, whilst such findings suggest that the models provide an incomplete explanation of union growth patterns over the long term, they are quite consistent with the view that short-run fluctuations in union growth are largely determined by cyclical factors, as captured in the models.

A final area of criticism is that the business-cycle models explain only short-term fluctuations in union growth, and that those variables which have only a longer-term influence on membership trends are not explicitly included in such models (Richardson, 1977; Booth, 1983). Thus, whilst Disney (1990: 170) shows that the sharp decline in union density during the 1980s was attributable largely to short-term business cycle factors, and that changes in the composition of employment seem not to have had a major effect on union density in this particular period, he admits that such structural change may be important in the longer term. Indeed, in an earlier paper, he calls for more work to be done on the effects of "underlying secular variables" (Carruth and Disney, 1988: 15), a view endorsed by Booth (1983: 386).

Such secular variables may include the policies of government and employers as well as changes in the industrial and occupational structure. Thus, the growth of unions has been said to be associated with employer recognition and the development of collective bargaining (Bain, 1970; Clegg, 1976; Gallie, 1989), whilst these have in turn been promoted with more or less enthusiasm by governments for much of the present century, at least until 1979. The development of employers' associations and national level bargaining have also been seen as important contributors to union recognition and growth over the longer term. Conversely, the move away

from multi-employer bargaining by the 1980s may facilitate a trend towards non-union companies (Beaumont, 1987a).

Also, Neumann and Rissman (1984) find evidence of a "substitution effect" in the USA, whereby the development of state welfare provision and the protection of employees through the courts contributes towards declining union density, as the benefits of union membership are thus undermined.

All this suggests that, as yet, the time-series models give only a partial answer to the question "what determines the level and density of trade union membership?" In particular, they do not reveal the effect of longer-term structural change. In this respect, cross-section studies of the determinants of union density and membership provide us with some useful insights. It is to these that we now turn.

Cross-Section Models

Table 3.3 shows how union density differed between the sexes, between manual and non-manual workers, part-time and full-time workers, the employed and self-employed, and by industry and size of workplace. In addition the same Labour Force Survey evidence tells us that union density was higher amongst older workers and those with longer job tenure, and that it varied between ethnic groups, and by occupation.

TABLE 3.3: Union Density in Great Britain, Spring 1989

	% Union Membership
Males	44
Females	33
Non-Manual	35
Manual	43
Manufacturing (2-4)	41
Non-Manufacturing (0,1,5-9)	37
Full-time[1]	43
Part-time	22
Size of Workplace: Under 6 employees	11
6-24 employees	23
25 or more employees	48
All employees	39
Self-employed	9
All in employment[2]	34

Source: 1989 LFS, Stevens and Wareing (1990).

Notes:

[1]   Definition of full-time and part-time based on respondent's own assessment.

[2]   Includes those on government employment and training schemes and those who did not report their employment status.

However, this simply gives us a descriptive picture of the incidence of membership amongst the various groups. In order to say something about

the independent effects of the various factors on union membership, it is necessary to utilise regression analysis.

Several studies have attempted to explain the cross-section pattern of trade union density or membership in this way, using data at the industry (Bain and Elsheikh, 1979), establishment (Elsheikh and Bain, 1980) or individual (Bain and Elias, 1985; Booth, 1986) level. The dependent variable in such studies is either union density, where industry or establishment data are used, or individual union membership status, where individual-level data is used. Independent variables in these studies include characteristics of the establishment, enterprise, industry, region and individual, as appropriate. Table 3.4 presents a brief summary of the major findings of these studies.

The studies suggest that the likelihood of union membership, and hence higher union density, is positively associated with the following industry or establishment characteristics:

1. Larger establishments. The more impersonal and bureaucratic nature of larger establishments is said to lead to a greater propensity for workers to seek collective representation, as the sense of alienation may be greater under such conditions. Employers may also recognise a need to deal with workers collectively under such circumstances,

TABLE 3.4: Principal Findings of Cross-Section Studies of Unionisation in the United Kingdom

Study	Bain & Elsheikh (1979)	Elsheikh & Bain (1980)	Bain & Elias (1985)	Booth (1986)
Dependent Variable	Union density by industry: 1951, 1961, 1971, pooled	Union density by establishment	Union membership by individuals	Union membership by individuals
Data Source	Official sources and trade unions	1977–8 survey of manufacturing plants	National Training Survey, 1975–6	National Training Survey, 1975–6
Size of Establishment	+	+ but at a decreasing rate	+ but at a decreasing rate	+
Labour as a % of Total Costs	+	+	+	
Relative Wages	+ 1961 and 1971 only		+ then − at higher levels	+ then − for males, moderates for females
Unemployment in Industry	− 1971 only	−		Not significant
Market Concentration	Not significant	Not significant	+	
Union Recognition		+		
Region	Not significant	+ North and Wales	+ North and Wales	− South and East
Labour Turnover	Not significant	Not significant		
Sex (Female)	Not significant	− blue collar only	−	
Part-time	Not significant	− white collar only	− females only	− females (males not tested)
Occupational Mix: Skill Managers/Prof White Collar	Not significant − not 1961 Not significant	Not significant −	 −	 − − females
Age	+			+ females
Work Experience			+ but at a decreasing rate, not female white collar	+ but at a decreasing rate, males only
Self Employment			− not female	
Level of Education			− except teaching qualifications	+ full-time females

Notes:

+ & − indicate a significant positive or negative relationship respectively between the variable and union membership/density.

A blank cell indicates that the variable was not included in that particular study.

given the practical difficulties in communicating with and managing a larger workforce. Finally, unions find larger establishments easier and more economical to organise and service, given the scope for economies of scale and the spreading of overhead costs.

2. A higher ratio of labour to total costs. Such labour-intensive industries are more likely to be highly competitive (due to lower capital requirements), so that employers may have more readily conceded industry-wide union recognition and collective bargaining. This takes labour costs out of competition, eliminates "sweating", and stabilises the industry. Employers' associations may have played a key role in this.

3. Higher relative wages. This may reflect a greater "credit effect" in high wage cases. Booth (1986: 44) notes that collectively-negotiated wage increases would not be expected to produce an individual incentive to unionise, if such gains are public goods and individuals decide to free-ride. She therefore suggests that the observed positive relationship between earnings and unionisation implies that free-rider behaviour is not the norm, and that the propensity of individuals to join the union is positively related to the size of the perceived wage impact of the union. However, Bain and Elsheikh recognise that the

causation may run in the reverse direction, with higher union density leading to higher relative wages, although they decline to construct the multiple-equation model that this would imply (1979: 139). In those studies using individual-level data, the relationship tends to become negative beyond a certain level, perhaps reflecting the greater individualism of the very highly-paid.

4. Lower unemployment in the industry. This may be explained in terms of the balance of power in the labour market concerned, with employers more likely to resist unionisation and employees less likely to push for it where their industry faces higher unemployment.

5. Greater market concentration. This has a significant (positive) impact on union membership in only one of the studies (in the other two in which it was included there is the possibility that multicollinearity prevented a significant finding). This relationship may reflect a greater willingness to concede union recognition by employers in less competitive markets.

6. Union recognition. This relationship is hardly surprising, and has often been remarked upon in the literature on union growth and recruitment (e.g. Bain, 1970). In the Elsheikh and Bain (1980) study, the apparent

positive effect on density of CBI affiliation and the negative effect of being an independent establishment disappear once the union recognition variable is included.

Region has an independent effect, with the North of Britain and Wales being more favourable to unionisation, and the South and South East being less favourable. The fact that this relationship persists even when differences due to other factors are accounted for suggests that social and community influences may have an influence. These may have an impact at the level of the individual or the employer (i.e. it may influence the decision on recognition).

Booth (1986) also includes industry dummies, and finds, not surprisingly, that individuals are more likely to be union members if they work in the nationalised industries and the public sector generally.

The level of labour turnover perhaps surprisingly, is found to have no significant effect on union density in the two studies in which it is included.

So far as the characteristics of the individual are concerned, the following are more likely to be union members: males, blue-collar and non-managerial workers. Part-time status reduced the chances of being a union member in

the case of females and white-collar workers. The lack of a similar finding for male manual workers may simply reflect the small numbers of such people in the samples analysed. Age and experience tend to have a positive effect on unionisation, although the effect of the latter tends to moderate at higher experience levels. Self employment seems to have a negative effect on union membership for males. As we have already noted, higher relative earnings tend to be consistent with unionisation up to a threshold level, beyond which the relationship becomes negative.

The findings that both females and part-time workers are less likely to unionise, even when other factors have been accounted for, may be explained in at least two ways. Firstly, lower union membership may reflect a lower degree of attachment to the workforce on their part, which undermines the individual incentive to join a union. Secondly, it may be a reflection of trade union recruitment priorities and the image of unions as essentially "male" institutions. Clearly, these explanations are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and indeed unions may be able to influence the willingness of women and part-time workers to join by adapting their approach to such groups.

Similar arguments may apply to the finding that union membership correlates with age and experience. Whilst there may be an exposure effect here, with

young people simply having had fewer opportunities of joining a union, the arguments on job attachment and union policies and image may apply, so that again there may be scope for unions to increase membership amongst younger people by adapting their policies.

The finding that white-collar workers are less prone to join unions than are blue-collar workers may reflect different perceptions of status; differences in employer policies towards union recognition, and the fact that even in large establishments, white-collar workers are often found in relatively small numbers.

The impact of education on union status is uncertain. Bain and Elias (1985) find a negative relationship between the level of education and the likelihood of union membership, whilst Booth (1986) finds no relationship for men and part-time women, and a positive relationship for full-time women. Hundley (1988), using American data, suggests that unionisation is less likely in jobs requiring higher levels of education, but that within a given job category higher levels of education are consistent with a greater likelihood of union membership. This result is intuitively plausible, and accounts for the mixed findings on the relationship between union membership and education in UK and US studies.

Several individual characteristics were found to have no significant impact on unionisation, according to the studies reviewed here. These include: race, marital status, number of dependent children, supervisory responsibility, amount of work-related training undergone, and number of discrete periods of employment. It seems that characteristics of the industry and of the job tend to be more significant determinants of the likelihood of union membership than are such individual characteristics, a finding highlighted by Booth (1986). This suggests that union membership tends to "go with the job", rather than being primarily a function of the individual's own characteristics (Payne, 1989; Deery and De Cieri, 1991).

In general, the above cross-section studies give plausible results, which are broadly consistent with similar work carried out in the USA. As with the time-series studies, they may be criticised for their ad hoc approach and lack of rigorous theoretical justification. Again, however, the findings may be interpreted as reflecting the various costs and benefits of union membership.

Trends and Prospects: What do the Models Tell Us?

The above studies obviously tell us something about the factors influencing the cyclical fluctuations of union growth (the business-cycle variables), and about the distribution of union membership and sectoral disparities in density (the cross-section studies). In addition, we may also infer something about

75

the likely long-run trends in union growth and density by applying the cross-section results to projected changes in occupational, industrial, and demographic structures.

Writing in the early 1980s, Price and Bain (1983) attempted such an analysis for the UK. They argue that much of the union growth in the 1970s took place in the existing union strongholds (public services and manufacturing), but that by 1979 there was only limited scope for further growth in these areas, because of a saturation effect. In contrast, the 1970s had witnessed only modest gains in private sector services, partly because existing membership levels were too low to secure recognition from employers. This leads them to talk of a "duality in the pattern of unionisation" (1983: 61). Unfortunately for the unions, expected changes in the structure of employment were not favourable. Public sector employment levels were expected to stagnate, whilst manufacturing employment would continue to decline, and private sector service employment would be the growth area. Thus, even if unions could recruit sufficient members to maintain density in each sector, overall union density was still likely to fall.

However, Price and Bain admitted that union density levels were not likely to remain unchanged within each sub-group, so that the decline was expected to be more severe than would be implied by a pure compositional effect.

They expected that union membership growth would be adversely affected during the 1980s, and perhaps beyond, by lower inflation, a re-widening of pay differentials (including that between manual and non-manual workers), higher and at times increasing unemployment, the changed political and legal environment, and a possible tendency for employers to resist unionisation more determinedly. Thus, union decline would be the result of a combination of both long-term trends and more short-term business cycle factors.

Price and Bain did not, however, envisage as steep a decline in union membership as occurred in the 1920s and 1930s (UK union membership fell from 8,348 thousand in 1920 to a low of 4,392 thousand in 1933). Rather, writing in 1983, they expected union density to continue to fall until 1984 or 1985 and then, assuming that unemployment ceased to increase and inflation did not take off again, to fluctuate around a gently declining trend, similar to that of 1949-68 (Price and Bain, 1983: 63).

To what extent were the predictions of Price and Bain borne out? Table 3.5 presents data on the growth of union membership and employment for the UK. The severity of the recession, and its impact on union membership after 1979 is clear from these figures. After 1983, employment was increasing again, but this did not feed through into an increase in union membership, although the rate of decline did slow in the mid-1980s.

TABLE 3.5: Growth of Union Membership and Employment in the UK, 1979-89

Year	% Change Since Previous Year	
	Union Membership	Employment
1979	+1.3	+1.65
1980	-2.6	-0.78
1981	-6.5	-5.01
1982	-4.2	-2.22
1983	-3.1	-1.62
1984	-2.2	+0.82
1985	-1.6	+0.86
1986	-2.6	-0.16
1987	-0.6	+0.91
1988	-0.9	+2.90
1989	-2.1	+2.33

Source: Employment Gazette, Historical Supplement No 2, November 1989, and various issues. Employment figures refer to employees in employment.

There has been a debate on the extent to which the decline in membership and density in the 1980s can be explained by the various models. It appears that much of the decline in collective bargaining coverage in the private sector between 1980 and 1984 may be attributed to a higher level of plant closures and job shedding amongst larger (unionised) establishments (Beaumont and Harris, 1991). However, Freeman and Pelletier (1990) show that structural shifts away from manufacturing industry, male, blue-collar and full-time employment account for rather less than 3.1 of the 8.6 percentage point fall in union density during 1980-86. Furthermore, they note that most

business-cycle models overpredict union density for the 1980s, so that there appears to be "something more" to the union decline of the 1980s, which is omitted from both the workforce-composition and the business-cycle explanations. Their econometric analysis incorporates an index of the extent to which labour law is hostile to trade unions, and leads them to conclude that:

> "...the vast bulk of the observed 1980's decline in union density in the UK is due to the changed legal environment for industrial relations."
>
> (Freeman and Pelletier, 1990: 156).

Disney (1990), whilst agreeing that shifts in the composition of the workforce explain only a small part of union decline in the 1980s, questions Freeman and Pelletier's conclusion on the importance of legislation. He argues that the business-cycle (or "macroeconomic") model of Carruth and Disney (1988) is able to predict the decline in density during the 1980s very successfully, with economic factors, particularly real wage growth, explaining the greater part of the decline. Furthermore, he claims that the labour law index used in Freeman and Pelletier's analysis is likely to be severely correlated with macroeconomic variables, and that hostile legal changes may follow on from, rather than be a cause of, union weakness.

The Carruth-Disney model finds only a limited impact of unemployment on union membership, with real wage growth and inflation being more important. Thus, the fall in unemployment after 1986 would not necessarily be expected to halt the decline in union membership so long as real wage growth continued and inflation remained relatively low, whilst the continued presence of a Conservative government would also inhibit union growth (Disney, 1990: 169).

Thus, whilst there is some disagreement on the relative impact of economic factors and changes in the legal framework, the conclusions of most analysts are consistent with an explanation of union growth which differentiates between short-term factors (whether economic or political) and more long-term structural factors. The former explain much of the union growth of the 1970s and the sharp decline of the 1980s, with the latter contributing towards a more moderate gradual decline in density, and perhaps in membership, as the labour force shifts towards less heavily-unionised sectors over the longer term.

The above analysis is, on the face of it, far from optimistic about the prospects for union growth. However, several commentators have warned against taking an overly-pessimistic view. Thus, Kelly (1988) challenges the notion that unions are locked into a process of secular decline:

"Those who believe in a crisis of the labour movement have made a series of analytical errors. They have mistaken short-term cyclical trends, such as the decline in union membership, strike frequency and bargaining power, for long-term, secular tends. All previous evidence suggests that these three indicators will rise again as the economy moves out of recession, and those who think otherwise have provided no convincing grounds for their beliefs".

(1988: 289)

Nevertheless, as we have shown, whilst cyclical factors were important, the unions would not be able to rely simply on an upturn in the economic cycle to maintain and improve their membership densities. From the above, it is evident that whilst most of the sharp union decline of the 1980s may be explained by the business cycle and by the presence of a hostile government, adverse structural shifts are likely to be important in the long term. Thus, a key factor in determining the fate of trade unions is the extent to which they are able to move into the hitherto largely unorganised sectors. Whilst the unions were likely to remain strong in their core areas, mainly the public sector and manufacturing industry, structural change would continue to bring relative, if not absolute, decline in employment in these areas. Add to this the relative shift away from male, blue-collar, full-time, permanent employment, and it becomes clear that unions needed to appeal to new groups if they were to avoid being marginalised in the longer term. The main aim of this thesis is to discuss the attempts by unions to develop new

strategies aimed at improving recruitment and retention in both new and existing areas.

Implications for Strategy: Can the Unions Influence Their Own Fate?

Having suggested that unions need to develop new strategies, the obvious question is: can such strategies have a significant impact on union growth and density, independent of forces external to the unions?

Undy et al (1981: 349) argue that trade union leaders may act as "change agents"; playing a key role in guiding the development and future direction of their organisations, and that the strategies of trade unions and their leaders are critical factors in determining union growth.

In contrast, the econometric work examined earlier suggests a deterministic approach to union growth, with economic and structural factors dominating the analysis. Such factors as union leadership and strategy may affect the relative growth of individual unions, but they are not seen as significant determinants of aggregate union growth. As Bain argues in his study of white–collar unions:

> "...the most balanced conclusion would seem to be that unions are not much more than catalysts in the recruitment process. Before a group of workers can be successfully organised, there must be some irritating condition resulting in a widespread

feeling of dissatisfaction. Unions cannot create this condition. They can only discover where it exists, emphasise it, and try to convince the workers that it can be removed by unionization. Union recruitment by its very nature is largely a passive process".

(1970: 99)

According to this view, trade unions simply exploit the propensities of workers to join, and of employers to concede recognition. Which particular union gets the members may well reflect union leaders and strategies, but if the underlying economic, political, and structural factors are unfavourable, then the opportunities will not be available. Thus, leadership "is very much a secondary and derivative determinant of aggregate union growth" (Bain and Elsheikh, 1976; 23, quoted in Bain and Price, 1983: 31).

Beaumont (1987b) attempts to shed some light on the Bain/Undy debate. He finds that the TGWU, by far the heaviest user of the ACAS provisions for union recognition claims in Scotland during 1976-85, did not enjoy a significantly higher success rate in such claims than did unions generally. He claims that this suggests that a high level of organising activity by a particular union is not sufficient in itself to guarantee a high level of organising success. However, this conclusion seems to us to be overstating the significance of the results. The acid test of organising success is surely the number of members gained, or perhaps the number of recognition agreements signed,

rather than the success rate. Indeed, a union pursuing an aggressive organising strategy might be expected to have a lower than average success rate in its recognition bids, since it might make bids which other unions would dismiss as having no chance of success.

According to Undy et al (1981) the critical test of the importance of strategy is whether particular unions grew at the expense of other unions, or whether their growth reduced "continuing non-unionism". They claim that their case studies show evidence of the latter, with union policy playing an important role. For example, they cite the cases of NALGO and the POEU gaining members as a result of adopting policies of pressing for closed shop agreements. They also cite several cases of recruitment following industrial action.

However, just because unions gained members at the expense of continuing non-unionism does not necessarily imply that union leaders and their strategies have an independent influence on aggregate union growth. Would such strategies have been successful if the economic and political circumstances had been different? As Undy et al themselves note earlier in their book (1981: 25), trade unions are constrained by the "logic of their situation", in the sense that the economic, social, political and industrial contexts shape what is feasible.

84

Nevertheless, the outright rejection of any role for union leaders and strategy in determining aggregate union growth seems on the face of it to be unjustified. Much of the time-series work of Bain and others focuses on cyclical variations in union growth, and would claim to account for around 70 per cent of such variation. The cross-section work, which Bain and Price use as the basis for their discussion of the structural trends in union growth, explains anything from 15 to 70 per cent of the cross-section variation in union density, depending upon the unit of analysis. Furthermore, as Richardson (1977) points out, the union growth literature lacks a coherent theoretical analysis of why workers actually join unions. All this leaves room for factors not specified in the models to exert considerable influence on aggregate union growth. The question to be considered in this thesis is to what extent union strategy is one such factor.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it appears that whilst business-cycle and political factors accounted for most of the sharp growth of the 1970s and the decline of the 1980s, the key question in the long term was whether or not the unions could cope with structural change, by appealing to new groups and expanding into new sectors. The econometric studies leave at least some scope for factors not specified in the models to exert an influence on union membership and

density, so that a wholly deterministic view of future membership trends appears to be unjustified.

There is some evidence of a latent demand for union representation amongst the hitherto unorganised groups. Thus, in 1990, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (NACAB, 1990) pointed to a marked increase in the number of employment-related enquiries being brought to Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABx) (see Table 3.6). Their report claimed that a high proportion of such enquiries came from part-time women working in the private-services sector, the majority working in small establishments without trade union or staff association representation. Most enquiries involved poor pay or conditions, changes in conditions, or actual or threatened dismissal. The complainants typically lacked a written contract or statement of their terms of employment.

TABLE 3.6: Employment-related Enquiries to Citizen's Advice Bureaux

Year	Number of Enquiries (000's)	% of Total CABx Enquiries
1987/88	642	8.0
1988/89	673	9.6
1989/90	709	10.2

Source: NACAB (1990).

Certainly there were factors limiting the ability of unions to convert this latent need for representation into efffective union organisation, including the possible hostility of employers, the example and policies of government, and the behaviour and attitudes of the workers themselves. However, as Bain, often seen as the arch–determinist, puts it:

> "... given the way that unionism started among the skilled and spread to groups of workers which were initially thought to be unorganisable – the semi–skilled and unskilled, public employees, white–collar employees, and women – it is as reasonable to predict, on the basis of past performance, that the basic parameters of the unionisation equation will shift in the future in such a way as to enable unionism to expand as to contract".

(Bain, 1986: 158)

It is here that union strategy can have its greatest impact, in shifting the "parameters of the unionisation equation"; by developing new approaches to deal with the challenges. In the following chapters, we seek to determine the extent to which unions were able to do this in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

CHAPTER 4

TRADE UNION OBJECTIVES, STRATEGY AND BEHAVIOUR

Introduction

In this chapter, we develop some of the themes in the literature on union objectives to provide an explanation for union behaviour in the 1980s and 1990s. We adopt a satisficing or behavioural model of the union, whereby an external stimulus, such as adverse economic circumstances leading to falling membership, stimulates a search for viable responses. This is used to explain the apparent shift from a predominantly reactive approach to recruitment in the 1970s to a more proactive and innovative approach by the late 1980s, as union leaderships attempted to counter declining membership in order to preserve their organisations. We emphasise the notion that union leaders may pursue "organisational" goals, which may differ from those of the rank and file membership. We conclude the chapter with a discussion of the strategic choices open to union leaders in this period.

The Economics of Union Objectives

A logical starting point in any discussion of trade union behaviour is to consider the nature and origins of trade union objectives. The long–standing Ross–Dunlop debate focuses on whether union bargaining goals reflect maximising behaviour on the part of the leadership (Dunlop, 1944; Cartter,

1959) or, alternatively, emerge out of a political process within the union (Ross, 1948).

Work in the former tradition sees the union as the sum of its members, in that there is no discussion of leadership or "organisational" goals. Thus, Oswald rather naively states:

> "Assume that the union cares mainly about its members' real wages and the level of employment in its industry."
>
> (1985: 162)

But why should we, and what is meant by "the union"? If such an approach is to avoid reification then, as Faith and Reid (1983) note, we must assume that the union is the perfect agent of its principals, the members. This draws our attention to a key distinction between the Ross and Dunlop traditions. Ross does not assume perfect agency, but allows the union to develop organisational goals, as well as recognising that the membership themselves may be far from homogeneous in their preferences. Crouch emphasises that:

> "Organisations, whether of workers or of anybody else, are not the simple embodiment of their members' wishes; they are social institutions in their own right, and develop their own pattern of power, goal-seeking and conflict."
>
> (1982: 161)

We develop this notion below in our discussion of union strategies.

A less well-developed literature has looked at union objectives and behaviour in terms of the internal allocation of resources; for example, between the organising of new members and the servicing of existing ones. Berkowitz (1953-54) saw the union not as a monopoly seller of labour to employers, but as a seller of services to members . Thus, the union was seen as more than the sum of its members. It was analogous to a "business enterprise", selling its services and running its affairs according to an "economic calculus".

Block (1980), developed this approach a stage further, analysing the allocation of union resources between organising and servicing activity. He argued that as the union's density in its primary jurisdiction increases, so members and leaders tend to increasingly favour expenditure on servicing existing members in preference to organising new ones. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, organising expenditures yield a benefit to existing members in terms of increased bargaining power, but once a degree of security is achieved in the union's primary job territories, the marginal benefits from additional organising begin to decline. Secondly, once union density reaches a high level in a particular job territory, a saturation effect sets in and organising expenditures begin to reap diminishing returns in terms of members recruited.

Block finds some empirical evidence in support of his hypothesis on the decline of union organising activity in the USA, and concludes that US unions are in a "contradiction of success and democracy" (1980: 112), as success

in the primary jurisdictions satisfies the membership and leaders, but then precludes aggressive organising in other areas. Others, however, have questioned the extent to which this accounts for the decline in union density in the USA in recent years (Freeman, 1988; Voos, 1983; 1984).

A Behavioural Model

Whilst the work of Berkowitz and Block looks at a different aspect of union behaviour to that examined in the bargaining objectives literature, nevertheless it shares with the Dunlop tradition the view that unions behave as maximisers of some kind of an objective function.

We have already noted that Ross (1948) questioned this in respect of bargaining objectives. When we are looking at other aspects of union behaviour, the maximising approach is even less appropriate. Thus, Voos (1983) finds that US unions tend not to expand organising expenditures to the level where the marginal benefits equal the marginal costs of such activity, so that maximisation of net benefits does not occur. There are some problems with the way in which Voos estimates costs and benefits of organising, which she herself is aware of, but she concludes with the suggestion that perhaps:

> "unions are complex institutions with political as well as economic dimensions. If so, unions will not expand organising programs unless internal political pressure builds for such an expansion or unless union officers are convinced that such an expansion would be desirable."

(1983; 591)

91

We suggest that it is more appropriate to see unions as satisficers, rather than maximisers; as adapting to environmental stimuli, on a problem-solving basis rather than pursuing an optimum set of objectives and use of resources. Cyert and March's (1963) "behavioural theory of the firm" provides a useful model.

According to this view, the "organisational goals" pursued by union leaders are the outcome of the internal politics and decision-making processes of the organisation. There can be no single maximand appropriate to all circumstances, and strategies adopted by leaders will vary across unions and, possibly, over time. Union leaders preside over Ross-style organisations, with the imperfect resolution of conflicting interests, and with bounded rationality. They only search for new solutions in response to specific stimuli; a dissatisfaction due to environmental or organisational change. Search will then involve a limited range of alternatives. It will proceed on a sequential basis, examining the more familiar solutions first, and once a solution which satisfies current organisational goals is found the search will end. Organisational goals are themselves formed on the basis of past performance levels, and may be amended in the light of experience, for example when they prove to be unattainable under current circumstances.

Whilst this assigns a key role to environmental stimuli in the development of union behaviour, we must guard against cruder notions of environmental determinism. Miles and Snow (1978) have shown how managerial ideology

92

may influence strategic decision-making in business firms, so that different firms would not necessarily react in the same way to a given stimulus. Similarly, trade union strategy may be influenced by the ideologies of leaders, activists and members.

Organisational Goals

An important aspect of this behavioural view of unions is that there may be differences between the goals of rank and file members and union leaders. Unions are initially established to serve the direct goals of their members (terms and conditions of employment, job security, etc). Once established, however, organisational survival becomes a goal in itself, particularly for the leadership and full-time officials of the union, whose career prospects are related to organisational success. Furthermore, some individuals may also have ideological or political goals.

Kelly and Heery (1989) find evidence to suggest that the goals of union leaders and rank and file members are significantly different. The former, at least in the 1980s, emphasise the need to recruit new members, whilst lay committees tend to emphasise job protection and pay rises.

Hyman (1971) refers to the process of "goal displacement", whereby "worker-orientated provisions", such as terms and conditions of employment, may at times be sacrificed in favour of "union-orientated provisions", such as the winning of bargaining rights, recruitment facilities, and closed shop

93

agreements. Whilst it is possible that in many circumstances the latter can be seen as means to achieve the former, Hyman argues that on occasions there is likely to be genuine conflict between the two, such as where unions concede no-strike clauses in return for recognition, thus according to Hyman, possibly compromising workers' ability to protect their own interests in return for bargaining rights (1971: 197).

Note that we do not reify the union. Along with Ross (1948) and Cyert and March (1963) we note that it is individuals, and not organisations, that have goals. Nevertheless, we see "organisational" goals as emerging from an ongoing bargaining process within the union. The leadership, with their particular personal interest in organisational viability, survival and prestige and often with a personal ideological commitment to the broader goals of the labour movement, are party to this bargaining process, and may be expected to give some priority to such union-orientated provisions. Our view thus differs from some of the work in the Dunlopian tradition, which assumes that members' preferences are perfectly reflected in the union's behavour, a variant of what Cyert and March (1963) term the "entrepreneurial solution" to organisational goal-formation.

Developments in Union Behaviour

We may use the above notions of union decision making to try to account for developments in union behaviour during the 1980s and 1990s.

When membership is increasing, as in the 1970s, the union-orientated goals are not generally under threat. In most unions, rank and file initiatives have been central to such growth when the environment is favourable to unionisation, with shop stewards and other lay activists playing a key role, and the full-time union official only becoming involved once a recognition agreement is to be signed (Boraston et al, 1975). The "passive" nature of union recruitment activity during the late 1960s is illustrated by Bain's comments on the recruitment tactics of white-collar unions, most of which experienced fairly rapid growth during this period:

> "Whatever the nature of union recruitment strategies, they have generally not been pursued with much tactical aggressiveness. The recruitment process tends to be more passive than active in the sense that potential members generally have to contact a union before there is much attempt to recruit them. The comment of one AScW official is typical: 'Generally we wait for people to approach us before we try to recruit them. You might say that organisation occurs by accident.'"

> (Bain 1970: 92)

However, when membership declines sharply, as in the 1980s, and the environment is more harsh, the situation is very different, and union leaders may feel compelled to take action to deal with the consequences of declining membership. Two questions then arise. Firstly, what are the likely consequences of membership decline, and secondly, how might unions respond to this?

One possible consequence is that falling membership may threaten the financial security of the organisation, thus challenging the union-orientated goals which are so dear to the leadership. In the 1980s, as in earlier periods, unions in Britain were highly vulnerable to declining membership, given that the greater part of their income came from members (Willman and Morris, 1988a; Latta, 1972). As a union official put it to us:

> "At the end of the day, membership means security of job [for full-time officials], and membership also means security of the type of structure we have as an organisation. If our numbers start to dwindle, then our structure starts to crumble."
>
> (TGWU Regional Secretary)

Moreover, trade unions are not business enterprises, and concern at declining membership may go beyond its immediate effect on the unions' finances. Falling membership may reduce the unions' bargaining power, especially if it involves a reduction in union density in particular establishments or job territories. The growth of a significant non-union sector would be a worrying development for trade unionists, since it could undercut them on terms and conditions and make it more difficult to secure improvements through collective bargaining. Thus, union density appears to influence the size of the union-non-union wage differential (Beenstock and Whitbread, 1988). Furthermore, a decline in aggregate union density may marginalise the union movement as a social and political force, undermining any claim to speak for the workforce as a whole. In sum, declining membership may ultimately

weaken the unions and undermine their ability to secure gains for their members.

Faced with these challenges, the leadership searches for a way to halt the decline, or at least to come to terms with it. This would explain why, during the 1960s, a period of gently declining membership, there were debates on the future role of unions, with union leaders such as George Woodcock calling for a reassessment of union activities (see Flanders, 1970: 38). It explains the relative absence of such concerns during the growth years of the 1970s, and their re-emergence in the 1980s.

Such action could take several forms. Firstly, the union may react to declining membership income by attempting to cut costs. There was clear evidence of this on the part of several unions during the 1980s. ASTMS were one of the first to introduce a cost-cutting programme as membership declined (Taylor 1983), whilst the AEU's restructuring proposals involved cutting sixty full-time officials' jobs and reducing staff numbers by a third, freezing salaries, merging branches, selling off property, and reducing the size of union committees. Other unions taking similar action in response to falling membership included the Civil Service Union, the National Union of Journalists, the National Union of Mineworkers, the National Union of Seamen, the National Union of Teachers, the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades, and the TUC itself. However, whilst there may be some scope for the elimination of waste and for increased efficiency in the union's operations, and whilst cost cutting may be

necessary to deliver the union from an immediate financial crisis, such a strategy risks undermining the effectiveness of the organisation, and ultimately perhaps contributing to further decline. Thus, we suggest that cost cutting alone will not generally be a sufficient response.

A second possibility is to increase membership contributions. Willman and Morris (1988a) show that, apart from some initial problems around 1980, and some particular problems associated with large scale industrial action, and particularily severe membership losses, in general unions avoided severe financial difficulties in the mid-1980s by increasing per capita contribution income sufficiently to compensate for declining membership. This seemed to be attributable to increased efficiency in the collection of contributions due from members, along with intermittent increases in contribution rates.

However, unlike Willman and Morris (1988b), we doubt whether unions could rely on increased contributions to cope with a sustained long-term decline in membership. At some stage higher contributions may provoke internal protest and could even deter workers from joining (see chapter 7). Furthermore, whilst higher contributions may temporarily offset any financial consequences of falling membership, they do not deal with the consequences for bargaining power and influence.

Thus, we suggest that many unions were likely to adopt strategies designed to halt or reverse the decline in membership. There are two options here.

Firstly, individual unions may attempt to increase membership through mergers with other unions. There is clear evidence of an increase in merger activity in this period, with declining membership as a key factor expaining this trend (Labour Research Department, 1990b). Union mergers have been the subject of a growing amount of research in recent years (Aston, 1987; Buchanan, 1974, 1981a, 1981b; Morris, 1986; Waddington, 1987, 1988a). Given the volume of this research, in this thesis we choose to focus on the other and perhaps less-researched option: that unions may react to declining membership through internal growth strategies.

Recruitment campaigns may appear to be a less cost-effective means of achieving membership growth than mergers, since the latter usually involve acquiring an already organised membership, complete with recognition agreements (Aston, 1987). However, where membership has been declining fairly steadily and in aggregate terms, we suggest that unions are likely to launch initiatives aimed at achieving internal growth for at least two reasons.

Firstly, to the extent that union leaders are concerned with the influence of the union movement as a whole, they may wish to confront the problem of declining aggregate membership. Mergers have no direct influence on this, whilst internal growth strategies may be aimed at extending the frontiers of the union movement as a whole. Secondly, where the decline in the union's membership has been particularly severe or sustained, the leadership may opt for as wide a range of responses as possible, including both mergers and the

pursuit of internal growth. In this case the two may be combined in a general growth strategy.

Such internal growth strategies may involve major recruitment campaigns. However, we would also expect to see strategies aimed at increasing the union's ability to retain existing members. As has long been recognised (Bell, 1954), and as Appendix 4 demonstrates, unions are likely to differ considerably in terms of membership turnover. This reflects the level of labour turnover and redundancy in the industries concerned, and also the extent to which those becoming unemployed allow their membership to lapse. In our interviews with BIFU officials, for example, we were quoted figures of around twenty thousand resignations per year from the union in the late 1980s, out of a total membership of over 160 thousand, a loss rate of about 12.5 per cent, compared to estimated rates of 14, 25 and 34 per cent for the AEU, the TGWU and USDAW respectively.

Thus, coping with declining membership is not simply a matter of launching major recruitment drives. For some unions at least, there would be considerable payoff from strategies aimed at retaining existing members. Indeed, as we shall see, given the difficulties and costs associated with recruitment in new job territories, some unions might usefully concentrate more of their efforts on retention.

Unions and Strategic Choice

Many of the debates amongst union leaders during the 1980s reflect a belief that unions needed to develop new approaches and new roles if they were to avoid representing a dwindling proportion of the workforce. We argue that this involved strategic thinking by union leaders.

Kochan et al (1984) argue that insufficient attention has been given in the academic literature to the question of strategic choice by the parties involved in industrial relations. They argue for a shift of emphasis towards the analysis of strategic choice, particularly important given that marked environmental change in recent years has undermined the stability of established industrial relations practices.

Johnson and Scholes (1984: 6-9) argue that strategic decisions tend to involve the following features (we have re-ordered their points for our present purpose):

1.   Strategic decisions are to do with "matching the activities of an organisation to the environment". Thus, as we argued above, changes in the labour market, in particular, contributed towards a perceived need to reassess the functions and activities of trade unions.

2.   Strategic decisions tend to effect the "long term direction of an organisation". This seemed likely in the case of some unions and,

perhaps, in the case of the union movement in general. The debates on union strategy suggested this and it was reflected in the recruitment campaigns and innovations in services, benefits and contributions launched by many unions.

3.   Strategic decisions are often concerned with the "scope of an organisation's activities". Thus, the unions were involved in proposals to develop their functions and to provide a broader range of services and benefits to members. This is reviewed in chapter 6. Also many unions were involved in attempts to extend their organisation to include new groups of members. This is the subject of part four of the thesis.

4.   "Strategic decisions often have major resource implications". Thus, any new functions, services or benefits must be paid for. This may be particularly significant if additional staff are required. This is also considered in chapter 6.

5.   Strategic decisions also involve "matching the organisation's activities to its resource capability". Chapter 7 considers whether unions were able to finance any developments in functions, services and benefits by increasing membership contribution rates. The chapter attempts to determine which factors restrain unions from increasing their contribution rates.

6.   Strategic decisions tend to be "complex in nature". They may have implications for how the organisation is managed. This question is considered in chapters 9 and 10, in our discussion of the implementation of recruitment strategies, where a key consideration is the ability of unions to develop a "recruitment culture".

7.   Strategic decisions will be determined partly by "the values and expectations of those who influence strategy". In the concluding chapter, we discuss the view that strategic choice is dominated by the ideological and political views of the leadership.

We thus consider that the debates, campaigns and innovations launched by union leaders in the 1980s constitute a reassessment of union strategy. In a time of marked environmental change and uncertainty, strategic choice is a key area, which cannot be ignored by industrial relations scholars.

CHAPTER 5

TRADE UNION STRATEGY AND THE RATIONAL-CHOICE THEORY OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

Introduction

The individual's decision on union membership can be seen within a rational-choice framework, being made on the basis of a subjective assessment of the costs and benefits of joining the union. These costs and benefits reflect the characteristics of the individual, of the job, and of the industry concerned, the policies of employers and of government, and union policy and practice on contributions, services and benefits, and recruitment. Thus, unions could attempt to attract additional members by adopting measures designed to increase the net benefits of union membership.

However, it is insufficient simply to show that union membership offers net benefits to potential members. In order to induce workers to join, unions must be able to demonstrate that membership brings benefits which are not available to non-members. In this chapter, we develop a rational-choice approach to union membership, which includes a discussion of the free-rider problem and the ways in which it may be countered.

Such a rational-choice approach to unionisation, with its emphasis on the individual's assessment of costs and benefits, may be criticised from a collectivist standpoint. The latter would argue that the individual is not an

island, and that unionisation must be seen in a social context, taking account of the influence of class and social group norms and pressures. However, as Goldfield (1987: 161) notes, the rational-choice approach could incorporate such influences within the individual cost-benefit framework, but in so doing the explanation becomes tautological, and so is incapable of being refuted. As Voos notes:

> "People who vote for unionization...always may be said to have done so because they had a higher subjective expected utility for the union than the nonunion situation."
>
> (1982: 134, quoted in Goldfield, 1987: 161)

Thus, any observed behaviour can be explained simply by widening our definition of costs and benefits, and nothing can contradict our theory.

It should be clear from the above that once we admit to a definition of costs and benefits that goes beyond the narrowest of financial definitions, we are unable to test the rational-choice framework as such. It should therefore not surprise the reader to learn that we do not intend to attempt such a test. Rather we accept the rational-choice framework as a heuristic device; as an aid to the clarification of concepts in the initial stages of our work. The only assumption that we make in adopting the framework is that individuals do not behave "irrationally", by which we mean that they would not knowingly choose a course of action which does them harm.

Having said all this, the rational-choice framework is by no means useless. As we shall demonstrate in the course of this chapter, it yields several interesting propositions which can be used to shed some light on union behaviour.

Trade Unions and the "Free-Rider" Problem

Olson (1965) argues that the collective bargaining activities of a union yield benefits to workers which are "collective goods", in the sense that non-members also enjoy the union-negotiated terms and conditions. It is usually either non-feasible or uneconomic to exclude non-members from such benefits. This gives rise to the familiar "free-rider" problem, as individual workers have an incentive not to pay union contributions, but to enjoy the benefits free of charge.

Thus, just because workers do not join a union this does not necessarily mean that they do not value the potential benefits of unionisation. Rather, their non-membership may represent a rational choice even if they value the benefits of unionisation (Pulsipher, 1966).

Burton (1978) claims that this free-rider argument is incorrect. He notes Samuelson's (1954) definition of "public goods", in terms of technical impossibility of exclusion and non-rivalry in consumption, and argues that the collective bargaining and contract enforcement activities of unions satisfy neither of these criteria. Exclusion is held by Burton to be technically

possible, in that unions could negotiate terms and conditions to apply to members only, by demanding that employers deny bargained gains to non members. Furthermore, he claims that there is rivalry in consumption of such union benefits, in that the enjoyment of union benefits by one person restricts their availability to others,given that union bargaining power depends upon pressing sectional gains and restricting the supply of labour.

This rejection of the free-rider argument is unconvincing. Olson's "collective good" differs from Samuelson's pure "public good" (see Table 5.1). For a collective good, exclusion may be feasible in purely technical terms, but it is not economically viable to exclude non-members from the good. Also, the collective good may involve rivalry in consumption (Olson, 1965: 14). In this sense, Olson's conditions for the existence of a collective good are less stringent than those for Samuelson's public good. The important point for our purposes, however, is that the free-rider problem applies to both public and collective goods, since exclusion is economically non-feasible in both cases.

TABLE 5.1: Public, Private and Collective Goods: Definitions

	Rival in Consumption	Exclusion is Technically Possible	Exclusion is Economic
Public Good	No	No	No
Collective Good	Yes or No	Not Necessarily	No
Private Good	Yes	Yes	Yes

What of Olson's claim that some union services yield collective goods; that it would not be economically viable to deny the benefits of collective bargaining to non-members? Technically, it would be possible for an employer to pay the bargained terms and conditions to union members only, since non-members could be easily identified under check-off, or if the union provided a membership list. More importantly, however, is this likely to happen? We suggest not. To have a two-tier system of pay and conditions, with union members on more favourable terms than non-members, implies that the employer is cooperating in encouraging workers to join the union. Under a closed-shop agreement the employer discriminates against non-unionists in terms of employment, whilst here the employer would be discriminating in terms of pay and conditions. In either case, the union is dependent upon the cooperation of the employer in avoiding the free-rider problem. It seems likely that such a pro-union employer would find it administratively simpler and socially more acceptable to adopt a closed shop than to provide non-unionists with inferior pay and conditions.

An employer without such pro-union sentiments, even if pressed into accepting such a two-tier pay and conditions structure would surely employ a workforce composed wholly of non-unionists, if they were available at the lower rate. Even if total replacement by non-union labour were not possible in the short term, the existence of lower-paid workers would undermine union bargaining power and, in the longer term, restrict the union's ability to bargain for improved terms and conditions. The only way around this, for the union,

would be to force the employer not to employ such non-union labour. Thus, the closed shop represents a more realistic objective for the union than does discrimination in pay and conditions.

There are also legal objections to placing non-unionists on inferior terms and conditions. In the USA, unions argued in favour of Section 9(a) of the 1935 National Labor Relations (Wagner) Act, under which the terms of a collective agreement must by law apply to all workers in a designated bargaining unit, whether union members or not. In addition, the law also places on unions a duty of "fair representation", under which all members of a bargaining unit must be given equal representation by the union. This even precludes unions from providing attorney representation for union members without providing an equal facility for non-members in the same bargaining unit (Dunlop, 1990: 116-7).

Bennett and Johnson (1979: 161) argue that by pressing for the Wagner Act, US unions brought the free-rider problem on themselves by supporting legislation which prevented exclusion from the benefits of collective bargaining. However, the unions clearly realised that without such a provision, unions might be undermined by employers substituting cheaper non-union labour.

In Britain, whilst there are no provisions similar to those in the US legislation, the Employment Protection Act of 1978 gave employees the right not to have

action short of dismissal taken against them by the employer to try to force them to join a union. It thus seems that the right to free ride is given at least some protection in law in both Britain and the USA.

In sum, we suggest that Burton's objections to the collective-good nature of trade unions' bargaining gains are ill-founded. Apart from the legal position, it is unlikely in practical terms that the union would secure the exclusion of non-members from the benefits of collective bargaining. Even where the union is powerful enough to force the employer to concede exclusion, the closed shop represents a more realistic objective for the union. Thus, union gains from collective bargaining are collective goods according to Olson's definition, and he is therefore correct in referring to a potential free-rider problem in the absence of a closed shop.

Exclusive and Inclusive Collective Goods

Olson also introduces a distinction between what he calls "exclusive collective goods" and "inclusive collective goods" (1965: 38). In both cases, exclusion is economically non-feasible, but in the former there is rivalry in consumption, whilst in the latter there is a degree of non-rivalry. In terms of trade unionism, the higher wages of a craft, secured by limiting the supply of labour through union control of apprenticeship and entry to the craft, constitutes an exclusive collective good. There is rivalry in consumption of the benefits of unionisation here, in that there is a limit to the number of workers who can enjoy the higher craft wages, as expansion of the craft would eventually

110

undermine wages. Where a union presses for a statutory national minimum wage, however, there is a degree of non-rivalry , in the sense that all may enjoy the benefit without directly undermining it. In this case we have an inclusive collective good.

It should be clear that the distinction between exclusive and inclusive collective goods has implications for trade union strategy. Those unions seeking to protect the interests and improve the terms and conditions of sectional groups, perhaps of more highly skilled or even professional workers, should follow a strategy of exclusive recruitment as part of an attempt to restrict the supply of labour. Those seeking broad objectives, including legislation for general employment rights, may pursue an inclusive approach, since the enjoyment of benefits is not impaired by the size of the organisation. Indeed, in the inclusive-good case, success in the pursuit of these objectives is more likely the broader the support, given the nature of the democratic political process. In other words, the degree of success in seeking inclusive collective goods may be positively related to the number of people in the organisation. We develop these points in our concluding chapter, when we discuss British trade union strategies. For the moment, we return to the question of the free-rider problem.

Avoiding the Free-Rider Problem

The free-rider problem is of significance to trade unions in two ways. Firstly, a significant number of actual free riders reduces union density in sectors

where unions are organised. This is evidenced by the gap between collective

bargaining coverage and union density. As Table 5.2 shows, union density

was only two thirds to three quarters of collective bargaining coverage in

Britain during the 1970s and 1980s. Bearing in mind that some union

members are not covered by collective agreements, this clearly suggests that

free-riding was widespread in Britain.

TABLE 5.2: Union Density and the Coverage of Collective Bargaining in Britain

	(1) Collective Bargaining Coverage (%)	(2) Union Density (%)	(3) Gap = (1) - (2) (%)	(4) Gap as a % of Coverage
1973	72	46	26	36
1978	69	53	16	23
	Unions Recognised at the Employees' Workplace (%)			
1983	66	49	17	26
1984	66	47	19	29
1985	63	47	16	25
1986	62	46	16	26
1987	63	46	17	27
1989	57	39	18	32

Sources: 1973 and 1978 Bailey and Kelly (1990) for British union density, and New Earnings Survey for British collective bargaining coverage (after Beaumont, 1987a: 175).

1983 to 1987 British Social Attitudes Survey.

1989 NOP Random Omnibus Survey, Employment Gazette, November 1989.

Secondly, free-rider behaviour may undermine union organisation or even prevent it from developing at all in some sectors. This is the classic case of market failure, with each individual concealing their true preference for the good, in an attempt to avoid bearing the costs.

Free-rider behaviour is more likely where the balance between costs and benefits of union membership appears to be less favourable to unionisation. Where union organisation is rudimentary, the expected costs to the individual are greater, not least in terms of possible victimisation. At the same time, the possible benefits of union membership are more uncertain and depend to a great extent upon the securing of recognition from the employer. Here, unionisation is locked into a vicious circle, inhibited by a relative lack of demonstrable benefits, but unable to demonstrate significant benefits until membership grows and recognition can be won.

We may identify three ways in which unions may counter the free-rider problem:

1.   Pursue compulsory membership provisions.

2.   Rely upon "social custom" to provide an incentive for workers to join unions.

3.   Develop excludable "selective benefits".

We now deal with each of these at length, since they are clearly of importance in any discussion of union strategy and recruitment, and since any strategy must necessarily address itself to the free-rider problem.

Compulsory Membership

Olson suggests that the union may counter the free-rider problem by pursuing some form of compulsory membership. He suggests that union growth in the USA has been related to the development of collective bargaining, which has provided the opportunity to seek compulsory membership arrangements.

Olson (1965: 83) notes that the AFL, under Samuel Gompers, was the first US union centre to prosper and argues that this success is partly explained by its concentration on collective bargaining and "job control" issues, in contrast to the emphasis on political and utopian reform of earlier unions. Similarly, Clegg (1976) has claimed that we can explain international and intersectoral differences in trade union density partly in terms of the extent and depth of collective bargaining.

Why should the emergence of collective bargaining be so significant? Olson (1965: 84) argues that once unions deal with employers in a collective-bargaining relationship, they are in a position to request compulsory membership or union security provisions, which employers have the ability to deliver. Unions which emphasise mainly political methods, on the other hand, are not in a position to demand compulsory membership arrangements. It is

difficult to see who would enforce compulsory membership for the exclusively political union. Furthermore, it is likely that compulsory membership of an essentially "political" organisation would be socially unacceptable in a Western democracy.

Thus, the purely "political" union would have no basis for compulsory membership, yet such benefits as it is able to achieve, in the form perhaps of legislative changes, would be collective or public goods. The free-rider problem would be unresolved, and organisational growth and survival would face serious difficulties.

How significant is compulsory union membership in Britain? Table 5.3 shows that the number of workers covered by closed shops increased from the early 1960s to the late 1970s. This largely reflected the extension of the closed shop from its traditional areas of printing, engineering and coalmining, into the public sector, particularly the nationalised industries (Gennard, 1987). During the 1980s, however, the closed shop declined, partly because job losses were heavily concentrated in those sectors where the closed shop was important (Millward and Stevens, 1986: 305-6), and also because of the gradual removal of legal support (Gennard, 1987). However, at no time during this period were a majority of members covered by a closed shop agreement.

TABLE 5.3: Compulsory Union Membership in Britain, 1962-89

	(1) Estimated No. of Workers Covered by Closed Shops (millions)	(2) Total Union Membership (millions)	(3) % of Members Covered	(4) % of Workers Covered
1962	3.8	8.9	43	17
1978	5.2	11.8	44	23
1982	4.5	10.4	43	22
1984	3.5	9.9	35	17
1989	2.6	9.1	29	12

Sources:

(1)   1962 to 1984 from Gennard (1987: 351), after McCarthy (1964), Gennard, Dunn and Wright (1980), Dunn and Gennard (1984), Millward and Stevens (1986).

1989 from Stevens, Millward and Smart (1989).

(2)   Department of Employment figures for union membership in the UK, deflated by 10 per cent to give approximate employee membership for Great Britain (see Bailey and Kelly, 1990).

(4)   Closed shop as a % of GB employment. Employment data from Employment Gazette, Historical Supplement No.2, November 1989, and August 1990.

It is interesting to note that the increase in union membership between 1962 and 1978 (2.9 million) was greater than the increase in the coverage of the closed shop (1.4 million), suggesting that the growth of union membership during this period cannot be wholly attributed to the spread of the closed shop. Workers seem to have been joining unions even in the absence of compulsion.

In sum, whilst compulsory membership has been significant in some sectors in Britain, the majority of union members have not been covered by such

arrangements. Furthermore, the closed shop was in decline and this seemed unlikely to be checked in the future.

However, union membership may be supported by an employer by means other than the closed shop. A recommendation to join the union, the provision of a new starters list to union representatives, allowing a union input into employee induction courses, and the provision of check-off facilities for the collection of union contributions, may all be seen as evidence of the employer's endorsement of union membership, and employees may be influenced by this in deciding whether to join the union. Table 5.4 illustrates this by pointing to the widespread use of check-off, with over seventy per cent of union members paying their contributions by this method in 1989. Whilst check-off was more common under the closed shop, it was still used by the great majority even where no closed shop existed.

Thus, whilst outright compulsory membership was likely to play a very limited role in the foreseeable future, less extreme forms of employer endorsement of union membership could continue to be important. However, there was evidence to suggest that even the non-closed shop forms of employer support were under attack from government by the early 1990s, with the Treasury advising government departments to end the practice of "strongly advising" new employees to join a trade union. In addition there were suggestions that future legislation might require workers on check-off to renew the instruction on a regular basis, thus possibly increasing membership

turnover and increasing the complexity of check-off administration. To the extent that such a shift in attitude was mirrored by employers generally, unions were likely to face increased problems in recruitment and retention even within areas of existing organisation.

TABLE 5.4: Method of Paying Union Contributions

	% of Union Members		
	Closed Shop	No Closed Shop	All Members
Workplace representative collects it	7	2	4
Paid in person at local union office	4	3	3
Check-off by employer	80	68	72
Straight from account by direct debit or standing order	8	18	14
Paid by post to union office	–	2	2
No answer	2	6	5
	100	100	100

Source: Stevens, Millward and Smart (1989: 620).

The "Social Custom" Approach

Booth (1985) argues that Olson's (1965) emphasis on coercion in helping unions cope with the free rider problem simply does not fit the facts for Britain, with high levels of unionisation in areas without closed shops. Instead, she proposes a "social custom" model of union membership, whereby the

individual may be influenced by peer pressure and possible loss of "reputation". Thus, a community which values union membership may be capable of supporting high levels of voluntary union membership in spite of the financial pressures to free ride.

Akerlof (1980) provides a similar "social custom" model and although he is concerned with the issue of unemployment rather than with the individual's decision on union membership, nevertheless his broad approach is of interest. By his definition:

> "A social custom is an act whose utility to the agent performing it in some way depends on the beliefs or actions of other members of the community."

> (1980: 749)

He suggests that the obedience of a social custom may provide positive utility to those who hold the values underlying the custom. Furthermore, disobedience may involve the risk of loss of "reputation", resulting in ostracism by the community, so that even those who do not share the underlying values may decide to obey the custom. Thus, it is possible that the existence of a small group of "non-believers" will fail to progressively undermine a general belief in the relevant custom through increasing disobedience, since the non-believers will continue to obey for fear of loss of reputation.

Akerlof's approach is interesting, in that it discusses both the benefits and costs involved in social custom; it deals with those who hold the relevant underlying values and those who do not; and it goes beyond the narrowly individualistic approach by integrating community influences into the rational-choice framework.

Olson (1965: 61) also considers the possibility of "social pressure" on individuals to join an organisation such as a trade union. He sees the social approval on joining as a form of private good, in the sense that those who do not join are automatically excluded from the social custom benefits of being a member. However, he claims that this is only important in the case of "small" organisations, for two reasons. Firstly, the large group would not bother punishing the individual recalcitrant, whose actions are hardly significant in terms of the group as a whole. Secondly, large groups are less likely to involve social and friendship ties, so that the sanction of social pressure and ostracism is less significant than in the small group case. Also, Messick (1973) suggests that small groups may avoid the free-rider problem, because here the gains from unionisation are more likely to be significantly affected by the individual's decision on membership, so that the optimal choice may be to join.

In addition to accepting that social pressure may be significant in the small group case, Olson also suggests that it may also play a role in the case of a "federal" organisation:

"...a group divided into a number of small groups, each of which has a reason to join with the others to form a federation representing the large group as a whole. If the central or federated organisation provides some service to the small constituent organisations, they may be induced to use their social incentives to get individuals belonging to each small group to contribute toward the achievement of the collective goals of the whole group".

(1965: 63)

Olson argues, however, that US unions are large organisations. National unions are federations of local organisations, but the latter are in themselves often large, with over a thousand members, whilst the national union is increasingly taking over the functions formerly performed locally. He claims therefore, that the above social pressure arguments do not generally apply to modern unions in the US (1965: 75)

Crouch questions Olson's assumption that unions appear as mass organisations to the individual worker. He claims that the worker's experience of the union takes the form of face to face contact with a local shop steward or representative, and involves interaction with colleagues in the workplace. Thus, each individual's contribution may appear to be significant, whilst the local workplace "culture" may influence the individual's decision whether or not to join (Crouch, 1982: 67). According to this view the national union is essentially a federation, providing workplace representatives with back-up services and legitimacy in the eyes of management (Batstone et al, 1977). Boraston et al (1975) find that workplace representatives may shoulder much of the burden of establishment-level bargaining, and that the formalisation of

such bargaining in the period after Donovan had not reduced this role. Thus, it is possible to argue that workers in some workplaces may feel an effective social custom incentive to unionise.

But what of the workplace representatives themselves? Why do people take on the hard work and risk involved in performing such a role? Barry (1970: 37-60) suggests that we can explain the participation of workplace representatives in terms of an "economic rationality", encountering no free-rider problem, in that they, unlike the members, receive significant non-collective good benefits in the form of personal status and power. Furthermore, he suggests that, once established, such "leaders" will set about getting support for their organisation by building an "ideology", in an attempt to give the union a significance to the members that goes beyond their own self interests (1970: 39).

Messick (1973: 155) presents a different version of the social custom approach, based on the assumption that workers aim to maximise the net benefits for the whole group, rather than just for themselves as individuals. In the Booth/Akerlof version, the individual may have an incentive to free ride as net benefits to the individual are at a maximum where the benefits are enjoyed, but where no contribution is paid. In the Messick version, however, workers would join the union if it can achieve net benefits for the group, and where the individual feels that his membership is significant in terms of achieving these benefits (this is more likely to be the case in smaller groups,

of course). Here free riding is unlikely if such behaviour is felt to jeopardise union gains.

This approach sees free riding as being countered by the individual's concern for the welfare of the group as a whole, rather than because of a fear of ostracism and social pressure, as in the Booth and Akerlof approach. As such, Messick presents a more philanthropic view of human nature, based on social concern rather than on individual self interest. We suggest, however, that such a motivation would depend very much on the social and community structures of the industries and occupations concerned, and that some groups may be less prone to such influences.

To summarise, the social custom approach begins to offer a more credible counter to the free-rider problem once we recognise the significance of workplace trade unionism. This suggests, of course, that those unions with a structure which emphasises workplace activity and local representatives may, other things being equal, have greater success in generating a social custom incentive to unionise. This is due to the small group characteristics of workplace trade unionism, and because of the vested interests of workplace representatives in fostering social custom. This is important for trade union strategy and recruitment, in that it suggests that unionisation will prove more difficult in the absence of such workplace social custom, for example where the employer refuses to recognise workplace representatives, where the employer attempts to counter such social custom, where the

123

employment unit is too small or too fragmented for any group consciousness to develop, or where the workforce has apparently diverse interests or experiences limited group contact (for example, with part-time or temporary workers).

As a final point on the social custom approach, we note that the heterogeneous nature of potential union members, particularly important in light of current trends towards greater differentiation in the workforce, may be reflected in differences in motivation in joining unions.

Thus, in a review of trade unionism in the Netherlands, van Ham et al (1985: 7-9) argue that unions are now aiming to recruit in relatively new areas, amongst professional and white collar workers, part-timers and women. As a result, it is increasingly important to distinguish between those who join out of "moral and ideological motives", the "members"; and the newer categories, who will tend to take more of a rational-choice approach and weigh-up the economic costs and benefits of joining. This latter group are the "clients". They suggest that clients, because of their more instrumental approach to the union, will often only join when they actually need the union's services, for example when they have an individual or collective grievance over pay and conditions, or when they feel threatened by dismissal or redundancy. Once this immediate need disappears, so clients may allow their membership to lapse. Van Ham et al suggest that unions may need to adapt to this by

offering reduced subscriptions and additional or cheaper benefits to longer-standing members.

Whilst one might question the sweeping generalisations of Van Ham et al on the motivation of these different groups, nevertheless it seems reasonable to note that not all sections of the workforce will be equally amenable to a social custom incentive to unionise, and that unions need to be sensitive to the increasing diversity of the labour force by differentiating their appeal accordingly. This is a theme to which we will return below.

Selective Benefits

Olson notes that unions provide other benefits or services in addition to acting as a collective bargaining agent over pay and conditions. These include cash benefits and friendly-society provisions, the processing of individual grievances, and the negotiation with employers of seniority rights from which non-members might be excluded. These "selective benefits" provide an economic incentive for the individual to join, since a non-member can be effectively excluded. They are not, in Olson's terms, collective goods. He argues, however, that in practice such selective benefits are not significant for most modern unions in the USA.

Crouch (1982: 57) argues that such selective benefits are also limited amongst modern British unions, although he notes the then National Union of Agricultural Workers as an exception. This union provided a wide range of

125

advisory services not usually seen in trade unions. Crouch argues that this may partly reflect the relative weakness of this union's collective bargaining position, so that these secondary benefits were particularly important. We may also suggest that the structural characteristics of the industry, with small, scattered employment units, and the absence of closed shop agreements, make for a particularly acute free rider problem.

However, whilst the selective benefits option may be of limited general importance at present, this does not mean that this must always be the case. Selective benefits were important in the early craft unions in Britain, which emphasised a friendly-society role (Pelling, 1987: 24). Whilst the significance of these particular benefits has been undermined by the development of the modern welfare state, this does not necessarily rule out the possibility of unions developing new selective benefits to meet the different needs of the future.

As we saw in the previous chapter, union growth in Britain has been critically dependent upon the winning of recognition from employers (Bain, 1970), and in the absence of such recognition, members have been difficult to recruit and retain. This means that when recognition becomes more difficult to secure, and if there is a trend towards de-recognition, then we would expect union membership to decline.

Under these circumstances, unions might respond by developing those benefits of membership which do not depend upon recognition from the employer, such as lobbying for statutory enforcement of employment terms and conditions, and the increased provision of certain selective benefits. The latter, as we have seen, have the added advantage of being excludable, and so are likely to represent an attractive option for unions.

The development of selective benefits may also help unions to retain members who change job or who become unemployed. British unions have generally not been very successful in retaining unemployed members (Barker et al, 1984). Kelly and Bailey (1989) estimate that only 5.01 per cent of the unemployed were union members at the end of 1986, but they point out that those unions with higher proportions of unemployed members tended to be skilled manual or professional unions, which tend to offer more in the way of selective benefits.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we have developed a rational-choice approach to union membership, based on Olson's analysis of the free-rider problem. Any union strategy must, as a basic requirement, come to terms with this problem.

We have seen that the free-rider problem may be countered in three ways: by securing compulsory membership, by exploiting a social custom incentive to unionise, and by the provision of selective benefits. Compulsory

membership, seen by Olson as an important reason behind the adoption of collective bargaining as the key method by unions, had been of some importance in Britain, but this was undermined by the legislative reforms of the Conservative government in the 1980's, and was likely to be affected by developments in employer policies towards unions. Also, other forms of employer support for unions, such as the endorsement of union membership and the provision of check-off facilities, whilst important at the time of writing, could not necessarily be taken for granted in the future.

We argue that Olson's rejection of a significant social custom incentive to unionise is unjustified, given the importance of workplace organisation in certain sectors in Britain, although we have noted that it might not be possible to generate such a social custom in all sectors. Certain categories of workers may be less prone to such an incentive to unionise, particularly those in smaller workplaces, part time and temporary workers, and those whose employers oppose unionisation. Significantly, these are the very groups who were accounting for a growing proportion of the workforce by the 1980s, so that union strategies would need to confront the lack of an effective social custom incentive if such people were to be organised.

Selective benefits had in recent times tended to be of limited practical importance, although, as we shall see below, this option had been considered in the union strategy debates amongst union leaders and academics in the 1980's and it promised to become increasingly important, particularly when

attempting to recruit where employer recognition was difficult to obtain and where the social custom incentives were weak.

There are, however, two potential problems with a selective benefits approach to union strategy. Firstly, British unions had been seen as offering trade unionism "on the cheap" and, with income from members as by far the main source of income, it was unclear whether they would be able to increase contributions sufficient to finance an increase in the level of benefits and services offered to members. Secondly, even if services and benefits could be improved, it was by no means certain that this would provide an effective incentive for workers to join and to remain in membership, particularly in the face of possible employer hostility and a denial of recognition rights. We deal with these two questions in the next part of the thesis, before examining organising initiatives in part four.

PART THREE

DEVELOPMENTS IN UNION
BENEFITS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

CHAPTER 6

THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNION SERVICES AND BENEFITS

Introduction

The rational-choice analysis of chapter 5 suggested that selective benefits may provide an incentive to unionise and may offer a counter to the free-rider problem. Furthermore, this incentive is independent of any social custom incentive and the provision of such benefits is, unlike collective bargaining, not necessarily dependent on employer recognition of the union. Thus, it is to be expected that unions would place an increasing emphasis on such benefits in a period when the political and industrial climate is hostile to unions, when compulsory union membership is under attack and when employer recognition becomes more difficult to win and retain.

In the USA, such an approach has been referred to as "associational unionism". It has been linked to the introduction of reduced-subscription "associate membership" status in several unions, along with the development of selective benefits through such schemes as the AFL-CIO's Union Privilege Benefit Program, launched in 1986 (Jarley and Fiorito, 1990). Heckscher (1988) claims that such developments represent a move towards a "new unionism", made necessary by structural change in the labour force.

However, Booth (1985: 254) has argued that such a selective benefits approach may only be feasible if the union has some kind of monopoly in the supply of the benefits in question. Where the benefits take the form of goods and services which could be provided by commercial organisations, such as with financial services, the latter may be able to provide them more cheaply, since they will not need to cross subsidise the collective goods provision. Similarly, Hanson and Mather note that the selective benefits approach:

> "...exposes trade unions to competition in all their activities, competition which they may find hard to surmount. Their weakness is that they have no unique selling proposition. They are on their own in a competitive market, and their competitors have a head start in terms of brand image, customer appeal and business effficiency, whether selling pensions or insurance or financial advice."

> (1988: 67)

Whilst there will clearly be competition in the provision of many such benefits, Hanson and Mather surely overstate the difficulties faced. In particular, they assume that unions will themselves enter the market as providers of such services, whereas in fact the union's "unique selling proposition" may be to act as a collective organisation of consumers, contracting with an experienced and established third party to provide the goods or services. Here, the union may in effect offer the latter a marketing advantage, by providing direct and privileged access to union members, complete with a union endorsement.

The TUC Special Review Body Steering Group on Services pointed out that:

> "While services may be provided to the member as an individual, they benefit in various ways by being provided by or through a collective organisation. In particular, the ability of the unions to 'purchase collectively' on behalf of a large number of members can enable a better deal in terms of price, standards of service or other aspects to be obtained than is available to individuals."

<div align="right">(TUC, 1988a: 1)</div>

In this chapter, we attempt to answer two basic questions. Firstly, to what extent did unions respond to the conditions of the 1980s by developing their selective benefits? Secondly, was there any evidence to support the view that such benefits help in the recruitment and retention of members? Table 6.1 places our discussion in context by summarising the main types of benefits and services offered by unions. We refer back to these in the course of the chapter.

In the following section, we describe and account for the decline of union cash benefits. It is the long–term move away from the traditional friendly–society role that has led many to conclude that selective benefits are no longer important for the modern union (Olsen, 1965). However, as we demonstrate in the subsequent section, the 1980s saw considerable interest in the development of new selective benefits, including group discount schemes and even individual representation and advisory services, with the express aim of improving union recruitment and retention.

TABLE 6.1: Trade Union Selective Benefits

Type	Union Role	Examples
Direct individual representation and advisory services	Direct provision (either in-house or through retained advisors at no extra cost to the member)	Representation in grievance procedures, at industrial tribunals, etc
Cash benefits	Direct provision	Dispute, sickness, accidence, unemployment benefits, etc. Superannuation
Direct provision of services at a discount	Direct provision (often at less than market prices at the point of use)	Holiday centres, training facilities
Group insurance policies	Negotiation of cover and payment of group premium	Personal accident, damage to personal possessions at work
Group discount schemes	Negotiation of the discount with third party supplier, promotion of scheme to members, monitoring of scheme	Retail discounts, insurance, financial, legal and travel services, etc

The Decline of Cash Benefits

Many British unions have their origins as providers of welfare benefits (Pelling, 1987). It is often argued, however, that this friendly-society role has declined over the years as unions have become preoccupied with collective bargaining, rather than with "mutual insurance" (Webb and Webb, 1897), and as state welfare provision has substituted for union provision (Latta and Lewis, 1974; Neumann and Rissman, 1984).

In his study of union finances, Latta (1972: 401-2) notes that union expenditure on cash benefits as a proportion of total union expenditure declined sharply during the late 1930s and 1940s, subsequently stabilising at

this lower level. There then appears to have been a further decline in the 1970s (see Table 6.2).

TABLE 6.2: Union expenditure on cash benefits as a percentage of total union expenditure, 1936–89.

1936	44
1954	30
1960	29
1970	30
1975	16
1980	13
1985	13
1989	11

Note: All cash benefits to members, including welfare and dispute benefits.

Sources: 1936–70: Latta (1972).

1975–89: Annual Reports of the Certification Officer, various years.

Table 6.3 examines recent trends in more detail, this time looking at the real value of cash benefits per member (at 1985 prices). This suggests that the decline in the real value of benefits during the 1970s was followed by a modest recovery in the early 1980s, which was, however, insufficient to return the value of benefits to the levels of the 1960s. It is important to emphasise that, in spite of this recovery, there does not appear to have been a decisive shift towards a cash–benefits orientated union movement during the 1980s.

TABLE 6.3: Annual Expenditure on Cash Benefits Per Member, 1951–89 (at 1985 prices)

	Welfare Benefits	Dispute Benefits	All Benefits
1951–55	5.67	0.42	6.09
1956–60	5.90	1.53	7.44
1961–65	6.15	0.45	6.61
1966–70	7.00	0.99	7.98
1971–73	na	na	na
1974	4.02	1.20	5.22
1975	3.17	0.79	3.97
1976–80	2.89	1.00	3.89
1981–85	3.39	1.07	4.46
1986	4.45	0.19	4.65
1987	na	na	5.30
1988	na	na	4.92
1989	na	na	4.67

Notes: "Welfare" includes all cash benefits other than dispute benefit. "All" includes both welfare and dispute benefits.

Figures show total expenditure on benefits divided by total union membership, at 1985 prices. Where refers to a five-year period, this is an annual average.

na means not available.

Sources: Expenditure on benefits and union membership:
1948–70 Annual report of the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies, various years.
1974–89 Annual Report of the Certification Officer, various years.

Retail price index:
Economic Trends Annual Supplement, 1991.

Given the above trend in cash benefits expenditure, one is tempted to suggest that the factors underlying it are peculiar to particular periods. Thus, the late 1930s and early 1940s was a period of upheaval, given the war and the subsequent development of the welfare state. The 1970s saw a rapid growth in white collar unions, which tend to pay out fewer cash benefits, so that there may be a compositional effect here. Both periods, however, saw an

acceleration in the rate of inflation, and this may have contributed to the fall in real per capita benefits, as unions failed to increase cash benefits in line with rising prices. The modest recovery of the 1980s owes something to increased unemployment benefit payouts during the early part of the decade, to the tendency for some unions to increase benefits in an attempt to sweeten the pill of higher contributions, and perhaps also to the lower levels of inflation compared to the 1970s.

The Development of Selective Benefits in the 1980s and 1990s

The above refers to the provision of cash benefits. Rather less data is available on the provision of other types of selective benefits. Therefore, in 1987, as part of the Special Review Bodies' work, the TUC carried out a survey of union services, which looked beyond the traditional cash benefits, to include the whole range of services outlined earlier in this chapter. The results showed that the provision of selective benefits was patchy, with some unions providing a near–comprehensive range of services, and with others providing almost none of the services referred to. The survey report concluded that there was considerable scope for the development of union services (TUC, 1988a).

In this section, we describe how unions responded to the circumstances of the 1980s and early 1990s by developing such selective benefits. Our aim is to describe these developments and to briefly compare the innovations of the

various unions. We concentrate mainly, though not exclusively, on our sample of unions.

(a)   Financial Services

A major area of innovation in the latter half of the 1980s was in the provision of discounted financial services for members. Whilst several unions already had extensive provision in this area, including mortgages and loans by ASTMS and NALGO, the EETPU attracted considerable publicity with the launch of its financial services package in January 1986. The contents of the package (as at September 1988) are outlined in Table 6.4.

TABLE 6.4: EETPU Financial Services for Members

> **Mortgage Priority** for EETPU at Halifax Building Society.
>
> **Endowment Linked Mortgages** – a "low cost" endowment policy through West Common Financial Services.
>
> **Contact with Local Solicitors**, who would provide conveyancing "efficiently and at a competitive price".
>
> **Household Insurance** – 20% off Cornhill Insurance premiums, plus £2 reduction on first premium.
>
> **Motor Insurance** – 12.5% off General Accident premiums.
>
> **Financial Advice** – free advice on savings, investments, pensions and insurance from West Common Financial Services.
>
> **Income Security** – "Credit Guard" insurance policy offered by Financial Insurance Co Ltd.
>
> **Accident Plan** – accident insurance cover offered by CIGNA Insurance Co.

Source: EETPU Moneywise brochure (as amended to September 1988).
Note: The scheme was designed to be amended on a regular basis.

The launch was greeted with a great deal of interest by the media, being seen as a clear expression of the EETPU's "business unionism". As was said at the time:

> "The EETPU's overt move towards market-based trade unionism may be followed with varying degrees of reluctance by other unions; Mr Hammond clearly sees it as another precedent set by the electricians which others will have to follow."

> (Financial Times, 29 January 1986: 11)

Within a month, the AEU had announced plans to follow suit, eventually launching its own similar package in April 1986. Within the next few months many other unions jumped on the bandwaggon, as shown in Table 6.5.

In describing the contents of such packages, the first point to emphasise is that, unlike in the case of traditional cash benefits and representational services, the union itself did not directly provide the service, but simply negotiated the discount with the supplier. The union then normally took responsibility for circulating details of the services amongst members, who would then usually contact the companies direct, quoting their membership number to qualify for the agreed discount or priority treatment.

It seems that unions were often reluctant to allow companies direct access to their membership lists, for fear of overwhelming members with publicity

material, and where direct access to members was allowed, companies sometimes agreed to limit the amount of such material.

TABLE 6.5: The Financial Services Bandwaggon

Union	Launch Date of New Financial Services Package
EETPU	January 1986.
AEU	Plans announced February 1986; launched April 1986.
IPCS	July 1986.
UCATT	November 1986; extended June 1987.
SOGAT	December 1987.
NUPE	February 1988 announced preparation of package. Launched May 1988. (First Unity Trust package).
STE	November 1988. (Unity Trust).
TSSA	November 1988. (Unity Trust).
USDAW	January 1988 announced were considering a package. Launched April 1989.
GMB	Plans announced June 1988; pilot in Midlands late 1988; national launch early 1989. (Claimed to be first with an exclusive union credit card).
MSF	January 1989. (Claimed to be first to include credit card with lower interest rate).
COHSE	January 1989.
AMMA	September 1989.
TUC	Bank of Scotland/Unity Trust Bank credit card to be offered to TUC affiliates. Launched May 1990. Immediately taken up by 25 unions.

Sources: Financial Times, union journals, union literature and interviews and correspondence with union officials.

In choosing suppliers, the approach of the EETPU, the AEU and other unions was to shop around in order to locate the most competitive services. Thus,

the EEPTU package initially took four months to assemble, involving the union's Deputy Head of Research, an insurance broker and the union's stockbroker. This approach meant that the union was in a position to demand the most competitive service, and to cancel those deals which became uncompetitive. In some cases unions concluded a deal with a company with whom they already had a good relationship.

The packages were designed to be flexible, so that the terms and even the range of services could be modified. Indeed there was an element of competition between unions in the services offered. Thus, whilst the GMB was relatively late in launching its financial services package, it claimed to be the first union in Britain to offer a credit card bearing the union's logo. A few months later, MSF claimed to be the first to offer a credit card with lower than normal interest charges.

Another reason for flexibility, of course, was the dynamism of financial markets and products, with keen competition and innovation amongst the providers of such services in the newly-deregulated markets of the late 1980s. In some cases, this led to particular discounts becoming obsolete, as happened for example in the case of the mortgage discounts negotiated by several unions prior to the slump in the housing market in 1989, which led to terms at least as favourable being offered to the general public in a bid by the lending institutions to offset the slowdown in lending (Industrial Relations Services, 1990: 12).

As pointed out by the EETPU's Deputy Head of Research (private correspondence, 25 August 1988) the services basically fall into two categories. Firstly, there are the "off the peg" packages, negotiated with companies, often at preferential rates. Secondly, there is the provision of professional financial advice on an individual basis, in many cases free of charge. Whilst it is the former that initially attracted much of the media attention, the latter may prove to be a particularly valuable benefit to members, given the rapid development and aggressive marketing in financial services markets.

As we demonstrate below, whilst unions had generally been keen to develop the services provided to members, there was a feeling amongst some trade unionists that the unions must not become associated with the problem of consumer debt, and must avoid being seen as encouraging their members to get themselves into financial difficulties. This explains why some unions chose not to offer credit discounts, whilst others included warnings about the dangers of excessive debt in their promotional material (Industrial Relations Services, 1990: 12).

(b)   Legal Services

By the 1980s, legal representation had long been established as a core benefit of union membership, and all unions provided members with representation and legal assistance with work-related matters such as industrial injuries, unfair dismissal, equal pay and so on. Industrial tribunal

cases tended to be dealt with by full-time officials, and most of the larger unions had a legal department with legally-qualified staff to provide advice, whilst all unions used outside solicitors when necessary. The issues most commonly dealt with were industrial injuries. According to a survey by the Labour Research Department (1990a), 36 of the largest unions between them recovered £165 millions in compensation during 1989, equal to £24.75 per member, or forty per cent of contributions income. This involved over a hundred thousand members; 1.6 per cent of the total membership of the unions concerned.

An increasing number of unions were, however, beginning to provide legal assistance on personal and domestic issues not directly related to work. Some unions had for several years provided legal assistance for members injured whilst travelling to and from work, or whilst looking for work. By the late 1980s, unions were extending this to include purely domestic issues, often in response to a growing number of enquiries from members. This usually involved providing a first free consultation with the union's solicitors on any non-work related matter, followed by a quote for the likely cost to the member for any further assistance. The NGA even provided this service to members' families.

In 1989 the TUC launched the "Unionlaw" scheme, in cooperation with the Law Society, whereby TUC affiliates could provide their members with access to a network of local participating solicitors (see below).

(c)　Other Discounts

By the late 1980s, many unions were offering travel and holiday discounts of around five to ten per cent off standard retail prices. Most unions offered this by negotiating with an ABTA travel agent. Only NALGO, with a long tradition of providing such benefits, had gone so far as to establish its own travel agency, which itself joined ABTA in January 1987.

Motoring discounts became increasingly common, including reduced-rate membership of the RAC, AA and National Breakdown, discounts on car repairs and maintenance, and in a few cases on car hire and purchase. Many unions offered discounts on insurance, including holiday insurance, motor, household, and accident and life.

Whilst some unions had long had a list of retailers and other businesses willing to offer a discount to members, this was in many cases extended in the late 1980s, as part of the bid to maximise membership services. Often this was handled at national level, but in some cases this was supplemented or even replaced by regional or area-level schemes.

Some unions offered discounts which were specifically related to the jobs performed by members. For example, the IPMS provided professional indemnity insurance aimed at certain professional specialisms, the EETPU provided insurance aimed at self-employed plumbers and electricians, whilst

UCATT included a discount on mail order tools as part of its "Moneysavers" package.

One area where unions were slow to provide discounts was for private health care. Thus, by 1990 in a survey of 17 unions, only the AEU, EETPU, FTAT and the non-TUC FUMPO had negotiated such a discount, with none of the large general or public-sector unions following suit (Industrial Relations Services, 1990). Clearly, this hesitance to offer what could prove to be a valuable benefit, with discounts of up to 33 per cent offered by the EETPU, reflects the reluctance of most unions and the TUC to be seen as undermining the National Health Service.

(d)   Training

Almost all unions offered some form of training for lay officers or shop stewards. Topics covered typically included negotiating procedures and skills, employment law, employment issues and broader economic and political questions, as well as the structure of the union and its procedures.

By the 1980s, however, a few unions were also beginning to help members with training in job-related skills. The prime example of this was the EETPU's skills training centre at Cudham Hall in Esher, offering courses in electronics and computing skills. The courses were offered free to unemployed members, whilst those in employment were encouraged to seek funding from their employer. The union also marketed the courses to employers, and could

145

provide them on site or at one of the union's regional training centres, set up in union offices around the country. British Steel and Rolls Royce were amongst those employers who had used the EETPU's facilities by 1989.

In March 1988, the EETPU followed up its craftsmen training schemes with the launch of a management training course, to be offered to its managerial and professional members, and to those organisations affiliated to COMPS. This would appear to be partly designed to encourage white-collar staff associations and specialist unions to merge with the EETPU.

The AEU became involved in job skills training in 1986, and subsequently launched its National Skills Training Centre in Birmingham in 1988, providing courses in robotics, CNC, CAD, electronics, pneumatics and hydraulics. The union also provided members with details of open learning courses available from local colleges, and set up a number of Training Access Points in AEU local offices, where members could get information about training opportunities from a computer database. The AEU also collaborated with employers and colleges in the provision of open learning courses for members. In addition, the union produced literature on training issues and on new technology. The range of measures was packaged and promoted by the AEU as its "Engineers 2000" programme, with the aim of projecting a modern, progressive image of the union.

NALGO had a long history of providing members with a full range of selective benefits, and this included access to a range of correspondence courses for vocational qualifications, including BTEC certificates and the Institute of Personnel Management examinations, amongst others.

Several other unions, whilst not becoming directly involved in providing training themselves, attempted to bring training into the collective bargaining arena. Thus, in September 1987, following on from a campaign launched by ASTMS in the previous year, MSF launched its training initiative under the banner "Campaigning for Training". The activists' pack for the campaign included a policy document criticising the UK's poor training record, a briefing on training terminology for MSF representatives, and a model "Training and Staff Development Agreement". MSF negotiators were to be encouraged to press for training to be included on the negotiating agenda with employers. The ultimate aim was to sign training agreements providing for an agreed training budget, the monitoring of training expenditures, and the setting up of a joint union–management training committee to negotiate on these issues and to communicate with employees through regular training bulletins. At this stage, the union had no plans to become involved in providing training directly, the aim being to pressurise employers to provide better training opportunities (Tim Webb, National Officer, MSF, private correspondence, 15 August 1988).

In June 1989, the TGWU launched a similar scheme, aimed at negotiating training agreements with employers. A model agreement was drawn up by the union, again providing for a joint training committee to discuss training needs, to draw up a training plan, and to monitor outcomes. The union also launched a quarterly training bulletin and issued a statement on national training policy.

The MSF and TGWU approaches are based on the notion that employees accept the introduction of new technology in return for training opportunities and the enhanced job security that this might bring. In 1989 the two unions published a joint booklet "Making our future:manufacturing in the 1990s", which outlined the case for a major expansion of training in Britain, through a mix of state intervention and union negotiating power, designed to push employers to invest more.

The above examples illustrate two distinct approaches to training. The first appears to accept that training provision is a shared responsibility, with the union providing some training directly and helping individual members secure access to training opportunities. Such union assistance may be designed to appeal as much to employers as to members, since in providing such a service the union was projecting an image as a progressive, cooperative organisation, so important in an era of union "beauty contests" for employer recognition. The second approach, epitomised by the TGWU and MSF, placed more emphasis on the responsibility of employers for training, with the

union acting to press employers to carry out training through collective bargaining.

(e)   Direct Representation and Advice

We have already mentioned in our discussion of legal services that unions are involved in representing and advising individual members in grievance and disciplinary procedures, in industrial tribunals and in the courts. It appears that unions were becoming increasingly involved in providing such services to members by the late 1980s.

Of the local full-time officials we spoke to, over a quarter said that dealing with members' casework had become more time-consuming over the previous three to five years. Officials told us that the increased workload came from medical appeals, social security and industrial tribunals, where the full-time official usually acted as the member's representative, as well as from dealing with members' problems in the workplace. Changes in legislation and the increased inability of shop stewards to deal with grievances domestically were cited as reasons for this increased workload.

Similarly, the TUC survey of union officials, carried out in 1989, found that 48 per cent of officials felt that dealing with members' queries and problems was becoming a more important aspect of the official's job, with only three per cent seeing it as becoming less important. This item was second only to recruitment on this question. However, only 22 per cent said that attendance

149

at legal/tribunal hearings was becoming more important (17 per cent seeing this as becoming less important), thus suggesting that much of the increase in individual representation took place at the workplace rather than through the tribunals or courts. This may reflect the restrictions placed on statutory employment rights by Conservative Governments during the 1980s.

The Role of the TUC

By the late 1980s, the TUC was beginning to play a role in assisting individual unions in developing their selective benefits. As part of the review exercise begun by the 1987 Congress, a "Steering Group on Services to Members" was set up to report to the Special Review Body. This was to examine proposals from Unity Trust on financial services and pensions, and to consider the whole area of services to members. The group carried out a survey of unions' provision of such services. This revealed a marked unevenness of provision between unions, and the Steering Group, writing in 1988, concluded that there was considerable scope for the extension and improvement of union services. They noted that there was considerable interest amongst members in extending services, and that several unions were already taking steps in that direction. They felt that the TUC had a role to play in assisting such developments (TUC, 1988a: 2).

According to the Steering Group, the advantage of TUC involvement was that it could help to avoid a duplication of effort by unions, it pooled the expertise

of unions, and it provided greater scope for economies of scale and greater bargaining strength with the companies selling the services.

In May 1988, Unity Financial Services launched a financial services package for NUPE, and the Steering Group decided to treat this as a pilot for a TUC-wide scheme. It was proposed that UFS would make available to TUC unions a range of financial services for members, covering personal insurance, mortgages, investments, banking and travel services. The TUC would inform affiliates about the services, and it would then be up to individual unions to negotiate with UFS on the range of services, if any, to be offered to its members. Thus, the autonomy of individual unions was a key principle here. The TUC was to play a facilitating role, with unions being left to make their own arrangements with UFS or, indeed, with any other company.

The Steering Group considered proposals from the Law Society for a TUC/Law Society scheme, which would provide legal services on non-employment issues on preferential terms to union members. The scheme, known as "Unionlaw", was launched in 1989 with a national network of around two thousand participating local solicitors across England and Wales. Unions opting to join the scheme could recommend solicitors from the list to their members, who would then be entitled to a free initial interview of 15 to 20 minutes on any non-employment related matter, with a free estimate of the cost of any further action, if recommended. In addition, solicitors were to provide a fixed-price service for house conveyancing and the drawing up of

wills, and they agreed to be bound by a special code, covering the conduct of interviews and the explanation of legal charges. Unionlaw was offered at no cost to the TUC or participating unions, beyond that of publicising the scheme to members. By 1991, 41 TUC-affiliated unions had adopted the scheme, including the GMB, NALGO, USDAW and the CPSA, and in a survey carried out by Industrial Relations Services (1990), half of those unions which provided legal help on domestic issues were doing so through the Unionlaw scheme. By 1990, the TUC were looking to extend the scheme to Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The steering Group recommended that the TUC should support the launch, in June 1988, of a personal pensions plan by Unity Pensions Services. The plan discouraged employees from leaving occupational schemes or from contracting out of SERPS where this was not advantageous to the individual, and thus accords with trade union policies on the issue. The TUC was to circulate information about the plan, but was to stop short of recommendation or endorsement, not wishing to fall foul of the restrictions imposed by the 1986 Financial Services Act.

The 1987 survey found that no union at that time provided a credit card for members, although the GMB became the first union to launch one in 1988. Following from the favourable experience of unions in the USA, the TUC in conjunction with Unity Trust and the Cooperative Bank plc, prepared a feasibility report for the 1988 Congress. The card was launched in May 1990,

initially offering an Annual Percentage Rate of interest up to three and a half per cent lower than its major competitors, with a minimum credit limit of £250 compared to £750 for many credit cards. The card was immediately taken up by 25 affiliated unions, representing some six million members. The TGWU was amongst those deciding to adopt the card. By 1991, some 32 thousand cards had been issued to individuals, 70 per cent of which had been activated (TUC, 1991a).

The Steering Group was also to consider several other initiatives, including banking facilities and travel services.

The Involvement of Local Union Officials

In general, the local union official had only a limited role in administering these new services. In some cases, promotional material was mailed directly to individual members' homes from the union's head office, whilst in others the material was distributed by lay officials via local offices. Even in the latter case, the local full-time official's role was usually limited to providing the promotional material. Most of the discount-type services were provided by third-party suppliers, so that an interested member would be referred directly to the company concerned.

Most of the new services were initiated by the centre, although we found some examples of regional or district initiatives. For example, a UCATT Regional Officer told of his attempts to negotiate discounts with the local

cooperative retail society and with a local supplier of building tools. This was done on his own initiative, rather than in response to a central directive, but he felt that it was important to ensure that local firms were involved in the discount scheme.

Similarly, NUPE officials described their own local initiatives, including discounts with local traders and the original extension of legal help to cover non-work related matters.

It seems that local officials were often approached by companies offering discounts and incentives to purchase their goods and services. For example, a TGWU official told us that following the new legislation on pensions in 1986, officials were approached by a large number of companies offering commission in return for access to the membership. As a result, the union decided to take control at a national level, and that no local official was to become involved in such deals for fear of provoking accusations of lack of expertise or even corruption in such matters.

Selective Benefits, Recruitment and Retention

We have seen that in principle selective benefits offer a recruitment and retention incentive which avoids free-rider problems and which does not depend on recognition from the employer. The development of selective benefits has thus been seen as an attractive option for unions, particularly in a difficult period such as the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Jarley and Fiorito (1990: 222) see such an approach as being aimed at three particular groups of workers. Firstly, it represents an attempt to retain those members who have in the past allowed their membership to lapse on moving from a job covered by collective bargaining to one which is not. Secondly, it attempts to recruit and retain those who have supported the union in an unsuccessful bid for recognition. Finally, it attempts to recruit free-riders in job territories covered by collective agreements.

The selective benefits approach promises to make it easier to secure union recognition in the long run, in that membership may be maintained even where the employer initially refuses recognition, thus providing a nucleus for future organising efforts. Thus, in a study of US local government departments over the period 1977 to 1982, Ichniowski and Zax (1990) find that the presence of "association-style unionism" (ie membership in the absence of collective bargaining recognition) in 1977 made it more likely that full negotiating rights would have been secured by 1982.

In this section, we examine the likely impact of the development of selective benefits on recruitment and retention in Britain, firstly by briefly reviewing the existing evidence and secondly by drawing on our interviews with local full-time officials.

The British Social Attitudes Survey provides some evidence on the reasons why people join unions (Table 6.6). Whilst protection at work, better pay and

conditions, and a wish to help workmates are the three most important reasons, over 70 per cent said that "members' benefits like financial or health schemes" were "very" or "fairly" important as a reason for joining the union. The survey report notes that this may reflect the greater emphasis on such services by unions in the late 1980s (Millward, 1990: 35).

TABLE 6.6: Reasons for Belonging to a Trade Union: Evidence from the British Social Attitudes Survey, 1989.

	Very/Fairly Important	Not Very/Not at All Important/Does Not Apply To Me
To protect me if problems come up	93	6
To get higher pay and better working conditions	80	20
To help other people I work with	76	23
To get members' benefits like financial or health schemes	71	29
I believe in them in principle	67	33
Most of my colleagues are members	55	45
It is a condition of having my job	38	62
It is a tradition in my family	15	84

Source: Millward (1990).

Table 6.7 suggests that, according to shop stewards, the provision of legal and accident cover was significant in persuading individuals to join a union, as was the provision of individual representation. Thus, whilst the collective bargaining and collective strength arguments were important, particularly it seems in the private sector, so were the selective benefits of representation

and legal cover. However, cash benefits and discount packages were not mentioned as significant incentives to join the union in this survey.

TABLE 6.7: Most Convincing Arguments Used by Union Representatives in Recruiting Members

	% of Union Representatives Mentioning as Most Convincing Argument
Public Sector	
Union provides representation for members	35
Union negotiates improvements in pay and conditions	25
Union provides legal aid and accident cover	24
Government policies	18
Collective strength of union organisation	14
Private Sector	
Union negotiates improvements in pay and conditions	32
Collective strength of union organisation	24
Union provides legal aid and accident cover	23
Union provides representation for members	21
All or most are union members	14

Source: Labour Research Department (1986b: 23).

Based on a survey of 265 union representatives and shop stewards, who were asked for the most convincing arguments used in their workplace in favour of union membership. Multiple answers were allowed.

A survey of 1,249 NUPE members, carried out in early 1988, came up with the following conclusions on the motivation for joining the union:

> "Most members (61 per cent) joined a union to have 'someone to turn to if I had a problem at work'. Half say they joined because they thought it would help to get better pay and conditions at work, and only one in five joined 'because I believed in trade unions and wanted to be part of the movement'. Twenty seven per cent said they had to join as a condition of the job. Only five per cent joined because they were attracted by the benefits and services offered."

> (NUPE, 1989: 7)

Furthermore, only five per cent said they had joined NUPE in particular because its benefits were more attractive than those of other unions. Thus, whilst individual representation was seen as being potentially very important, other selective benefits and services appeared not to be a major factor in encouraging individuals to join this particular union, although it must be pointed out that the survey predates the launch of the union's financial services package in May 1988.

Kelly and Bailey tentatively suggest that selective benefits may help unions to retain those members who become unemployed, since the unions with higher proportions of unemployed members tend to be the skilled manual and professional unions, which often provide "labour market access and information" (1989: 61). Lewis (1989) also provides evidence of this effect, with almost 20 per cent of his sample of 123 unemployed union members

citing either "provision of benefits" or "protection or help while unemployed" as a reason for maintaining their membership on becoming unemployed. In addition, a further fifteen per cent gave "union membership necessary in order to obtain another job" as a reason for retaining their membership.

In sum, the above evidence suggests that selective benefits, whilst probably rather less important than collective bargaining, were at least of some significance in the decision to join a union. Of the various selective benefits offered by unions, it appears that individual representation and legal assistance, and in some cases labour market access and information, may have been more important than cash benefits and discount packages in the decision to join a union, although the latter may well have become a more significant incentive following their development in the late 1980s.

We saw earlier how unions were developing their services in the late 1980s, particularly in the area of discounts, financial and legal services and training. In the remainder of this section, we assess the importance of these new benefits by examining the experiences and views of our sample of union officials. We discuss their attitude to the development of such services and whether they feel that they could become an important aid to recruitment and retention.

The development of some benefits was often associated with the "business unionism" of, for example, the EETPU, so that the provision of such benefits

had been controversial in some unions. Thus, some officials expressed serious doubts about the union offering a financial services package to members. We encountered this view in its most extreme form from a left-wing official of the AEU:

> "I don't see my role as propping up capitalism...I don't see my role as assisting workers as to how they can get themselves more and more into debt...I see my role as demonstrating that unions are there to protect and defend their living standards, and the more we try to move away from that with clever-clever concepts, people get confused."

> (AEU District Secretary)

Another view, from a different political perspective, but still expressing reservations about the development of discount packages, came from a BIFU official:

> "Some people within the union are concerned that we are going to end up just like a staff association, as a discount house. We don't want to lose our traditional values because that would effect our retention of members and possibly the potential for future members who may be a bit further thinking than the average recruit into a bank, and therefore say 'I want a union that's actually going to improve my lot with my employers, and not necessarily just offer me a discount', which, let's be honest, if anybody looks around closely enough they can probably get for themselves."

> (BIFU Area Organiser)

This view was echoed by another BIFU official, who suggested that there was a "grudging acceptance" of the development of discount packages on the part

of BIFU activists. The point in this case is that whilst there was some recognition that such services could be attractive to members, the provision of discount services was traditionally a major feature of the staff associations, which were regarded with contempt by BIFU activists, who were anxious that their own union maintain its distinctive character.

More representative of our sample of officials, however, was the following view from a NUPE official on the introduction of a financial services package:

> "There was considerable political resistance to getting involved at all...from full-time officials and lay activists, who saw it as 'consumer unionism' or 'new unionism'; the EETPU type of thing. I've always favoured it so long as it was an addition to the services that we provided and not a change in emphasis. I don't see why our members shouldn't have all the benefits that size can bring, so long as that doesn't divert the union into providing that rather than union services."

> (NUPE Regional Secretary)

Thus, whilst there was some opposition to the development of discount packages and other new benefits, the great majority of the officials we interviewed were in favour of them, so long as their introduction was seen as an addition to, rather than a substitute for, representational services.

The next question, of course, is whether officials found such benefits helpful in the recruitment and retention of members. Only a very small minority felt that the new benefits were of no help whatsoever (see Table 6.8). However,

the usual view was that their impact, whilst probably positive, was at most marginal, whilst some officials specifically stated that they were more helpful in retention than in recruitment.

TABLE 6.8: Do The New Services and Benefits Help in the Recruitment and Retention of Members?

Response	Number of Replies
Yes	21
Too early to say	2
No	2
Don't Know	2
	27

Source: Interviews with local union officials, 1989–90.

An interesting suggestion was made by one of our respondents:

> "I suspect that it is an intangible thing. It's simply an impression that the union is providing all of these things which you can make use of if you wish to. In practice, a lot of them don't make any use at all but they think that the union is doing this, that and the other for them, and therefore they're in the union."
>
> (BIFU Area Organiser)

Thus, the actual take up of benefits may, according to this view, not be critical if individuals can be persuaded to join by the offer of potential benefits.

A key feature of the selective benefits option is that such benefits may assist in the recruitment and retention of members even where the union is not

recognised by the employer, and so does not negotiate terms and conditions.

This is catered for in many US unions, in their "associate membership"

category (Jarley and Fiorito, 1990). Several officials were aware of this

argument:

> "[Could the union ever recruit and retain members where there
> is no recognition?] I think that is the tack we have decided to
> go down. This is the challenge we've set ourselves as a
> union... We've always been able to hold onto members, without
> them being employed even, but not in the numbers that we'd
> like to."

> (TGWU District Secretary)

However, the same official noted the long-term nature of such a strategy:

> "What is happening in our union now is going to take a decade
> before it shows whether it is going to bear fruit."

> (TGWU District Secretary)

For the present, at least, officials felt that recognition was still critical if

members were to be retained. In general, officials were rather pessimistic

about the ability of selective benefits to retain members in the longer term.

An interesting view was put forward by a BIFU official:

> "[Do the new discount services help you to recruit and retain
> members in the absence of recognition?] I think they are an
> advantage, but I don't think they'd stay just for that. I think if
> people stay it is simply because they believe in trade unions
> and want an independent trade union in there on their behalf.

I don't think they are going to stay for discount packages or anything like that...because if someone's prepared to stick it out under those circumstances, then it isn't about the cheap cosmetics or a cheap holiday."

<div align="right">(BIFU Area Organiser)</div>

This argument was echoed by an USDAW official:

"It's true that you might be able to recruit on the basis of this sort of thing [discounts etc.], but if you are dealing with an employer who is hell bent on keeping you out, and he's prepared to transgress the law in doing so, then people can be bullied out of trade unionism."

<div align="right">(USDAW Deputy Divisional Organiser)</div>

Thus, to remain a union member in a hostile anti-union environment, with all that this may entail for the individual concerned, may require more than this type of discount benefit.

We therefore suggest that such services may be more useful when trying to recruit individual non-members where the union is already recognised. Here the prospects of victimisation for union membership are remote, so that even marginal inducements to join may have a significant effect.

This suggests that the development of selective benefits may have a greater impact where unions are attempting to consolidate their organisation than where they are attempting to expand into new job territories, and they will be

particularly useful where density levels are quite low due to adverse attitudinal or structural conditions. Thus, white-collar unions, unions seeking to organise women and unions organising in scattered workplaces, but which nevertheless have recognition agreements, would be particularly well-advised to develop their selective benefits.

Regardless of whether unions recruit non-unionists by developing their selective benefits, individual unions may feel compelled to develop them in order to avoid losing members to rival unions. The improvement of union services may thus be driven by inter-union competition. The officials we interviewed were split fairly evenly on this question, with no clear pattern by union. Those officials who felt that failure to develop new services would result in membership loss tended to talk in terms of a "market place for trade unionism", with members becoming increasingly demanding in terms of services.

Conclusions

Whilst in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was no major reversal of the long-term move away from traditional union cash benefits, there was a new emphasis on negotiated discounts on a wide range of products, such as financial services, travel and tourism, and motoring and other services. In addition, unions were keen to demonstrate their commitment to training, sometimes by attempting to negotiate on training with employers, and in a few

cases by extending the traditional union education service to include job-related training.

Many such services were clearly aimed to appeal to the member as a consumer, but union officials were often at pains to point out that whilst their union sought to provide as wide a range of services as possible, nevertheless such discount services were essentially of an ancillary nature, with negotiation and representation remaining as the core union purpose.

Union-negotiated discounts were not new in the 1980s. In some unions they had existed for many years. What was new for many unions was the systematic attempt to revamp and to promote such benefits as an integrated package of members' services. There was a feeling amongst some officials that it was essential to match the developments of rival unions in order to avoid dissatisfaction amongst members, and even to safeguard the ability to recruit and retain members. According to this view, such developments were driven by the demands of the membership and by inter-union competition, and may be seen as a symptom of "market shares" trade unionism (Willman, 1989), with a perceived need to continually update the "product" in order to compete in the "market" for union membership. Also important was the fact that in this period, the suppliers of such goods and services were often particularly keen to offer discounts to union members as part of their approach to marketing their products.

In some respects the new services were as important symbolically as they were in practice. The EETPU, for example, was keen to project itself as a modern, progressive union, sensitive and responsive to the demands of its members. Even those unions which did not share the EETPU's vision of "business unionism" were nevertheless anxious to maximise their membership appeal by offering as much as possible to members.

With a few exceptions, our sample of local full-time officials were in favour of the development of their unions' selective benefits along the lines described above. The majority claimed that such developments might assist in the recruitment and retention of members, but that this effect was likely to be only marginal. Some officials were aware of the thinking behind "associate membership" trade unionism, but they felt that at least in the immediate future employer recognition would continue to be vital if membership were to be retained for any length of time. It seemed unlikely that such benefits would provide an effective incentive to unionise in the face of employer hostility to unionisation, although they might have more of an effect where unions were attempting to consolidate membership under existing recognition agreements.

CHAPTER 7

UNION STRATEGY AND THE LEVEL OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Introduction

The level of resources available to trade unions has long been an area for concern, and during the 1980s it attracted increasing attention as membership declined. Given that British unions derive the bulk of their income from membership contributions (Latta, 1972; Willman and Morris, 1988a), it was suggested that unions needed to increase contribution rates. This concern with resources and contributions arose for three reasons.

Firstly, by the mid–1980s it was being argued that if they were to avoid being marginalised, unions needed to extend their recruitment activity to organise new sectors of the labour market. As Willman (1989) points out, however, such expansionary recruitment activity is highly resource–intensive, so that additional resources might be necessary if unions were to successfully extend their recruitment activities.

Secondly, we suggested in chapter 6 that unions might attract additional members and improve their retention of existing ones by developing their services and benefits, but that there was a question as to whether or not the unions would be able to finance this. Whilst it may be possible to increase the provision of certain consumer discounts without incurring major additional

168

costs, this would not necessarily be true of all new benefits and services. Thus, it might be necessary to increase the level of membership contributions in order to provide the required finance. Edmonds, for example, sees this as essential in the bid to provide an attractive range of advisory and advocacy services, which would involve the development of specialist head office departments, and an improved network of local officers. He claims that:

> "These changes mean that the era of cheap, post-war trade unionism is fast coming to an end. More officials, more specialist advice and more information bulletins will have to be paid for by sharply increased union contributions."

> (1984: 21)

The TUC itself has long recognised a need to increase contributions, if a proper level of services is to be maintained (see, for example, TUC Annual Report, 1961: 316).

Thirdly, even if unions were to continue to provide existing members with the current level of services and benefits, it was likely that servicing costs would increase. Given the trend towards smaller workplaces, and away from industry-level bargaining, the scope for economies of scale in the servicing of members was likely to diminish. Thus, again, there seemed to be a need for higher contributions.

The above arguments suggest, then, that higher contributions might be necessary if the unions were to maintain or increase membership and to

extend their field of organisation. We begin this chapter with a review of recent trends in union contributions and of the debates within the union movement. Our main aim, however, is to discuss to what extent unions were able to increase the level of contributions to meet the challenges outlined above. We approach this question in two ways: firstly through a time–series analysis of the relationship between union contributions and membership, and secondly through a cross–section analysis designed to identify those factors which appear to influence a union's contribution rate. Finally, we examine recent developments in union contributions policies, and show how these were often related to organising priorities.

Union Contributions in Britain

By the 1980s, union contributions in Britain were low, both by international and by historical standards. In 1988 British unions had contribution rates at about half the level of West German unions, and around two thirds those of French and Italian unions (Labour Research Department, 1988b). In 1984, TUC unions had an average individual contribution rate of 55 pence per week (£28.59 per year), equivalent to 0.36 per cent of the average male weekly wage. In 1938, by comparison, the average contribution was 1.5 per cent of the average male wage. Table 7.1 records the long term decline in union contributions relative to wages.

TABLE 7.1: Union Contributions as a Percentage of the Average Male Gross Wage, 1938-74

	%
1938	1.50
1954	0.75
1960	0.40
1970	0.33
1974	0.28

Source: TUC internal papers.

Table 7.2 shows, however, that by the 1980s union members were paying a higher percentage of average earnings in union contributions than they had during the mid to late-1970s, although real contribution rates remained at very low levels compared to earlier decades. Willman and Morris (1988a: 55) attribute this modest recovery to greater efficiency in the collection of contributions due, as check-off and direct debit became more widespread, and also to attempts by unions to restore their finances in a period of falling membership by increasing the level of contributions.

Table 7.3 provides some additional insights into trends in contributions in recent decades, this time looking at the real value of contributions, deflated by prices rather than by wages or earnings. From this, we can identify three broad phases. Firstly, real contributions increased at a modest rate from the 1950s up until the late 60s. Secondly, the 1970s saw real contributions fluctuating around the £24 to £25 level, with real contributions at the end of the decade at a similar level to the late 1960s. Finally, the 1980s saw a

marked increase in real contributions, at a much faster rate than had been
seen in earlier years, so that by 1989 they had increased by over 40 per cent
in real terms since 1979.

TABLE 7.2: Union Contribution Income Per Member as a Percentage of
Average Earnings, 1975-89.

	%
1975	0.320
1976	0.334
1977	0.338
1978	0.330
1979	0.334
1980	0.330
1981	0.371
1982	0.370
1983	0.373
1984	0.357
1985	0.373
1986	0.377
1987	0.376
1988	0.364
1989	0.354

Note: The figures in this table are based on average earnings and are
not comparable to those in Table 7.1, which are based on
average male gross wages.

Source: Union membership and income from members from Certification
Officer's annual reports. Average weekly earnings of full time
employees on adult rates from New Earnings Survey.

These phases appear to correlate with the phases of union growth identified
by Price and Bain (1983), with modest membership growth and stagnating or
gently declining density up to 1968, rapid growth and increasing density in the

172

1970s and sharp decline after 1979. As we have seen, Willman and Morris (1988a: 55) interpret the increase in contributions in the 1980s as a reaction by unions to falling membership. An alternative explanation, of course, would be that higher contributions contribute to lower membership through a "price elasticity" effect.

TABLE 7.3: Per Capita Income from Members at 1985 Prices, £ per member per annum

Year	£
1951–55	19.78
1956–60	21.30
1961–65	24.23
1966–70	24.85
1971–73	na
1974	24.83
1975	23.96
1976–80	25.12
1980–85	31.02
1986	35.04
1987	36.12
1988	36.60
1989	36.18

Notes: Income from members divided by total membership, at 1985 prices.

Grouped years are annual averages.

na means not available.

Sources: Income from members and total membership:
1951–70 Report of the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies, various years.
1974–89 Annual Report of the Certification Officer, various years.
Retail price index: Economic Trends Annual Supplement, 1991.

Thus, whilst unions increased contributions to some extent in the 1980s, two questions remain. Firstly, to what extent did higher contributions adversely affect unions' ability to recruit and retain members? Secondly, given the alleged need for further increases to fund improved services and benefits and to finance organising campaigns, to what extent did unions appear able to pursue further increases, without encountering adverse consequences for recruitment and retention? Before presenting our empirical work on such questions, we review the debates on union contributions.

Union Contributions: The Debates

The low level of contributions, and its effect on union finances, has long been an issue of concern to union leaders. Thus, a TUC survey of union finances, carried out in 1960, led the General Council to conclude that unions needed to improve their financial position (TUC Annual Report, 1962: 109). In 1961, the following motion was presented at the TUC:

> "This Congress urges the General Council to consider, with a view to making recommendations to a future Congress, means of promoting the adoption by affiliated organisations of a uniform minimum contribution for industrial services and greater uniformity of industrial benefits such as strike and lock-out pay."

> (TUC Annual Report, 1961: 316)

The mover of the motion, a delegate of the then National Union of General and Municipal Workers, argued that such a course of action would lay the basis for sounder union finances and improved inter-union relations by

174

removing competition over contributions and industrial benefits. The Congress debate revealed some reservations about the proposals. A National Union of Agricultural Workers delegate opposed uniform contributions on the grounds that unions differed greatly in the average earnings levels of their members, suggesting instead that unions might relate contributions to the minimum hourly adult pay rates of their members. A delegate from the Draughtsmen's and Allied Technicians' Association argued against the harmonisation of strike pay, claiming that his own union's members needed a higher level than most because of the isolation and lack of mass bargaining power of draughtsmen compared to manual workers. Nevertheless, the motion was carried, and the General Council presented a report to Congress the following year.

Their survey of contribution levels for 33 unions revealed a very broad range. They concluded that the need was to increase contributions, rather than necessarily making them more uniform. However, they did suggest that unions might take steps to pursue greater uniformity in contributions and benefits within particular sectors, where there was apparently evidence of competition in contribution rates. Significantly, the TUC drew back from making specific proposals about contributions and benefits, even within these sectors, suggesting instead that the unions themselves might consult on these issues (TUC Annual Report, 1962: 106-109).

The issue of union finances and inadequate contribution rates was again raised during the TUC Development Programme, adopted by Congress in 1981. The General Council issued a consultative document in November 1982, seeking the views of individual unions on ways of increasing contribution income. Whilst unions said that they would welcome TUC guidance, they were aware of the difficulties involved in attempting a coordinated increase in contribution levels. In May 1983, the General Council recommended a target contribution rate of one per cent of gross earnings of a typical member. Unions were asked to move towards this target at their own pace, and the TUC was to monitor progress and to issue a regular progress report in its summary of the TUC annual returns (TUC Annual Report, 1983: 22-3).

In 1991, the TUC Finance and General Purposes Committee recommended that unions with contribution rates between 110p and 125p per week should increase their rates by at least 10 per cent, whilst those with rates below 110p should increase theirs by a larger amount, the aim being:

> "... to improve the financial position of unions and the TUC by encouraging unions to take a co-ordinated approach to subscriptions."

> (TUC, 1991a: 8)

Thus, there has been some agreement amongst union leaders on the need to increase the level of contributions. There are, however, difficulties with this.

Firstly, inter-union competition may restrain unions from increasing contributions for fear of losing members to other unions (Latta, 1972: 410). This point was raised by several unions during the TUC's consultative exercise of the early 1980s (TUC, 1981a: 6), and it appears regularly in debates at annual Congress (see for example, TUC Annual Report, 1961: 316 and Annual Report, 1983: 393-4).

Whilst this may only affect a small minority of individual membership decisions, nevertheless the relative level of contributions may be important at the margin. Thus, NUPE has often been cited as a union with low contribution rates. In a survey of 1,249 NUPE members, carried out during 1988, eight per cent claimed to have chosen NUPE over other unions because it had the lowest level of contributions of unions recruiting in the area. In our interviews with local full-time officials, a majority felt that inter-union competition kept contribution rates low. Those agreeing with this view tended to come from unions such as BIFU, GMB, NUPE, USDAW and UCATT; unions which faced keen competition in some areas.

A second possible constraint on contribution rates is resistance from members. This may take the form of direct resistance to increases in contribution rates from within the union. Oram (1987) provides evidence of this in his discussion of membership ballots on special levies in the NGA and SOGAT, although these unions may be a-typical in that their contributions were already much higher than most unions. Willman and Morris (1988a: 74-

5) show that the determination of contributions is often a matter for annual conference and/or the national executive committee, so that members may have ample opportunity to resist increases.

In addition to such direct resistance, actual and potential members may exert an indirect influence over contributions in that significant increases may be a disincentive to join and to remain in membership. According to the 1989 British Social Attitudes Survey, only six percent of non-members felt that the cost of membership was "important" or "fairly important" as a reason for not belonging to a union (Millward, 1990). In our interviews with full-time union officials, only a minority said that the level of contributions was generally a problem in recruiting and retaining members, although they did see this as more of a problem in the case of low-paid, part-time and women workers.

In a survey of 265 union representatives and shop stewards, carried out by the Labour Research Department, 17 per cent said that the cost of union contributions was the main argument used against joining the union at their workplace. This, along with claims from workers that unions are "too political" (15 per cent), were the main arguments cited as deterring membership (Labour Research Department, 1986b: 23).

In a survey of 671 ex-BIFU members carried out on behalf of the union in 1988, 15.4 per cent cited the level of contributions as their primary reason for leaving the union, including 10.6 per cent who said they were "not getting

value for money" and 4.8 per cent who said they "could not afford them" (BIFU internal document "Resignations Survey", 1988). Our own interviews with BIFU officials suggest that the union had around 20 thousand resignations per year during the late 1980s, which implies that BIFU lost about three thousand members per year (two per cent of 1988 membership) because of the level of contributions. Whilst at first sight a figure of two per cent may not appear particularly significant, this must be compared to an annual BIFU growth rate of around three per cent during the 1980s.

Whilst we must be wary of the likelihood of post hoc rationalisation, particularly in an exit study such as the BIFU one, the above results suggest that contributions may influence the membership decisions of at least a minority of individuals, and particularly so for the lower paid.

Bearing in mind the possible problems involved in increasing the level of contributions, union principal officers, meeting at a consultative conference organised as part of the "TUC Strategy" exercise in 1984, questioned the wisdom of the General Council's target contribution rate of one per cent of gross earnings and concluded that:

> "... contribution rates generally had to be competitive and moves
> to introduce a common rate at a percentage linked to the gross
> earnings of a typical member were premature given the
> incidence of competition and membership resistance."

> (TUC Annual Report, 1985: 19)

The question, then, is whether unions could increase the real level of contributions sufficient to provide the resources necessary to finance additional recruitment activity and a significant increase in the level of servicing and benefits provided to members.

Is Membership Sensitive To "Price"? The Demand for Union Services

A common theme in the above debates is that unions are prevented from increasing contribution rates for fear of deterring workers from joining. This is consistent with the rational-choice view outlined earlier in the thesis, and treats contributions as the "price" of union services. This suggests that the elasticity of demand for union services with respect to the contribution rate is a critical factor underlying the ability of unions to increase contributions. If demand is inelastic, then unions will be able to increase contributions with little effect on membership levels, and total revenue will increase. If, however, demand is elastic, then this suggests that unions will find it difficult to increase revenue from contributions.

In the only study of its type known to us, Pencavel (1971) concludes that the demand for union services in the UK is price-inelastic, with a short-run elasticity of 0.173 and a long-run elasticity of between 0.364 and 0.466. He suggests that:

> "The relative inelasticity of the (own) price of union services provides empirical evidence to support the common belief that union finances could be strengthened by higher dues."
>
> (Pencavel, 1971: 187)

Following Pencavel, we set out to provide an updated estimate of the real price elasticity by modelling a simple demand for union services function (see Appendix 5). We used aggregate union density (UDEN) as our dependent variable, with real per capita membership income (RPCMIN) as our "price" variable, and real personal disposable income per head of population (RINCPC) as the income variable.

In contrast to Pencavel, our initial results suggested that whilst the short-run elasticity was around 0.5, the demand for union services was price-elastic in the long run, with an elasticity of around three. This appeared to cast doubt on the extent to which unions could increase contributions as a means of raising income.

However, we found some evidence to suggest that there was a causal effect running in reverse: from union membership and density to the level of contributions (see Appendix 6). What seems to happen is that when membership is falling unions increase contribution rates, perhaps with a lag of a year or more, in an attempt to maintain total income, whilst with increasing membership unions may allow real contribution rates to stagnate, or even to be eroded by inflation, since higher membership itself generates sufficient income growth. This is consistent with the observations made by many of the officials we interviewed, with the evidence of a lower level of real contribution rates during the 1970s and also with the interpretation of Willman and Morris (1988a: 55). The suggestion is, then, that unions follow a

181

satisficing approach to pricing, levying a contribution rate sufficient to finance the organisation as it exists and to provide the customary level of service to members.

Nevertheless, we found evidence of at least some causal link running from real contributions to membership and density (see Appendix 6), so that whilst our initial estimates were likely to overstate the true price elasticity, we could not discount the possibility that higher real contributions impair membership growth, although we could not state with any degree of confidence that the elasticity was greater than one (Appendix 5).

In fact, this time-series analysis may understate the difficulties faced by unions in attempting to increase contribution rates. We have already seen that inter-union competition is widely quoted as an explanation for low contributions. Thus, any individual union going it alone in increasing contributions risks losing members to other unions, so that the membership loss in this case is likely to be greater than that implied by an aggregate price elasticity. Also, the demand elasticity approach looks simply at membership exit (or non-joining) as a constraint on higher contributions, but we also need to allow for the possibility that union members may be able to resist increases in contributions by voicing their protests within the union. It may be that unions will be prevented from increasing contributions by members' resistance and protest, short of exit. Thus, by concentrating solely on exit behaviour the

above conclusions may again understate the difficulties faced by unions in attempting to increase the real level of contributions.

Cross Section Analysis: A Reduced-Form Approach

The above suggests that it may be fruitful to look beyond the aggregate-level approach in order to provide a more detailed analysis of the problems faced in attempting to increase income from members. Below, we develop a cross-section analysis using data from the TUC's annual returns from unions, in an attempt to discover the factors which influence an individual union's contribution rate. This will allow us to suggest which types of unions or memberships are likely to be more resistant to higher contributions, and to explore the implications for union strategy. In particular, we attempt to test the following hypotheses:

1. That resistance from (actual and potential) members acts as a constraint on contribution levels. This effect might lead to those unions recruiting in lower-paid and harder-to-organise sectors having to levy lower contribution rates in order to recruit effectively.

2. That the degree of recruitment competition faced by a union acts as a significant constraint on its contribution rates. In other words, where recruitment rivalry between unions is more intense, contributions will be lower, other things being equal.

3.   That unions which provide higher benefits to members are able to levy higher contributions. This assumes that in arriving at a decision on whether or not to join a union, the individual assesses both costs and benefits of being a member, so that higher benefits may justify higher costs. Also, existing members are less likely to resist higher contributions where this is accompanied by improved benefits and services.

Acceptance of either or both of hypotheses (1) and (2) would not necessarily mean that the high benefit/high cost form of trade unionism is unworkable. Members may be recruited and retained and internal protest defused in spite of higher contributions, so long as the benefits of membership are seen to be worthwhile. However, membership resistance to higher contributions would mean that any attempt to increase them would be that much more difficult and hazardous a strategy to pursue. Acceptance of hypothesis (3) would add weight to the high benefit/high cost strategy, since it suggests that contributions may be increased so long as benefits are increased accordingly.

In addition, we will discuss the possibility that unions might opt to shift the burden of higher contributions onto less price-sensitive members. We suggest that such a policy may be necessary if unions are to increase resources on the one hand, and yet maintain their ability to recruit on the other.

Variables Used in the Analysis

We now discuss in more detail, the variables which we use in our cross-section analysis. We divide the explanatory variables into three broad categories: those reflecting the nature of the union's environment, those representing the characteristics of the membership, and finally, the characteristics of the union itself. Table 7.4 summarises the dependent and independent variables. The precise definitions and data sources for these variables are discussed in Appendix 8.

Dependent Variables

We use two dependent variables, per capita membership income (PCMIN) and the main contribution rate (MCR). The former is available for most unions, and is calculated simply by dividing total membership income by total membership. Thus, it gives us the average actual contribution per member. The main contribution rate is the declared standard rate and/or the rate which is paid by more members than any other. This variable is obviously only available for those unions which declare specific contribution rates. Thus, it is not available for those unions which base contributions on a given percentage of an individual's pay.

TABLE 7.4: Variables Used in the Cross–Section Analysis

	Variable Name	Description	Expected Sign
Dependent Variables:			
	PCMIN MCR	Per capita membership income Main contribution rate	
Independent Variables:			
a)	Environmental Characteristics:		
	COMP	1=over 0.002 disputes committee references per member (1980–85) 0 =0.002 or fewer references per member	Negative
	SECT	1 = public sector 0 = private sector	?
	IND	0 = union's primary job territories are high density (>50%) 1 = union's primary job territories are low density (<50%)	Negative
	WPAY	Average gross weekly earnings of male manual workers in the primary SIC.	Positive
b)	Membership Characteristics:		
	COLL	1 = white collar majority 0 – blue collar majority	?
	PFMR	Female membership as proportion of total	Negative
c)	Union Characteristics:		
	PCOB	Percapita other benefits (includes all cash benefits to members except for dispute benefit)	Positive
d)	Price–discrimination variables:		
	DISCP1	Contribution based on a given % of the individual's pay 0=No; 1=Yes	Positive
	DISCP2	Contributions vary according to pay scales or bands. 0 = No; 1 = Yes	Positive
	NCR	Number of contribution rates quoted (1 to 5)	Positive

Note: SIC is Standard Industrial Classification

Independent Variables:

(a)   Environmental Characteristics

As we have already noted, it is widely believed that union contributions are restrained by inter-union competition for members (Latta, 1972: 410) Hence, we would expect that those unions facing more intense recruitment rivalry would, other things being equal, have lower contribution rates.

In our analysis we attempt to proxy the intensity of competition by looking at the number of TUC disputes committee hearings in which each union was involved over the five-year period 1980 to 1985. We then divide this by the number of members (to compensate for any size bias in the number of disputes) and calculate a dichotomous competition variable (COMP), which takes the value zero for unions with 0.002 disputes per member or less, and one for unions with more than 0.002 disputes per member. We expect the coefficient on this variable to have a negative sign. Admittedly, this is a very crude proxy for the intensity of recruitment rivalry. For example, it takes no account of any inter-union disputes which fall short of a full Disputes Committee hearing. Nevertheless, it gives us some indication of the extent to which a union comes into competition with other unions.

Whether the union recruits mainly in the private or public sector may influence the level of contributions.   Public sector unions are generally better-established and more secure, due largely to the traditional pro-recognition stance of public sector employers, and to the more

bureaucratic nature of public sector employment, which tend to encourage union membership (Clegg, 1976; Winchester, 1983). Public sector employees are likely to be encouraged to join trade unions, so that there may be less of a need to maintain low contribution rates to attract members. However, public sector employment tends to be in larger units, with centralised bargaining arrangements, so that per capita recruitment and servicing costs may be reduced, allowing them to have lower contribution rates. Thus, we cannot be sure whether public sector status (SECT) will lead to higher or lower contribution rates.

We expect that those unions which recruit primarily in sectors which are more difficult to organise would have lower contribution rates, as they attempt to overcome their recruitment difficulties by minimising the costs of union membership. Also, workers in low density sectors may find that the benefits of unionisation are slight, in that recognition from employers may be lacking and union bargaining power may be limited. Thus, we include a dummy variable to represent the union's primary job territory (IND). This took a value of zero where union density in the union's primary SIC industry was more than fifty per cent, and one where this was less than fifty per cent. We expect a negative coefficient.

We expect that those unions which recruit in industries with higher pay levels will generally be able to levy higher contribution rates, since members will be less resistant. Thus, we expect a positive relationship between the average

earnings in the union's primary job territory and the union's contribution level. (n.b. We take average gross weekly earnings of male manual workers (WPAY) to proxy the earnings level. Any pay differences attributable to a concentration of white collar or female workers will be reflected in the COLL and PFMR variables, as explained below).

(b) Membership Characteristics

In order to test the effect of white-collar status on contributions, we use a dichotomous variable (COLL) with a value of zero for those unions with a majority of blue-collar workers, and one for those with a majority of white-collar workers. In so far as white-collar workers tend to earn more, we would expect a positive coefficient on this variable. However, white-collar workers may have a lower propensity to unionise (Elsheikh and Bain, 1980; Bain and Elias, 1985; Booth, 1986), so that we may expect white-collar unions to have lower contribution rates, in an attempt to overcome recruitment resistance. Thus, we cannot be clear about the expected coefficient on this variable.

As we saw earlier, females are less prone to unionise than are males (e.g. Bain and Elias, 1985; Booth, 1986) and they also tend to be less highly-paid. Thus, we expect unions with a higher percentage of female members (PFMR) to have lower contribution rates, as unions attempt to attract them into membership, and because they are likely to be more resistant to higher rates than are males.

(c)   Union Characteristics

We consider the possibility that those unions which provide higher cash welfare benefits may be able to levy higher contribution rates. This argument is based on the assumption that individuals base their unionisation decisions on an appraisal of costs and benefits, so that higher benefits may reduce resistance to higher contributions.   We use per capita welfare benefits expenditure (PCOB) in our analysis. This includes all cash benefits with the exception of dispute benefit, the latter being excluded because it tends to be an erratic item of expenditure, its distribution across unions in any one year being dependent upon the incidence of industrial action in that year.

We decided not to include a proxy for the collective-bargaining gains of unions. Whilst these certainly represent benefits gained by the union, by and large they are available to members and non-members alike, and so they do not represent additional gains to the individual on joining. Hence, they would not enter into the individual's cost-benefit analysis, so that higher bargained gains would not necessarily justify higher contributions.

(d)   Price-Discrimination Variables

We consider the possibility that unions may be able to increase their per capita membership income, but not necessarily their single main contribution rate, by adopting a policy of price discrimination. This may allow unions to raise additional income from those groups of members who are relatively able and willing to pay higher contributions, without discouraging lower paid or

more price-sensitive groups from joining. The union may thus be able to avoid some of the membership resistance to higher per capita membership income. We therefore expect a positive coefficient on the price discrimination variable when per capita membership income (PCMIN) is the dependent variable, although there may be no such relationship when the main contribution rate (MCR) is the dependent variable, since price discrimination may occur without affecting this.

We tried three different variables. The DISCP1 and DISCP2 variables were included together in the regression equations, in an attempt to capture the effect of basing contributions on a given percentage of pay or on pay scales or bands respectively. The second approach was to use NCR, the number of different contribution rates quoted by the union in the TUC return (this varied from one up to a maximum of five). (Note that the latter, whilst involving different contribution rates for different categories of member, does not necessarily involve what economists would understand by the term "price discrimination", since the levels of service provided often differs between such membership categories. Where a union provides various levels of service at different prices, we might more accurately refer to this as "differential pricing".)

Empirical Results

We now present the results of our analysis of the above variables. Note that this cross-section analysis takes a reduced-form approach. An endogenous price variable is regressed on a number of environmental, membership and

union characteristics, which we are assuming to be exogenous. Thus, we envisage no simultaneity problems, and the equations reported below are ordinary least squares (OLS) estimates.

In the results reported, we exclude several of the variables identified earlier, since they persistently failed to produce statistically significant results. These variables are:

COMP

SECT

IND

NCR

We excluded one outlying case from our estimation. This was the British Air Line Pilots' Association (BALPA), which has a per capita membership income far higher than any other union in the sample.

The regression results are presented in Table 7.5. We present results for both dependent variables (PCMIN and MCR). Sample sizes vary between the two dependent variables, since MCR was not available for all unions. The variable DISCP1 is not included in the MCR equation, because unions which related contributions to pay by a fixed percentage do not, of course, quote a given contribution level in their return.

The variables WPAY, PFMR and PCOB are significant in both the PCMIN and MCR equations, suggesting that unions with more highly-paid members, with a lower percentage of female members, and paying out higher levels of cash benefits, tend to have higher contribution rates.

TABLE 7.5: Regression Results: Cross Section Analysis

	I Percapita Membership Income (PCMIN)	II Main Contribution Rate (MCR)
WPAY	0.01495** (2.382)	0.03947*** (3.302)
COLL	15.79215*** (4.838)	30.62601*** (5.069)
PFMR	-14.13014** (-2.071)	-33.39728** (-2.623)
PCOB	1.17082** (2.038)	2.37191** (2.233)
DISCP1	19.56085*** (3.616)	---
DISCP2	-2.56317 (-0.520)	-12.04408 (-1.105)
Constant	6.24849 (0.567)	14.69295 (0.710)
R2	0.48356	0.50814
F	10.14354***	11.36387***
n	72	61

Significant at: 1% level ***
                 5% level **
                 10% level *

The variable representing whether the union is predominantly blue- or white-collar (COLL) was significant in both the PCMIN and MCR equations. The coefficient is positive, suggesting that white-collar unions have higher contributions (both PCMIN and MCR) than do blue-collar unions. However, our specification, with COLL included as a simple dummy variable, constrains this effect to shifting the intercept term, and does not allow for any possible interactive effects between COLL and the other independent variables. We tested for such effects by estimating separate equations for the blue-collar and white-collar sub-samples. However, a Chow test led us to accept the pooled equation as superior, suggesting that there are no significant interactive effects. Thus our simple shift dummy is sufficient in both the PCMIN and MCR equations (See Appendix 9 for details of this test).

Of the price discrimination variables, NCR and DISCP2 were never significant, whilst DISCP1 was significant in the PCMIN equation, but not in the MCR equation. Thus, unions which base contributions on a given percentage of the individual's pay tend to raise higher levels of per capita membership income than do other unions, although they do not necessarily have higher main contribution rates. This suggests that such price discrimination has a positive effect on union revenues, although we cannot rule out the possibility that we are picking up the effect of some other factor not included in the model. (Most of the unions involved organise highly-paid managerial and professional staff, and it may be that we are picking up a further pay effect in our DISCP1 variable.)

194

These results suggest a number of important conclusions. Firstly, members' pay levels seem to act as a constraint on the level of contributions. This is reflected in the findings on the pay (WPAY), white/blue collar status (COLL) and female membership (PFMR) variables. The suggestion here is that unions whose members are lower paid encounter greater resistance to higher contributions.

Such resistance might take the form of direct protest or greater difficulties in recruiting and retaining members.

Secondly, there is evidence that some unions have increased their per capita membership income (PCMIN), but not their main contribution rate (MCR), by basing contributions on pay, through a given percentage formula (DISCP1). However, of the seventy two unions included in our sample, only seven (plus the excluded outlying case) related contributions to pay in this way. Furthermore, our other measures of price discrimination and differential pricing (DISCP2 and NCR) were not statistically significant. Thus, price discrimination may have been used by some unions, but it was not the general practice amongst unions in 1985.

Thirdly, there is evidence that some unions have been able to levy higher contribution rates as a result of their having higher per capita cash benefits (PCOB). This suggests that resistance to higher contributions may be

overcome if members feel that they are getting value for money, in terms of the selective benefits offered by the union.

Fourthly, we failed to find the expected relationships between contributions and inter-union competition (COMP), sector (SECT), and industry density (IND). This may be attributable to a degree of multicollinearity amongst the independent variables, or it may reflect limitations in the proxy variables used. Thus, whilst we find no evidence of a general constraint on contributions due to inter-union competition, we would not wish to dismiss the possibility that alternative proxies of competition could produce more positive results, nor to deny that in certain specific cases competition might be an important factor. (A particular case that comes to mind is BIFU, competing for members with the non-TUC banking staff associations, which are not included in our competition variable).

Implications For Union Strategy

Both the time-series and cross-section results have implications for union strategy. We could not necessarily conclude from our time-series analysis that the level of union membership was highly price-elastic at the aggregate level, thus suggesting that the relatively modest contributions increases of the 1980s may not have significantly damaged the ability of the union movement to recruit and retain members. Furthermore, this suggests that it might have been feasible to raise additional finance by further increasing the level of contributions, although we must wary here because we could not rule out at

least some price elasticity effect and major increases could result in a greater price-sensitivity as we move beyond the hitherto-experienced levels of contributions.

Some union strategists had seen a need to extend organisation amongst the peripheral labour force, which included a high proportion of low-paid workers and women. Our cross-section findings show that such features were already associated with lower union contributions, and yet these same strategists also emphasised a need to mount organising campaigns and to develop union services and benefits if such groups were to be successfully recruited and retained. This in turn might require higher contributions to provide the necessary finance.

Thus, unions which seek to recruit amongst the peripheral workforce may be caught in a contradiction, unless they can demonstrate clearly that their services and benefits represent good value for money. On this latter point, the cross-section results appeared to offer some comfort for unions, in that those which already had higher cash benefits seem to have been able to levy higher contribution rates. Unfortunately, we lacked the data to perform a similar test on other types of selective benefits.

Another way out of this apparent contradiction might be to adopt a policy of price discrimination based on the individual members' income. This would involve reduced contributions for some, but higher contributions for others, so

that the overall level of income would be maintained or increased. The aim here is to increase revenue without deterring more price-sensitive individuals from joining.

Our findings suggest that whilst there was some evidence of this, and whilst it may have enabled some unions to increase the level of income collected from members, such a practice was not widely used. Of our interview sample of nine unions, only NALGO had a policy of basing contributions on the individual's pay, with a sliding scale of contribution rates for different salary bands. Furthermore, our interviews with full-time officials revealed some reservations about linking contributions to the individual's pay, on the grounds of administrative difficulty, particularly in multi-industry unions, in terms of not wishing to create a category of "second class citizens" within the union, and because of possible membership resistance.

Nevertheless, this could well be a viable policy option for at least some unions. Such a policy has been adopted by West German unions, for example, which usually link contributions to the individual's pay, either on a fixed percentage or banded basis. As a result, West German unions tend to be more financially secure than their British counterparts, with better education and publications services, higher strike pay, and with a better-financed national union centre (Labour Research Department, 1988b).

In addition to adopting price discrimination, unions might also relate contributions to the level of services or benefits enjoyed by the individual member. For example, several unions offered members a choice of cash benefits, with different contribution rates to match. Thus, as from April 1990, the TGWU had a basic rate (Scale 1) of 102 pence per week, with a voluntary higher rate (Scale 2) of 112 pence open only to members under the age of fifty, and giving additional entitlement to sickness benefit. In addition, lorry drivers could pay an additional 16 pence per week and become entitled to "Distress Benefit". Similarly, AEU members could opt to contribute at a higher rate and gain additional benefit entitlements, for example in 1990 a section one (skilled) member could pay an extra 31 pence per week over and above the standard £1-15, and so gain entitlement to superannuation, sickness and unemployment benefits.

Apparently more widespread than allowing members to opt for different contribution rates was the practice of allocating different rates of contributions to different groups of members. Our cross-section analysis produced no evidence that such a practice had enabled unions to increase the level of membership income raised (the NCR variable was not significant), although the apparent resistance of lower-paid and women workers to higher contributions might mean that such a policy could assist in recruiting and retaining such groups. Part-timers, apprentices and younger workers, those on government-funded training schemes, and those becoming unemployed, might be charged a lower rate, although entitlement to cash benefits was

often reduced accordingly. Thus, in USDAW full-time adult workers paid 71 pence in 1990, whilst part-time workers and the under 16's paid only 56 pence, but were not entitled to unemployment or sickness benefit. In the EETPU, "skilled, technical and supervisory" members paid £1-10, whilst "auxiliary, clerical and administrative" members paid 85 pence, but were entitled to cash benefits at around 70 to 80 per cent of the skilled worker level.

The advantage in relating contributions to the level of benefits and services received is that the balance between the costs and benefits of joining the union may be made more favourable for particular categories of individual. A similar effect would be achieved if unions were to fund particular services or benefits either partly or entirely out of supplementary charges levied at the time of use. Such a policy of differential pricing is not, of course, strictly a form of price discrimination, since the latter involves levying different rates for the same level of services. Nevertheless, the broad aims are similar, in that, by offering a more flexible menu of costs and benefits, union membership may be made more attractive to hitherto little-unionised groups.

A particular form of such a differential pricing approach is the offer of cut-price "associate membership" for those in workplaces not covered by collective bargaining, offering access to the union's cash benefits, advisory and representational services. The Engineers' and Managers' Association, for example offered a reduced-rate contribution to those for whom the union did

not have negotiating rights. Such an approach was suggested by Cairns (1985, 1988) as a means of recruiting in the difficult to organise small-firm sector. Jarley and Fiorito (1990) describe the development of such schemes by unions in the USA, and Ichniowski and Zax (1990) suggest that the recruitment of associate members in a workplace may subsequently help the union to win full recognition.

Innovations in Contribution Rates

In this section, we briefly review the kinds of innovations being introduced by the unions in the 1980s. Our aim is not to present an exhaustive survey of developments, but to illustrate the way in which some unions were adapting their contributions policy in line with their organising strategies.

In our interviews with union officials and in our other research, we encountered several examples of unions having recently adjusted their contribution rates to increase their ability to recruit and retain. In some cases, such adjustments were aimed specifically at the union's target groups, such as women, part-timers, temporary workers and young people. We have already seen that by the 1980s, many unions were already offering lower contribution rates to such groups, and there appeared to be a move towards both price discrimination and differential pricing.

For example, in December 1985, the EETPU extended its offer of free membership for YTS trainees to include all apprentices and trainees at skills

centres aged under 18 years old. The aim here was to maintain and even increase the union's recruitment of apprentices, particularly in the engineering industry, where moves to multi-skilling meant that traditional demarcations and union affiliations were breaking down.

Both the GMB and the TGWU were amongst those unions introducing reduced-rate contributions for part-time workers during the 1980s, and in a report to the 1987 Congress, the TUC urged other unions to follow suit. Again this was seen as part of an attempt to recruit such workers in greater numbers, and was accompanied by recruitment campaigns and attempts to introduce issues of particular concern to part-timers onto the collective bargaining agenda.

As of April 1990 the TGWU reduced the membership qualification period for obtaining remission from 39 to 13 weeks. This made it easier for temporary workers to maintain continuous membership, since they could now retain their membership at a reduced rate when out of a job, and so avoid having to serve the qualifying period for union benefits each time they restarted work. At the same time, the union finally abolished membership entrance fees, previously set at a minimum level of 25 pence for adults and 15 pence for the under 18s.

Beyond our sample of nine unions, there were other notable examples of unions adjusting their contributions policy in an attempt to increase their ability

to recruit amongst targeted groups. In 1987, the NCU announced its intention to offer reduced-rate contributions as part of its recruitment drive in British Telecom's new subsidiary companies, established following privatisation. The NGA's 1988 Delegate Meeting approved a reduced contribution rate for new members in areas where the union lacked recognition, of £1 per week (50 pence for part-time workers) for the first two years, compared to the full rate of £1-90 at the time. Critics of the NGA's high contribution rates had long seen them as a source of recruitment difficulties, and the reform was designed to assist in the organising of new areas such as desk-top publishing and in-house printing, which threatened to undermine employment in the union's traditional job territories (Gennard, 1990: 184). In 1989, MSF offered free membership to unpaid volunteers working alongside paid MSF members in the voluntary sector, on condition that they move onto the normal contribution rate on securing paid employment. This was designed not only to assist recruitment, but also to strengthen MSF bargaining power in such organisations.

However, proposals for the reform of contribution rates occasionally met with resistance from within the union. Thus, in 1986 the GMB executive rejected a proposal to allow the unemployed to join as new members at reduced contribution rates, partly it appears because of concern within the union about the possible effects on the political balance within branches, and also because at that time existing members who became unemployed were required to continue paying the full contribution.

By 1987, leaders of several unions, including both the GMB and the TGWU were expressing interest in the "associate membership" schemes of unions in the USA (TUC, 1989b: 7). The GMB leadership was proposing a flexible menu of contribution rates for different sectors and groups, depending on the demands placed on the union's services and the degree of difficulty experienced in recruitment. Similarly, in its 1989 consultative document "Forward with the T&G", the TGWU proposed associate, junior and family membership categories. However, by the end of 1990, neither union had yet implemented such radical proposals.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we have seen that unions did increase contributions to some extent, as part of their attempts to restore their finances in the 1980s, although British unions still had rather lower contribution rates than in other countries and in earlier periods. Whilst there was some evidence of a price-elasticity effect, we could not conclude with any degree of certainty that membership was highly price-elastic, and the contributions increases of the 1980s appear to be more a consequence than a cause of declining membership. Further increases in contributions mught have been feasible, although this was likely to have at least some effect on membership, and price-sensitivity might increase as contributions rose beyond previously-experienced levels. Furthermore, there was evidence in our cross-section analysis to suggest that unions seeking to recruit amongst the typically low-

paid peripheral workforce, might face particular problems increasing contributions.

Willman and Morris (1988b) suggest that increases in contributions represented an alternative to recruitment strategies in the unions' bid to restore their financial stability in the 1980s. Indeed, Willman (1990) argues that unions might opt out of major recruitment activity, since membership growth does not necessarily imply an improvement in the finances of unions, and that the 1970s were a period of "cost-ineffective growth" for the unions. However, the poor financial performance of the 1970s may reflect the "satisficing" nature of union pricing strategy, with unions simply not finding it necessary to raise contributions when increasing membership provides income growth. Clearly, this does not imply that the growth of the 1970s was in itself financially damaging, nor that falling membership does no damage to union finances. It is likely that whatever financial recovery had been possible in the 1980s would have been equally, if not more easily, achievable during a period of growth, had the willingness been there.

Whilst we agree with Willman that union finances would probably benefit if new recruits came from the more highly-paid groups, who are able to pay higher contributions, we question whether the primary aim of trade unions is to achieve financial stability. Furthermore, we would not necessarily agree with his suggestion that:

"The experience of cost-ineffective growth during the 1970s may cause trade unions to discriminate in their choice of new members and thus to affect the aggregate membership level."

(Willman, 1990: 325)

What we have suggested is that wider recruitment may be important if unions are to survive as a social and political force in the longer term, and that price discrimination and/or differential pricing offer an opportunity for unions to combine improved financial performance with a contribution rate which does not necessarily deter the lower paid. As we have seen in this chapter, there is some evidence that British unions were realising this in the 1980s, with an increased general level of contributions alongside a move to offer lower rates on a selective basis. We show in subsequent chapters that in the case of at least some unions, this was in line with an increasing emphasis on organising the peripheral labour force.

PART FOUR

UNION ORGANISING STRATEGIES

CHAPTER 8

THE NATURE OF UNION RECRUITMENT ACTIVITY

Introduction

In the next four chapters, we examine union organising strategies in detail. Our overall aims are threefold: to describe such strategies and their implementation at local level, to assess them in terms of their contribution to union growth, and to explore their limitations.

In this chapter, we describe four types of union recruitment, and we calculate the scope for each type in Britain during the mid-1980s. We suggest that unions are likely to differ in their approach to recruitment, and that a union's size, the degree of organisation of its core job territories, and the union's own internal characteristics are likely to influence the extent and type of recruitment activity undertaken. We test these hypotheses in subsequent chapters. We conclude the present chapter with a review of the evidence on the trends in union recruitment activity, and with a description of the main types of recruitment campaign being launched in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

In subsequent chapters, we discuss the implementation of such recruitment campaigns, and we present a detailed examination of the difficulties faced by union recruiters during this period.

Types of Recruitment Activity

It is important at the outset to be aware of the diversity of recruitment activity.

Kelly and Heery (1989) provide a useful typology, as shown in Table 8.1.

TABLE 8.1: A Typology of Recruitment

Coverage by Recognition Agreements	Proximity of Job Territories			
		Close		Distant
Yes, Consolidation	a.	Non-members in organised establishments covered by recognition agreements	b.	Non-members covered by company/national recognition agreements but in weakly or non-organised establishments
No, Expansion	c.	Non-members in organised establishments not themselves covered by recognition agreements	d.	Non-members in unorganised establishments without recognition agreements

Source: Kelly & Heery (1989: 198).

This typology categorises recruitment activity along two dimensions: whether or not the target groups are covered by a union recognition agreement, and according to the proximity of the groups to already-organised workers. Kelly and Heery suggest that:

"As we move through each of these four areas of recruitment it can be seen that unions face progressively greater difficulties, and that to overcome them requires the mobilisation of both greater quantities and different types of resources."

(1989: 198)

209

They suggest that close consolidation, in well organised workplaces, tends to be carried out by lay representatives. Distant consolidation, however, requires the direct involvement of the union's full-time officials, since less well-organised workplaces tend to lack a self-sufficient network of lay representatives. This is also true of expansionary recruitment, particularly distant expansion, where by definition effective workplace organisation is absent. Thus, as Kelly and Heery (1989) argue, full-time officials would have a key role to play in distant expansion if unions were to successfully extend their organisation into new job territories.

The Scope for Union Recruitment

What scope existed for each of our four types of recruitment? Table 8.2 is a crude attempt to answer this question for those establishments employing 25 or more people. Using figures from the 1984 Workplace Industrial Relations Survey on union density (58 per cent), collective bargaining coverage (69 per cent) and the proportion of establishments where trade unions were present (79 per cent), we estimate the number of unorganised workers falling into the consolidation, close expansion and distant expansion categories. (Unfortunately, WIRS does not include establishments employing fewer than 25 employees, so that we cannot use these figures to perform a similarly detailed calculation for smaller workplaces.)

TABLE 8.2: The Scope for Union Recruitment in Great Britain: Estimates for 1984.

	Millions
Employees in Employment (1)	14.9
Trade Union Members (2)	8.7
Non-Members (3)	6.3
Of which:	
Covered by Collective Bargaining (4)	1.6
Not covered, but work in establishments where some unions recognised (5)	1.5
Work in establishments where no unions recognised (6)	3.1

Notes:

(1)   The WIRS 1984 population: employees working in establishments employing 25 people or more (Millward and Stevens, 1986: 332). WIRS also excluded agriculture, forestry and fishing, and coal extraction, which between them employed half a million people in 1984.

(2)   Equals [(1) x 0.58]. Union density figure of 0.58 from 1984 Workplace Industrial Relations Survey (Millward and Stevens, 1986: 54).

(3)   Equals (1) minus (2).

(4)   Calculated from [(1) x 0.69] minus (2). Collective bargaining coverage figure from 1984 WIRS from Millward and Stevens (1988).

(5)   Calculated from [(1) x 0.79] minus [(1) x 0.69].
Recognition figure from 1984 WIRS (see note (4)).

(6)   Calculated from [(1) x (1-0.79)].

Our calculations suggest that there were over one and a half million workers who were not union members but who were covered by collective bargaining, representing considerable scope for recruitment by consolidation. If anything, this is likely to be an underestimate of the true number of "free-riders", to the extent that some of the union members will be in establishments not covered by collective bargaining, so that the number of covered non-members will be correspondingly greater. A further 1.5 million workers worked in establishments where a union or unions were recognised, but who were not themselves covered by collective bargaining. This represents an opportunity for close expansion. Finally, over three million worked where no unions were recognised, representing an opportunity for distant expansion.

To these WIRS-based estimates we must add those working in establishments employing fewer than 25 people, where union density and collective bargaining coverage are much lower. Whilst we have no precise estimate of union density in such establishments for 1984, we have a figure of 19 per cent from the 1989 Labour Force Survey (Stevens and Wareing, 1990). Whilst density was probably somewhat higher in 1984, this suggests that there were over four million non-members employed in small establishments.

Finally, the WIRS figures also exclude agriculture, forestry and fishing, employing 320 thousand workers in 1984, and coal extraction, employing 234 thousand. Again taking the 1989 Labour Force Survey union densities of 13 and 90 per cent respectively (Bird et al, 1991), this suggests over a quarter of a million unorganised workers in agriculture, forestry and fishing, and a further 20 thousand in coal extraction.

Thus, there appeared to be considerable scope for each of the types of recruitment in the mid-1980s. Whilst the largest number of non-members appeared to fall into the distant expansion and small-firm categories, even if unions had been able to recruit half the "free riders" in 1984 this would have brought an additional 800 thousand members, increasing membership by over seven per cent.

Union Characteristics and Recruitment

Given that distant expansion was likely to require the commitment of considerable full-time official resources with no guarantee of short term success, along with the fact that unions with weakly-organised core job territories will need to focus their efforts on distant consolidation in order to survive, we expected that the dominant type of recruitment undertaken by a particular union would be influenced by the unions' size and by its organisational base, as summarised in Figure 8.3.

213

FIGURE 8.3: Union Characteristics and Recruitment

ORGANISATIONAL BASE

Weakly–Organised   Well–Organised
Core Job Territories   Core Job Territories

U
N
I   Small | Consolidation |
O
N

S
I   POSSIBLE RECRUITMENT
Z   TARGETS MAY BECOME
E   MORE REMOTE

Larger | Distant
                                                   Expansion |
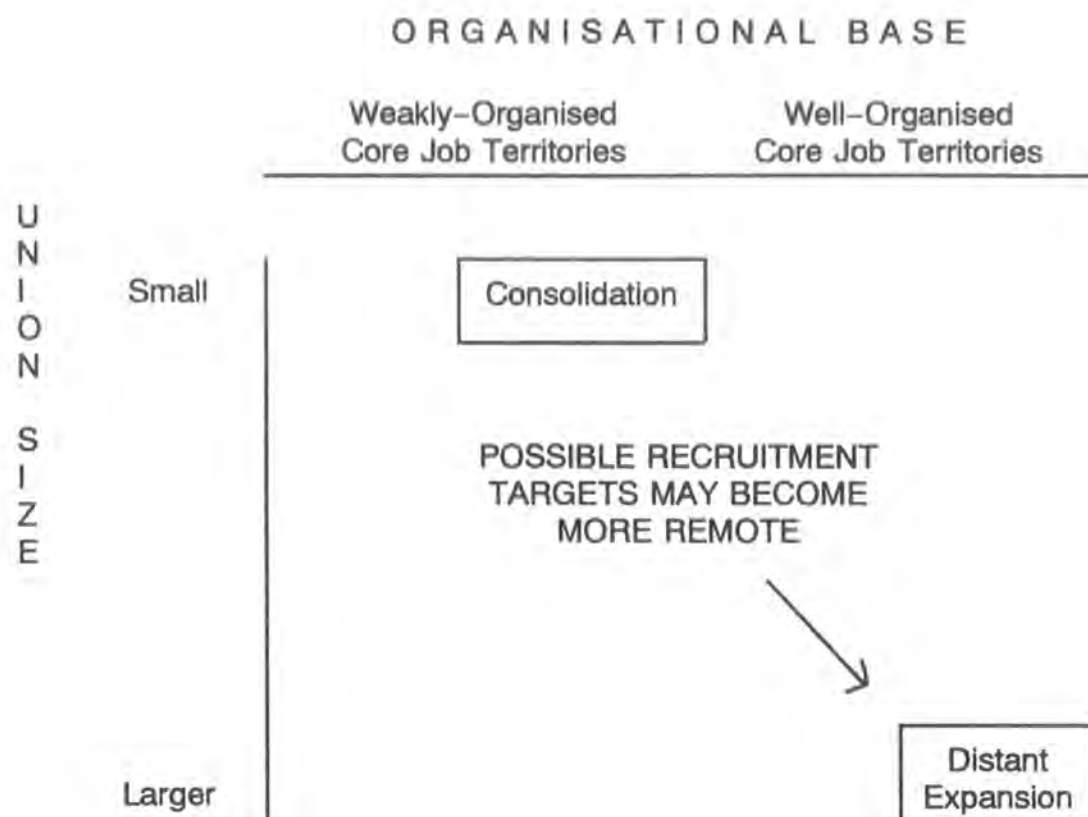
We expected that those unions with a weak organisational base would tend
to concentrate more of their efforts on consolidation, whilst those unions with
stronger and self– sustaining organisation in their core job territories would feel
more able to devote attention to expansion. We also expected that the union's
size would have an effect, with a larger union having more resources
available, due possibly to economies of scale, and being more visible to
potential members, due to its having a better network of local offices. A larger

214

union would thus be more able to undertake a sustained recruitment effort outside its primary job territories.

In addition, Kelly and Heery (1989) have suggested that the internal characteristics of the union influence the extent and type of recruitment activity undertaken, and in particular the extent to which full-time officials are willing and able to become heavily involved in recruitment. They argue that greater involvement of full-time officials in policy making, for example through conference and executive and other committees, is likely to increase their level of commitment to the policy decisions which emerge, whilst the degree of centralisation will affect the ability of the union to lead campaigns from the centre.

Earlier work has shown that lay members have different priorities from national leaderships, being more likely to emphasise immediate substantive gains in pay, conditions and job security, whilst the latter tend to emphasise the need for recruitment and organisational security (Hyman, 1971; Moran, 1974; Kelly and Heery, 1989). In a sense, the local full-time official is caught between these often-competing demands, and the extent to which he favours one or the other is likely to depend partly on the organisational context. Thus, more highly-centralised unions in which local officials are appointed by the centre and where the influence of lay activists is relatively limited, are more likely to

be able to mobilise their full-time officials behind a centrally-driven recruitment campaign. Conversely, decentralisation of decision making and the election of officials is likely to make such a mobilisation more difficult.

In sum, even though many unions may place a greater emphasis on recruitment in a period of declining membership, we would not necessarily expect them all to prioritise recruitment to the same extent, to emphasise the same type of recruitment, nor indeed to have the same degree of success in mobilising their officials behind a campaign. Of course, the above analysis is a simplification in that it ignores the many other factors which might influence a union's recruitment strategy, such as changes in employment structure, the policies of government and employers, economic conditions, inter-union rivalry, and the policies of the union itself. Nevertheless, we suggest that, subject to these qualifications our framework offers a useful starting point in our explanation of differing union recruitment strategies, which we test in subsequent chapters. In the remainder of the present chapter, we review the evidence on trends in recruitment activity, and describe the main types of campaign being launched in the late 1980s.

Union Recruitment: Some Aggregate Evidence

There is little hard evidence to suggest that unions placed a great deal of emphasis on attempting to recruit in non-unionised workplaces during the

early 1980s. The 1984 Workplace Industrial Relations Survey revealed that, according to management respondents, amongst workplaces where there was no union presence, only fifteen per cent had been the subject of any union recruitment activity in respect of manual workers during the previous five years. The corresponding figure for non-manual workers was ten per cent. Requests for union recognition very rarely occurred without a prior attempt to recruit members (Millward and Stevens, 1986: 70).

A survey of shop stewards and union representatives, carried out by the Labour Research Department (1986b), suggests, not surprisingly, that recruitment effort was more intense in workplaces where unions were already present. This survey included only unionised workplaces, and suggests that thirty three per cent of workplaces surveyed had been the subject of a concerted recruitment campaign during the previous two years. Also, fifty seven per cent of those surveyed said that the unions had access to lists of new entrants and leavers, twenty eight per cent took part in induction courses for new employees, and twenty per cent had a union newsletter at the workplace. Whilst we must take care in comparing the results of two studies with different methodologies and types of respondent, the above suggests that there was a greater intensity of recruitment activity in already-unionised workplaces (the LRD survey) than in non-unionised workplaces (the WIRS data).

Is there any evidence that unions in general were placing an increasing emphasis on recruitment during the 1980s? Mason and Bain (1990) suggest that unions were increasingly launching recruitment campaigns as the decade progressed, largely it seems because of a concern about falling membership. Their survey of 45 TUC and 11 non-TUC unions carried out during 1990 found that 79 per cent of unions claimed to have initiated a recruitment campaign during the period 1985 to 1989, compared to only 39 per cent claiming to have launched a campaign during 1980-84. Only 19 per cent had not launched any campaigns at all during the decade, the usual reason for this being that the union had "stable or naturally growing membership". Furthermore, Beaumont and Harris (1990) find some evidence that even in the early 1980s, unions were focusing their recruitment efforts on establishments with a high proportion of female and part-time workers and on low density sectors such as hotel and catering, although large and UK-owned establishments were still a priority.

However, in spite of this apparant increase in targeted recruitment effort, the number of recognition claims handled by ACAS declined from the late 1970s to the late 1980s (Table 8.4). Rather than attempting to offset falling membership by submitting more claims for recognition, it seems that unions had been submitting fewer claims. The official ACAS view was that this was not attributable simply to the repeal of the statutory recognition procedures:

218

"This decline, which is both relative and absolute, seems to be part of a longer term trend unrelated to the existence or otherwise of statutory recognition provisions. Economic factors have undoubtedly played a part..."

(ACAS Annual Report, 1983: 27–8)

TABLE 8.4: Union Recognition Disputes: Completed ACAS Conciliation Cases, 1975–90

Year	Number	% of all Conciliations	References Under Section 11, EPA, 1975, received during year
1975	416	20.6	
1976	697*	24.4	461 (11 months)
1977	635*	22.0	576
1978	451*	16.7	279
1979	392*	17.1	227
1980	329*	17.2	70 (7 months)
1981	247	14.4	
1982	232	14.2	
1983	216	13.3	
1984	221	15.3	
1985	211	15.8	
1986	179	13.5	
1987	140	12.2	
1988	165	15.6	
1989	136	12.7	
1990	159	14.0	

Source: ACAS Annual Reports.

*   Excludes recognition references made under the statutory provisions of Section 11, Employment Protection Act, 1975 (Effective 1 February 1976. Repealed 15 August, 1980).

The decline in recognition cases probably reflects the reduced chances of success in the hostile environment of the 1980s. Thus, as Table 8.5 shows, by the late 1980s unions were winning full recognition rights in less than 20 per cent of ACAS conciliations, compared to over 30 per cent in the late

219

1970s. ACAS had noted an increased tendency to bid for recognition from a weaker membership base (ACAS Annual Report, 1986: 26), perhaps reflecting growing desperation on the part of the unions concerned.

TABLE 8.5: Proportion of ACAS Conciliation Cases Leading to the Granting of Union Recognition, 1976-89

	No. of Recognition Cases[1]	Full Recognition Granted (%)[2]	Limited Recognition Granted (%)[3]
February 1976 to August 1980	2,292	32	11
1987	140	18	7
1988	165	18	15
1989	136	16	7

Source: ACAS Annual Reports.

Notes:

[1] Recognition cases completed through voluntary conciliation.
[2] Full collective bargaining.
[3] Individual representation rights, access to members, or check-off only.

Beaumont's (1985) study of recognition claims made through the Scottish region of ACAS for the period 1976 to 1984 also suggests that unions were finding it increasingly difficult to win recognition in the 1980s. He found a fall in the number of claims per year, with a declining union win rate (i.e. full

recognition), and with post-1980 claims being significantly less likely to result in full recognition than were pre-1980 claims.

By the late 1980s, there had been a few cases of managements withdrawing union recognition (ACAS, Annual Report, 1987; 1990; Labour Research Department, 1988a; Towers, 1988), and although such cases remained comparatively rare, there was some evidence that the frequency of derecognition was increasing (Claydon, 1989: 214; Financial Times, 8/3/91: 6).

However, derecognition tended to be limited to where union density was low and organisation was weak, and was often concentrated upon particular grades of managerial, professional or technical employees. Even here unions often retained individual representation or consultation rights (Claydon, 1989; Snape and Bamber, 1989).

To summarise the aggregate evidence: Not surprisingly, at least in the early 1980s, unions were less likely to attempt to recruit individuals in establishments where they lacked employer recognition than in establishments where recognition existed. During the 1980s, there was some evidence of an increasing emphasis on recruitment campaigns as concern over declining membership grew. Whilst unions took fewer recognition disputes to ACAS as the decade wore on, this reflected the fact that recognition became more

difficult to win, and ACAS noted an increasing tendency for unions to bid for recognition from a weaker position, perhaps a sign of growing desperation. However, in spite of the greater difficulty in winning new recognition agreements, by the end of the decade derecognition was still the exception.

Union Recruitment Initiatives

We have shown that unions were likely to place a greater emphasis on the need to actively recruit during the 1980s. Our interviews with full-time officials reflected this. As a TUC official put it to us:

> "... in terms of the drive to have growth in the union, that is something being initiated by the general secretaries and the national executive committees, because they are keenly aware that it has become a very competitive world. It is being led down from the centre, and I hope the Special Review Body will add to that".

(TUC Official)

In this section, we review some of the organising campaigns launched by unions in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In what follows, we discuss such campaigns in terms of the recruitment typology, outlining the features of the main types of campaign and discussing some examples. Our aim is to give a flavour of the types of recruitment activity being launched by the leadership of various unions, prior to our discussion of their implementation in the following chapters.

(a)   Consolidation

We discuss consolidation as a single category, since the close/distant

distinction is a matter of degree, and whilst distant consolidation tends to

involve full-time officials to a greater extent, many of the problems and issues

apply to both types.

From our survey of union initiatives, it seems that there were two basic

approaches to consolidation in the new campaigns. Firstly, some unions

sought to increase membership density amongst formerly-neglected groups,

such as women, young people, part-time, self employed, temporary and

casual workers, for whom the union may already have recognition. Secondly,

some unions sought to consolidate their membership generally, without

necessarily targeting particular groups of workers.

So far as the first approach is concerned there were many areas where such

groups were already implicitly covered by collective agreements but where

they had been less likely to join the union than had permanent, full-time male

workers. Given the lower levels of density amongst such groups, and the

rapid growth in these categories of employment during the 1980s, it is hardly

surprising that many unions should begin to target their recruitment efforts

here. Such recruitment campaigns were usually accompanied by placing

issues of particular interest to such groups on the collective bargaining

223

agenda, often for the first time, setting up committees to represent their interests within the union, and appointing specialist full-time officials (see, for example, Labour Research Department, 1986a; 1991b; Lee, 1987; TUC, 1989b: 10-12). The TUC assisted by producing charters on equal opportunities. The aim was thus to counter the middle-aged, white, male image of unions, and to make themselves more attractive to a wider range of people.

Thus, by the mid-1980s, NUPE was re-emphasising its commitment to securing improved terms and conditions for part-time workers in public services (NUPE, no date). Around forty per cent of the union's members worked part-time, and part-time employment seemed likely to remain a major feature of the public services. In 1985, NUPE submitted a resolution to the TUC, calling on the latter to:

> "... launch a campaign for a better deal for part-timers and to press the Labour Party for action in this field by the next Labour Government".

> (TUC Annual Report, 1985)

During 1986 and 1987, NUPE itself produced campaign and recruitment material aimed at part-timers. This set out their employment rights and put forward the case for "NUPE - The Union for Part-Time Workers" (NUPE recruitment leaflet, 1986). The union claimed to have fought for the rights of

part-time workers, and pointed to its recent gains in superannuation, unsocial hours payments and maternity rights. In 1987, the union issued a "Ten-Point Charter for a Fair Deal for Part-Timers", calling on the government and employers to provide equal pay, benefits and employment rights for part-time workers.

The early stages of the TGWU's "Link-Up" campaign were primarily concerned with the recruitment of temporary and part-time workers (although the campaign's scope was subsequently widened to include all types of worker, see chapter 10). The union published a draft agreement, to be used by its negotiators in an attempt to win pro-rata terms and conditions for part-timers, to regulate their use and to guarantee terms and conditions to temporary workers and sub-contractors "no less favourable than those of equivalent permanent full-time employees" and "no less than those agreed in appropriate company, NJIC, national or regional agreements" (Temporary and Part-Time Workers TGWU Model Agreement). Thus, the aim was not only to recruit these workers, but also to regulate their use, terms and conditions so as to ensure that existing members were not undercut. (Note that in some cases the union did not already have recognition for such groups, so that the campaign involved close expansion rather than consolidation. This was often the case with contractors.)

In addition, the TGWU sought to underline its commitment to the recruitment and representation of women and ethnic minorities by setting up national and regional advisory committees on race, women's and youth issues, and by appointing a national equaliies officer and a national women's secretary.

John Edmonds, General Secretary of the GMB, was a strong proponent of the idea that unions had to organise previously-neglected groups (Edmonds, 1986a; 1986b), and this union had several initiatives of this type. The GMB launched its *"Winning a Fair Deal for Women"* programme in 1987, based on a thirteen-point collective bargaining agenda (GMBATU, no date; Incomes Data Services, 1987b). Again, the aim was to prioritise issues of particular concern to women. The union also produced a guide for GMB negotiators on temporary workers, with the aim of restricting employers' use of such staff, and ensuring that any temporary workers were employed on terms and conditions comparable to permanent employees. In June 1989, the union announced its intention to launch a recruitment effort aimed specifically at young people, as a follow-up to its earlier efforts to make itself more attractive to women. The campaign was budgeted at £250,000 and the plan was to establish a unit with special responsibility for developing a network of young people in each region, who could be used as recruiters.

Such attempts to consolidate previously-neglected groups can in some cases be seen as a defensive reaction by the union, particularly where such groups are growing, perhaps at the expense of more traditional groups. This was clearly the case with the attempts by the EETPU and UCATT to organise self-employed workers in electrical contracting and construction respectively. Neither union had actively sought to recruit self-employed workers in the past. Indeed, particularly in the case of UCATT, there had been considerable hostility towards self-employed labour on the part of the union. However, the rapid growth of self-employment threatened in both cases to undermine collective agreements and training so that a change in union policy was called for.

UCATT eventually changed its policy in 1988, after the Building Employer's Confederation proposed that the industry agreement be amended to set up a voluntary register for those companies seeking to use self-employed workers. This would allow for self-employed workers to receive terms and conditions comparable to those of directly-employed workers and in particular would provide them with sick pay and holiday pay. Thus, self-employed workers were to be brought under the coverage of the national agreement. The union subsequently identified the self employed as a priority recruitment target, and developed a package of benefits specifically designed for the self-employed,

offering specialised advice, representation and accountancy services for the self-employed member in addition to the standard services and benefits.

A similar case arose in the case of milkmen. In May 1989, USDAW announced its intention to review its policy of opposing the franchising of milk rounds. Again, this threatened to undermine membership, and many were opting for franchises and subsequently allowing their membership to lapse once they became self-employed.

The second approach to consolidation involves seeking to increase the general level of density in areas already covered by recognition. This time there are no particular target groups involved. Rather, the union leadership exhorts lay representatives and full-time officials to place greater emphasis on recruitment in general. Thus, whilst USDAW launched recruitment drives aimed particularly at part-timers (in 1986) and at young workers (in 1988), it had been campaigning to recruit all workers, using lay recruitment teams and publicity buses in its attempt to consolidate its existing membership in retailing.

For much of the 1980s, NALGO escaped the falling membership which had affected most other unions, but in 1988 the union recorded a 1 per cent fall in membership and reacted by launching its "Build a Better Union" campaign in March 1989. Again, the emphasis was on consolidation. The union estimated

that in local government, some branches achieved only 30 to 40 per cent membership, so that there was felt to be considerable scope for further recruitment. The aim of the campaign was to recruit more stewards, and to encourage all members to actively recruit their fellow workers.

> "... On the bottom line each new member will only be recruited when someone talks to them and asks them to join.

> If you're in the union, but your workmate isn't, then you are both weaker, tell them why you are in a trade union, and ask them to join NALGO today"

> (Public Service, March 1989: 7)

Here then, the emphasis was on lay involvement in the campaign, and a key aim was to build an effective stewards' system as a means of strengthening organisation from the bottom up.

(b)   Close Expansion

Several unions launched campaigns aimed at organising and securing recognition for groups working alongside their existing membership. Again, we may identify two basic approaches, which we will refer to as the "defensive" and the "offensive" approaches.

229

In some cases, unions saw the development of the flexible workforce, and particularly un-unionised contractors, as an attempt by the employer to undermine their strength. We have already seen that consolidation campaigns often involved seeking to regulate the use of the flexible workforce, but where the union lacked recognition for such groups, it was all the more urgent to recruit them into the union and win recognition.

A clear example of this type of defensive behaviour was seen in the case of the public sector unions. They faced the threat of privatisation and the influx of private-sector contractors into government and the public services. The unions feared that this would undermine collectively-bargained terms and conditions. As a defensive reaction to this, NALGO changed its rules in 1984 to allow it to recruit in the private sector, and again in 1988 to allow it to recruit manual workers. This was specifically designed to provide the union with sufficient flexibility to sign recognition agreements with private-sector contractors. NALGO saw this purely as a defensive reaction to privatisation, rather than as an aggressive move to organise in the private sector. As a NALGO official put it to us:

> "... part of our task is to follow these people [into the private sector], and our rules have been amended accordingly... Our argument would be that they are still providing a public service from a private sector base".

> (NALGO District Organisation Officer)

Similarly, by the late 1980s, NUPE was attempting to organise amongst sub-contractors and private nursing homes, again as a defence against their encroachment on its traditional job territories.

Other examples of defensive expansion occurred where employers acquired or set up new subsidiaries, and subsequently attempted to secure their non-union status in spite of union organisation in the parent business. BIFU faced this when the major clearing banks established merchant banking subsidiaries during the period of the 'Big Bang' in financial markets.

A more offensive approach to close expansion occurred where unions sought to use their established job territories as a base from which to expand into new but adjacent areas. The examples here involve a more pro-active approach than those examined above. Where employers grant single-union recognition on established sites, this may involve close expansion for the union winning the deal, although other unions may lose recognition and members as a result, as in the case of several of the EETPU deals, for example (Incomes Data Services, 1987a; 1987c).

(c)   Distant Expansion

This form of campaign tended to be the most high-profile, with the union attempting to recruit and win recognition in hitherto unorganised areas. Such

a strategy could involve either attempting to recruit members before approaching the employer or making a direct approach for recognition, referred to by Willman (1989) as the "membership market" and the "employer market" for trade unionism respectively.

Several unions launched campaigns of the first type. Whilst the TGWU's Link Up campaign began as an attempt to recruit part-time and temporary workers, it developed into a general campaign, involving a concerted attempt to organise non-union firms. Similarly, the GMB launched campaigns aimed at organising in the private services sector, including un-organised hotel and catering firms and the private security industry. Such campaigns were aimed essentially at employees, with special literature and recruitment drives, often involving factory-gate activity. We examine Link Up in chapter 10.

However, at least one campaign recognised the unlikelihood of effectively organising the non-unionised sectors in the immediate future. Thus, the GMB's Fair Rights and Laws in Employment (FLARE) initiative sought to win and enforce individual employment rights, particularly on behalf of the unorganised peripheral and service-sector workers, for whom effective protection through collective bargaining was a remote possibility in the 1980s (Edmonds, 1986a; 1986b).

The selling of the union to employers was epitomised by the EETPU's single-union, no-strike deals. The union adopted the "hard-sell" approach to securing such deals. Following its pioneering agreement with Toshiba, at Plymouth in 1981, the union developed the deal into a marketable package (Taylor, 1985; Bassett, 1986). In October 1984 Roy Sanderson, the official then in charge of the union's white-collar section, EESA, visited Tokyo to meet Japanese companies considering setting up in Britain. The union published a glossy brochure, "EETPU: The Union for Your Future", for distribution to employers, along with a video film outlining the virtues of the union and the Toshiba deal. The union's brochure summarised the EETPU approach as follows:

> "We cooperate readily with fair employers. They and our members alike, gain immensely from the enlightened self-interest involved in doing so, and from the presence of our genuinely representative independent and trustworthy organisation at their workplace. Many managements have good cause to be grateful for our efficiency, expertise and effort. We provide work study, productivity, job evaluation and training services. Our organisation is equipped to help meet the critical needs of Britain's growth industries.
>
> Our union combines moderation and responsibility with determination. We are hard bargainers. But we honour our bargains."
>
> (EETPU: The Union for Your Future, no date)

This approach was at certain times targeted at particular areas on an intensive basis, for example in the "sunrise" industries setting up in the West and Central Scotland, and in London's Docklands. The latter campaign was launched in mid-1987, and involved a special project team, a recruitment caravan and a publicity package and promotional video.

The EETPU adopted an aggressive, competitive approach to recruitment. The union declared an "open market for trade unionism" (Financial Times, 5/1/87: 6), and aimed to "follow the electron" by recruiting in all industries which involve electronic technology. This argument was used, for example, to justify the union's attempts to extend its influence in the printing industry at the expense of the more traditional print unions (Lloyd, 1986: 14). Not surprisingly, this brought the EETPU into conflict with other unions (Incomes Data Services, 1987a; 1987c), culminating in its expulsion from the TUC in 1988, following its refusal to follow the instructions of TUC Disputes Committees to withdraw from single-union agreements at Christian Salveson and Orion Electric (TUC: 1988b).

However, the EETPU was not alone in approaching employers with a view to securing single union recognition. Officials from several unions were keen to contact new employers with such an offer, whilst most unions had signed single union recognition agreements in the past. The AEU had a similar

approach to the EETPU, again producing a glossy brochure designed to sell

the union to employers. The brochure declared that:

> "The adversarial relationship of unions and employers is an outdated concept.
>
> In our rapidly changing world, industrial progress can only be achieved through consensus. The employers and workforce share, in the final analysis, the same objectives: the maintenance and increase of prosperity."
>
> (Creating the union of your future, AEU brochure, no date)

Such an approach was not confined to so-called right wing unions, nor to the

traditional craft unions. In June 1986 the GMB launched a publicity package

not unlike that of the EETPU, again with the intention of approaching

employers directly. The campaign was operated through the union's

white-collar section, MATSA, and the union's brochure "Into 2000" again

presented the union as modern, progressive, flexible and cooperative. The

emphasis was on how the union could help the employer, on issues such as

advice on health and safety, pensions and financial services, and assistance

with industrial relations training. The brochure also contained a draft

recognition and procedure agreement, covering single-union recognition,

single status and a detailed grievance/disputes procedure. Unlike the EETPU,

however, the MATSA package did not include compulsory binding arbitration,

the so-called "no-strike" clause.

In May 1989, John Edmonds announced the launch of a model single-union agreement for the GMB as a whole with an updated brochure ("Towards 2000") and a promotional video ("Welcome to the Future"), all aimed at employers. This was seen as a development from the MATSA package, and again, the GMB was careful not to conflict with the TUC's code of practice, which ruled out compulsory binding arbitration.

By 1990, even the TGWU, for long amongst the severest critics of the EETPU approach to single-union deals, launched a brochure aimed at "selling" the union to employers (see chapter 10), following growing concern within the union that it was losing out on recognition bids due to its poor image with employers.

The TUC and Recruitment

Thus, individual unions were increasingly launching their own recruitment initiatives during this period, and many have pointed to the intense recruitment competition in some sectors (see, for example, Willman, 1989). However, the TUC also became increasingly interested in the question of recruitment, particularly of the distant expansion form, since the organisation of new job territories was seen as vital to the future of the union movement as a whole. Thus, in July 1987 Norman Willis, the TUC General Secretary, put forward proposals for an increased TUC role in coordinating recruitment activity, with

the aim of reducing wasteful competition and making best use of scarce resources.

He proposed that "Designated Organising Areas" be established, whereby individual unions would be allocated a free run at particular target companies for a specified period, and that a TUC organising fund be set up, financed from affiliation income, to fund TUC and individual union recruitment activity. However, in spite of some initial support from the GMB, the Willis proposals were widely criticised by union leaders, largely because of concern over any "carve-up" of recruitment territories, and the feeling of some leaders that the smaller unions might lose out in such an exercise.

In the event, the detailed proposals were submerged in the deliberations of the TUC Special Review Body, set up as a result of the 1987 Congress. An early aim of the SRB was to assist unions in the use and pooling of local labour market information, with the aim of better targeting recruitment efforts (TUC, 1988c; 1989b). This developed into TUC coordinated recruitment drives in Trafford Park, Manchester and London's Docklands during the Spring of 1990. Based on the "Union Yes" campaigns of the AFL-CIO, the campaigns involved a concentrated effort over three weeks, for which unions were allocated target companies from a list of non-union firms by a local joint committee. In addition, trade union fairs were organised by local trades councils and by TUC

regions, in an attempt to raise the general profile of trade unions in the local community, whilst in some areas unions collaborated in targeted recruitment drives. (We review the outcome of the TUC recruitment campaigns in the following chapter.)

Conclusions

In this chapter, we identified four types of recruitment activity, and we showed that there was considerable numerical potential for each of these. It was suggested that the four types each had quite different resource implications, but that attempts to expand union organisation to completely new job territories were likely to depend on the effective mobilisation of the union's full-time officials.

It seems from the aggregate evidence that recognition had become more difficult to win during the 1980s. However, it appears that unions were placing an increasing emphasis on recruitment campaigns as the decade wore on, and there was some evidence of a growing desperation on the part of unions in their attempts to win recognition.

Our survey of union recruitment campaigns demonstrates quite clearly their diversity, both in terms of their target job territories and their methods. Whilst many unions reacted to declining membership by placing a greater emphasis

on recruitment, the form that this took ranged from exhorting lay representatives and members to recruit their workmates, to far-reaching, resource-intensive campaigns, involving a major commitment of resources, with a long time horizon. Whilst some unions may have adopted several different approaches simultaneously, we suggested that the response of individual unions would vary according to the size of the union, the degree of organisation of its core job territories, and the internal characteristics of the union. We return to this in the next chapter, where we discuss the choice of recruitment targets and the implementation of such campaigns in more detail.

In addition to the initiatives of individual unions, by the late-1980s the TUC was attempting to play a greater role in assisting union organisation. Whilst unions were suspicious of any notion of a "carving up" of recruitment territory, there appeared to be some support for a TUC role in promoting trade unionism and in coordinating union recruitment efforts. It appears that where the TUC became involved in promoting inter-union cooperation in recruitment, the emphasis was mainly on distant expansion.

CHAPTER 9

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
UNION RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

Introduction

In this chapter, we look in more detail at the issues involved in implementing

the new recruitment initiatives. As one study of union recruitment campaigns

concluded:

> "What we are suggesting is that if individual unions are to
> translate recruitment potential into actual membership, then
> identifying and dismantling internal attitudinal and organisational
> barriers should constitute the starting point."

> (Mason and Bain, 1991: 44)

We discuss whether unions were in fact dealing with such barriers. We begin

by examining the difficulties involved in getting full-time officials to prioritise

recruitment activity. We then focus on four key areas: communicating the

prioritisation of recruitment within the union, the allocation of resources to

recruitment, the effective targeting of recruitment activity, and the monitoring

of outcomes. We examine the extent to which unions had been successful in

getting their full-time officials to spend more time on recruitment. Finally, we

briefly assess the effectiveness of such campaigns, although a more detailed

240

evaluation is provided in the following chapter, which examines one particular campaign.

The chapter is based mainly on empirical material drawn from our interviews with a sample of local full-time union officials, carried out during 1989-90.

Recruitment and the Job of the Full-Time Official

In this section, we explain why, at least up to the late 1980s, many officials did not devote a great deal of their time to recruitment, and we examine the difficulties faced by unions in getting their officials to spend more time on such activity.

It might be expected that any new priority given to recruitment by union principal officers would be communicated to full-time officials and that their recruitment effort could be carefully targeted and monitored, so as to ensure that the recruitment aims were realised. However, whilst the critical role of the full-time official has been recognised, it is not a simple matter to change their priorities and shift their workload towards recruitment, especially given the demands of their existing membership.

A major problem facing full-time officials is finding sufficient time to devote to recruitment. Past research has shown that negotiation and routine office work

tended to be their most time-consuming activities, with preparing for negotiations, dealing with lay representatives and branches, dealing with individual members' casework, and travelling all placing major demands on the official's time, and contributing to what is typically a very heavy workload (Clegg et.al., 1961; HMSO, 1968; Brown and Lawson, 1973; Robertson and Sams, 1976; Watson, 1988; Kelly and Heery, 1989). A TUC survey of union officials carried out in 1987 was broadly consistent with these findings, and suggested that forty one percent of union officers spent less than two hours per week on recruitment, with one in five spending a day or more per week (TUC, 1989a).

Thus, recruitment is only one in a range of tasks, and one which may at times be displaced by more pressing demands. This was reflected in the views of the officials we interviewed:

"Unfortunately, with the amount of members, ten and a half thousand, and having to deal with all the negotiations, there just isn't the time to deal with the recruitment."

(AEU District Secretary)

"The union at a higher level are pushing for recruitment more than we have time to fulfil... . They would like us to spend more time on recruitment, but unfortunately we just don't have the time for it."

(AEU District Secretary)

"My priority is determined by my Executive Council in London, and they say recruitment. ... With the second breath they say 'Mind,but you've got to retain your membership. But recruitment is the most important.' Well, you know, while you're out recruiting you can't be servicing members and the members who you've actually got the money from, they start to say 'What the hell's the point being in a union if we're not going to see you?' It's a very difficult situation."

(UCATT Regional Officer)

"There's always the balancing act. We cover an area from ... to ..., with getting on for fifty thousand members in various services. So obviously, there's got to be some direction from national level downwards on what the priorities are going to be for the next twelve months. They become numerous in themselves, and you find yourself with ten top priorities, which might include recruitment, and then during the year you'll get specific priorities that arrive unheralded ... It's a balancing act."

(NALGO Divisional Organizing Officer)

Two themes emerge from the above views. Firstly, it seems that by the late 1980s, union leaders were signalling to their local full-time officials that recruitment must be prioritised. We return to this point below. Secondly, time was short partly because officials had large numbers of members to service. Thus, the 1987 TUC survey of union officials found that the modal range of members serviced was between three thousand and six thousand, whilst the modal range of employers dealt with was twenty to forty nine (TUC, 1989a).

One might expect that the fall in membership during the 1980s would have reduced the workload on full-time officials. However:

> "People say because you've lost a lot of members that means you automatically lose workload; but that isn't the case. You can have a factory which has quite a number of members, where the input isn't as great as one with a small number, which requires your time more."
>
> (TGWU District Secretary)

Thus, the loss of members did not automatically lead to a reduced workload for officials. Indeed, in the context of the 1980s, workloads might be expected to increase. We show below that many officials claimed that they were coming under an increasing burden from members' casework, and some felt that shop stewards were making greater demands on the full-time official:

> "When I was convenor at [...], they had seven and a half thousand shop-floor workers ... now there's just over two thousand. The shop steward organisation has remained intact, but the instances of the convenor's asking for advice from District Secretaries, and requesting their involvement has increased because they feel more vulnerable. That's the top and tail of it all."
>
> (AEU District Secretary)

Also:

> "In smaller factories, of course, where you have smaller numbers, then very often District Secretaries are involved..."
>
> (AEU District Secretary)

244

This suggests that shop stewards might become increasingly dependent on the full-time official in difficult times, and also that a trend towards smaller establishments increases the burden on full-time officials.

Furthermore, whilst full-time officials may have been dissuaded from spending more time on recruitment by the demands of their existing membership, it may be that such demands were consistent with the priorities of the full-time officials themselves. Thus, in some unions officials often saw recruitment as a relatively low-prestige activity. For example, BIFU Area Organisers had relatively little involvement in collective negotiations, reflecting the predominance of centralised negotiations in the finance sector. A BIFU official was unequivocal about his preferred kind of work:

> "Negotiations with employers ... You get an awful lot of satisfaction out of it, personal satisfaction. Although you do out of casework as well, if it goes right... A lot of unions already have site negotiations anyway, so they already have that element of 'quality' in their workload."

> (BIFU Area Organiser)

To some extent, this identification of negotiating as "quality" work reflected the fact that negotiations were usually carried out by National Secretaries and Negotiating Officers, a relatively senior grade of official, whilst recruitment and casework were carried out by Area Organisers and lay representatives.

In sum, the heavy workloads and competing pressures militated against increasing the recruitment activity of full-time officials, and such pressures could not be expected to ease due to falling membership in the 1980s. Indeed, if anything the workloads of officials could be expected to increase. Add to this the possible identification of recruitment as low-prestige work, and it seems that unions would find it difficult to increase the recruitment activity of their officials.

However, there are at least three reasons why such a view would be over pessimistic. Firstly, one must be wary of making too sharp a distinction between "recruitment" and "servicing" activity. Thus, when a BIFU Area Organiser visits a bank branch, the initial reason may be to meet a particular member or a representative to discuss a piece of casework. Having arrived at the branch, however, the official may take an opportunity to meet any non-members in an attempt to recruit them. Also, where the problem is resolved to the member's satisfaction, this may in itself encourage others to join the union (and vice versa). Similarly, membership may increase in an establishment or enterprise once the union is able to demonstrate its effectiveness in dealing with an issue. In other words, recruitment and servicing are not necessarily mutually exclusive activities. Rather, the one may assist the other. Where there is a conflict, of course, is in the case of distant expansion, where the official is required to spend time attempting to

recruit in completely new job territories, thus reducing the time available for servicing and recruiting in existing areas of organisation.

Secondly, earlier studies have noted that officials' work patterns vary significantly between unions, with some unions spending much more time on recruitment (Clegg, 1961; Brown and Lawson, 1973). Given that a prioritising of recruitment appeared to be possible in some unions, this suggests that it might have been feasible for other unions to follow suit. It tended to be in unions with relatively weakly-organised core job territories that officials spent more time on recruitment (Brown and Lawson, 1973: 437). Thus, distant consolidation appeared to carry with it an imperative for more intense recruitment activity by full-time officials which may be absent where core job territories were better organised. The challenge facing unions was to encourage full-time officials to do more on recruitment even in the absence of the distant consolidation imperative.

Finally, Kelly and Heery (1989) find that whilst most officials did not rank recruitment amongst their three most time-consuming activities, nevertheless over a fifth rated recruitment as the task they would most like to spend more time on. Thus, there was at least some recognition of the importance of recruitment amongst officials.

Whilst there were undoubtedly competing demands on the official's time, with a tendency for recruitment to be crowded-out by other activities, nevertheless it at least seems possible that full-time officials could be encouraged to devote more time to recruitment. The question then is: how were unions to achieve this?

Developing the Recruitment Culture

A theme in many of our interviews with national and local union officials was that the 1980s appeared to demand what amounted to a change in the "culture" of their organisations, towards a greater emphasis on recruitment and organising. This was stated very clearly by John Edmonds, early in his term as General Secretary of the GMB. Speaking to the union's 1987 Congress he said:

> "We have to alter the priorities of the organisation – change, in effect, the habits of a generation. This union has always prided itself on having officers and activists who could negotiate a good settlement. But in future the prizes will not go to the negotiator, but to the person who can organise a new group of workers, and give them basic trade union protection. Of course, there will always be a place in the GMB for someone with good negotiating skills. But make no mistake – the future lies not with the negotiator, but with the recruiter, and the organiser."
>
> (New Directions For the Year Ahead, GMB internal document, 1987)

As his Head of Research put it to us during an interview:

> "There was a sense in which the union went to sleep in the 1970s. Check-off kept members coming in. Recruitment was a rather dirty activity compared to sitting in snug negotiating rooms."

> "What needs to be changed is the whole way in which the union behaves as an organisation. ...It is really about changing the culture of the union, and also changing the rewards system accordingly. At the moment we reward people for activities which we no longer are saying should be a high priority. We reward them for progressively sitting on more and more negotiating bodies. We reward them for sitting on large, fairly inert branches of well-settled membership. We don't so far, though we are beginning to change, reward people for bringing new groups of workers into the union and keeping them there."

(GMB Head of Research)

We suggest that any attempt by the central leadership to achieve such a culture change and to get full-time officials to devote more time to recruitment would consist of four elements. Firstly, the prioritisation of recruitment must be effectively communicated to officials. Secondly, there is likely to be a need for a clear policy for allocating time and resources to recruitment. Thirdly, the union will need some way of choosing recruitment targets so as to try to make best use of available resources. Finally, the union will need to monitor and evaluate the exercise in some way, so as to ensure its implementation, and also to collate information on achievements and difficulties so that further effort can be planned and targeted effectively. As suggested above, the evaluation of recruitment performance might be used to link rewards to the organising

249

priorities of the union in some way. In this section, we discuss the experience of our sample of unions in each of these key areas.

(a) Communicating Recruitment Priorities

Our interviews show quite clearly that local full-time officials in the unions we looked at had been made aware of any prioritisation of recruitment by their union's leadership. Thus, from a BIFU official:

> "The emphasis on recruitment means that we are meant to be spending more and more time on it. In a union like BIFU, recruitment has always been pretty important... [but] recruitment is without doubt what we are under pressure to spend more and more time on."

From a UCATT official:

> "We've got a commitment from general office, a very harsh commitment, and we've got to get our fingers out [on recruitment]."

From a EETPU official:

> "We are all under pressure on recruitment. That's got to be high on our agenda."

From a NUPE official:

> "I would say that in the present climate in the union it [recruitment] is probably the key area if we are to survive at all...It has always been a major priority with me, I've never seen it differently, but certainly from head office level now that is being signalled up as a priority."

From a TGWU official:

> "If there's one credit given to an officer, it's recruitment. All the
> rest doesn't matter now."

And even from the AEU:

> "Traditionally, we didn't give it [recruitment] all that much
> prominance, because we had a steady supply of recruits through
> the apprenticeship system. But like all other unions,
> membership has fallen, and we are trying to put that right."

(b)   Allocating Resources

On the question of allocating resources to recruitment, we found evidence that

at least some of our unions were making an attempt to devote an increasing

amount of officials' time to recruitment. The aim was usually to get officials to

put the demands of servicing existing members to one side and concentrate

solely on recruitment activity for a given period.

For example, in USDAW, full-time officials were required to devote the

equivalent of one week per month solely to recruitment visits, with some

divisions demanding even more. The time was usually spent visiting retail

establishments, according to a schedule of visits coordinated and monitored

on a Divisional basis by the Deputy Divisional Officer. During this time, the

official was deemed to be unavailable for other duties, except in cases of

extreme emergency which could not be handled by another official. As might

251

be expected, such an arrangement led to some difficulties, especially in the early stages:

> "The membership started to complain. They could never get hold of anyone because the administration for the week built up, and if you happened to be at the back of the queue it might be three weeks before you contacted the official.

> "After trying one week a month for a period, we then switched to two days a week, and we have found that that is beneficial and worthwhile, and it works. The membership accept it. They know that if they have an emergency, they can get them. If it's a question of a routine enquiry, they can get an answer, because there's always someone in the building. If it's a question that they want to see the official to discuss something, they know they can get them on Monday."

<div align="right">(USDAW Divisional Officer)</div>

BIFU Area Organisers were urged by their General Secretary wherever possible to refer members' casework to the union's lay seconded representatives, and to focus their own efforts on recruitment. Whilst Organisers retained a significant amount of casework, and the trend towards regionalising personnel management in the major banks made an increased servicing workload likely, it is clear that the union's leadership was signalling the critical role of Organisers in recruitment.

In addition to their day to day recruitment work, BIFU organisers were taken away from their normal workload for a specified period to undertake an intensive recruitment campaign. In several successive years, BIFU held a month-long recruitment campaign in the City of London during October, and

organisers would each participate for two weeks, setting aside their normal area responsibilities for that period. Similar campaigns, though on a more limited scale and involving organisers from a smaller number of areas were also held in the provinces.

In one GMB region, the union had up to three of its thirty officials working largely on seeking to organise new sites, having been relieved of most of their servicing responsibilities for this reason. Initially on an experimental basis, the aim was to prioritise the winning of recognition at greenfield sites, with the officials concerned, all volunteers, reporting directly to the Regional Secretary.

In another GMB region, we were told of attempts to "re-educate" lay activists to take on a greater responsibility for recruitment within their own establishments, thus releasing the full-time official. Also:

> "What we are saying now, to some extent, is that we've over-serviced in the past. There's an emphasis to come off that a little bit where we can, so that we've got more time and more resources to spend on the priority area greenfield sites, dealing with companies... letting the employer know what the GMB is all about."
>
> (GMB Regional Industrial Officer)

The GMB reallocated the responsibilities of full-time officials at national and regional levels to reflect its recruitment priorities. For example:

"Hotel and catering [a priority recruitment target for the late 1980s] stopped being the drossy one you gave to the new John, who came in and was told to do that for a while before being given a 'proper job'. It became one to give to an experienced officer."

(GMB Head of Research)

The aim here was to ensure that these jobs were performed by officials with the necessary skills to do them well, and also to signal the union's priorities to officials.

Full-time officials in the TGWU were not generally required to devote a specified amount of time to recruitment each week. One Regional Organiser explained that TGWU officials were, given the nature of the union's job territories, involved in more local-level bargaining than in some other unions, so that this would be unrealistic. However, they were expected to participate in intensive recruitment campaigns, where, barring emergencies, officials were required to devote themselves exclusively to recruitment. The union attempted to coordinate the latter, through it's National Action Weeks implemented as part of the Link Up campaign (see Chapter 10).

(c) Targeting Recruitment Activity

How did unions set about targeting their recruitment activity? Was there

evidence that unions were attempting to make best use of their scarce resources in this respect?

BIFU had established clear procedures for the targeting of recruitment activity, which tended to focus on consolidation. The union produced accurate membership figures, with regular printouts of membership broken down by section and employer, enabling committees and officials to monitor membership trends very closely. There was a National Membership Committee, which monitored membership on a national basis, selected targets, and controlled a national budget for recruitment campaigns. In addition, Area Councils each had an Organisational Sub-Committee responsible for monitoring membership and recruitment activity in their area.

Recruitment targets were chosen and campaigns organised at both national and area levels. Area organisers also played a role in selecting their own targets on a day to day basis, although they were often asked to focus their routine recruitment efforts on particular targets, for example part-time workers or the branches of a particular clearer. Each organiser submitted his eight-weekly recruitment plan to the area Organisational Sub-Committee for approval. Local campaigns occasionally involved bringing in resources and officials from outside the area, with the approval of the National Membership Committee, where it was felt that a concentrated intensive effort would be

helpful in a particular locality. Whilst there might be occasional strategy disagreements between the National Membership Committee and area Organisational Sub-Committees on specific targets, there was clear agreement at both national and local levels of the union on the need to prioritise recruitment.

In several successive years, BIFU held month-long recruitment campaigns in the City of London during October, and all the union's organisers would each participate for two weeks, setting aside their normal area responsibilities for that period. Similar campaigns, though usually on a smaller scale, were also held at large labour centres in the provinces.

Our interviews suggested that systematic criteria were applied by BIFU in selecting targets. Effort tended to focus on centres with large concentrations of potential members, often where BIFU density levels were comparatively low. The latter included areas with comparatively high labour turnover, where there was competition from staff associations and where the employer was less supportive of BIFU membership. Significantly, officials were instructed to spend more time recruiting in the clearing banks, rather than in the TSB, the Cooperative and Yorkshire Banks, where membership density was higher because of the legacy of union membership agreements and the absence of staff association competition.

Thus, the union sought to maximise economies of scale, and to target resources where the potential was greatest. In addition, there was also a belief amongst some in the union that better results came from concentrated or repeated campaigns, which raised the profile of the union in a particular area or institution. Thus, one official explained that a one-off campaign aimed at the Midland Bank complex in Sheffield had been less successful than the large sustained drives in central London because:

> "It's an area that needs to be constantly bombarded if it's going to be successful. Unless you are prepared to put the resources into areas like that, then you are not going to get the results in a short sharp campaign."

> (BIFU Area Organiser)

This suggests that it may be unwise to spread resources too thinly.

The main part of USDAW's recruitment effort was devoted to consolidating membership in retail stores. The union concentrated on those stores where it already had recognition, but where the employer tended not to be strongly supportive of union membership, so that density would fall in the absence of union recruitment activity. Thus, full-time officials spent less time recruiting in Tesco Stores and cooperative retail societies, where the employer encouraged individuals to join the union and supported the development of a system of shop stewards, than in companies such as Argyle Stores and

Morrisons, where whilst the union was recognised, the employer was less supportive. As one official explained:

> "Argyll give us any kind of facility that we like, but insist on strictly voluntary membership. We always have to put Argyll at the top of our list when we are considering membership, because that's where our biggest potential lies. I always say to organisers when we are starting our twelve months recruitment activity 'Argyll first, and every store'."

> (USDAW Deputy Divisional Officer)

The Divisional Officer and his deputy could use organisers' weekly recruitment reports to monitor visits made and recruitment outcomes by company (see below). This information was then used in the systematic targeting of recruitment effort. Thus:

> "If there's a lot of visits being made and no results, we say 'Well what the hell was all that about? What the hell are we bothering with that for, and wasting resources.'"

> (USDAW Divisional Officer)

Given the pressing need to consolidate existing areas, USDAW had limited resources to devote to expansion into new companies, in spite of the fact that distribution had a lot of unorganised territory. Thus:

"It takes us all our time, to be quite honest, to deal with companies where we are already welcomed. And whilst we continuously try to break down the unreasonable opposition that won't give us access... we can't afford to devote nearly as much time to it as where we already have facilities".

<div align="right">(USDAW Deputy Divisional Officer)</div>

Whilst full-time officials were expected to constantly be on the look-out for new recruitment oppportunities, there was a keen awareness of the need to avoid spending excessive time to little effect. Occasional campaigns might be aimed at non-union companies such as Marks and Spencer and Dickens, but this often amounted to little more than a gesture, designed to raise the profile of the union but with little realistic prospect of success at least in the short term. A Divisional Officer we spoke to even went so far as to declare his opposition to one such campaign:

"We've had a limited campaign at Marks and Spencer, but I have to tell you I've opposed that because Marks and Spencer are hostile, and there is no possibility of retaining people who've joined...I said I didn't want my officials deployed on what I know from my own experience is a useless exercise. But sometimes the organisation at national level will see a need to have a high profile in targeting a major high street company like Marks and Spencer. So politically there might be reasons for doing something when strategically, sensibly, you wouldn't give it house room."

<div align="right">(USDAW Divisional Officer)</div>

Thus, USDAW found itself in a difficult industry which effectively imposed recruitment priorities on the union in terms of distant consolidation. Resources were concentrated on existing agreements, where there was more chance of retaining those recruited. This left only limited scope for other targeted campaigns, which were given a lower priority apart from the occasional high-profile recruitment drive.

Similar arguments applied in the case of UCATT, which shared with BIFU and USDAW the need to continually consolidate its core membership territories, due in this case to the transitory nature of most construction industry workplaces. This effectively precluded UCATT from launching major recruitment drives outside the construction industry, and the officials we interviewed suggested that this had not been seriously considered. Even within construction there was a tendency to concentrate on larger sites, partly to exploit economies of scale in organising, but mainly because the larger employers were party to the national agreements, so that the union was afforded organising and bargaining rights.

Two of our other unions, NALGO and NUPE, chose not to move beyond their traditional job territories, seeing themselves as essentially public services unions. At the time of our interviews they were, however, preoccupied with major changes in the public sector, including wholesale privatisation and

encroachment by private contractors. This meant that both unions spent much of their time and resources campaigning on issues relating to service quality and the terms and conditions of their members, although they sought to link this in with recruitment in existing areas of organisation.

Also, both unions were faced with large pockets of non-members within their core job territories, so that there was considerable scope for recruitment through consolidation. As a NALGO official put it to us:

> "We took the decision that there were too many areas of non-members in existing employer institutions, where we've got recognition, for us to be able to justify moving out to greenfield sites. ...It takes a lot of work to secure recognition and to build up a membership base, and then to organise new branches...But that isn't to say that we would turn away from new areas. If new opportunities come along, then we take them. But we've got so much to tackle at the moment..."
>
> (NALGO Regional Officer)

There was also recognition of the dangers of placing too much emphasis on organising new job territories if this meant having to neglect existing members:

> "If I were to take [officers] out and put them into new areas of work where we didn't already have a membership base, then I'd be neglecting the membership base that we've currently got, and the gains that we were making in the new areas would be offset by losses in the traditional areas."
>
> (NALGO Regional Officer)

The large general unions had also identified local authorities as an area with great recruitment potential, and NALGO and NUPE faced competition from the TGWU and GMB in this area. Such competition may have brought added urgency to the former unions' recruitment efforts.

Whilst recruitment in NALGO was the responsibility of branches and district committees, and there was a lot of emphasis on branch autonomy, the union had established a National Recruitment Working Party to determine national recruitment priorities. Targets for recruitment campaigns were chosen at national level and communicated to District Service Committees, who were responsible for organising recruitment campaigns in their own localities and sectors. Major campaigns had included such areas as schools staff, social services, electricity staffs, universities and police civilians. District service committees and branches, however, had autonomy in the sense that they could decide whether or not to implement a particular campaign, given their own local priorities and membership levels.

Where they were unsuccessful in resisting privatisation, both NALGO and NUPE had a policy of staying with their membership in the private sector, and of attempting to organise any new contractors encroaching into their traditional job territories. In this sense NUPE, for example, had come to see itself as a

public services union, regardless of whether those services were provided from a public or private sector base.

However, even in cases where NUPE recruited in the expanding voluntary sector, the union's preoccupation with consolidating its traditional membership base, with campaign work and (in 1989) with industrial action meant that:

> "It is often more demand-led, rather than us going out and specifically targeting an area."
>
> (NUPE Regional Secretary)

The unions in our sample which appeared to be most likely to adopt a pro-active targeting approach to recruitment were the big general unions, the TGWU and the GMB. They had the potential for economies of scale in their operations, and the benefit of some reasonably stable core areas of membership to provide the necessary organisational and financial stability, but at the same time avoided the inward-looking character of some of the other unions because of their broad membership base.

Our expectations were confirmed, with both the TGWU and the GMB adopting a targeted approach aimed at a number of sectors, with a mix of consolidation and expansion. There did appear to be an advantage in size here, in terms of being able to free up resources to devote to recruitment campaigns.

The GMB identified seven target areas at national level as early as 1986. These were:

Local Authorities

Health

Food Manufacture and Distribution

Hotel and Catering

Private Sector White-Collar Workers

Construction and Building Materials

Workers on Government-Funded Training Schemes

Individual regions of the union would select specific target areas to reflect local circumstances, but the aim was for the General Secretary and the executive committee to monitor recruitment figures for these areas on a quarterly basis at national level.

Similarly, the TGWU targeted particular sectors at national and local level, and placed a particular emphasis on temporary workers, part-timers, women, the ethnic minorities and young people, groups which the union felt had been neglected in the past (see the Link Up case study below).

In both cases, the targets were chosen on the basis of perceived recruitment potential, involving either consolidation, as in the case of local authorities, or sectors of very low density, possibly with expanding employment opportunities. In some cases, the union would deliberately select a combination of harder and less difficult targets, in order to avoid too much disillusionment amongst recruiters.

The EETPU leadership had recently signalled recruitment as a priority for officials. White-collar workers and technicians had been identified as a particular priority. National campaigns had been held, for example aimed at Visionhire and Radio Rentals technicians, with full-time officials being asked to take time out to visit local shops and service centres. The union was a leading player in attempts to win recognition from employers, and, particularly following its expulsion from the TUC in 1988, it put a great deal of effort into trying to attract transfers of engagements from staff associations and small specialist unions, where it's moderate image was felt to give it an advantage over its rivals in the TUC.

Of our sample of unions, the AEU appeared to be the least advanced in terms of targeted recruitment campaigns. Our respondents told us that the union had no nationally-coordinated recruitment campaigns as such. Aside from attempts to win recognition deals from employers on greenfield sites, the

union's approach was, by and large, a traditional one, with little evidence of any systematic attempt to target non-union plants. AEU officials insisted on the futility of cold-calling more strongly than those in the general unions, for example, and emphasised that they relied either on approaching new employers or on building a membership from within the workplace. This was feasible, they claimed, because skilled AEU members were much more likely than members of most other unions to retain their membership on moving to a new job, whether or not it was in a unionised plant.

Table 9.1 summarises the above discussion by outlining the main recruitment targets quoted by our interviewees. There is broad support for the hypotheses outlined in the previous chapter, that recruitment targets are likely to reflect the size of a union, the level of organisation of its core job territories, and the internal characteristics of the union.

Thus, the TGWU and the GMB were the most active in terms of expansionary recruitment campaigns, including a strong emphasis on targeting private-sector services and the peripheral labour force. BIFU, UCATT, and USDAW concentrated mainly on consolidation within their existing job territories, with some targeting of particular groups and workplaces. The motivation here was essentially defensive, aimed at maintaining existing areas of organisation. These unions launched the occasional expansionary campaign, usually in

TABLE 9.1: Specified Recruitment Targets

Union	Recruitment Target
AEU	Officials could cite no particular targets, beyond attempting to secure recognition in new plants
BIFU	Consolidation in clearing banks, including concentrated campaigns in London and selected areas Part-time workers } in banking and finance Women } Large complexes: Barclaycard, Northampton; Midland Bank, Sheffield; Guardian Royal Exchange, Lytham International banks; Subsidiaries of clearing banks; Building societies (mainly by mergers with staff associations)
EETPU	Managerial, professional and technical staff (often through mergers) Technicians (eg Visionhire, Radio Rentals)
GMB	Local Authorities; Health; Food Manufacture and Distribution; Hotel and Catering; Private sector white collar workers; Construction and Building Materials; Workers on Government-Funded Training Schemes; Security Industry. Women; Ethnic Minorities; Young People; Part-time and Temporary Workers; Self-employed Workers (in certain regions).
NALGO	General consolidation in: Local Government; NHS; Public Service; Electricity & Gas; Universities. Particular campaigns: Police Civilians; Probation and Aftercare; Housing Associations; Public Transport. Follow members into private sector, with limited recruitment in adjacent areas
NUPE	General consolidation in: Local Authorities; NHS; Public Services; Public Utilities; Universities Particular campaigns: Schools meals, caretakers, nurses, home helps Follow members into private sector, with limited recruitment in adjacent areas, such as housing associations, private nursing homes, law centres, etc.
TGWU	Widespread targeting including: Local Authorities; Contract Cleaning; Retail (eg Sainsbury's); Hotel & Catering (eg Ladbroke's hotels); Bar Staff; Betting Shops and Racing Stables; Channel Tunnel; Voluntary Sector. Women; Young People; Ethnic Minorities; Part-time and Temporary Workers.
UCATT	Consolidation in construction and related industries; Self employed in construction; Women.
USDAW	Consolidation in Distribution; Periodic campaigns aimed at particular companies; Women; Part-time Workers.

Source: Interviews with union officials, union journals, recruitment literature and general media.

response to employee demand or as a defensive measure. However, NALGO and NUPE, whilst having the advantages of size and well-organised core job territories, chose not to expand beyond their core public-sector base, probably a reflection of their tradition as purely public-sector rather than general unions, although they did make some expansionary moves in response to privatisation and employee demand. Finally, the EETPU and the AEU tended to concentrate on core workers and on direct approaches to the employer. The AEU appeared to have the least-developed approach to recruitment campaigning amongst our nine unions, perhaps reflecting the fact that the union had elected rather than appointed officials, thus making them more responsive to the servicing needs of their membership, and less responsive to calls from the central leadership for the prioritisation of recruitment.

Table 9.2 presents a summary of the main criteria which appeared from our research to inform the selection of recruitment targets. These are grouped according to the underlying rationale, and suggest that recruitment targeting was undertaken on the basis of a pragmatic assessment of the threats and opportunities facing the union, and as such reflected a combination of defensive, membership potential, and other organising considerations.

TABLE 9.2: Criteria Used in the Targeting of Recruitment Effort

Criteria	Rationale	Examples
Maintenance of existing areas of organisation	Defensive	BIFU–banking USDAW–retailing
Competition in existing areas of organisation	Defensive	BIFU–selected clearing banks. NALGO/NUPE–public sector
Contractors entering union's job territories	Defensive	NUPE–public services TGWU–agency drivers
New subsidiaries of existing employers	Defensive	BIFU–merchant banking subsidiaries
Areas of lower union density	Membership potential	BIFU/USDAW–where employers less supportive
Previously–neglected groups in the workforce	Membership potential	Many unions–women, young people, ethnic minorities, peripheral workforce, etc
Expanding industries/sectors	Membership potential	TGWU/GMB–private services sector
Less emphasis on "near impossible" targets	Membership potential	USDAW–Marks & Spencer and others
Pockets of non–members in existing areas of organisation	Membership potential Retention potential	Most unions
Larger establishments	Economies of scale Retention potential Employer recognition	BIFU–large labour centres UCATT–construction sites
Need to concentrate recruitment efforts	Critical minimum effort to make an impression	BIFU–targeted campaigns TGWU/GMB–national priorities

(d)   Monitoring Recruitment Activity

The monitoring of results was an area which received greater attention in some unions during the 1980s, although in some there had long been formal monitoring systems.   In what follows, we briefly describe the practice of several unions as of 1989-90, with the aim of illustrating the approaches adopted by unions.   The systems which we describe in some cases apply to the whole national union, whilst in others they are specific to a particular region.   Even in the latter cases, however, what we describe is illustrative of the general philosophy of the national union.

A common approach amongst our sample of unions was for full-time officials to submit regular written report forms to their superior at regional or district level.   For example, in USDAW, the Deputy Divisional Officer compiled a weekly "Organising Activity Report" based on reports from each of his full-time officials.   This gave a detailed breakdown of the week's organising activity in terms of companies targeted, branches visited, members recruited, proposed follow-up visits, and on any difficulties encountered during recruitment.   This allowed the Deputy Divisional Officer to monitor recruitment, not only for each officer, but also on a company-by-company basis.   Here the "difficulties encountered" information could be particularly useful.   For example, where a comment such as "poor facilities" appeared for a particular company, he was

able to telephone the National Officer responsible for that company in an attempt to improve such facilities.

In addition, the Deputy Divisional Officer monitored branch membership figures:

> "...and when I see a certain trend in a branch, a downward trend, I'll be seeking an explanation from the organiser. Invariably I'll get it. A supermarket closes; we lose the membership. You can do damn all about that. A supermarket opens...and you pick members up. There are simple explanations, usually, of members lost and members gained. But having said that, you've got to watch that the rate of recruitment stays up. If a supermarket opens, you've got to make sure that you get in there to do the job."

> (USDAW Deputy Divisional Officer)

However, our respondents from USDAW were generally at pains to point out that whilst there was an increased emphasis on recruitment in the 1980s, the union had always emphasised recruitment in this way, and such monitoring was a long-standing feature of the union's activities.

Similarly, in UCATT, full-time officials completed a "Regional Organiser's Weekly Report and Expenses Form". This included not only details of the week's expenses and car mileage, but also details of recruitment activity undertaken. The former was approved by the regional secretary and forwarded to the central wages department. The recruitment information was

used by the regional secretary and regional council to monitor recruitment activity. Again, this form of monitoring had long been a feature of the union.

BIFU Area Organisers spent a great deal of their time visiting bank branches in order to recruit members. They were required to submit an eight-weekly programme of recruitment visits to the Assistant Secretary (Organisation) with a copy to their area Organisational Sub-Committee (OSC), comprised of lay members drawn from the elected Area Council. The Organiser also completed an "Organiser Report Form" for each individual branch or office visit, forwarding copies of these to the Assistant Secretary and to members of the area OSC. Every eight weeks, the AS(O) held meetings with Area Organisers to discuss their completed programmes, in terms of visits actually made, membership densities, staff association strength, and members recruited.

In the TGWU, officers reported to their District Secretary on their recruitment activity, who then compiled a quarterly report for his district. This was forwarded to the Regional Organiser, who had overall responsibility for recruitment in the region. The report identified new areas of recruitment, other major areas of recruitment effort and details of any major membership losses due to redundancies or closure. Officials were also asked to provide comments on recruitment opportunities and difficulties encountered. The reports were discussed at district and regional level, where the information was

used to plan recruitment activity. In addition, the Regional Organisers met at national level on a National Coordinating Committee and such information was intended to inform their discussions and planning of national campaigns.

Similar procedures operated in both the GMB and the EETPU. In the GMB, Regional Industrial Officers drew up a quarterly recruitment report for their Regional Secretary and executive, based on reports from individual officials. The report set out recruitment trends, weaknesses in campaigns, employment trends, future recruitment plans, and resource requirements. Again, this was used by the Regional Secretary to inform the allocation of resources. In addition, some GMB regions had recently introduced regular recruitment meetings, organised by Regional Industrial Officers and attended by all officials, where recruitment campaigns were discussed and planned. In the EETPU, Area Officials were required to submit a quarterly report to the Executive Council, based on reports from individual officials, and giving details of recruitment activity, numbers recruited, difficulties encountered and future plans in their area.

In some unions, there was no such attempt to directly monitor the recruitment activity of full-time officials, and the union relied solely on branch membership returns. Our NALGO respondents informed us that this was the practice in their union, with branches submitting an annual membership return to head

273

office, and reporting on a quarterly basis at District Committee level. The AEU also relied on monitoring membership on a branch basis, with branch secretaries submitting a quarterly report to head office. However, in 1990, the Rules Revision Committee made the following alteration to AEU rules:

> "The divisional organisers shall meet with all the assistant divisional organisers and district secretaries located within their divisions twice a year to discuss the level of organisation and recruitment within the division and the steps taken and to be taken to improve the same. The divisional organisers shall submit written reports to the Executive Council on each such meeting."

> (AEU Journal, Reports Section, June 1990)

This decision was cited by an AEU official we interviewed as a clear expression of the increasing emphasis being placed on recruitment within the union. What is perhaps significant, however, is that the rules revision came at the end of a full decade of steeply falling AEU membership, during which major cost savings and contributions increases had been implemented, and in spite of which AEU officials were amongst the least likely of those interviewed to see recruitment as a key part of their responsibilities (see below).

From the above discussion, there appeared to be two basic approaches to the monitoring of recruitment and membership. One involved the direct monitoring

of the activities of full-time officials, through a formal written reporting system. This was often accompanied by the monitoring of branch membership figures, through quarterly or annual returns. The second approach concentrated solely on branch membership returns, with no attempt to formally monitor the recruitment activity of full-time officials. The latter appeared to occur mainly where recruitment had been seen as a matter for lay representatives, with full-time officials concentrating mainly on servicing. These tended to be the unions whose core job territories were relatively well-organised, and whose major recruitment activity was of a close consolidation type.

What is clear is that most of our unions appeared to have a reasonably systematic approach to the monitoring of recruitment activity and membership trends at local level, with some attempt to collate this information at the level of the region and/or at the centre, and there was evidence that this could be used to evaluate recruitment efforts and to plan future activity.

In spite of such monitoring, union officials have traditionally been given a high degree of autonomy in their work, and it seems that they, and indeed their superiors, were often sensitive about any suggestion that their personal performance was being monitored, or that they were being given targets to meet. Thus, whilst UCATT Regional Organisers reported weekly on their recruitment activity, a Regional Secretary explained:

"The bottom part of the form is for me to monitor the amount of people – not only to monitor, I mean it's not like that, because we have a lot of trust in our officers. It's to give my Regional Council some idea which areas are more organised than others, and which companies are more organised. If we notice a company is not appearing on this, well, then I'd pick up the 'phone and endeavour to go and meet the company and say 'Look, as far as I'm concerned, the report I'm getting from my officers is that we don't seem to have many members inside your company. Is there a specific reason for this?' And then, they may not have a check-off agreement, so then I could negotiate with them a check-off agreement. So it's not only to monitor the officers, it's to give me some idea, a picture, of that massive area [his region]."

(UCATT Regional Secretary)

Several of our other respondents were similarly at pains to point out that any monitoring was aimed primarily at ensuring that recruitment opportunities were fully exploited, and any difficulties dealt with systematically, rather than constituting any form of detailed supervision and assessment of the performance of individual officials. When asked whether there was central monitoring and control of the recruitment of officials, a EETPU official told us:

"Oh there is, but it's not control in the sense that you're measured. There's no league table. But you have to get out. Everyone understands that... it will only be a success if you get out there and do it. Even when you do that, we all appreciate that there are difficulties, whether it's from the employer, or whether it's from the person you are trying to recruit."

(EETPU Area Official)

Similarly, the TGWU did not assign recruitment target figures to officials, since again it was generally felt that recruitment success was to some extent beyond their control and that such targets would simply make recruitment an even more frustrating activity. Thus, in most unions any emphasis on recruitment took the form of ensuring that officials undertook a certain amount of recruitment activity, rather than setting particular target figures or quotas to be achieved by each official.

A NALGO official told us that his union did not have recruitment quotas for individual full-time officials, and explained that it would be difficult to introduce them in his union because full-time officials were only usually allowed access to the workplace once the branch had called them in.

BIFU did not produce recruitment targets for full-time Area Organisers, although temporary recruiters, employed by the union on one-year contracts specifically to recruit members, were assigned a target of an average three new members per day. BIFU introduced their monitoring system not so much to monitor each organiser's recruitment performance, but rather to monitor recruitment problems and to underline the importance of recruitment visits and contact with actual and potential members. Thus:

> "They don't really look at the numbers recruited. It's just a
> general chat about what the major issues are and what the

opposition is up to, what the response of the membership is to a pay settlement, et cetera. We are not asked to justify our movements or anything like that."

(BIFU Area Organiser)

There was some evidence of resistance to the principle of targeting amongst BIFU Area Organisers. This was reflected in their initial response to the introduction of the monitoring exercise:

"We weren't keen on it when it came in. [APEX – their trade union] had some discussions on it, but there were various assurances given that it wasn't going to be used for disciplinary purposes; it was not a form of targeting; it was simply a record of where we'd been."

(BIFU Area Organiser)

In the event, however, none of the BIFU officials we interviewed had heard of the monitoring system being used to impose recruitment quotas, or to discipline an official. Of course, this may simply suggest that officials were doing their job effectively. As one official put it:

"Although if an organiser was found not to be doing his job, I'm sure these things [report forms] would be used in evidence."

(BIFU Area Organiser)

A regional officer of another union outlined the problems faced in monitoring officials' recruitment performance:

"Recruitment is hard work. It can be stressful for officials, and unless there is some mechanism for ensuring that people are doing what they are being asked to do, the reality is that they don't do it. There has to be some management control. Now that is a bit more difficult in trade unions, which are not based on the same principles as employers. We don't find it as easy to get rid of staff who don't measure up to the standard. We wouldn't want to do really, although I say that tongue in cheek, because from time to time there are people who are round pegs in square holes. The job isn't really for them. But we are stuck with the problem of having people that other organisations wouldn't have, because of the nature of our organisation as a trade union."

Our interviews with regional and national officials confirmed this view, suggesting that there were few effective sanctions deployed against officials who reacted unenthusiastically to the new recruitment campaigns, with exhortation, example and a tendency to depend on the enthusiastic officials being the approach adopted in implementing campaigns.

However, we did come across one regional secretary who was particularly hawkish about encouraging his full-time officials to recruit. He suggested to his officials that they should aim to recruit at least ten private-sector members per week, and he compiled a quarterly "league table" of officials' recruitment

achievements. Table 9.3 compares the recruitment performance of the full-time officials in his region during 1988.

TABLE 9.3: Union Region X: Recruitment Figures for 1988

| Organiser | Number of Members Recruited | | | | | |
	Jan–March	April–June	July–August	Sept–Dec	Total	Average
Public Sector						
A	74	57	10	20	161	3.0
B	170	77	89	44	380	7.3
C	76	9	48	49	182	3.5
D	145	72	63	111	391	7.5
E	127	45	16	11	199	3.8
F	315	192	131	127	765	14.7
G	97	177	80	6	360	6.9
H	479	317	138	5	939	18.0
Private Sector						
A	25	16	16	37	94	1.8
B	78	79	121	117	395	7.5
C	41	57	54	40	192	3.6
D	45	73	171	138	427	8.2
E	39	62	59	89	249	4.7
F	17	55	58	41	171	3.2
G	43	57	8	87	195	3.7
H	211	285	381	283	1160	22.3

Source: Internal union documents.

Note: The names of the union, the region and of individual organisers have been excluded to preserve confidentiality.

Whilst he was at pains to point out that such figures could not necessarily be taken at face value, given that the scope for recruitment differed greatly

between districts and depended to some extent on factors beyond the individual official's control, nevertheless he did meet with each official regularly to discuss the figures. If there was evidence that an official was making insufficient impact on recruitment, either in general or in a particular area, then he was expected to explain why.

He suggested that his union needed to undergo a "culture change", moving towards a greater emphasis on the need for full-time officials to get out to workplaces and recruit:

> "If [...] is going to survive, or any union really, I think the priority is to get officials who can sell the organisation to people, and there's a lot of officials who don't have that ability."

He argued that it tended to be the newer, younger officials who shared this view, and indicated that there had been some problems in getting officials to prioritise recruitment:

> "There's a certain amount of officer resentment about this kind of thing. They regard it as pressure. Ironically, my two best recruiters don't regard it as pressure. They're very much into the recruitment orientation, and see it as a necessary union operation."

He outlined the case of one official who refused to complete the monitoring forms, and who eventually took early retirement from the union. Clearly, many unions may face resistance from within the organisation in attempting a shift towards a more recruitment-oriented culture.

This particular regional secretary was the only one of our respondents who claimed to be in favour of directly linking officials' rewards to their effectiveness as recruiters. Whilst he was not able to do this with salary, given his union's salary policy, nevertheless he claimed to operate an informal system of rewards, for example by selecting good performers for conference delegations and overseas trips.

In general, however, our respondents were strongly opposed to the provision of direct financial incentives for recruitment. One official told us that his union did not provide such incentives because:

> "...we've all been members for years. We all believe in the philosophy of trade unionism. It's not something I think you can pay someone to do, as you would pay them to be a salesman."
>
> (EETPU Area Official)

This is consistent with the study by Robertson and Sams, which found that "the basic motivation to engage in full-time trade union work seems generally

282

to have been non-economic"(1976: 34), with most officials seeing it as being

a logical progression from their lay involvement, and many claiming that their

motivation was idealistic. As a UCATT official put it:

> "My grandfather was a trade union official for NUFTA, my dad was the District Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, and the family's always had an involvement with the labour and trade union movement. ... Five years ago I was on fourteen and a half thousand a year, and I took a six thousand pounds a year cut to come into this job."

However, whilst there was neither evidence of, nor support for, providing

financial rewards for recruitment, it might be possible to provide longer-term

recognition and reward. As we have seen, the GMB sought to emphasise that

increasingly officials would receive recognition for their achievements as

organisers rather than as negotiators. Whilst the union stopped short of

adopting performance-related pay, nevertheless it was made clear that

promotion within the union would depend on the individual's achievements in

this area:

> "People are aware that if they want to move up in the union; if they want not just a future, but if they want to go further than Organiser... then they must take on board the recruitment idea."

> (GMB Regional Industrial Officer)

This point was echoed by officials we spoke to in several other unions, although one might question whether unions have sufficient opportunities for career advancement to make this an effective incentive for all but a minority of officials.

Were Officials Spending More Time on Recruitment?

Given all the above, was there any evidence by the early 1990s that union leaderships had been successful in getting their full-time officials to devote more time to recruitment?

We saw above that earlier studies of the work patterns of union officials suggested that recruitment was a relatively minor activity for most in terms of the amount of time spent. Such a finding emerged very clearly, for example, from the work of Kelly and Heery (1989), who found in a survey of 101 local officials, carried out in 1987, that only 18 ranked recruitment amongst their three most time-consuming activities, with routine office work, conducting and preparing for negotiations, training/guiding stewards and attending union committees all taking up significantly more time.

Our own interviews with local full-time officials confirmed that negotiating was the most time-consuming activity (see Table 9.4), followed by helping or advising union stewards or representatives, and recruitment in joint second

place. Routine office work did not emerge as one of the main time-consuming activities in our interviews. This finding, along with the high ranking given to recruitment compared to earlier studies, may reflect the composition of our sample, who were mainly "first-line officials", and in some cases drawn from unions which had traditionally placed a great deal of emphasis on recruitment. The latter point is significant, given that Kelly and Heery's sample was based on officials from seven unions (AEU, ASTMS, EETPU, GMB, NALGO, NUPE and TGWU), whilst twelve of their eighteen who ranked recruitment as one of their top three activities came from one particular union (the GMB).

TABLE 9.4: Full-Time Officials' Work Patterns

Activity		Most Time-Consuming Activity: Number of Times Mentioned				Increasingly time Consuming in Last 3-5 years
		RANK				
		1st	2nd	3rd	Total	
a)	Helping/advising stewards or representatives	5	7	5	17	4
b)	Negotiating with employers	9	6	3	18	3
c)	Preparing for negotiations	1	3	1	5	1
d)	Attending union branches/committees	2	0	3	5	1
e)	Helping members with individual problems	0	6	6	12	7
f)	Recruitment	8	3	6	17	9
g)	Routine office work	2	1	1	4	1

Source: Interviews with 27 full-time officials, 1989-90.

However, given that our research was conducted during 1989 and 1990, rather later than that of Kelly and Heery and the other studies referred to earlier in the chapter, the higher ranking given to recruitment may also reflect to some extent a growing awareness of the importance of recruitment amongst officials. This is certainly implied by the fact that recruitment was the activity most often mentioned as taking up an increasing amount of officials' time over the preceding three to five years (Table 9.4).

The TUC survey of union officials, carried out in 1987, lends weight to this interpretation, suggesting that even by then officials had recognised the growing importance of recruitment. When asked to identify the different aspects of their job which were becoming more or less important, over seventy five per cent saw recruitment as becoming more important, with only 2.4 per cent seeing it as becoming less so. Recruitment emerged as the top-ranked item on this question. Dealing with individual casework and queries was the second-ranked item, with forty eight per cent seeing this as becoming more important (TUC, 1989a). These results appear to be consistent with our own findings.

Thus, our tentative conclusion is that by the end of the 1980s, local full-time officials do appear to have been shifting their work patterns in favour of recruitment activity.

In spite of this, we still found that the priority given to recruitment activity by full-time officials varied considerably between unions. Table 9.5 suggests that officials in unions whose core job territories had lower union density were more likely to spend a high proportion of their time on recruitment. This included officials in BIFU, UCATT and USDAW, whilst those in unions such as the AEU, NALGO and, perhaps surprisingly, the TGWU tended to represent the other extreme, with a much greater emphasis on negotiations.

TABLE 9.5: Union density and the time devoted to recruitment by full-time officials

		Recruitment Mentioned by the Official as one of their Most Time-Consuming Activities		
		Yes	No	Total
Union Density in Core Job Territories	High Density	7	10	17
	Low Density	10	0	10
	TOTAL	17	10	27

Note: See Appendix 10 for details of the categorisation of unions according to density in core job territories.

Source: Interviews with 27 union full-time officials, 1989-90.

The above implies that even by 1989-1990, full-time officials devoted more time to recruitment where this was essential simply to maintain existing organisation. Thus, the recruitment imperative felt in unions with weakly-organised core job territories had yet to be matched in all other unions, and

in spite of some prioritising of recruitment in the 1980s, the dichotomy between the "Organizer" and the "Negotiator" still appeared to be relevant (Brown and Lawson, 1973: 437).

Our interviews suggested that the AEU had greater difficulty than most of the other unions in getting full-time officials involved in coordinated recruitment campaigns. The officials we interviewed were insistent on the need to prioritise servicing over cold-calling unorganised plants. It may be that the election of officers made them particularly sensitive to the demands of their membership and that this, along with the traditional pattern of recruitment through the apprenticeship system in highly-organised plants, militated against a reordering of priorities towards new recruitment. It must also be recognised that the AEU was at the time of our interviews engaged in a national campaign to secure a reduction in the working week in the engineering industry, again pointing to the importance of competing priorities.

The Effectiveness of Union Recruitment Campaigns

In the final section of this chapter, we briefly evamine the impact of the union organising initiatives on membership. More, however, will be said on the evaluation of such campaigns in the following chapter.

It is clear that the initiatives discussed in this thesis had failed, at least by 1990, to halt the decline in aggregate union membership. Whilst the rate of membership decline slackened from an annual average of 3.7 per cent during 1980-84 to 1.6 per cent during 1985-89, this was due largely to the resumption of employment growth after 1983. In 1989 the rate of decline rose to 2.1 per cent, the biggest fall since 1984, whilst the fall in union density continued unabated throughout the period.

Furthermore, whilst particular unions fared rather better than the movement as a whole, it is not clear that the observed pattern can be explained by differences in recruitment effort, and it appears that employment growth in a union's core job territories was a key factor. For example, USDAW claimed some success for its "Reach Out" campaign, launched in January 1988, with a net increase of 9,517 members during that year. In fact, USDAW's membership had stabilised by 1986, and was growing by 1987, and thus predates the campaign, appearing to owe much to the growth of employment in retailing after 1984. By 1989, USDAW membership was again in decline, with a five per cent fall more than cancelling out the growth of the previous two years. Similarly, BIFU experienced growth for most of the 1980s, but again this appears to be a reflection of employment growth in banking and finance, and in fact the union was not quite able to maintain its share of total

employment in the sector during the 1980s. (See Appendix 2 for a more detailed discussion of membership trends in our sample of unions.)

Some further evidence on the effectiveness of union recruitment campaigns aimed particularily at distant expansion can be found in the TUC's assessment of its "Union Yes" pilot campaigns, conducted in Trafford Park, Manchester and London's Docklands during 1990. In the Trafford Park campaign, conducted during the period 5th to 25th March, 75 companies were selected from a list of 500 largely non-union establishments. Public meetings and other events were organised, local advertising was arranged, and around 300 full-time officials and lay activists were involved in approaching companies, largely on a cold-call basis.

The TUC costed the campaign at £78,200, including £52,000 spent on advertising alone, but by January 1990 unions were claiming to have recruited only 900 new members as a result of the campaign. At over £86 in measured direct cost per recruit, this could hardly be seen as an economic success, and indeed John Monks, TUC Deputy General Secretary and responsible for the campaign, concluded that future campaigns should be organised by the TUC regions and at a lower cost.

The London Docklands campaign, conducted during 1st to 18th of May, was even less successful, with unions claiming to have recruited only 120 new members. Thus, whilst the TUC emphasised that the campaigns could bring longer-term benefits in terms of a higher union profile in the area, and indeed by January 1991 the TUC was claiming that the Trafford Park recruitment total had risen to 1,400, it is clear that such a cold-call approach to distant expansion faces severe difficulties.

Conclusions

A constant theme in our research was that recruitment activity competed for resources with other priorities, such as servicing existing members and campaign work. However, the evidence presented in this chapter shows that local full-time officials had been made aware that recruitment was to be a priority within their union. In some, though not all of the unions, officials had been asked to devote at least a given minimum amount of time specifically to recruitment activity, and in several cases officials were required to set aside their other activities for a week or so at a time to participate in recruitment campaigns.

All of our unions monitored membership in some way, although unions varied in their approach, from a simple membership count on a branch basis, to a more detailed evaluation of recruitment activity broken down according to

targets and officials. The former was found in unions with very well-organised job territories, and where the full-time official's role in recruitment was generally limited.

The latter approach appeared to be undertaken with two aims in mind. Firstly, by signalling the priority afforded to recruitment, and perhaps by exerting pressure on officials and branches, an effective monitoring system might actually increase the level of recruitment effort within the union, particularly amongst full-time officials. Secondly, monitoring could provide the necessary information for the evaluation of recruitment activity, and so assist in the planning and targeting of recruitment campaigns, thus allowing for a more effective utilisation of resources.

On the first point, whilst it was not general practice to set numerical recruitment quotas for full-time officials, the systematic monitoring of recruitment activity did at least offer the potential for identifying poor performers. We heard of only one example where this had resulted in an official leaving his job, although it is open to question whether this reflected good job performance by officials, a deliberately restrained approach to such matters, or a reluctance to discuss such cases with an outside researcher.

We came across no examples of remuneration being linked directly to recruitment, and it was generally felt that this would be inappropriate, given the idealistic motivation of officials, and the fact that recruitment success was to a large extent influenced by factors beyond the official's control. We did, however, find one regional official who was in favour of such an approach and who himself attempted to provide informal rewards for good recruiters, and some officials suggested that effective recruiters could be rewarded in the longer term by promotion. Thus, whilst unions had not adopted a performance-based recruitment culture, there was some evidence of a desire to recognise good performance in this area.

We concluded that full-time officials were spending more time on recruitment by the late 1980s. In our interviews, we found that recruitment was the item most often referred to as being an increasingly time-consuming part of the full-time officials' job, and this was corroborated by the 1987 TUC survey. We also found that recruitment was rated as being relatively more time-consuming than in studies carried out in earlier years. Clearly, our findings could be biased to the extent that officials may have claimed to be doing more than they actually were, given the fact that union leaders were exhorting them to prioritise recruitment. Only a detailed analysis of work patterns, based perhaps on diary studies and systematic observation, could provide more firm conclusions on this question.

In spite of the apparent progress in prioritising recruitment activity, we found continuing differences between unions in the amount of time spent on recruitment. It was in those unions which had traditionally given more emphasis to the recruitment responsibilities of full-time officials which appeared to be further prioritising recruitment activity, whilst officials in those unions with relatively well-established core job territories often continued to see themselves essentially as negotiators rather than as organisers. We also found some suggestion of an uneven reaction to campaigns within particular unions (see the following Chapter).

All this implies that the development of the "recruitment culture", whilst apparently in progress, was not complete at the time of our interviews. Furthermore, the problems in securing such change must not be underestimated, given the traditional autonomy of union officials, their competing loyalties to the union centre and to their members, and the fact that union tradition and ideology may militate against the use of firm sanctions and incentives. Thus, the development of the recruitment culture was likely to be a slow process, perhaps even ultimately depending on the gradual inflow of a new generation of officials, schooled in the realities of the post-1979 period.

On the question of making best use of available resources, it is clear that many unions were targeting recruitment efforts selectively, choosing targets so

as to maximise the return, both in terms of potential recruitment and the ability to retain those recruited. Those unions organising in particularly difficult sectors, where it was necessary for full-time officials to continually consolidate membership, had very limited scope for expansionary recruitment, and their priorities were in a sense predetermined. Even here, however, there was clear evidence of a carefully targeted and monitored approach in an attempt to ensure the best use of scarce resources.

Targeting was usually done at both national and local levels, and a view that came across from many of our interviewees, as well as in the documents we studied, was that in spite of the launch of nationally-coordinated campaigns in several unions, there was a need for a degree of local autonomy in the detailed selection of targets if resources were to be used effectively.

We found some evidence to support our expectations on the link between union characteristics and recruitment targets. We suggested in the previous chapter that small unions with weakly organised core job territories could be expected to concentrate on distant consolidation, whilst larger unions, with well-organised core job territories would be more likely to be able to engage in distant expansion. We found some support for this, the main exceptions being the limited expansionary recruitment activity of NALGO and NUPE, which we attributed to the lack of a general or open tradition in these unions,

295

and the occasional defensive or reactive expansionary campaign undertaken even by unions such as BIFU.

Finally, in spite of attempts by the TUC to develop greater cooperation between unions, the increased prioritisation of recruitment appeared in some cases to contribute to inter-union rivalry. As an USDAW official put it:

> "It's easier to pinch them from somebody else, far easier, than to go out cold."

>   (USDAW Divisional Officer)

Whilst this was by no means a dominating theme in our interviews, nevertheless several of our respondents referred to it. It was mentioned mainly by officials organising in industries with small, scattered workplaces (i.e officials from BIFU, UCATT and USDAW), and by the EETPU officials, who claimed that their union had given greater priority to recruitment partly as a defensive measure following its expulsion from the TUC in 1988. Officials from such unions were the ones tending to spend more time on recruitment, and claiming that they were or would like to spend an increasing amount of their time on recruitment. This suggests that perceived competition may act as a spur to recruitment activity.

CHAPTER 10

A CASE STUDY:
THE TGWU'S LINK UP CAMPAIGN, 1987-1991

Introduction

In this chapter, we present a case study of the TGWU's Link Up campaign. Our aim is to provide an analysis of the implementation of a national recruitment campaign, with particular emphasis on the relationship between central coordination and local implementation. We discuss the issues and problems raised by a campaign of this type, including the selection of recruitment targets, the mobilisation of full-time officials and lay activists, and the monitoring of recruitment activity. We conclude the discussion with an evaluation of the effectiveness of the campaign, in terms of the impact on membership and in the eyes of TGWU officials.

Link Up was chosen as a case study for three reasons. Firstly, the TGWU is the largest union in Britain, and Link Up represents the union's major recruitment initiative of the late 1980s. Thus, the campaign was likely to be one of the most significant initiatives undertaken during this period. Secondly, a declared aim of the campaign was to organise hitherto little-unionised groups and sectors. Hence, at least on the face of it, Link Up represents an

297

attempt at expansionary recruitment. Finally, the campaign was addressed in particular at the peripheral labour force; precisely those sectors felt by many to represent the frontiers of trade unionism during the 1980s and 1990s.

The Background to the Campaign

The incentive to launch a major recruitment initiative was provided by two factors. Firstly, TGWU membership declined by 708 thousand (equal to 34 per cent of the 1979 membership) in the seven years (1979-1986) prior to the launch of Link Up. As we have seen, the TGWU was more severely affected by declining membership than were most unions. Secondly, the development of "flexible" forms of employment, including agency labour and temporary and part-time work, along with the growth of female employment, meant that the traditional areas of TGWU strength amongst male, full-time, permanent employees, were in relative, and at times absolute decline. Given these trends, there was by the mid-1980s a growing realisation within the union that something had to be done if the TGWU were to avoid a continuing decline in its membership, bargaining power and influence.

However, the bid to organise peripheral workers was not without controversy within the union. In 1985, the General Executive Council, recognising the growth of agency labour within road transport, sought to lay down conditions for the acceptance of agency drivers in unionised workplaces. The union's

road transport group, however, opposed these proposals, claiming that such agency labour displaced permanent jobs, and the executive's proposals were decisively rejected at the union's biennial conference of July 1985. In the course of the conference debate, some delegates even argued that such drivers should not be allowed into the union, in spite of the fact that the TGWU already had a recognition agreement with Manpower.

However, as the decade progressed with no sign of a change in the political climate, and as TGWU membership continued to decline, it was becoming increasingly clear that the union must try to come to terms with the growth of the peripheral labour force. Even by the middle of the decade there was evidence that this was happening.

In 1985, the TGWU launched its "Living Wage" campaign. Based on a target level of minimum terms and conditions to be aimed for by TGWU negotiators, the aim was to improve the terms and conditions of low-paid workers and so encourage them to join the union. Given the incidence of low pay, the campaign had a particular focus on such industries as textiles, hotel and catering, agriculture and public services, and on women and young people. A national official was given responsibility for ensuring that the campaign was developed across the union. Recruitment material was prepared under the "Living Wage" slogan, and in 1986 special reduced contribution rates were

adopted for part-timers and the young unemployed, reduced rates for YTS

trainees having already been introduced in 1984.

The Living Wage campaign was essentially concerned to achieve a target

wage through existing collective agreements. However, as one TGWU official

put it to us:

> "...but there were a lot of people below that rate that we were
> not going to achieve it for, because they were unorganised."

> (TGWU Regional Organiser)

Thus, something more was called for.

The Launch

Link Up was launched in February 1987 as an attempt to build links between

the core and peripheral workforces, and in particular to recruit and represent

the interests of temporary and part-time workers. A launch rally was held at

the Wembley Conference Centre, attended by the Union's full-time officials

and senior lay activists, sponsored MPs, and representatives of community

organisations and the media. With keynote addresses by Neil Kinnock, the

Leader of the Labour Party, and Ron Todd, the union's General Secretary, the

aim was to ensure maximum publicity for the campaign, and for the model

agreement and the charter of rights for part-time and temporary workers, which provided the focus for the initial stages of Link Up.

In addition, the union held a special weekend seminar for regional secretaries, national (trade group) officers and executive officers, to discuss the union's approach to the campaign and to recruitment generally. The aim here was to try to ensure that the campaign amounted to more than a central publicity exercise, and actually led to real recruitment activity on the ground. The union had already discussed the need to prioritise recruitment activity for full-time officials during a review of officers' jobs and gradings carried out during 1986, and had appointed a Regional Organiser in each region with responsibility for coordinating recruitment activity. Thus, the early stages of the campaign were very much aimed at convincing those inside the union of the need to prioritise recruitment. As a TGWU official put it to us in mid-1987:

"The people we had at the [Wembley] rally were our own officers and our own representatives, and it is the creation of a cultural change within the union which will have a major effect upon the membership and the potential membership...In the early months [of the campaign] the major emphasis has really been on changing attitudes and gaining cooperation and support from within the organisation."

The national campaign was the responsibility of Bill Morris, Deputy General Secretary, and a working party was set up at central office, to coordinate the

campaign and to provide guidance to regions. The National Coordinating Committee, a quarterly meeting of Regional Organisers and National Officers chaired by Bill Morris, was to provide a forum for the discussion of strategy and implementation of the campaign, including the analysis of Regional Organisers' reports on the progress made in their regions. Whilst Link Up was to be a nationwide campaign, regions 5 (the Midlands) and 9 (Yorkshire) were chosen to act as pilot regions, and as such were to receive additional support from the centre in the initial stages.

A Link Up "Organiser's Pack" was produced nationally, aimed primarily at lay activists. This set out the basic facts on the peripheral labour force, the TGWU Charter for Temporary and Part Time Workers, and a model agreement regulating the use of such workers to be put to employers by TGWU negotiators. In spite of the adoption of Link Up, the union remained opposed to the substitution of part-time, temporary and sub-contracted jobs for full-time, permanent, in-house jobs, except where this was a matter of choice or increased opportunities for the workers concerned. Any attempt to organise and represent such workers was in some cases therefore a second-best option, to be chosen only where the union had failed to secure its preferred form of employment.

Link Up was seen as a broad-ranging campaign, and involved addressing community and welfare issues as well as attempting to recruit members and negotiate collective agreements for temporary and part-time employees. Thus, in 1988 the union organised "Trade Unions in the Community: A TGWU Conference for Social Action Groups". This sought to discuss how the TGWU could develop links with the voluntary sector. The aim was to emphasise the campaigning, "social justice" aspect of the union, with proposals to offer TGWU offices as advice centres, and also to increase the union's membership in voluntary organisations (TGWU, no date a).

Running parallel to Link Up was a programme of measures designed to help the union shed its male, white, middle-aged image by adapting its internal structures. The setting up of Regional Women's Advisory Committees had been approved by conference in 1979, and progress was made during the 1980s in developing their influence within the union, for example by providing for a quarterly report from the RWAC to the Regional Committee and ensuring that there was at least one woman from each region in the delegation to the TUC and Labour Party conference. The 1987 conference approved the establishment of Regional Race Equality Committees along similar lines, and a national Equal Opportunities Working Party was set up, as a stop-gap until committees had been established in each region. A national women's officer and a national officer for race equality were appointed to promote the pursuit

303

of equal opportunities within the union. The union established a national youth conference, a national officer was given special responsibility for youth issues, and regions were asked to designate an official as youth officer. In March 1991, it was announced that advisory youth forums were to be set up at regional and national levels.

The Campaigns

(a) Link Up Phase One, September 1987 to March 1989

The key feature of Link Up was an attempt to coordinate recruitment activity across the union. The 1987 National Action Week was seen as the "kick start" for the campaign in the regions. Regional Organisers were asked to develop a campaign for the week of 19th to 26th September. Whilst suggested activities and campaign materials were produced by the working party at central office, and TGWU campaign buses and lorries were available for use by regions, the regions themselves were left with considerable autonomy to draw up their own schedule of activities and recruitment targets for the week. Regional Organisers were to report back to the National Coordinating Committee on their region's activities in early November.

The two pilot regions were given additional assistance by the centre during National Action Week, with the aim of securing maximum national media coverage for the campaign.

Following the national action week, the union selected various national targets for particular emphasis on a quarterly basis. In early 1988, regions 2 (the South) and 10 (Humberside, Lincolnshire and the East Coast) were added to the original pilot regions, and four trade groups, agriculture, construction, commercial road transport and public services, were to be the subject of concentrated national campaigns for the first quarter of 1988. At the same time, a schedule of trade quarterly trade group campaigns was announced to cover the period to March 1989 (see Table 10.1). This meant that regions were subject to regular requests from the centre to launch new campaigns in the specified sectors, and the aim was to maintain the momentum of Link Up by developing it into a "rolling recruitment campaign", taking in trade groups on a sequential basis (T&G Record, January 1988: 2).

Thus, Regional Organisers were responsible for ensuring that an ongoing programme of recruitment activity was maintained in their regions. Regular targeted recruitment campaigns were to be conducted under the Link Up banner, with targets selected both centrally and locally.

TABLE 10.1: National Recruitment Targets, 1988-9

Period	Targeted Trade Group
1st quarter 1988	Agriculture; construction; commercial road transport; public services
2nd quarter 1988	ACTSS; textiles; passenger road transport
3rd quarter 1988	Civil air transport; food, drink and tobacco
4th quarter 1988	Automotive; docks and waterways
1st quarter 1989	General workers; power and engineering; chemicals

Source: T&G Record, January 1988: 2.

(b)   Phase Two, April 1989 to September 1990

Following the initial campaigns, the union had decided to broaden Link Up to cover all workers rather than just temporaries and part-timers. This was made clear in "Link Up: Phase Two", launched on Monday 3rd April 1989, with the following three objectives:

"(1)   consolidation of membership in existing strongholds.

(2)   organising and recruiting in new or neglected areas (such as temporary and part-time workers, women, young people and ethnic minorities).

306

(3)   developing our links with the wider community."

The campaign was to focus on three issues in particular: health and safety, training and equal opportunities. These had been identified as key concerns of those groups which the union was attempting to recruit.

During April, the union planned a programme of national and local events, including:

1.   An "Equal Opportunities and Childcare" Conference sponsored by the TGWU and chaired by Joanna Foster of the Equal Opportunities Commission, and with invited representatives from local authorities and voluntary organisations.

2.   A TGWU Health and Safety Week to coincide with the TUC Inspection Week, involving the launch of a series of Health and Safety News and Hazards sheets and a series of workplace health and safety inspections.

3.   The launch of a model training agreement, to help TGWU negotiators to press for improved training.

4.   Card inspections and membership audits to be carried out by branches and workplaces during April. The aim here was to involve all branch secretaries and shop stewards in a bid for 100 per cent membership in areas where the union already had recognition agreements.

The union continued its programme of national and local recruitment campaigns. For example during 1989, the union launched a national campaign to organise contract cleaners, holding a national delegate cleaner's conference in October. Whilst the union restated its opposition to the contracting out of services in both the public and private sectors, it recognised that where contracting could not be resisted, that the union should attempt to organise the workers concerned. Thus, all TGWU branches were urged to pressurise their employers to ensure that any contract cleaners were unionised, and lay recruitment teams were used in a concerted effort to recruit amongst cleaners.

(c)   Link Up for the 90s

In July 1990 the union announced a two-year programme, approved by the general executive council, and designed to continue the Link Up approach.

New recruitment and publicity materials were produced, including a TGWU video and a members' handbook.

A third national campaign week was scheduled for the 17th to the 21st September 1990, with the same broad aims as the previous year's campaign. Once again, health and safety, training and equal opportunities were highlighted as key issues, with a national conference on "Women at Work: Winning Equal Pay", and a repeat of the card inspection/membership audit exercise. In addition, a new campaign was launched, known nationally as Recruit-a-Mate, aimed at encouraging ordinary members to recruit workmates, friends and relatives into the union.

The union continued it's community links theme, for example participating in an anti-sectarianism campaign aimed at young people in Northern Ireland, and launching five joint pilot schemes with the Citizens Advice Bureau, aimed at offering the union's advice facilities to members of the public. In addition, the union was to emphasise "green" issues, by encouraging its workplace health and safety representatives to pursue environmental issues.

June 1991 saw the launch of a major campaign aimed at recruiting cleaners, catering staff and other ancillary workers in local government. Aimed primarily at the estimated 250 thousand part-time women workers who were not in a

union, the campaign involved a new emphasis on equal rights on pay, conditions, pensions and training for women and part-timers, with a demand for local authority employers to implement an *"equality audit"*. Also emphasised was the need to consolidate local authority membership generally, with renewed calls for workplace membership audits. The campaign was to run over an extended period, perhaps as long as two years, with lay recruitment teams visiting workplaces in each District. The aim was both to consolidate membership and also to try to win recognition from private contractors.

In 1991, the plan was to continue the Link Up theme into the future, with national action weeks and trade group campaigns. The election of Bill Morris, the key architect of Link Up, as the union's General Secretary in 1991 suggested that the campaigning approach would indeed continue.

Implementation at Regional Level

As has already been emphasised, Link Up was intended to be more than simply a national publicity campaign. Hence it is important to examine the implementation of the campaign at the local level.

At the commencement of Link Up, regions were advised by central office to draw up "Industrial Area Profiles" on a systematic basis, to assist in the

targeting of recruitment efforts at the district level. Initially, districts were asked by central office to try to identify three areas where membership could be expected to approach 100 per cent, but which had not been checked for some time, three areas where the union had a basis of membership and recognition but where membership could be extended, and three areas of "virgin territory".

In the Northern region (Region 8) the following targets were chosen for the first national action week in September 1987:

1. Bar staff in Scottish and Newcastle Breweries establishments. Here the TGWU already had a recognition agreement covering bar staff, but with staff working in scattered workplaces, and with labour turnover as high as 100 per cent per annum, membership was often patchy, leaving considerable scope for what has been called "distant consolidation".

2. Bar staff in Vaux Breweries establishments. Here the union had recognition agreements covering production and distribution workers, but not bar staff, so that whilst the union had generally good relations with the company the level of cooperation from the employer was likely to be lower than in the Scottish and Newcastle case. This represents an attempt at what has been called "close expansion"

3.   Employees of National Tyre Services. Here again the union had a recognition agreement, so that the campaign involved an attempt at consolidation.

The aim here, according to the Regional Organiser concerned, was to target a mixture of hard and softer targets, so that at least some sort of positive results were likely, in order to guard against demoralisation amongst recruiters.

In the case of Scottish and Newcastle breweries, for example, the employer agreed to write to all managers, informing them of the recruitment campaign and requesting their cooperation. Even so, the task was a major one, with around 500 establishments to be visited in the region by the 20 or so TGWU full-time officials involved. Officials were asked to keep their diaries clear for the week of the campaign and the Regional Organiser provided each of them with a list of visits and a map.

The Northern Region also held a campaign to attempt to consolidate membership in local authorities, an area where the union had long had recognition agreements covering both blue and white collar workers. In one local authority, where the majority unions were the GMB, NUPE and NALGO, the TGWU was given a list of employees and sent a mailshot aimed at those

not in membership of any union. The union claimed a response of some 300, providing one of the highlights of the early Link Up campaign in this region.

Other targets during early phases of Link Up included contract cleaning and voluntary organisations, both identified by the union nationally as priority recruitment areas.

Also during 1987, the Northern Regional Organiser sent a circular to branch secretaries, urging them to pursue a campaign for 100 per cent membership in their workplaces, paying particular attention to the previously neglected areas such as part time, temporary and contract workers.

The Northern Regional Organiser held regular meetings with all District Secretaries to plan and coordinate recruitment activity. Targeted recruitment campaigns were held approximately once per quarter, when officials were asked to try to take a full week out to spend on the campaign. Each District Secretary was initially asked to set up a "Lay Member Recruitment Team" of four members, to assist them in recruitment on locally and nationally targeted campaigns in their district. Finally, District Committees were asked to place recruitment as a standing item on their agendas for all meetings, so that membership and recruitment opportunities could be discussed on a regular

basis. Thus, the aim was to involve all full-time officials and lay activists in a coordinated and sustained recruitment effort across the region.

In the North West (Region 6), in addition to the initial media coverage as a result of press releases, the union arranged a week of local radio advertising to coincide with the initial week of campaigning on Link Up. The region operated four campaign vans, complete with Link Up logos, and stalls were set up on local markets. Four main target areas were chosen in the region: bar staffs, those working on government training schemes (YTS and Community Programme at the time), retailing (with particular emphasis on Sainsbury's), and local authorities. An official was assigned as coordinator for each of these areas, and full-time officials were asked to report quarterly on their efforts in each of these target areas in particular. Of course, officials were also expected to continue recruitment activity in their other areas of responsibility. Again recruitment was made an agenda item for every district committee within the region. District Secretaries required a detailed programme of recruitment activity from committees, setting out a schedule of targets and activities, with dates and details of personnel and resources to be used.

The intention of the union was that whilst major national and local campaigns would be mounted from time to time, Link Up would be an ongoing exercise, with a sustained emphasis on recruitment by all the union's full-time officials

and lay activists. Thus, recruitment targets were constantly reviewed at national and local levels, and the selection of particular targets did not necessarily mean that other areas were to be ignored. Thus, one Regional Organiser explained to us his belief that officials should play a part in selecting their own targets, where promising recruitment opportunities presented themselves.

A particular feature of Link Up in all regions was the use of lay member recruitment teams. This was a national policy of the union, initially adopted during the Living Wage campaign. It reflected a recognition that full-time official resources were scarce and subject to the competing demands of servicing the existing membership, so that there was a need to supplement these resources in a relatively low-cost way. Whilst most unions emphasise the responsibility of lay members to consolidate membership in their own workplaces, the TGWU's Lay Member Recruitment Teams differed from most in that they were to be used beyond their own workplaces in campaigns aimed both at distant consolidation and at expansion.

Many lay recruitment team members were retired, unemployed or worked part time, although some took days off work or were released by their employer. Whilst formal training was often limited, with most drawing on their experience of recruiting in their own workplaces, the union produced a Link Up

"Organiser's Pack" (see above), and regions held briefings on recruitment methods and best practice.

Lay recruiters were usually deployed in teams of between two and four people. The aim was usually to have an experienced activist as the core team member, with a full-time official in attendance where other commitments allowed. On industrial estates, lay teams were used to canvass workers, mainly at the factory gate. In some cases the teams would be accompanied by a TGWU publicity vehicle complete with loudspeaker and campaign materials. Much of this work was on a "cold-call" basis, aimed largely at un-unionised workplaces.

Lay recruitment teams were also used to assist in the consolidation of membership in areas such as local authorities and the public services. For example, they might visit scattered establishments such as schools in an attempt to consolidate membership amongst cleaners. Here, where employers were sympathetic, access to workplaces might be arranged in advance, either by the full-time official responsible for the team or, in the case of more experienced teams, by the lay recruiters themselves.

It was envisaged that the public services campaign launched in June 1991, would make particularly heavy use of lay recruitment teams, drawn from

amongst the lay membership working in the targeted occupations. Local authorities were to be approached for the release of perhaps two to four people in a district, for a period of up to three months. These members would then be provided with a week's recruitment training, before going out as recruiters. Most were part-time workers, and they were to work their usual hours, being paid their normal hourly rate by the union, plus meals and expenses. The bill for this activity was to be met ultimately from central funds, the campaign having been approved by the general executive committee.

Lay recruiters were not usually involved in dealing with potential members' problems or approaching employers, the aim being to publicise the union and to attempt to recruit individual workers into membership. Where a core of members was developed in a particular establishment, or employees requested a meeting with a representative of the union, then it was usually the responsibility of the full-time official to follow this up. In general, formal contact with employers was to be left to the full-time official.

Link Up recruitment campaigns were often characterised by an innovative approach. There was a conscious effort to design more attractive recruitment literature, often aimed at particular target groups. Local radio and press advertising was used in several regions, and the union even took out an advertising billboard at Yarmouth races as part of the campaign to recruit

317

stable lads. Many regions invested in recruitment caravans or minibuses, which could be taken onto industrial estates, town centres, and so on, in an attempt to publicise the union. Public meetings, press conferences, sponsorship of sporting and cultural events, and various other means were used to promote the union, with an emphasis on attempting to create an image as a caring, community-based organisation.

All this was complemented by reforms in the internal structures and policies of the union, designed to promote the involvement of young people, women and ethnic minorities.

Evaluation

Link Up appeared to involve a prioritisation of recruitment activity within the union, an allocation of resources to recruitment in terms of the time of full-time officials and lay members, the selective targeting of recruitment activity, and the systematic monitoring of that activity. Thus, Link Up amounted to more than simply a national publicity campaign. But did it work? In this section, we attempt an evaluation of Link Up, from the point of view of the full-time officials involved in implementing the campaign, and in terms of its impact on membership, union recognition and collective bargaining. We end this section with a brief discussion of some of the organisational issues raised by Link Up.

According to the central office, regional and district officials we interviewed, Link Up involved full-time officials spending more time on recruitment than they had done previously. The requirement to take time out for recruitment clearly affected the work pattern of full-time officials, and did at times conflict with their servicing responsibilities:

> "The other difference [with Link Up] is this taking out of a chunk of time from an officer's job to devote to recruitment... If a problem arises you've got to make your mind up which one you do... You've got to say to yourself 'Am I likely to lose more members if I don't deal with that than I'll gain if I deal with this?'"

One Regional Organiser summed up his view of the Link Up recruitment campaigning as follows:

> "I'm glad to say, without too much push, it does happen. They [officials and lay activists] know the role they've got to play. There are people who feel they ought to be doing more, but.. if you fall on so many rocks there's a lull from time to time and you've got to build up the enthusiasm again."

However, there was a view, expressed by two of the three Regional Organisers we interviewed, that the response was at times uneven:

> "We have some difficulty in trying to get people who have been full-time officials for some time to understand the necessity of actively seeking new recruits, in as much as in the old days...

> people tended to come in droves and surrender themselves at
> the counter, arising out of a problem or something."

And also:

> "We've had difficulty in trying to activate some of our districts.
> They can't see the necessity to sit down and plan recruitment,
> and to target areas and go out and look. So the response to
> [Link Up] has been to some extent a patchy response."

Both the proximity of the district to regional office and the enthusiasm of
particular officials were seen as key factors explaining the different responses
of districts. With no real sanctions at their disposal, Regional Organisers had
to rely on exhortation and on publicising the achievements of the committed
districts in order to elicit a response from less enthusiastic officials and
districts.

Thus, even by 1990 there was a consensus amongst senior officers of the
TGWU that the union still needed to do more to develop a *"recruitment
consciousness"* amongst officials (TGWU, 1990: 10)

As regards the use of lay recruitment teams, the full-time officials we
interviewed were generally aware of the possible advantages of using lay
members in recruitment. For example, in the case of recruiting young people:

"It would be no good me going in in my suit. We were seen as the establishment, even though we were union officials. So what we had to do was get people nearer their age group, who dressed more like them. The chap in overalls was more likely to recruit the YTS than the union official."

This view is consistent with research in the USA on union organising, which has emphasised the importance of having a recruiter with whom the target group can readily identify (Karsh et al, 1953; Northrup, 1989), and with the suggestion that more women officers could help unions in the recruitment of women (Heery and Kelly, 1988; 1989).

Officials also recognised that the use of lay teams was a useful complement to full-time officials:

"They [lay recruiters] do an excellent job, and they are able to spend the time that an officer doesn't have in leafletting companies when the officer has had to move away to represent someone or to do a wage deal... then they can still concentrate their time on the companies concerned."

However, certainly in one district we looked at, the experience of using lay recruitment teams appeared to have been mixed. Enthusiastic lay member teams were set up for the initial National Action Week and sent out with full-time officials to canvass local industrial estates on a "cold call" basis. However, having met with a seemingly indifferent response at the majority of

establishments visited, their enthusiasm quickly waned, and the volunteer response for the second campaign was, in the words of the District Secretary, "fairly minimal".

"As an officer you gradually get round to know what's happening after a while, whereas them poor devils [the lay recruitment teams] got into it, met that hostility and suddenly said 'How's this?'. They couldn't rationalise it compared to where they'd been; a union environment."

And from another official:

"The lay people,.. their lifestyle is based on their plant; their organisation within that plant. They've been the king in that particular area and they don't know what the world is like outside. They think they do. I'm not being hypercritical of them. I try not to be... If you're in a plant where you can go to the boss and say 'Get stuffed'... you don't realise that the ordinary guy in another establishment just can't do that."

Availability of lay members to recruit during working hours was clearly restricted, unless the union could negotiate their release from their employer and meet their wages. In addition:

"You don't always get the people you want. People may be keen, but they're not necessarily the best recruiters."

Nevertheless, it seems that a small hard core of keen and relatively effective lay recruiters was developed, and officials emphasised the importance of

322

numbers in a recruitment team, so that even those who did little more than "come along for the ride" were able to make at least some sort of contribution. The union appeared to have most success with lay recruitment teams in local government and the public services, where recognition existed, at least from the public sector employers, but where scattered workplaces were common and part-time hours the norm, making for a classic case of distant consolidation. Significantly, lay recruitment teams were to be used as the mainstay of the public services campaign, launched in the spring of 1991.

What did the Link Up campaign actually achieve in terms of membership? Table 10.2 shows that TGWU membership continued to decline throughout the 1980s, in spite of the launch of Link Up at the beginning of 1987, and that the TGWU's decline continued to be more marked than that of other unions until 1989. Certainly there was little evidence of any initial impact on TGWU membership, with an acceleration in its rate of decline in 1988, a year earlier than for other unions, although in 1989 the percentage decline was greater for other unions. These figures must be treated with some caution, not least because the TGWU and some other unions were computerising their membership records during this period, which tended to eliminate some over-recording of membership by branches, particularly during 1988 and 1989 in the case of the TGWU (Joe Irvin, Head of TGWU Policy Support Unit, private

correspondence, 13 May 1991). However, Link Up had clearly failed to halt the decline in membership.

TABLE 10.2: TGWU Membership, 1979-89

Year	Union Membership (000s)		Annual % Decline	
	TGWU	All Others	TGWU	All Others
1979	2086	11126		
1980	1887	10749	9.54	3.39
1981	1696	10615	10.12	1.25
1982	1633	10111	3.71	4.75
1983	1547	9753	5.27	3.54
1984	1491	9573	3.62	1.85
1985	1434	9385	3.82	1.96
1986	1378	9220	3.91	1.76
1987	1349	9131	2.10	0.97
1988	1313	9074	2.67	0.62
1989	1271	8773	3.20	3.32

Source: Annual Report of the Certification Officer.
(Shows membership as at 31 December.)

However, whilst Link Up may not have been able to reverse the decline in membership in the short term, this does not necessarily mean that the campaign was not worthwhile. As one Regional Organiser put it:

"While the campaign may have brought the attention of the union
to the employees of non-organised companies, and if the
political and economic climate changes we may derive some

benefit from the activity and initiatives during the campaign the initial response to both campaigns [1987 and 1989] was disappointing.

"Recruitment did take place in a number of establishments, but they were threes and fours and quickly fell by the wayside once pressurised by their management or [when] recognition was not achieved."

(Dixon, 1989)

Thus, whilst the campaign perhaps did not have as great an immediate payoff as the union would have liked, there might be longer-term benefits through raising the profile of the union, so that where workers felt the need for union representation in the future they would be aware of what the TGWU had to offer. This view is, of course, consistent with the explanation of union growth as being largely determined by environmental factors, with union campaigns and policies simply exploiting the underlying recruitment opportunities and influencing the incidence of union growth between unions, rather than the overall level of growth (Bain and Elsheikh, 1976; Bain and Price, 1983).

In spite of the inability to halt the decline in membership, the TGWU officials we interviewed remained fairly committed to Link Up, and claimed that it had been quite successful in terms of recruitment. In one region, with a total membership of around 60 thousand, we were told that the union recruited 11 thousand new members during 1989, and in another region we were told of an average recruitment rate of around six thousand per quarter during 1989.

Regular features on Link Up in the union's newspaper were able to point to evidence of the campaign's success in recruiting new members (T&G Record, November 1987: 5; January 1988: 2; June 1989: 10-11; October 1990: 10-11).

As Table 10.3 shows, whilst the TGWU continued to experience a net loss of members in the late 1980s, in fact the union improved its recruitment performance. During the period 1985 to 1989, it recruited almost one and a quarter million members, with 1989 in particular showing a marked upturn in recruitment. The problem appeared to be the outflow of members. Whilst a reduction in losses was recorded in 1987, this trend was reversed in 1988 and deteriorated even further in 1989.

One official even went so far as to claim that:

> "We're possibly organising at a higher rate than we did during the 1970s, in the good times... but the turnover, the loss [is the problem]."

Other officials certainly echoed that membership loss was the real difficulty faced by the union in the late 1980s and early 1990s. A District Secretary described the difficulties faced in attempting to recruit workers in the peripheral labour market. Of the National Action Week campaign to recruit bar staff at Scottish and Newcastle Breweries and Vaux in 1987 he said:

TABLE 10.3: TGWU Membership Gains and Losses, 1985-90

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Membership, 1 January (1)	1,491	1,434	1,378	1,349	1,313
Membership Lost (2)	277	294	270	281	324
Members Recruited (3)	220	238	241	245	282
Membership, 31 December (4)	1,434	1,378	1,349	1,313	1,271
Net Membership Loss:					
Thousands	57	56	29	36	42
% of 1 January	3.82	3.91	2.10	2.67	3.20

Sources:

(1) & (4)	from Annual Reports of the Certification Officer.
(2)	equals (1) plus (3) minus (4)
(3)	from TGWU Record, September 1990, p10.

"The problem I found was that yes, we recruited them, but within a very short space of time we lost them. There's a hell of a turnover of labour in these part-time and temporary industries, so that we are running fast to stand still."

Thus, retention of those recruited was a problem not only in establishments where recognition had not been won, it could also be difficult with respect to those groups of peripheral workers who had high levels of labour turnover. Consolidation of any gains made through Link Up was therefore always likely to be difficult and recruitment successes were likely to lead to higher membership turnover.

Not surprisingly, then, the union increasingly concerned itself with retention as Link Up wore on. In launching the third (1990) stage of the campaign in the union's journal the Deputy General Secretary claimed that:

"Recruitment is on a rising curve in the union but so is membership turnover."

(T&G Record, August 1990: 11)

The question of retention was specifically addressed in a number of initiatives. Branch membership audits encouraged lay members to check that membership levels were maintained. Leaflets were produced, urging those retiring or leaving a job for other reasons to retain their membership in order to take advantage of the range of TGWU benefits and services. From 1989 temporary workers were allowed to pay a reduced contribution rate of only three pence per week during spells out of work, thus allowing them to maintain continuous membership for benefit purposes and retaining them in the union pending their taking up another job.

To what extent did the campaign actually succeed in breaking into new job territories? Close expansion was pursued in the case of groups which had in the past been on the periphery of collective agreements, for example with bar staff at Vaux and in the case of temporary workers generally. Distant expansion was attempted by full-time officials and also through the lay

328

recruitment teams, campaigning on industrial estates. The latter was, of course, the most difficult and appeared to offer the least tangible gains, at least in the short term.

The officials we interviewed could tell us of only a handful of new recognition deals won in recent years. A successful bid for recognition at Industrial Clothing Services Limited in Ayrshire, following eight years of recruitment and a one day strike over pay, was seen by the local District Secretary as "...our biggest success for a decade", and yet the plant employed only 175 people (T&G Record, September 1990: 5). Other campaigns, such as at Sainsburys and at Ladbrokes, often achieved a great deal of publicity but failed to win either recognition or a sustainable membership base. It is perhaps not surprising that, following the conspicuous lack of immediate success in the Ladbroke Hotels campaign of 1987, the union tended to give a high profile to the overall Link Up theme and to broad sectors rather than to specific company targets.

A content analysis of the union's newspaper (T&G Record) for the period November 1987 to April 1991 revealed a similar lack of new recognition agreements, with only five reported cases of recognition being won for the first time. Far more common were reports of continuing efforts to recruit and win recognition, and there were four reported cases of employers actually

withdrawing recognition. Whilst not all new recognition deals may be reported in the union's journal, we are left with the conclusion that Link Up appears to have failed to result in the widespread winning of new recognition deals. We return to the issue of securing recognition in the following chapter.

Much of the recruitment activity in Link Up appeared to be aimed at consolidating areas of existing membership and recognition, and it was in such areas that many of the recruitment successes were achieved. Branch secretaries and shop stewards were asked to pursue 100 per cent campaigns within their workplaces, lay recruitment teams and mailshots were used to consolidate membership in scattered local authority workplaces, and full-time officials also participated in campaigns aimed at distant consolidation. Indeed, as Link Up developed it is possible to detect something of a shift away from targeting the high-profile campaigns on expansion towards focusing them on consolidation. In doing this, the union appeared to be trying to learn from its successes and failures, the selection of local government as a priority target in 1991 being a clear example of this.

Link Up involved an increase in inter-union competition, both in the above consolidation campaigns in local authorities, and in certain attempts to extend recruitment into new territory. An example of the latter is provided by the launching of a new Hotel, Catering and Leisure section of the union in January

330

1990. The sector was seen as offering major recruitment opportunities for the union, given the employment growth and currently low levels of union organisation. The TGWU announced its intention to withdraw from the agreement which had regulated inter-union competition by restricting unions to organising in their agreed sphere of influence, arguing that this had hampered union organising attempts by allowing employers to use it as a shield.

As we saw above, Link Up began as a campaign aimed specifically at part-time and temporary workers. Thus, any evaluation of the campaign must consider its achievements in improving the terms and conditions of such workers. The union claimed several successes, including resisting the contracting-out of school meals in Cambridgeshire, the winning of a favourable pay settlement and permanent job status for temporary workers at Yardley cosmetics after a month-long strike, Ford's concession of common terms and conditions for contracted-out canteen workers, and several cases of equal pay and pension rights for temporary and contract cleaners and others (T&G Record, various issues). However, even where the union claimed to have won improved terms for such staff it is not altogether clear that this was the result of union pressure as opposed to the employer's reaction to demographic trends and skills shortages (Atkinson, 1989b).

To what extent did the Link Up campaign represent "value for money" for the union? According to our interviews, whilst there was a specific budget for publicity and literature (the national budget was initially set at £100,000 [Industrial Relations Services, 1987b]), there were no recruitment budgets as such at regional level. This reflects the difficulty in directly attributing specific costs to the campaign. Whilst items such as the national launch rally, radio and newspaper advertising, and literature clearly involved identifiable additional costs for the union, the main cost involved was the time of officials. Since no additional officials were appointed specifically for the campaign, such costs were in a sense hidden, falling on officials in terms of increased workload and on members to the extent that servicing might suffer as a result.

The benefits of Link Up were similarly difficult to quantify, given the possible long-term effect of raising the general profile of the union, and indeed of unions generally. This point is particularly important, given that the stated aims of Link Up included opening the union up to previously-neglected groups and developing the union's profile in the community through the campaigning work, and so contributing towards the favourable public image of the union movement.

The comments of one of the District Secretaries we spoke to were particularly interesting. When asked whether or not Link Up was cost effective, he replied:

332

"The response I got from the Deputy General Secretary when I asked that we should examine our costs, was that we can't afford not to do it. Our job is not to run precisely like a business. Although I accept that we have to run an economic organisation. As a District Secretary I accept that part of my job is to see that this place is run as efficiently and as cost effectively as possible. I acknowledge that; but that doesn't mean that I should always judge everything on whether there is a return. The return to us is people; a trade union is people."

To the extent that such a view is shared by those responsible for launching campaigns, we would not expect recruitment effort to be evaluated purely in terms of the contributions revenue raised from those recruited.

Link Up raised a number of organisational issues within the union, many of which were discussed at a seminar of senior officers (senior executive officials, regional secretaries, regional organisers and national officers) in January 1990. Most present at the seminar agreed that Link Up had had the indirect benefit of increasing communications between regions and central office, although it was felt by many that the campaign had involved too much of a "top-down" emphasis. Many campaigns were initiated by National Officers at the trade group level and then communicated to regions for implementation. With fifteen trade groups, each with their own priorities, there was a danger that regions could be subjected to a series of ill-coordinated and possibly competing demands. One Regional Organiser we spoke to felt that National Officers tended to lack an overall perspective and "...tend to become insulated within

their own trade groups." The seminar came to the view that this lack of coordination meant that full-time officials might experience conflicting demands on their time, with the danger that their ability to effectively service existing members might be compromised, thus damaging membership retention.

The National Coordinating Committee offered a possible forum to deal with these issues of coordination and prioritisation. However, one Regional Organiser we spoke to felt that the NCC had been disappointing during the first three years of Link Up, in that it had tended to concentrate on discussing Regional Organiser's reports on campaign implementation and had failed to develop a more strategic role. He felt that the committee needed to be "given more teeth", thereby giving Regional Organisers a greater input into the prioritisation of nationally-targeted campaigns. The view that regions must have a major influence over the prioritisation of campaigns was broadly accepted by the Senior Officers' Seminar:

> "The point was made, and generally accepted, that recruitment could not be totally directed from national level, a certain amount of regional flexibility is required, with full consultation at all levels of the union. But deciding priorities should involve some local determination, because this was the level at which specialist knowledge existed."

> (TGWU, 1990: 9)

Finally, there was also concern from some participants in the seminar that the union had placed too much emphasis on the Link Up theme, with the danger that the Link Up logo was more prominent than the name of the union on much of the campaign material.

Approaching the Employer

As membership continued to decline into the 1990s in spite of Link Up, there was increasing concern within the union at the TGWU's poor image amongst employers, with the union often being seen as a militant organisation. Thus:

> "It was also felt that we must improve our relationships with employers. This had not been a priority in the past, and had led to poor relations, which meant that opportunities had been lost. Consequently we were entering 'beauty contests' with an in-built disadvantage."
>
> (TGWU, 1990: 10)

Whilst the TGWU had long critiscised the EETPU-style of directly approaching employers with the offer of single-union no-strike deals, it had become painfully clear that the failure to win employer recognition was often a major barrier to effective recruitment and retention. In 1989 the union had followed the example of the EETPU and GMB-MATSA in producing "A Prospectus for Growth: The Route to Effective Industrial Relations", a brochure setting out the

advantages for employers in recognising the TGWU. Launched by Deputy

General Secretary Bill Morris at the 1989 Institute of Personnel Management

conference at Harrogate, the brochure was written in highly collaborative

language, with a introduction by Ron Todd, the union's General Secretary,

claiming that:

> "We are single-minded in our objective to provide the best
> possible environment for industry to operate successfully and
> safely."

The brochure was to be used in approaching employers, and whilst the TGWU

stopped short of offering some of the kinds of deals struck by the EETPU, and

whilst one may question whether or not such a brochure would be sufficient

to counter any image problems that the union might have, nevertheless its

launch demonstrates an awareness of the need to compete effectively with

other unions in the "market" for employer recognition.

Conclusions

The Link Up case study illustrates how a union had to begin by mobilising its

own officials and lay activists behind a recruitment campaign. Thus, in the

early stages, a great deal of emphasis was placed on the internal launch, and

whilst some progress was made in getting full-time officials and lay members

more involved in recruitment, even by 1990 many in the union recognised that

the necessary "recruitment culture" amongst full-time officials was by no means complete, so that the response to Link Up at district level, whilst significant, was nevertheless uneven. The notion of changing the culture of the organisation to reflect the prioritisation of recruitment was echoed by officials we interviewed in some of the other unions (see previous Chapter).

The Link Up case study suggested that whilst there was no rigorous cost-benefit appraisal of recruitment activity as such, so far as the selection of recruitment targets was concerned it appeared that the TGWU, in common with the other unions studied, was targeting its recruitment efforts selectively. However, in spite of the fact that Link Up was essentially a national campaign, regional and district officials argued that there was a need for local flexibility in the selection of detailed recruitment targets if resources were to be used effectively.

Whilst Link Up began very clearly as an attempt to extend union organisation to new groups, the campaign came to include several initiatives aimed at consolidating membership in existing areas of organisation, and the union became increasingly concerned with retention as the campaign progressed. Some of the most often-quoted "successes" of Link Up involved what was essentially distant consolidation, often in competition with other unions, and many of the high profile attempts at expansion failed to result in significant

advances, at least in the short term. In the latter areas, lack of recognition was usually seen as a major stumbling block, and it is significant that by 1990 the union was trying to improve its image with employers, in an attempt to become more competitive in the "employer market for trade unionism" (Willman,1989).

The latter development is particularly interesting, and suggests that the TGWU's "militant" image, which served it well in attracting groups of disaffected employees during the 1970s, became something of a liability in the 1980s. As one official explained:

> "We would be flavour of the month with workers. The trouble is,
> we're not flavour of the month with employers".

> (TGWU Regional Organiser)

The implication is, of course, that there may be a trade off between developing an appeal aimed at the "employee market" and one aimed at the "employer market". Other unions, may have had more success in combining the two approaches, but so far as the TGWU was concerned, this appeared to be a problem.

From a social perspective, the TGWU aimed to present a positive image, playing down the view of unions as representatives of a narrow sectional

338

interest group, and to link recruitment with the broader social aims of the union, emphasising community as well as workplace involvement. As such, Link Up could be seen as an expression of what Watson (1988: 185) refers to as "campaigning unionism", in contrast to the narrow business unionism associated with unions such as the EETPU. We return to these themes in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

Whilst the campaign had failed to halt the decline in membership by the end of the 1980s, there was some evidence of an increase in numbers recruited. Membership retention was, however, a key problem, and this was increasingly emphasised as the campaign developed. Many officials remained committed to the idea of Link Up, if only because of the lack of an alternative approach. Some officials rationalised the continuing effort in terms of possible future gains, when a more favourable political and economic environment would lead to those seeking union representation flocking to the high-profile TGWU.

The failure of this and other recruitment campaigns to reverse the decline in union membership by the early 1990s, suggests that the mobilisation of full-time officials and lay members behind a campaign was by no means a sufficient condition for significant union growth. We therefore need to consider in more detail the difficulties faced by union organisers in this period. This is the task of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 11

THE EXPERIENCE OF UNION ORGANISING

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the experience of union organising activity during the late 1980s and early 1990s. We seek to explain why the new organising initiatives generally met with at most only limited success.

We show that recruitment, particularly of an expansionary form, became increasingly difficult during the 1980s, not least because of the attitudes of employers and government to trade unions. We highlight the key difficulties faced by union organisers during this period, and we develop an idealised model of the organising process. Again, the analysis of the chapter is based largely on interviews with full-time union organisers.

The Experience of Union Organising

Table 11.1 presents a summary of the main obstacles to recruitment and retention identified by our interviewees. We have grouped these under four headings: those relating to the intrinsic nature of the industry or occupation concerned (structural factors), those relating to the attitudes of employees, those relating to employer actions, and those relating to the practices of the

TABLE 11.1: Obstacles to Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment	Retention
Structural Factors: Competition from staff associations (Banking)	High labour turnover. Temporary sites (construction)
Employer Factors: Refuses access to workforce. Refuses recognition. Victimisation of trade unionists. Employer does not recommend union membership	Refuses recognition Refuses check off
Employee Factors: Lack of understanding of trade unions. Apathy. Free-rider mentality. Part-time and temporary workers feel not worthwhile. Low paid say cannot afford union contributions.	Temporary/casual workers do not retain membership once move jobs. Non-craft members do not retain membership once move jobs as lack union tradition.
Union Factors: Failure to recruit shop stewards. Failure to approach potential members.	Lack of regular card checks. Poor communications with members. Poor response to demands for servicing

Source: Interviews with local full-time officials, 1989–90.

union or its representatives. All of these factors were mentioned by at least three of the officials interviewed, so that the list is representative of the main problems faced by our sample of unions during this period.

Rather than discuss each of the above factors in isolation, we structure our discussion of the experience of union organising around the four types of recruitment identified earlier: close consolidation, distant consolidation, close expansion and distant expansion.

(a)   Close Consolidation

Close consolidation involves recruiting those who are not members of the union in an establishment which is already relatively highly-organised, and where union recognition exists. Even here, union density may fall well below a hundred per cent, not only because of those individuals who object to joining a union, but also because of new starters. Several of the local union officers interviewed suggested that membership density often fell simply because new starters were not asked to join the union.

In many unions, this type of recruitment tended to be carried out mainly by shop stewards and workplace representatives or by branch officials. Indeed, this was traditionally the major role of the steward in many unions. NALGO, for example, published a detailed *"Stewards Guide to Recruitment"* (NALGO,

342

no date) outlining the stewards' role as the union's main recruiters, and emphasising the importance of the personal approach and the need for the steward to maintain close and regular contact with his or her constituents. Other unions produced similar material.

The ideal model for this is the large workplace, with a strong network of representatives enjoying the cooperation of the employer. The provision of check-off, access to new starters, and facilities for union representatives are valuable aids to this form of recruitment activity.

Thus, the full-time officer may leave this type of recruitment almost entirely to lay people in establishments where the union is recognised. Indeed, this is the essence of well-organised, self-sustaining trade unionism and under these circumstances recruitment may become a routine matter. Kelly and Heery (1989) refer to this as "passive recruitment". A TGWU District Officer summed up the view of most of those we interviewed:

> "What we find is that where we are already organised and recognised by the employer, we'll have established, even in this day and age, a steward or representative on site who will mop [new starters] up as soon as they come in... It's where we've not got recognition that we've got a problem".

An AEU official described the process of close consolidation as follows:

"Our union, we are very traditional... we were basically a skilled union... we operated in the traditional industries. The pattern has been that people serve an apprenticeship... and either during the apprenticeship, or when you came out of your time, the fashion was that you joined a union... nobody really thought of doing anything else. If you were a fitter, you proved you were a fitter when you had your union card.

This was our traditional way of recruitment and, indeed, it still is in the big well-established companies. We don't find a great problem there at the present, apart from the fact that the number of apprenticeships has gone down and so therefore we've found that we aren't recruiting young members".

(AEU Regional Officer)

Clearly, consolidation was not necessarily a problem in well-organised establishments, where there was a tradition of trade unionism. Survey evidence suggests that workplace trade unionism survived the recession of the early 1980s and the political and economic challenges of that decade remarkably well (Batstone, 1984; Millward and Stevens, 1986; MacInnes, 1987), whilst derecognition of unions was the exception (Towers, 1988; Claydon, 1989).

Whilst our interviewees claimed that close consolidation remained largely unproblematic in most cases, this optimistic picture must be qualified on at least three counts. Firstly, the withdrawal of legal support for the closed

344

shop during the 1980s, the possibility of further legislation on check-off, and the need for continued cooperation from the employer if consolidation were to be handled effectively, meant that even this form of recruitment could not necessarily be taken for granted in the future. In a few instances, employers had recently withdrawn check-off facilities, so that some unions were responding by encouraging members to pay their contributions by direct debit.

Secondly, there was a suggestion from some officials that even the well-organised workplaces were making increasing demands on the full-time official. As we saw in Chapter 9, many officials claimed that they were coming under an increasing burden from members' casework and from requests for assistance from shop stewards. Such demands, whilst not necessarily amounting to the full-time official taking over the shop steward's role, nevertheless took up an increasing amount of the officials' time, and arguably made it more difficult for him to devote his attention to organising in other sectors.

Finally, as the above AEU officials implied, a major problem arises when the traditional job territories contract as the number of recruits declines. Thus, even where close consolidation continued to represent a relatively easy and cheap form of recruitment, it became increasingly necessary for unions to look to other types of recruitment in the face of structural change.

(b)   Distant Consolidation

Distant consolidation involves recruiting in widely-spread, often low-density, establishments which are, however, covered by recognition agreements. For example, banking, retailing and private-sector construction are all characterised by union recognition at the industry or enterprise-level, but their workforces tend to be scattered into large numbers of comparatively small establishments spread over a wide geographical area.

Under distant consolidation, the union tends to be less able to depend on lay representatives to carry out the day to day recruitment activity, since workplace trade unionism is more difficult to sustain in small, scattered establishments and where the focus of union activity is at the national enterprise or industry level. The large number of part-time workers and women in banking and retailing, and the prevalence of self-employment and the transitory nature of employment in private-sector construction add to the difficulties in these particular industries. Such industries had never been characterised by closed shop agreements.

An USDAW Divisional Officer pointed to the relative lack of lay involvement in recruitment in his own union:

> "Well, we always hope that lay members would recruit. We
> always urge them to, but we don't get the same response that

346

the AEU get, even in places of comparable size... Their lay people will do that. We can't get our lay members to do that. We can get them to help us, but we can't get them to initiate it, even in the places where they work".

Even with the trend towards larger retail establishments, employing several hundred people, it seems that USDAW had not usually been able to develop the kind of relatively self-sufficient trade unionism found in the larger engineering establishments, for example. A possible explanation is:

"...you've got a growth of part-time labour, you've got a reduction in full-time staff, so the process of building up a shop steward network is slow. Although you might have three hundred people in the store you might only have thirty full-time staff. All the rest will be part-time staff working around the full-time hours... It's a big workforce, but it covers the eleven hour day and the six day week."

(USDAW Divisional Officer)

A UCATT Regional Secretary, in response to a question about membership retention, told us:

"That's a big problem... We believe the reason for the major problem is, one, we haven't got enough shop stewards these days, and, two, that we don't believe that all our shop stewards religiously carry out their duties... in this organisation they are supposed to do a card check once every six weeks, and I don't believe we get the same enthusiasm as we did years ago".

The relative lack of shop stewards in the private-sector construction industry may reflect the transitory nature of the industry, with some individuals being reluctant to become involved in union activity, given the essentially temporary nature of their employment, and their wish to avoid being seen by employers as "troublemakers".

Add to all this the problem of high labour turnover in industries such as retailing and construction, and the implications are clear:

> "Recruitment takes up to fifty per cent of an officer's time in USDAW, because in our union, a services union, we have to recruit a third of our membership each year to stand still"
>
> (USDAW Deputy Divisional Officer)

Similarly, those UCATT officials responsible for private- sector construction spent much of their time attempting to organise new sites. Because of the short-term nature of most construction sites, such organising activity must be ongoing if the union is to maintain its membership, and only when the initial organising effort has been successful is it usually possible to establish a shop steward, if at all.

BIFU had full-time representatives seconded by many of the major banks, but these tended to focus mainly on casework and negotiations, and were based

at bank head offices. In most institutions, there were lay representatives in branches and offices, who amongst other things, were responsible for recruitment. New starters were often given a pack of material, introducing the union. In spite of this, however, full-time area organisers spent a great deal of their time in recruitment, visiting branches for this reason. As a BIFU area organiser put it to us:

> "A lot of the active reps. don't see it [recruitment] as their role, although it should be, and a lot of the ordinary members don't see it as their role. That's maybe where we differ from a traditional trade union. The shop steward in a shop-floor environment would be going round making sure that they were in. Some of our reps. are in areas that are least organised."

In some regions BIFU had temporary recruiters, or "Travelling Representatives", on short term contracts, whose sole purpose was to visit branches and recruit. Again, the scattered nature of the industry, along with the need to "sell" the union to an often apathetic workforce in the face of recruitment competition from staff associations, made for a classic case of distant consolidation, placing much of the responsibility for recruitment on paid union officials.

How, then, did full-time officials set about the task of distant consolidation? The experience of UCATT in the private-sector construction industry provides a useful example, and illustrates the importance of exploiting collective

349

agreements and relationships with employers to the full. This shows how the effectiveness of distant consolidation may be increased where officials adopt a determined and systematic approach.

UCATT, along with the other unions in the industry and the employers' federations, was party to the national Working Rule Agreements covering the building and engineering construction industries. These collective agreements provided recognition at industry level and access to agreed disputes procedures, covering firms affiliated to the employers' associations. Employers were to encourage union membership, and there was an agreed framework for full-time officials' access to sites, the establishment of shop stewards and the provision of check-off facilities for the collection of union contributions. In addition, employers were to inform local union officials of new contracts in their area, with details of the timetable of expected labour demand, and the names of building trades sub-contractors to be used. Thus, the collective agreements established a framework within which the union could work to maintain the level of organisation within the industry. As we outlined above, however, construction is characterised by scattered, temporary sites, making for a classic case of distant consolidation.

Recruitment came through two main channels. Firstly, through employers' encouraging their workforce to join the union. Having got an employer to

recommend union membership to its workforce, UCATT would often follow this up with direct mailshots to individuals, asking them to join. Where a shop steward was established on a site, often with the cooperation of the employer, face to face recruitment could take place. This often enabled the union to recruit large numbers of members with the minimum use of union resources. In addition, the main contractor, usually a BEC-affiliated firm and party to the national agreement, might be pursuaded to write to any sub-contractors, asking them to provide full recognition and facilities for the union. Indeed, the union provided contractors with a model letter for this purpose.

Secondly, it was necessary to supplement the above by full-time officials making direct visits to sites, in an attempt to recruit any individuals not already in the union. Whilst this was a resource-hungry operation, it was nevertheless essential in construction for the reasons outlined earlier. As one official put it, when asked whether workers retained their membership from one job to another:

> "The lads do retain membership in the sense that when you walk
> on site: 'How long have you been working here?'. 'Oh, I've been
> waiting for you to come'. That's their retention."

> (UCATT, Regional Organiser)

In one region we looked at, when employers notified regional office of a new contract, the details were passed on to the Organiser responsible for that area,

351

who would visit the site to attempt to recruit any non-members. He would record the workforce employed by the main contractor and any sub-contractors, along with details of union membership and numbers recruited during the visit. Such reports were submitted to the Regional Secretary, who used them to monitor membership and recruitment trends, and to highlight any problem areas.

The collective agreements provided the local union official with considerable assistance in his task of consolidating the membership, but it was up to the individual official to make the most of such opportunities. This involved developing good relationships with employers, who could provide details of new starters, and maintaining close contact with the membership by making regular site visits and responding promptly and effectively to demands for servicing. Thus, distant consolidation could not be taken for granted, but had to be worked at.

It appears that some officials were very much more effective in recruitment than others. Our interviews suggest that this was partly a reflection of the approach adopted by the particular official. Recruitment in the private sector demanded a persistent, systematic approach, and a willingness to exploit every recruitment opportunity to the full. The more successful officials

appeared to be those who accepted that recruitment was their responsibility and a key priority for the unions' continued effectiveness.

However, it was clear that the performance of officials was not the only factor determining recruitment success. Officials of several unions suggested that expressions of employer support for union membership and the level of access enjoyed by the full-time official were key factors influencing the effectiveness of distant consolidation. Some employers strongly recommended that new employees join the union on taking up employment, whilst others, even where the union was recognised, took a less pro-union line. Officials cited this, along with access to the workplace as a key factor in determining the effectiveness of recruitment.

The extent to which union full-time officials were allowed access to the workplace in order to carry out recruitment also varied. They would often be admitted to the canteen. They might be allowed to set up a table displaying union literature, to address the whole workforce, and in some cases even to mingle with employees as they ate their lunch. In construction, union officials often wandered around the site whilst work was in progress checking union cards and attempting to recruit non-members. In banking and finance, the visiting full-time official was in some cases shown to a private office and staff informed of his presence, whilst in others he would be allowed to approach

353

staff on his own initiative. Thus, the quality of access varied; in some cases the full-time official would be admitted to an establishment quite freely, whilst in others management might only grant access at particular times and under strictly-controlled conditions.

Even where the union had recognition at enterprise or national level, the quality of access allowed by local management varied from company to company, and even between establishments in the same company. For example, one BIFU official claimed that in one region of a particular clearing bank, branch managers who were members of the staff association often deliberately obstructed BIFU recruiters. Occasionally BIFU officials appealed directly to regional managers or national personnel departments to ensure that nationally-agreed levels of access were forthcoming.

All this meant that union recruitment was critically dependent upon management policy, not only centrally, but also locally. Clearly, were managements to become less favourably disposed towards endorsing union membership and towards allowing union access, then the effectiveness of recruitment efforts would decline. Whilst our interviews revealed no general reduction in the level of employer support, unions were clearly in a vulnerable position, making it vital to retain managerial goodwill. The announcement in August 1990 that the Treasury had advised government departments to cease

354

"strongly recommending" that new employees join the union was a source of some concern for the civil service unions (Terry, 1991: 104), and were this to be followed by other employers, it could reduce the recruitment effectiveness of at least some unions.

In such a vulnerable position, the union's overriding need for employer cooperation in securing access and facilities placed moderate, cooperative behaviour at a premium. For example, an USDAW Divisional Officer told us that some employers would not allow lay members to be involved in formal on-site recruitment activity, in some cases not even in their own workplaces. As he explained:

> "[The company] need to know who it is that will be visiting their stores and speaking to their staff. A full-time official is accountable to me, and I would have to answer to the company if the facilities and what is said to staff are in any way abused. I have no control over lay members. I'd expect them to behave in a reasonable, decent proper manner, but if they don't, what control do I have over a lay member?

> "[Some lay members] seem to think that trade union membership comes on the basis of slagging the employer off, and being as militant and aggressive and disparaging about the company. In fact, the opposite is true, basically."

Finally, officials recruiting in industries such as banking, construction and retailing were amongst the most likely of our respondents to enter into an unprompted discussion of what we have called the "free-rider problem". This

concern is hardly surprising from officials recruiting in industries with such a large gap between collective bargaining coverage and union membership (see below). It suggests, however, that it is in such industries as these that the development of selective benefits will be most helpful (see Chapter 6).

(c)   Close Expansion

Close expansion involves the union attempting to recruit employees who, whilst working in organised establishments, are not themselves organised or covered by a union recognition agreement. This might involve attempting to recruit the peripheral labour force where these groups work alongside a unionised workforce, but are not themselves covered by a recognition agreement. It may also involve attempts to extend union organisation to white-collar, managerial and professional groups, building on an existing base, and it may involve bidding for single-union recognition for a whole workforce and in the process attempting to extend the scope of union organisation beyond existing boundaries. In this section, we deal with each of these.

Several of the unions we studied were attempting to recruit amongst the peripheral workforce, including agency temporary workers, subcontractors, the self-employed and employed temporaries and part timers. Where the recognition agreement covered such workers, such efforts involved consolidation, and much of the Link Up activity was of this type, as was the

recruitment of the self employed in construction. In some cases, however, particularly where contractors were concerned, such groups were not covered by union recognition, so that the union was, according to the Kelly and Heery typology, engaged in a form of expansion. The attraction to unions of this form of expansion is that existing organisation may be used to exert pressure on employers to extend recognition, and costly and potentially drawn-out factory-gate campaigns are avoided.

However, there are potential difficulties. Firstly, such groups were notoriously difficult to recruit and retain, given such characteristics as shorter and/or irregular hours, low levels of attachment to the employer, low pay and a high proportion of women. Secondly, existing members on occasion resisted the organisation of such groups, to the extent that they saw their use by employers as a potential threat to their own terms, conditions and job security. We saw in the previous chapter how members of the road transport group of the TGWU were hostile to the suggestion that their union negotiate with employers on the use of agency drivers, and how some even questioned the legitimacy of admitting such people into the union.

Thirdly, and perhaps more generally, unions faced resistance from employers when attempting to extend organisation in this way. After all, the appeal of such forms of employment to many employers is the greater potential for

357

flexibility that they offer, and since unions aimed to restrict this flexibility, for example by pushing for rules on the utilisation of such workers, employers resisted their organisation. Contractors often base their appeal on their ability to provide a service flexibly and at competitive rates, and unionisation may be seen as threatening their competitive edge over in-house provision. A NUPE official told us of one cleaning contractor in the public services, which refused to recognise on a contract-by-contract basis, insisting that if it were to recognise unions then it would have to be at national level, and only once a significant proportion of its total workforce had joined. Clearly, from the union's point of view, this made organisation very much more difficult.

Whilst we have characterised UCATT's task in the construction industry as largely one of distant consolidation, it also contained an element of distant expansion. The large main contractors, as BEC affiliates, recognised the union at national level, but increasingly the task facing the union on each site was to organise not only the main contractor's workforce, but also that of the subcontractors and the growing number of self-employed workers. A key factor in the success of such recruitment was, as we have seen the extent of cooperation received from the main contractor, as well as the degree of enthusiasm shown by the union official concerned. Clearly, both factors varied from case to case, and the union's organising efforts were particularly vulnerable to changes in employer policy.

Close expansion of a rather different kind occurred during the late 1960s and 1970s, when groups of previously un-unionised white-collar and managerial workers were organised (Bain, 1970; Snape and Bamber, 1989). Thus, unions such as ASTMS and TASS were able to extend their organisation from their original job territories such as technicians and draughtsmen to include the supervisory, professional and managerial grades (Kelly and Heery, 1989; Smith, 1987; Carter, 1979).

However, this expansion into new grades within existing areas of union strength is eventually subject to a saturation effect and, given that most of these gains were made in a period when conditions were more conducive to union growth, by the mid-1980s it seemed unlikely that further expansion would be possible in this area (Bain and Price, 1983: 32). Furthermore, whilst there was no significant general trend towards the de-recognition of unions by employers, the few cases that had occurred were concentrated upon the white-collar, particularly managerial and professional, groups first organised in the previous decade. Thus:

> "Given the generally greater resistance to white-collar unionism than manual unionism by employers, many recent derecognitions can be seen as an opportunist reaction to the concessions which employers were forced to make in the 1970s on the issue of white-collar unionism."

> (Claydon, 1989: 222)

This suggests that not only was there limited scope for close expansion involving white-collar workers in manufacturing industry, but also that any such gains were fragile and difficult to defend in times of adversity.

There may have been more scope for distant expansion where single union deals build on an existing group of members in a workplace. For example, a particular union may organise technicians in an establishment, and from this base bid for single-union status with the employer. This is an extremely controversial area, since such an approach would be likely to result in an inter-union dispute if other unions were denied recognition. Furthermore, whilst this would amount to close expansion from the point of view of the union concerned, it is likely that the members would simply be won at the expense of rival unions, so that the net effect on aggregate union membership would be nil.

In sum, whilst distant expansion may represent an attractive option for unions, particularly given that existing lay activists may play a prominent role at little direct cost to the union, the scope for such recruitment was likely to vary considerably depending on the group in question. Whilst unions appeared to have had some initial successes in extending organisation to contractors, such groups often proved difficult to recruit and retain, not least because of employer resistance to unionisation, whilst the prospects for further advances

in the organisation of white collar groups, such as had occurred in the 1970s, appeared limited.

(d) Distant Expansion

This is arguably the most difficult of the four types of recruitment. Distant expansion involves recruiting in job territories for which there is no union recognition, and which are remote from areas of union organisation.

Most of the union officials we interviewed said that recruitment, particularly of the distant expansion form, was more difficult in the 1980s, compared to the major expansion of the previous decade:

> "In the 1970s, the reality was that everyone was joining. You didn't have to [do much]. It was just an additional exercise at that time, if you went out and 'staked out' a place. They used to come into the office, and that's still the best form of contact, by the way."
>
> (TGWU District Officer)

> "[In the 1970s] It was a different approach. You didn't need to approach them, they approached you. What you are fighting against now is fear, employer resistance and state-sponsored mini-terrorism."
>
> (TGWU District Officer)

Several officials, particularly from the large general unions, claimed that their attempts to recruit were sometimes hampered by employer victimisation of

361

union activists, and by a general fear of losing their job amongst the workforce. Thus, when the employer was contacted requesting a meeting, a frequent response was to ask for the names of the union's members in the company, which the union would, of course, refuse to supply.

As we have already seen in Chapter 3 it has long been recognised in the industrial relations literature that recognition by the employer is effectively a prerequisite for union growth (Bain, 1970; Clegg, 1976). This was seen very clearly in our interviews with local union officials.

> "We lose them [members] fairly rapidly after they join if we don't achieve recognition. [What is the typical pattern ?]   A few people join, we get the membership up to a degree, we try and get the recognition with the employer, we fail, the employer puts the screws on and the members drift away. That recurs"
>
> (NUPE Regional Secretary)

This problem became more acute during the 1980s, as employers became more reluctant to concede recognition:

> "I don't find any difficulty in recruiting... in this area... The union's problem is that the employers, following what I consider to be the government's line, are resisting trade union organisation. [How do you resolve recognition disputes ?] You don't. ACAS has no statutory procedures now. The workforce, because it's frightened, invariably won't take industrial action to force the issue, so you lose out. You don't get the union organisation, and so the membership drifts away".
>
> (TGWU District Secretary)

Recognition is clearly a critical stage in union organising. How then do unions set about securing recognition?

An AEU District Secretary described his approach to newly-established firms as follows. Firstly, he would write a letter of introduction to an appropriate member of management, requesting permission to visit the firm. He would usually claim to have members in the firm. (This was often the case with the AEU, since time-served craftsmen tend to retain their union membership when moving from a union plant). Having been granted such permission, he would meet management to introduce himself and the union, asking for an opportunity to speak to the workforce, either at lunchtime or at a mass meeting. Here, he would explain to them the benefits of AEU membership, and leave behind application forms. If possible, he would make a follow-up visit within three weeks, by which time he would hope to have a number of completed forms. At this stage, even if only a few had joined, he would attempt to establish a shop steward, who would then take primary responsibility for recruiting the rest of the workforce. Only once a significant proportion of the workforce had been organised, often well in excess of fifty per cent, would the employer concede recognition, if at all. Only exceptionally, it seems, do firms grant recognition before the union has built up a significant membership.

This particular AEU official expressed a preference for this kind of approach, rather than having to fight for recognition once the workforce have a grievance with the company and turn to the union for help. Of the latter adversarial approach, he said:

> "This is not our favourite way of going into a company. We would prefer to go in and be an enabling body to the company..."

An example of such a fight for recognition is provided in the following account from another AEU official of his attempt to organise a new plant:

> "We already had a single union agreement with [company X] at Peterlee. We had a headstart on everybody, because we were the only ones who knew right from the start. But, by God, it didn't half take some chasing up to get that single union agreement, which we've recently signed.
>
> We wrote to them. Going back, we knew they were building [a new plant at Eaglescliffe]. We asked, immediately, what's going to be the situation? 'Oh, no need to worry.'
>
> Then, of course, different managers came in. We then started to get a bit concerned, because people were starting in the factory. We contacted them again and said 'Hey, what's going on?' 'Oh, don't worry'.
>
> Eventually we did start to get worried, because we had the information, see, from our people at Peterlee, that it was building up. People were starting there... We suspected we were being deliberately fobbed off by this time.
>
> We wrote to them. We met them, and we thought we were going into friendly negotiations, because we had negotiating

rights [at the company's other local plants]. And here was their one place without a union.

In fact, they wrote an article in the press, where they said no union had shown any interest. That was an article in the press, and of course we were concerned because we'd already written to them.

When we went there, all the niceties were said, then their first question was 'You tell us why we need a union.' Of course, we were taken aback slightly, but we told them why they needed a union. It was because we would grow together, we would suffer the hardships together and we could suffer the profits together. That wouldn't be the case if they went in and took a chance because when the people in there demanded a union we would be going in there with no interests of the company's at heart, apart from eventually to keep the jobs of course, but we would be in there backing these people. 'They're the ones who wanted us, you didn't'. We would be going in there in an us and them position. So we told them that...

So what they did was they wrote to us and thanked us very much and said how much they liked us, but 'don't call us, we'll call you' type of thing.

Well, we did have members there. We got the message to them, what had happened, and they walked out. The moment they walked out, I had the convener and shop steward from Peterlee down there with forms, issuing them out and recruiting them on the spot.

We knew before that they were going to walk out, because our convener from Peterlee was in touch with them. He clocked off, got in his car, collected some forms, bang, down, recruited them all outside the gates.

We then met with some of these lads, sounded out their opinions, told the management that we now had the members there. What they had said was that if the employees want a union they wouldn't stand in their way. We said, 'Well they do, They're members of our union'.

We met with them off-site. We said we wanted a ballot on trade union recognition. The company came back to us and said,

'Right, don't bother about the ballot. We are going to negotiate an agreement with you'.

It took some months to sort out every comma, every dot. It was a morass, the agreement, when we started. Totally unacceptable. Eventually we got it into a form that was acceptable. It took quite some time.

By this time, of course, people were losing interest. They gave the lads the biggest rise we've ever had, by the way, as an inducement not to go along with it. Without any negotiation, they gave them it...

Eventually I went along to sign the agreement. When I got there they said what they were going to do... was put it to their employees to see whether they wanted a union or not...

Now that's the type of thing you're up against ... [It is resolved now but] we still have a job to do. I'm just in the throes of setting up the organisation now. Hopefully I'll have two shop stewards by now, although I haven't been informed as yet. But I've had a load more forms back, wanting to join the union, so there is a nucleus there and we've got to build from there".

(AEU, District Secretary)

Thus, whilst single union deals may sometimes be handed to the union "on a plate", as a result of a union "beauty contest" or where a company with an existing agreement invites the union into its new plant, this is not always so. In the above case, the union faced the classic delaying tactics from management, initially refusing recognition, then bowing to industrial action by opening negotiations, offering an agreement which the union found unacceptable, and taking the union through drawn-out negotiations and awarding a large pay rise, before going to a ballot. Industrial action played a

366

key role in this case and, significantly, many officials saw the increased reluctance to take industrial action as a key problem in securing recognition. In this particular case, the union won recognition, although by this time many of its members were in arrears with their contributions, and the union had to rebuild its organisation at the plant.

Another AEU District Secretary made it clear that, whilst he would often write to employers, requesting access to the workforce, the main focus of his organising activity was the workforce rather than the employer.

> "... I concentrate my efforts on the workforce, explaining to them the benefits of being part of the trade union, rather than going to the employer, and the employer saying 'Well, what have you got to offer me?"

> "If a new factory opens up, almost inevitably, in the factory, there's union members go in. Green card holders [craftsmen]. And the incentive to organise must come from within. Very rarely is it successful from outside, unless it is a 'sweetheart deal'. And I will not, as a matter of principle, get involved in 'sweetheart deals'."

Several of our respondents agreed that recognition should not be accepted in return for "sweetheart deals". This particular AEU official felt that the problem facing unions in extending organisation was not simply the securing of recognition, but securing it on terms which would be acceptable to the union, and which would result in effective organisation of the workforce.

367

Most of the officials interviewed suggested that where the employer was reluctant to grant recognition, effective organisation was best achieved around a specific issue or grievance, which would mobilise the workforce in the protection of their own interests. Pay and disciplinary matters emerged as key issues in this respect. The TGWU's guide for lay recruiters echoes this point:

> "A formal procedural approach can be counter-productive with hostile employers. Best results have been obtained by seeing that the issue around which organisation takes place is not recognition as such, but a concrete issue such as a wage increase or advance on some backward condition of employment such as holiday pay.
>
> By posing the union case in practical terms of direct benefit to all workers, a wider basis of support can often be won than with pure 'recognition' demands. Also victimisation is likely to be seen by fellow workers as a cause for united action if the issue is a quite fair and just claim to everyone's benefit instead of an unfortunate by-product of an organisational tussle"
>
> (TGWU, no date b: 16)

For example, a TGWU official told us of his experience in trying to organise a new plant:

> "It may take months. It took me nearly twelve months in a place. I'm still trying to get a hundred per cent, because the employer won't recognise us, although they have met us and said 'Don't come back until you have fifty per cent'... Now, I could get nothing to hang my cap on, you see, and people were saying, 'We need a union, but we realise that you can't do anything'.

Now, the hard core stayed in, and then the company dismissed someone unfairly by means of redundancy. Not the fact that the redundancy was unfair, but the way they went about it. And I got a settlement out of it, because I would've plastered it all over the papers. But they settled out of court, and I used that... that showed the people, and the membership started going up because they realised that we could do something, although we didn't negotiate the wages. So they saw it as protection.

And that really is the essence of whether you retain them. If you can't do anything for them you'll lose them."

(TGWU District Officer)

Thus, the union may gain members where there are grievances, and where it is able to demonstrate that it can do something for the workforce. However, ultimately the most effective way to do this is to win recognition and thus negotiate on terms and conditions. Without this, organisation is likely to be fragile and transitory. The same official explained it as follows:

"If there's a lot of problems you keep them for a long while. If the employer consistently sacks people unfairly, and you keep getting settlements out of him. But the wise employer doesn't do that see... We can keep them in for one, two or three years, but the key is can we negotiate for them, at the end of the day, their wages".

(TGWU District Officer)

A key element in the organising process, according to many of our respondents, was the establishment of a shop steward. As an AEU District Secretary put it:

"If you get the right shop stewards, and they represent the members according to the agreements they've reached, you'll always have a base. If you fail to establish that, it's just like an hour glass; you turn it over and then you have to start all over again".

However, the shop steward may be in a very difficult position if the employer is hostile to trade unionism:

"The employer will be all sweetness and light with you... but when you've gone he puts the pressure on, and it's very difficult retaining shop stewards. And that's the problem. No district officer can maintain organisation from the outside, he cannot do it. That's one of the main problems of the so-called white-collar unions, even today".

(AEU District Secretary)

This is largely a problem of access to the workforce. The shop steward has daily access and a detailed day to day knowledge of the firm, in a way which the full-time official does not, so that the steward is better placed to consolidate and maintain union membership within the workplace. Thus, as we saw earlier, any weakening of stewards' organisation or reduction in facilities provided by management may reduce the effectiveness of union recruitment.

In several of our interviews, we were given examples of companies who, whilst claiming not to be anti-union, would nevertheless afford only very limited access to their workforce. For example, in one company, which had no union recognition agreement but had been the subject of repeated recruitment drives by the TGWU, had agreed to admit TGWU full-time officials to their stores. A room would be allocated to the official and staff would be informed of his presence by management, but he would not be allowed to take the initiative in approaching staff. As one official put it:

> "It's all a game. It's the facade of giving you the facility, but in reality they want you to fail."

> (TGWU District Officer)

Distant Expansion and the Small-Firm Sector

The small-firm sector seems to be particularly difficult to organise, not only because of a possibly lower propensity for workers to join, but also because of employer opposition and a lack of access for the union official:

> "Ten is a small business, but you can't afford not to have a go at them. It's more difficult, mind. An employer exercises a greater degree of control over that labour force. He knows everything that's going on, and if he wants to oppose trade unions, which at the moment they are doing, then he has all the means at his disposal. He has far superior access than what we do".

> (TGWU District Secretary)

371

Unions had often tried to extend organisation to suppliers and contractors of unionised firms. This may be a useful approach to organising small firms. However, such an approach was undermined by legislation. The 1982 Employment Act removes union immunities in cases of industrial action taken against employers in a bid to force them to use labour-only suppliers or contractors, and employers may no longer refuse or terminate a contract on grounds of union status (Mackie, 1989: 287-288).

Given the difficulties of organising small workplaces, one union official, with organising experience in the clothing industry told us that:

> "When I was a trade union officer in the 1970s, when inflation was fifteen to twenty per cent, if a worker 'phoned me up and told me they wanted to be recruited, if there were any less than two dozen people in the place I never bothered going, because there were so many other people to recruit. You got discouraged by the fact that there was labour turnover in representatives. It seemed to cost more time to service small workplaces than large workplaces".

> (TUC Official)

Similarly, Bain's study of recruitment in the late 1960s illustrates how a union may prioritise recruitment targets in terms of the potential membership:

> "But if the individuals happened to be from a combine [i.e. a large multi-establishment firm], then they received special attention. As one ASSET official put it, 'I will drop everything to

get them in. If they weren't from a combine I might not do this unless it was an extremely large group or I wasn't very busy.'"

(Bain, 1970: 92)

This suggests that unions are more likely to show a keen interest in organising small firms once other opportunities become scarce or, as in the 1980s, when the small-firm sector promised to be a major sector of employment growth. However, small workplaces might be uneconomic to organise:

"Any full-time officer would be hard pushed to cover as many as fifty workplaces in a patch. If these had ten or fifteen people in each, then how much does that come to at £1 per week? It just doesn't work out, economically, to be able to service their collective bargaining needs. Was it, in fact, economic for unions to be recruiting in that area at all? If they could recruit them could they then, in fact, service them? Should the membership in large workplaces subsidise the membership in small workplaces?"

(TUC Official)

Whether or not one agrees with the figure of fifty workplaces, and clearly this depends on the particular industry, the point is that unions might not be wise to follow a strategy of expansion into the small-firm sector. Even when they are able to build an organisation and win recognition, it may then prove difficult to provide an effective service to the membership, and any initial organising success may mean that the official has little time for further organising. This suggests that unions may need to plan their recruitment selectively.

373

The Process of Expansionary Recruitment

Our discussion of the expansionary organising process is summarised in Figure 11.2.

FIGURE 11.2: The Process of Expansionary Recruitment: A Summary
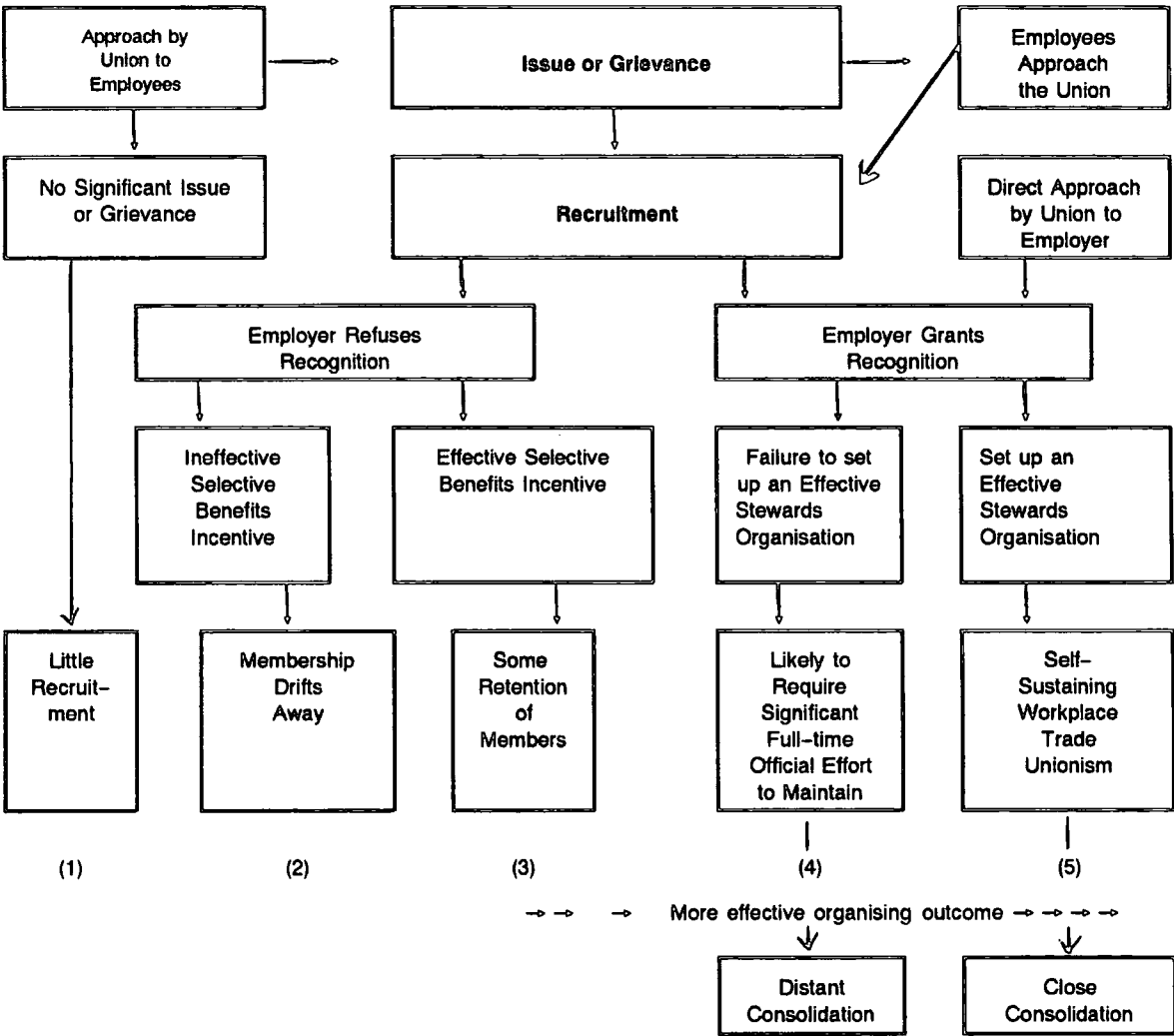
This highlights the importance of an issue or grievance around which a recruitment campaign can be based, either to make the union's approach

374

effective or to motivate the employees to take the initiative in approaching the union themselves. This finding is consistent with research on union organising in the USA (see for example Karsh et al, 1953; Northrup, 1990). Also important is the winning of employer recognition. Where this is not forthcoming, any membership will tend to drift away, unless the union is able to demonstrate that it can offer tangible gains or benefits to the members without recognition. This is the thinking behind the selective benefits incentive approach, as discussed in chapter 6.

Where recognition is won, the next step is to establish an effective shop stewards' organisation in the workplace. This is the ideal close-consolidation model. Where the union fails to establish an effective shop steward's organisation, then membership consolidation will usually prove to be more difficult, and the full-time official will subsequently have to play a greater role in distant consolidation.

This analysis highlights the crucial role of the employer in influencing the outcome of union organising efforts. Our respondents saw the increasingly anti-recognition stance of some employers as a key reason for their limited recruitment success during the 1980s and early 1990s, and employer attitudes were also felt to influence the chances of establishing a shop stewards' organisation. Even where recognition existed, the quality of access to the

workforce enjoyed by the full-time official often varied, depending on the attitude of the employer.

The analysis has clear implications for recruitment initiatives aimed at expanding into those job territories which were growing in the 1980s and 1990s. The trend towards smaller plants and a flexible labour force, along with employer hostility to unions and the lack of a tradition of unionisation amongst the workforce, were likely to mean that the recruitment process outlined above would become more difficult at each and every stage. Initial recruitment is likely to be more difficult where there is a lack of tradition of trade union membership in the workforce, and where the collective ethic has to be developed from nothing. Recognition will be more difficult to secure where employers' resistance is greater,and where employees are reluctant to undertake industrial action to force the issue. Finally, as we have seen, it is more difficult to secure good shop stewards in smaller establishments and where density has traditionally been low.

The industries and job territories which unions will need to penetrate share many of the characteristics of retailing, construction and banking. Thus, we suggest that such recruitment efforts are less likely to lead to the development of self-sustaining workplace trade unionism than has been the case in many of the traditional strongholds of trade unionism in manufacturing and the public

sector. If this is so, it means that even where recruitment takes place, there will be a heavy burden on full-time officials to service and maintain the membership. This is then likely to limit the ability of such officials to devote time to further expansion.

Conclusions

We set out in this chapter to explain why the new organising initiatives had by 1991 met with at most only limited success. Our analysis confirmed the pattern of full-time official involvement suggested by Kelly and Heery (1989) (see chapter 8). This is summarised in Table 11.3. Our interviews suggested no major changes in this pattern, but recruitment had become more difficult during the 1980s, particularly away from the union's core job territories.

Whilst we found little evidence that close consolidation in well-organised establishments had become significantly more difficult during the 1980s, some officials recognised that their well-organised job territories were contracting, so that increasingly there was a need to look to other forms of recruitment. Furthermore, some of our respondents suggested that shop stewards had become less self-reliant in terms of servicing the membership, and were thus making greater demands on the full-time official for advice and assistance. This could have implications for the ability of full-time officials to spend time on recruitment in other job territories.

TABLE 11.3: The Role of the Full-Time Official in Union Organising

Coverage by Recognition Agreements	Proximity of Job Territories	
	Close	Distant
Yes, Consolidation	Self–sustaining trade unionism. Stewards handle recruitment and retention. Little involvement of full–time official.	Major full–time official involvement in visiting scattered workplaces to maintain and develop organisation. Access usually readily available, though quality may vary
No, Expansion	Role may vary but likely to involve providing support for lay member initiatives, or at least may draw on lay member support	Major role for full–time official in recruitment, bidding for recognition, and building workplace organisation. Access often difficult.

In those sectors characterised by distant consolidation, full–time officials had less time to devote to organising new job territories. The task facing unions here was essentially one of exploiting collective agreements and relationships with employers to the full, and there appeared to be much that unions could do to improve the effectiveness of this form of recruitment, partly because it had often been a neglected area in the past. However, unions were heavily dependent on a degree of employer support, in terms of recommending union membership to new employees and providing good quality access to the workplace for full–time officials. Whilst our interviews did not reveal any general trend towards a reduction of employer support in this respect,

378

nevertheless unions remained highly vulnerable to any future changes in employer policy.

We suggested that close expansion often appeared to be an attractive option for unions, given that the strength of existing strongholds could be utilised, without the need for factory-gate campaigns and cold-calling. However, our interviews identified a number of problems with this approach. Such groups had often remained unorganised precisely because of the particular difficulties involved, including the nature of such workers themselves and strong employer opposition. Indeed, we suggested that employers often opted for the peripheral workforce and subcontracting because of the flexibility it offered, and unionisation might well be seen as a threat to such flexibility. Also, earlier gains in such areas as white-collar, managerial and professional employment could be fragile, since some employers had attempted to roll back the frontiers of unionisation when the opportunity arose.

Distant expansion has certain characteristics which distinguish it from the other types of recruitment and which make it a more problematical exercise. Firstly, distant expansion, even more than other types of recruitment, is likely to require a commitment of resources to what is essentially an uncertain and perhaps long term undertaking, with no guarantee of a return.

Secondly, any attempt to extend union recognition to new workplaces is particularly vulnerable to changes in the economic and political environment. The willingness of employers to concede recognition, and the ability of employees to fight for it depend upon such factors as the state of the economy, the government's own example on union recognition and the legal framework. In general, since the late 1970s these had been unfavourable to the unions.

In addition, we suggested that expansionary recruitment was likely to be particularly difficult in the growing sectors such as small firms, private services and the 'flexible' workforce. We saw in chapter 3 that there was evidence of a latent demand for union representation amongst such workers. Our analysis of union organising campaigns has suggested that the difficulty was in translating this into effective organisation. Even where some initial recruitment was achieved, the union faced major problems in securing recognition and in building workplace organisation, so that it often proved impossible to retain and consolidate the membership. Furthermore, we suggest that even if unions were to have some success in organising these areas, the subsequent heavy servicing burden on full-time officials would limit their ability to devote attention to further expansion.

Thus, whilst some commentators had argued that unions must seek to extend their membership into the hitherto unorganised sectors, nevertheless one can understand the sentiments of one union officer:

> "If union resources are to be deployed sensibly and economically, then why start with the hardest nut first? We should be testing whether we have sufficient density in places where we already have recognition"

<div align="right">(TUC official)</div>

We have argued that there is some sense in this view, in that there was considerable numerical scope for consolidation, and it had often been a neglected area in the past, with significant room for improved performance. Also, in our discussion of the development of unions' selective benefits, we concluded that such benefits were more likely to provide an effective incentive to join a union where recognition existed and the employer was not strongly anti-union.

There was certainly a tendency for some unions to focus their efforts on consolidation rather than on expansion, particularly into distant job territories. Officials in USDAW and UCATT, for example, clearly had their hands full simply trying to maintain their existing organisation. Even in the case of the TGWU and the GMB, which we identified as being more committed to expansion than most unions, many of the initiatives focused on consolidation,

and as the TGWU's Link Up campaign progressed there appeared to be an increasing emphasis on consolidation and the need for lay members to recruit, along with a growing concern within the union at the inability to win recognition from employers. Nevertheless, in spite of the difficulties involved, at least some unions continued to mount expansionary recruitment campaigns, perhaps because of their possible impact in the longer term, and also because their was a feeling that any effort was worthwhile in an increasingly difficult situation.

PART FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER 12

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Introduction

In this penultimate chapter, we summarise our findings in terms of the first three aims of the thesis, as set out in chapter 1. These were: to describe the initiatives being undertaken by unions in the 1980s and early 1990s, to examine the implementation of the organising initiatives, and to examine the effectiveness of such initiatives during the period up to 1991. In the following chapter, we address the final aim of the thesis, by discussing the implications of our findings for the debates on union strategy and for the future of British unions.

Union Responses to the "Membership Crisis"

The first aim of the thesis was to describe the kinds of initiatives being introduced by unions. On services and benefits, we found that whilst there was no clear reversal of the long term trend away from traditional cash benefits, unions were introducing a range of new discount services, including financial and legal services, travel and tourism, and many unions were developing their training facilities. A clear theme in much of this was the notion that the union was catering for its members not simply as workers, but also increasingly as consumers. Most of the officials we interviewed accepted that their union should provide as wide a range of services as possible, but

many emphasised that the new services were of an ancillary nature, and that the primary purpose of the union must be to represent their members as employees. Falling membership, and in some cases the need to match the initiatives of other unions, were cited as reasons for the development of such services, whilst aggressive marketing by the third-party providers of many of the suppliers of discounts was another reason for their increased provision. (Chapter 6).

On contributions, there was concern that the generally low level of contribution rates led to an underfunding of the union movement, which could act as a constraint on the maintenance amd improvement of services and benefits and on the undertaking of major recruitment campaigns. We could not conclude from our evidence that the generally low level of contributions was due to price competition between unions, although it appears that this may have been important in the case of particular unions. We could not firmly conclude that membership in general was highly "price elastic", and the contributions increases of the 1980s appeared to be as much a consequence as a cause of declining membership. This might suggest that further contributions increases were feasible, although there was some evidence of a price elasticity effect, which might become more pronounced were contributions to increase to levels unprecedented in recent experience. Also, our evidence suggested that the lower paid, including women workers, were more sensitive to the level of contributions. (Chapter 7).

We found that higher cash benefits and the linking of contributions to the individual's pay appeared to allow a union to levy a higher average level of contribution per member. The former offered some comfort to those who advocated the high cost/high benefits approach to unionism in the future. We inferred from the latter that unions might be advised to practise "price discrimination", by relating the individual's contributions to their ability to pay. (Chapter 7).

Whilst some of the officials we interviewed expressed reservations about linking contributions to the individual's earnings, largely on grounds of equity and administrative difficulty, we found that in recent years some unions had revised their contribution scales, introducing lower rates for such groups as part-time workers, youths, those on government-funded training schemes, those on temporary contracts, the unemployed and in a few cases those members for whom the union did not yet have recognition from the employer for collective bargaining purposes. In many cases, such reduced-rate contributions were linked to a lower level of servicing, and thus are more properly referred to as "differential pricing" rather than true "price discrimination". (Chapter 7).

We rejected the view that increased contributions were a viable alternative to organising campaigns, and that unions would necessarily shy away from recruiting the peripheral labour force because of their resistance to high contributions. Indeed, we suggested that many of the developments in

contributions policies could be seen as an attempt to combine a higher general level of contributions with selective reductions aimed at the more price-sensitive groups. (Chapter 7).

We found evidence that by the late 1980s, unions were making considerable efforts to develop their approach to recruitment, both at the level of the TUC and in the case of individual unions. However, whilst most of our unions were prioritising recruitment in response to declining membership, there was considerable diversity in the methods and recruitment targets of the various unions. Some campaigns, particularly those of the large general unions, involved a long-term horizon, and a major commitment of the time of full-time officials, whilst others consisted mainly of exhorting lay activists to step up their recruitment efforts. Some involved attempts to expand union organisation into new areas, whilst others focused mainly on consolidating existing organisation. We found that whilst most unions adopted a variety of approaches, a union's approach to organising was influenced by the union's size, the degree of organisation of its core job territories, and the internal characteristics of the union. (Chapters 8 and 9).

The Implementation of Union Organising Initiatives

A second aim of the thesis was to examine the extent to which unions were able to implement their organising campaigns at local level, and in particular to establish whether or not unions were able to effectively mobilise their full-time officials behind such campaigns. We identified four key areas which

unions would need to address: the communication of the prioritisation of recruitment within the union, the allocation of resources to recruitment, the effective targeting of recruitment campaigns, and the monitoring of recruitment activity.

We found that in most unions, leaders were effectively communicating to officials that recruitment was to be a key priority, and officials were increasingly being expected to devote specific blocks of time to recruitment activity. Most of those we interviewed recognised that more effective recruitment was vital to the continued well-being of their union, although many pointed to the tradeoffs in terms of the servicing of existing members. Whilst the necessary shift to a "recruitment culture" was incomplete, given the uneven response to campaigns, and the fact that some unions had made less progress than others, it appeared that full-time officials were spending an increasing proportion of their time on recruitment activity. (Chapter 9).

The targeting of recruitment activity appeared to reflect a pragmatic assessment of the threats and opportunities facing the union. We found some evidence that unions were selecting targets in an attempt to make best use of their scarce resources, for example concentrating on larger workplaces so as to reap economies of scale, and on areas of lower density where potential recruitment was greater. In some cases officials were sensitive about the need to avoid wasting resources on long-term campaigns where the chances of success were remote. (Chapter 9).

Most of our unions were systematically monitoring the level of membership and recruitment, and some had developed their monitoring procedures in recent years. The aim was to increase the emphasis on recruitment by signalling its prioritisation to officials and lay activists, and also to allow for the evaluation of recruitment activity so as to make best use of available resources. However, officials were, with one or two exceptions, highly sensitive about any suggestion of monitoring the recruitment performance of particular officials. Recruitment, and indeed retention, were felt to be largely influenced by factors beyond the control of the individual official, whilst any suggestion that officials might be further motivated by financial incentives or individual appraisal was in most cases resisted. (Chapter 9).

Thus, our sample of unions were making some progress in each of our four key areas. Our findings contrast with those of Mason and Bain (1991). On the basis of their survey of union headquarters, they argue that in 1990 most unions did not have a national official with sole responsibility for recruitment, a recruitment budget, nor a "sophisticated" monitoring system at national level, and that this was evidence of "...a gap between theoretical commitment [to recruitment] and existing practice" (1991: 44). Our own findings, based on a local perspective, suggest that whilst not all of our unions had made a transformation towards a "recruitment culture", it did appear that the recruitment initiatives amounted to more than simply a declaration by the leadership or head office on the need for recruitment, and that a serious attempt was being made to implement them at local level.

389

The Effectiveness of Union Organising Initiatives

Our survey of the literature on trade union growth and decline showed that there is some disagreement on the extent to which trade union strategies can exert an influence on aggregate membership independent of environmental factors. We referred to this as the "Bain-Undy debate" (chapter 3). The third aim of the thesis was to contribute to this debate by examining the effectiveness of organising strategies during this period.

In considering the effectiveness of such initiatives, the first question of course is what criteria to use in our evaluation. Since much of the pressure for the adoption of such initiatives came from the perception of a "crisis" of declining membership, the obvious approach is to assess them in terms of their impact on membership. In spite of the increased efforts of unions, we could not conclude that the campaigns had had a major effect on membership. Aggregate membership continued to decline to the end of the 1980s, and whilst some unions experienced growth, particularly in the latter part of the decade, this appeared to owe more to sectoral patterns of employment growth than to the organising initiatives of such unions. Even the TUC-coordinated campaigns at Trafford Park and London Docklands failed to significantly extend unionisation. (Chapter 9).

Our case study of the TGWU's Link Up recruitment campaign showed that recruitment appeared to increase following the implementation of the campaign, and our interviews with TGWU officials suggested that there had

been some recruitment successes, often in what were seen as difficult recruitment areas. However, the campaign was unable to check the decline in the union's membership, largely it seems because the outflow of members increased to more than cancel out the gains made. Our interviews suggested that in many cases the newly-recruited members were proving very difficult to retain, because of a lack of employer recognition or because of the characteristics of the workers themselves. This highlights the particular difficulties involved in targeting recruitment efforts at the difficult to organise sectors and groups. (Chapter 10).

We found no evidence that the union had subjected Link Up to any form of rigorous cost-benefit analysis, indeed one of our respondents specifically questioned the appropriateness of such an analysis. It appeared that the continued emphasis on such campaigns owed much to the feeling that at least something must be done and a faith that the campaign would pay dividends in the future, once the economic and political environment became more favourable. In this respect, some officials held a view not altogether out of sympathy with the econometrician's version of union growth as being determined by environmental and structural factors, largely beyond the control of union strategy. This is perhaps a convenient excuse for those who have tried and failed, but it does appear to be consistent with much of our evidence. (Chapter 10).

We found that local officials, whilst welcoming the various developments in the services and benefits of their union as providing an additional argument in favour of joining, did not consider them to be a major factor in recruitment and retention. In particular, it was felt that the notion of members joining on the basis of such benefits alone, and remaining in the union on a long term basis in the absence of employer recognition, was at that time idealistic, given the limited significance of the benefits, particularly in the face of any employer hostility to union membership. (Chapter 6).

Finally, given the apparent inability of the new initiatives to reverse the decline in union membership, we felt it necessary to examine the problems faced by unions, and from our interviews we identified the perceived difficulties in recruiting and retaining members. What emerged very clearly from this analysis was that the key problem in extending organisation was not so much the lack of a latent demand for union representation, as an inability to develop this into effective organisation in new job territories. (Chapter 11).

Close consolidation, the maintenance of membership in highly-organised sites, was not usually seen as a major problem by officials, even in the 1980s, since workplace organisation generally remained intact. Even here, however, it was clear that unions could not afford to be complacent, since past and possible future legislation on the closed shop and on check-off, along with the possibility of future changes in employer attitudes, might threaten the effectiveness of consolidation in particular cases. Distant consolidation, the

maintenance of organisation across scattered establishments with a lack of effective workplace organisation, required greater involvement from the full-time official, and unions organising in industries characterised by this form of recruitment tended to have fewer resources available to devote to expansionary recruitment campaigns. Whilst much could be done to improve the effectiveness of distant consolidation through greater effort and closer monitoring, unions were heavily dependent on the employer's support for union membership and for access to the workplace. This meant that the union was always highly vulnerable to changes in employer policy. (Chapter 11).

We found that whilst many unions had identified close expansion as a key area, it was often highly problematic, not least because such unorganised groups tended to be the most difficult to organise, because of possible employer resistance, and also because of the nature of the jobs themselves. This certainly appeared to be so in the case of contractors and agency labour, a key target for some unions. The limited incidence of derecognition was concentrated amongst white collar and professional groups which had often been the subject of close expansion during the 1970s. (Chapter 11).

However, the most difficult form of recruitment was clearly distant expansion: where unions were attempting to break into wholly unorganised enterprises. Here, employer resistance was identified as a key factor, particularly in terms of winning recognition, and the difficulty in winning recognition was seen by

officials as a major factor undermining their ability to retain and consolidate any initial recruitment gains. Such problems were particularly severe in the case of peripheral workers and in the private services and newly-expanding industries, where a tradition of union organisation was lacking, so that initial membership was low, employees were often sceptical, especially after an initial failure to win recognition, and where employer resistance was often particularly strong. (Chapter 11).

CHAPTER 13

CONCLUSIONS

In this concluding chapter, we do three things. Firstly, we discuss the implications of our findings for the debates on trade union strategy. Secondly, we discuss the implications for the future of the union movement, referring back to the literature on union growth and decline. Finally, we evaluate the study and examine the implications for future research in this area.

Implications for Union Strategy

By the mid-1980s, trade union leaders and academics were increasingly making statements about the future role of unions, and the ensuing debate polarised along familiar lines. Thus, Towers (1989) distinguishes between the "new realist" unions, such as the EETPU and the AEU, concentrating on organising core workers and emphasising the pursuit of their members' interests in a narrowly sectional way, and the "new traditionalists", epitomised by the TGWU and the GMB, who emphasised a broader social campaigning approach, and aimed to organise not only core workers but also the growing peripheral workforce. As we saw in our introductory chapter, the former group was at the centre of the "New Realism" which emerged at the 1983 Trades Union Congress. The latter group represented an attempt by some on the

centre-left of the union movement to regain some of the initiative in the debates on union strategy, and was initially associated with people such as John Edmonds of the GMB and Tom Sawyer of NUPE.

Watson (1988) adopts parallel categories, distinguishing between "business unionism" and "campaigning unionism", and quoting the EETPU and NUPE as leading examples of the two approaches. Again, the distinction is drawn on the basis of the wider social goals and the more inclusive nature of the latter, and between seeing unions as simply providing a service to members or alternatively as the representatives of a social cause. Watson argues that this dichotomy reflects a combination of pragmatism and ideology, with both membership characteristics and leadership traditions being important in moulding the approach taken by particular unions.

The business unionism/campaigning unionism distinction appears to be reflected in the approach to recruitment, with business unionism being associated with single-union deals (Taylor, 1985: Rico, 1987) and the direct approach to the employer, and campaigning unionism being more usually associated with attempts to build up a membership base prior to approaching the employer for recognition, referred to by Willman (1989) as the "employer market" and "membership market" respectively. The former approach became

the key source of inter-union conflict during the late 1980s, eventually leading to the EETPU's expulsion from the TUC.

It has also been suggested that trade union strategies can be categorised according to whether they are primarily aimed at "core" or "periphery" workers (Atkinson and Gregory, 1986; Atkinson, 1989a; Edmonds, 1986a). Thus, business unionism, with its emphasis on single-union deals, selling the union to enlightened employers as an effective "voice" mechanism, and to employees as a provider of individualised services, tends to concentrate on the permanent workforce in relatively stable establishments. Such employees are likely to be treated in a relatively privileged way by the employer, due to their possession of specific skills, and the need to encourage skills acquisition and functional flexibility (Atkinson, 1984).

Employment stability, individual job commitment and the possibility that employers may accept the non-zero sum arguments for trade union recognition (Freeman and Medoff, 1984) are all likely to favour unionisation of core workers. However, unions may face competition from the employer for the loyalties of this group, in the form of sophisticated human resource management and communications strategies, so that unions may find it increasingly necessary to innovate in terms of the bargaining agenda and selective benefits offered (Atkinson and Gregory, 1986: 16).

In contrast, campaigning unionism is seen as a more inclusive approach, seeking to organise the whole workforce, regardless of employment status and skill level. Thus, the union's organising efforts extend beyond the privileged core, to include those treated on a hire and fire basis, such as less-skilled employees, part-time and temporary workers, contract staff, and public-subsidy trainees. Such groups are used by the employer to provide "numerical flexibility", usually, although not exclusively in relatively low-skilled jobs (Atkinson, 1984). They are likely to include a high proportion of women, young people and ethnic minority workers.

Here employer resistance to unionisation may be particularly keen, since unions threaten to constrain the employer's flexibility in the use of such staff and to press for expensive improvements in terms and conditions. Add to this the logistical difficulties in recruiting and representing a diverse flexible workforce, and the likely problems facing union organisers are clear. Not surprisingly, then, such workers were seen by some as representing the frontiers of trade unionism; as a group which was in need of union representation, given their exploitation by employers, but which had been neglected by unions in the past (Edmonds, 1986a).

To what extent was the dichotomy between business unionism and campaigning unionism reflected in the actual behaviour of our sample of

unions? Clearly, there is some broad justification for categorising the EETPU and the AEU as "new realists" or "business unions", and the GMB, NUPE and the TGWU as "new traditionalists" or "campaigning unions", given the former group's particular association with single-union, no-strike agreements, and the latter's greater emphasis on recruiting the peripheral labour force and on broader social campaigns, epitomised perhaps by the Link Up and FLARE campaigns. However, there were considerable overlaps in the types of initiatives launched by the various unions.

Even though the development of financial services and other discounts was initially associated in the media with the EETPU, who enthusiastically embraced the notion of members as "clients", in fact many white collar unions such as NALGO and BIFU had long provided a wide range of such services, and such developments were soon followed by other manual unions, including NUPE, the GMB and even the TGWU. We therefore suggest that to associate the development of such selective benefits solely with a narrow group of unions, as some writers have done (see for example, Waddington, 1988b), is incorrect.   Equally, Mason and Bain (1991: 36-7) are unjustified in counterposing a "services" approach with a "militancy" approach to attracting members.

Similarly, whilst the EETPU and to a lesser extent the AEU, were seen as the market leaders in securing single-union deals with employers, the GMB was quick to adopt the EETPU's glossy brochure and presentation approach to employers, and by 1990 even the TGWU, amongst the most severe in its criticisms of the EETPU's approach, was becoming concerned at its lack of success in securing such agreements, and had produced its own brochure aimed at selling the union to employers. Thus, it appears that there may have been something of a convergence in practice, as the organising methods used by different unions were increasingly adopted on a pragmatic basis, rather than reflecting any basic ideological schism.

Unions did differ in terms of their priority recruitment targets, with unions such as the GMB, the TGWU and NUPE focusing on the peripheral labour force to a much greater extent than unions such as the EETPU and the AEU. However, again this appeared to owe more to pragmatism than to ideology, with many unions concentrating on consolidating and defending their existing job territories. Even where unions sought to extend their organisation to new sectors or establishments, the choice of recruitment targets tended to reflect an assessment of membership potential and the chances of success.

Furthermore, to present the recruitment of core and peripheral workers as a simple choice between one or the other is misleading, since in many cases

initiatives aimed at these two groups could be seen as complementary. Hyman (1989: chapter 8) notes that recession and restructuring in the 1980s meant that many unionised and formerly secure primary sector workers faced the threat of unemployment, raising the possibility of their seeing their interests as increasingly congruent with those of traditionally less-secure and non-unionised secondary sector workers. Atkinson and Gregory (1986) argue that a viable strategy for unions would be to confront employers' attempts to segment the workforce into core and periphery. Thus:

> "A broad union strategy which confronted employers' flexibility demands with countervailing demands for employment security, investment in training and equality of treatment for all workers might prove an effective means of redistributing some of the benefits of efficiency through flexibility to the totality of the labour force. As a unifying response to management strategy which threatens to fragment the union movement at enterprise level, it has much to commend it."

> (Atkinson and Gregory, 1986: 17)

We have seen that many of the initiatives aimed at peripheral workers were designed along these lines. For example, Link Up aimed to restrict or to regulate the use of part-time and temporary workers, and to secure pro-rata terms and conditions, not least because the unregulated use of such labour might ultimately threaten the employment security and terms and conditions of permanent full-time staff. Similarly, attempts by UCATT and the EETPU to organise and represent the growing numbers of self-employed in

construction and electrical contracting could be seen as an attempt to defend existing organisation and bargaining arrangements.

Finally, we suggest that it was fruitless to see the future of the union movement as necessitating a clear choice between either business unionism or campaigning unionism. Rather, unions were adopting an approach, or even a mix of approaches, suited to their particular recruitment territories. Indeed, were we minded to develop a descriptive typology of union models, we might suggest that a simple dichotomy would be insufficient to reflect the diversity of approaches.

For example, along with the business and campaigning unionism models, we could identify a new model "professional" union, epitomised by the Royal College of Nursing and the Professional Association of Teachers. Ruling out strike action, emphasising professional ethics and services, and attempting to mobilise the "balance sheet of public opinion" to further their aims (Clay, 1987: 143), such an approach is clearly distinguishable from business unionism, both in terms of its methods and its applicability only to highly-visible professional groups (Clay, 1987; see also Crane's (1986) study of Australian teachers' unions on the latter point).

The GMB's FLARE campaign might be interpreted, at least in principle, as offering a different approach to representing the peripheral labour force, not just through collective bargaining as was envisaged in the TGWU's Link Up campaign, but also by the winning and monitoring of statutory employment rights (Edmonds, 1986a). Cobble (1991) offers yet another model for the unionisation of service-sector workers, focusing on the development of an occupational identity, control of the supply of competent labour, and union regulation of work standards.

In sum, our contention is that whilst dichotomies such as those of Towers and Watson may offer some useful insights into the broad terms of the union strategy debate, they give an idealised picture of union behaviour and risk overemphasising the extent to which such behaviour was a simple reflection of an ideological split in the labour movement. Political and ideological differences there no doubt were, but union organising initiatives were very much driven by the search for effective solutions, and a decade of declining membership was teaching union leaders of the need for innovation. Whilst unions differed in their approaches and in the types of recruitment targets selected, this appeared to reflect a pragmatic assessment of comparative advantage and of defensive necessity, rather than any abstract ideologically-informed choice between organising core or peripheral workers, and there was

no sense in which the union movement faced a stark choice between opting for business unionism or for campaigning unionism.

Implications for the Future of the Trade Union Movement

In a series of papers and articles, Paul Willman (1989; 1990; Willman and Morris, 1988a; 1988b) has suggested that unions would not seek growth through membership recruitment campaigns, particularly in the difficult to organise sectors. According to Willman, unions would adopt what he calls "market share" trade unionism, preferring to compete for single-union deals with employers and for mergers, both of which represent a more economical means of securing additional membership than directly recruiting individual members. The implication is that the difficult to organise groups, including the peripheral labour force and those whose employers are hostile to unionisation, would be to some extent written off by union organisers.

There is something in the notion that mergers and single-union deals offer an economical means of recruitment, and it is clear that many unions were affording them a high priority. Indeed, as we saw in chapter 10, the TGWU became increasingly concerned at its relatively poor performance in each of these areas. However, we must question Willman's conclusions in at least four respects.

Firstly, he argues that the decline in union finances in the 1970s is evidence that membership recruitment is not necessarily beneficial to unions, at least from a financial point of view. Thus:

> "It is possible that union behaviour in the 1980s is influenced by the experience of cost-ineffective growth in the previous decade and that 'market share' unionism has emerged as a growth strategy in part because of the recent experience of cost-ineffective growth."

> (Willman, 1989: 266)

However, we showed in chapter 7 that such reasoning is flawed, in that unions appeared to determine contributions rates on a satisficing basis, so that there was no necessity for major increases in real contributions during the 1970s because at that time rapid growth meant that immediate financial crisis was avoided. Sharply declining membership and the threat of financial difficulties provided the stimulus to increase real contributions during the 1980s, and unions appear to have been successful in this, no doubt helped by lower levels of inflation and by rising real earnings. Thus, we cannot conclude that the membership growth of the 1970s was necessarily "cost-ineffective", it is simply that compared to the 1980s the need to increase real contributions was less urgent.

Secondly, we have shown how much of the recruitment effort of the 1980s was aimed at consolidating existing areas, and that in certain sectors such an approach was considered essential if the union was to maintain its existing areas of organisation. In such cases unions were obliged by circumstances to treat individual recruitment as a key priority. Even where the need for consolidation was less pressing, unions might be expected to prioritise it in a period of declining membership, particularly where it could be delegated largely to lay members at little direct financial cost to the union.

Thirdly, at least some unions could be expected to attempt to extend their organisation, in order to preserve their bargaining strength and political influence. Whilst unions representing well-organised and clearly-delineated industries and occupations might do little in the way of expansionary recruitment, those unions with large semi-skilled memberships vulnerable to general labour market trends would feel compelled to attempt to recruit in expanding job territories in order to avoid the undermining of their members' terms and conditions, and those unions representing workers with less labour market "clout" would be particularly concerned about a possible long-term marginalisation of the union movement as a social and political force (Edmonds, 1986c: 7).

Finally, contrary to Willman, we would suggest that inter-union competition might in some circumstances promote aggregate union growth. For example in the case of consolidation in the public sector, we found evidence to suggest that actual and potential competition between unions could act as a spur, encouraging recruitment activity.

In sum, we cannot agree with Willman that unions would necessarily reduce the emphasis on recruiting individual members. Membership recruitment had not necessarily been financially damaging to unions in the past, whilst the circumstances of the 1980s might be expected to lead unions to place a greater emphasis on recruitment.

In fact, it appears that much of the growth of the 1970s was received rather than actively sought by union leaders, and as we have shown, it is simply not true that unions reduced the emphasis on recruitment campaigns in the 1980s; quite the reverse. Thus, any notion of a recruitment growth strategy being emphasised in the 1970s and subsequently abandoned in the 1980s is false. Whilst single-union deals and mergers may represent an ideal low-cost means of securing growth, in general there is little evidence to suggest that they were used to the exclusion of recruitment campaigns.

However, whilst we feel that Willman overstates the extent to which financial considerations constrained union organising activity, we are not necessarily suggesting that unions would find it easy to extend their organisation. We therefore find it difficult to agree with Kelly and Heery's conclusion on the likely effectiveness of recruitment campaigns:

> "Bain's arguments for the ineffectiveness of recruitment campaigns turned out to be quite unconvincing, and insufficient to prove his case. In our view it remains an open question as to whether an extensive mobilisation of union resources would significantly increase aggregate membership in conditions of low inflation and high unemployment."
>
> (Kelly and Heery, 1989: 211)

It may be that unions could have done more on recruitment, and their efforts may have fallen short of what Kelly and Heery would see as an "extensive mobilisation" of resources. Certainly there was an unevenness, both between and within unions, in the extent to which organising activity was effectively prioritised, and there were often organisational barriers limiting the transition towards a "recruitment culture". Nevertheless, we found considerable evidence that unions were launching and actually implementing organising campaigns, as well as developing their services, benefits and contributions policies. However, such developments were clearly not in themselves a sufficient condition for a resumption of union growth. Unions were often able to recruit pockets of members, but it proved difficult to consolidate these and

408

to build effective organisation, due to the nature of the workforce involved and, critically, to the resistance of employers to union recognition (see chapters 10 and 11).

The problem facing unions was thus not so much the lack of an underlying propensity to unionise on the part of employees, nor even an inability to recruit individual members, but rather the difficulties in consolidating any initial membership gains into effective organisation. This was particularly so during a period when the economic and political climate was such as to convince many employers of the viability of the non-union option, and when the threat of industrial action to force the issue of recognition was remote.

It could be argued that unions might have achieved better results through a more effective mobilisation of officials and members behind the organising campaigns. However, such a view could be questioned on two grounds. Firstly, whilst some unions did comparatively little in this respect, others did rather more, and given the organisational and "managerial" obstacles, it is not clear how much more they could have done. Secondly, it is possible that the mobilisation of additional resources would have resulted in the recruitment of additional pockets of membership, but where recognition was lacking there is no reason to suppose that this would have led to more effective consolidation and organisation. Additional effort might have produced more in cases of

distant consolidation, where recognition existed and yet density was low, although the unions organising such sectors were those which were already making the most effort on recruitment.

Thus, many of the officials we interviewed appeared to have some sympathy with the deterministic theory of union growth as reflected in the econometric models, at least as regards the short run. A constant theme in our interviews was the difficulty in winning new recognition agreements in the economic and political climate of the 1980s. Significantly, by 1991 the TUC was seriously considering proposals for the reintroduction of a statutory recognition procedure in Britain, reflecting the improved showing of Labour in the opinion polls, and also a growing belief that recruitment campaigns were not in themselves enough to secure the future of the union movement, particularly in small-firms, in the growing "hi-tech" and private-services sectors, and in the face of strong employer resistance to unionisation (TUC, 1991b; Labour Research Department, 1991c; McCarthy, 1985b).

We suggest that the effectiveness of the union organising initiatives can only be properly assessed within the context of the literature on union growth. We argued in chapter 3 that it is useful to distinguish between short-term cyclical factors and more long-term influences on union growth and density (Bain and Price, 1983; Carruth and Disney, 1988). The sharp decline in membership

and density in the 1980s was attributable largely to business cycle factors, especially lower inflation, stronger real wage growth and rising unemployment, and to the influence of hostile Conservative governments (Carruth and Disney, 1988; Disney, 1990), although there was some disagreement in the literature over the role of Conservative employment legislation in particular (Freeman and Pelletier, 1990; Disney, 1990). Structural change in the labour force, with a relative shift away from the highly unionised groups and sectors, did not account for the particularly sharp decline during the 1980s, but such shifts appeared to imply a more gradual long-term decline in density, if not in membership (Bain and Price, 1983).

These econometric models appeared to leave at least some scope for factors other than those specified to contribute to union growth, and this thesis discussed the extent to which union strategies might be one such factor. We suggested in our introductory chapter that the initial response of union leaders, particularly before 1983, was to count on the eventual return of a Labour government, and a political and economic climate more conducive to union growth. However, with Labour's second and third electoral defeats in 1983 and 1987, and the realisation that employment growth did not automatically feed through into union membership, there was a growing view amongst union leaders that it was not sufficient simply to "batten down the hatches" and await better times. There was thus an increasing emphasis on new organising

initiatives and on the development of union services by the latter half of the 1980s.

The distinction between short-term cyclical developments and long-term structural ones may be useful in discussing the likely success of such initiatives. One might argue that in the early 1980s the focus was largely on an anticipated reversal of the adverse cyclical factors, both economic and political, which were causing a particularly sharp decline in those years. As the decade wore on, however, attention shifted towards the longer-term structural developments, and to how unions might avoid a more gradual but in the longer term more fundamental decline in the face of structural shifts towards female, peripheral, small-firm and private-services employment.

Viewed in this light, the admittedly modest achievements of union organising campaigns by 1991 was only to be expected. The realistic aim of such initiatives was to check any long-term structural decline and to eventually extend union organisation to the expanding sectors of the labour market, rather than necessarily to reverse the largely cyclical losses of the 1980s. The latter were only likely to be seriously addressed by a shift in the economic and political cycle, involving some combination of higher inflation, stagnating real wages, lower unemployment and a pro-union government (Disney, 1990).

Kelly (1987: 17-18) and Bain (1986: 158) are amongst those who have pointed out that unions have grown in the past precisely by organising those groups who were previously felt to be unorganisable, including semi-skilled workers, clerks, supervisors, managers and women. However, such major expansions in the union's organised job territories have usually occurred when the economic and political conditions have been favourable, probably because of the difficulties in securing new recognition agreements in a hostile environment. Thus, both Cronin (1979) and Kelly (1988) point out that periods of rapid union growth have been characterised by high levels of industrial action, suggesting that both generalised industrial discontent and the absence of a restraining "fear factor" may be essential prerequisites for a significant extension of union organisation. Several of our interviewees attributed their inability to win recognition at least in part to the reluctance of employees to take industrial action during the 1980s, and to the realisation by employers that unions had no means of forcing the issue of recognition.

Thus, the organising campaigns and other initiatives must be viewed in a longer-term perspective. It may be that the initiatives described in this thesis were laying the basis for future expansion when conditions became more favourable to the winning of recognition, by raising the profile of unions amongst the targeted groups. In the meantime, of course, periodic setbacks

413

could be anticipated as a result of short-term developments in the economy and in the political climate.

On one level, we are offering a reconciliation of the Bain/Undy debate on the relative importance of environmental and leadership factors in determining union growth (see chapter 3). We suggest that the ability of unions to increase membership through recruitment and other initiatives, whilst perhaps not negligable, is nevertheless limited by economic and political factors in the short run. In the long run, however, it may not be possible to mechanically predict declining membership simply by extrapolating current cross-section density patterns into the future, since it is here that union strategies may shift "...the basic parameters of the unionisation equation..." (Bain, 1986: 158).

In sum, our view is that unions were actively attempting to come to terms with membership decline by the late 1980s, and that membership recruitment campaigns were seen as an important part of that response. However, whilst such campaigns had potential in terms of consolidating existing areas of organisation, their effectiveness in extending union organisation to new job territories was severely limited by the inability to secure recognition from employers, in a period when the economic and political conditions were unfavourable to unions. Nevertheless, such campaigns, along with the other developments in services, contributions, collective bargaining aims and internal

structures, might enable unions to make advances in organising new job territories in the longer term, when the economic and political conditions were more favourable. By the early 1990s it was simply too early to judge the long-term effectiveness of unions' attempts to come to terms with declining membership and a changing labour market.

Implications for Future Research

We set out in this thesis to describe the unions' responses to declining membership, and to examine the implementation and effectiveness of such responses. In this chapter, we have discussed the implications of our findings for union strategy and for the future of unions in Britain. Whilst we have made some progress towards our research aims, a number of questions remain unanswered, and it is the task of this final section to review these and to briefly set out a number of research priorities which emerge from our study.

Firstly, our research draws mainly on interviews in the north of the country. Whilst we have been careful to avoid basing our conclusions on the experience of a single city or region, and we did learn something of experience in the south east of England, it would be useful to compare our findings with those of a similar study drawing on interviews with local officials based in the south east. Tighter labour markets, a more services-based economy, and a different social and political culture may mean that the problems facing union

415

campaigns are even more severe than in the north, so that we would expect that our conclusions on the limited short term success of union campaigns would be strengthened by such a comparison.

Secondly, we focus on the experience of a sample of large unions, and examine one particular campaign in detail. Clearly, there is a need for research on other campaigns and unions. Whilst there is likely to be a degree of common experience, and our sample of unions accounted for 53 per cent of total union membership in 1989, nevertheless differences in membership composition, employer policies and sectoral characteristics mean that we cannot necessarily generalise our findings across all unions.

Thirdly, there is a need to develop some of the organisational issues raised by this study and by other writers (Kelly and Heery, 1989; Mason and Bain, 1991). Thus, whilst we have discussed some of the problems encountered in developing a "recruitment culture", there is a need for a more in-depth study of the way in which various unions manage their resources, and not least their full-time officials. A more developed analysis of unions along the lines of the research on corporate culture and performance in business organisations would have much to offer in terms of understanding the development of unions as organisations. Such research might also offer useful insights for practitioners themselves.

Finally, given our conclusion to the previous section, there is a need to continue to monitor the effectiveness of union campaigns in the future. The context within which the unions operate continues to change as we enter the 1990s. Competition is likely to continue to be keen, not least because of closer economic and monetary integration in Europe, and the control of costs and inflation will remain a key priority for employers and governments alike. Unemployment is unlikely to fall to pre-1980s levels in the foreseeable future, particularly given the movement into recession by 1990. On the other hand, the implementation of the provisions of the European "Social Charter", and the possibility of a change in the political climate in the UK may mean that the future for unions is not all bleak, particularly given their apparently growing awareness of the need to adapt themselves to the needs of a changing workforce.

TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP AND DENSITY IN THE UK, 1950-89.

Year	1 Membership 000's	2 Employees in Employment 000's	3 Union Density (%)
1950	9289	20758	44.75
1951	9535	20970	45.47
1952	9588	20916	45.84
1953	9527	21041	45.28
1954	9566	21404	44.69
1955	9741	21702	44.89
1956	9778	21965	44.52
1957	9829	22058	44.56
1958	9639	21884	44.05
1959	9623	21421	44.92
1960	9835	21899	44.91
1961	9897	22233	44.51
1962	9887	22452	44.04
1963	9934	22509	44.13
1964	10079	22816	44.18
1965	10181	23085	44.10
1966	10259	23257	44.11
1967	10188	22813	44.66
1968	10191	22655	44.98
1969	10470	22624	46.28
1970	11178	22479	49.73
1971	11126	22139	50.26
1972	11351	22137	51.28
1973	11447	22679	50.47
1974	11755	22804	51.55
1975	12184	22723	53.62
1976	12376	22557	54.87
1977	12846	22631	56.76
1978	13112	22789	57.54
1979	13289	23137	57.44
1980	12947	22991	56.31
1981	12106	21892	55.30
1982	11593	21414	54.14
1983	11236	21067	53.33
1984	10994	21238	51.77
1985	10821	21423	50.51
1986	10539	21387	49.28
1987	10475	21584	48.53
1988	10376	22276	46.58
1989	10158	22751	44.65

Sources: Union Membership – Bailey and Kelly (1990: 269) and Employment Gazette, various issues.

Employees in employment – Economic Trends, Annual Supplement, 1991, p111. All employees in employment, unadjusted for seasonal variation, June each year.

Union density equals (1)x100/(2).

(All figures refer to UK)

Note: There is some controversy regarding the appropriate denominator in union density calculations (Kelly and Bailey, 1989). Given that UK unions are essentially organisations representing the employed, who do not usually actively recruit amongst the unemployed, we have chosen to exclude the latter from our calculations. However, to the extent that a small proportion of the unemployed, and indeed the retired and the self employed, are union members, the above will overstate the true density amongst the employed.

Bailey and Kelly (1990) suggest that in 1986 the unemployed represented around 2.06 per cent of union membership, whilst the retired accounted for a further 5.75 per cent. They assume that the self employed were an insignificant proportion. This suggests that the above membership figures overstated the employed membership by as much as 8 per cent in 1986, implying a true density of 45 per cent in that year.

SAMPLE UNIONS: MEMBERSHIP TRENDS IN THE 1980s

In this study, we base our analysis on the experience of a sample of nine unions. Table A2.1 ranks them according to the percentage membership loss over the period 1979 to 1989, whilst table A2.2 provides full membership figures.

TABLE A2.1:   Sample Unions: Rank Order by % Membership Loss, 1979-89

Union	Membership Loss (%)	Absolute Membership Loss (000's)
AEU	43	568
TGWU	39	815
GMB	34	425
UCATT	26	91
All unions	24	3168
USDAW	20	94
EETPU	17	77
NUPE	13	87
NALGO	0	2
BIFU*	(29)	(38)
* = Membership increase		

Source: Membership data from Annual Report of the Certification Officer, various years.

During this period, aggregate union membership fell by 24 per cent, but the experience of particular unions varied considerably.

TABLE A2.2:   Membership of Sample of Unions, 1975-1989

Year	Total Union Mbhip	AEU	BIFU	EETPU	GMB	NALGO	NUPE	TGWU	UCATT	USDAW
1975	11656	1294	102	427	1153	625	584	1856	278	377
1976	12133	1259	112	429	1186	683	651	1930	297	413
1977	12719	1266	117	433	1221	709	693	2023	308	442
1978	13054	1293	128	438	1249	729	712	2073	325	462
1979	13212	1310	132	444	1248	753	692	2086	349	470
1980	12636	1252	141	439	1180	782	699	1887	312	450
1981	12311	1099	148	429	1109	739	704	1696	275	438
1982	11744	1070	152	416	1049	726	702	1633	261	417
1983	11300	1009	156	405	975	780	689	1547	260	403
1984	11064	1001	155	394	942	766	673	1491	250	392
1985	10819	975	157	385	917	752	664	1434	249	385
1986	10598	858	159	374	898	750	658	1378	249	382
1987	10480	815	166	369	883	759	651	1349	256	387
1988	10387	794	168	370	864	755	635	1313	250	397
1989	10044	742	170	367	823	751	605	1271	258	376

NOTES: AEU includes the AUEW Constructional, Engineering and Foundry sections before 1985 (but excludes TASS). GMB includes Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers and APEX for the whole period.

SOURCE: Annual Report of the Certification Officer, various years.

The AEU experienced far greater membership losses than the average, losing 43 per cent of its 1979 membership. This reflected the particularly heavy job losses in the engineering industry, where the AEU's membership was concentrated. However, the decline in AEU membership also represents a clearing-out of lapsed members, particularly during 1986, when the union recorded a 12 per cent drop in membership (Financial Times, 14 November 1987: 5). Thus, AEU membership as a proportion of total employment in the metal goods, engineering and vehicles industries (SIC 3), used as a proxy for AEU membership penetration, declined only slightly from 1979 to 1981, thereafter increasing up to 1984, and only falling significantly with the membership shake-out after 1985 (see Table A2.3).

Both the TGWU and the GMB experienced above-average falls in membership, reflecting the major job losses amongst blue collar workers in manufacturing industry, and in sectors such as transport and public utilities.

420

UCATT lost proportionately more members than even the TGWU during the early 1980s, but its recovery in membership growth came rather earlier than for the other private-sector blue-collar unions, with static membership in 1986 and growth in 1987 and 1989. These trends reflect to some extent the marked cyclical pattern of employment in the construction industry, with employment growth resuming after 1986.

During the early 1980s, USDAW's membership declined almost in line with aggregate union membership. However, as in the case of UCATT, the recovery in membership came rather earlier than the average, reflecting strong employment growth in distribution after 1983. In spite of this, however, USDAW's share of distribution employment continued to decline to the end of the decade.

The EETPU lost 77 thousand members in the period 1979 to 1989. Whilst this was less than for many unions, it still represented 17 per cent of the 1979 membership, and can again be attributed largely to job losses in manufacturing and the public utilities, as well as to the growth of self employment in electrical contracting.

By 1989, NUPE had lost 13 per cent of its 1979 membership, losing 46 thousand members in 1988 and 1989 alone. Unlike most of the other unions, NUPE's losses appeared to be heavier towards the end of the decade, rather than in the early 1980s. This may reflect the fact that the recession of 1980-81 had a less profound impact on NUPE's public sector job territories, with the main challenge coming from privatisation measures later in the period. However, potential losses in the early 1980s may well have been masked by large-scale defections during the strikes of 1979, with some recovery of these losses in succeeding years.

The other two unions in our sample experienced less of a problem of declining membership during the 1980s. NALGO lost only two thousand members, and BIFU recorded a membership increase over the decade. NALGO's growth was rather erratic, perhaps reflecting the changeable mood of the workforce in what was an unsettled period for local government and the public utilities, where NALGO's mainly white collar membership was concentrated. In contrast, BIFU grew in every year but for 1984, with a 29 per cent increase in membership over the period 1979 to 1989. To a large extent, this was simply the result of employment growth in banking, insurance and finance, from 646 thousand in 1979 to 915 thousand in 1989, an increase of over 40 per cent (GB, SIC 81,82). Thus, in spite of strong membership growth, BIFU membership as a proportion of total employment in banking, insurance and finance increased by less than two percentage points between 1979 and 1983 and thereafter declined steadily (Table A2.3).

In sum, the predominantly blue collar unions with large numbers of members in the private sector tended to suffer the more marked losses in membership, whilst the white collar and/or public sector unions tended to suffer rather less. However, with the exception of NALGO and BIFU, all the unions in our sample experienced a significant fall in membership. NALGO experienced falling membership towards the end of the period and even BIFU faced a slowing of its rate of growth and failed to keep pace with employment growth in banking and finance. Thus, to a greater or lesser extent, all of our sample unions might be expected to launch initiatives designed to cope with the challenges of the 1980s.

TABLE A2.3:   Membership as a Proportion of GB Employment:
                   Selected Unions and Industries

Year	Union and Industry (SIC) %			
	AEU/Metal Goods, Engineering & Vehicles (3)	BIFU/Banking and Finance, Insurance (81,82)	UCATT/Construction (5)	USDAW/Wholesale & Retail Distribution (81, 64/65)
1977	38.2	19.2	26.2	15.4
1978	38.7	20.1	28.0	15.9
1979	39.3	20.4	29.1	15.7
1980	38.8	20.9	25.9	14.9
1981	38.1	21.5	25.0	15.0
1982	39.7	22.1	25.1	14.7
1983	40.1	22.2	25.6	14.2
1984	41.1	21.5	24.8	13.5
1985	40.5	21.3	25.1	13.2
1986	36.7	21.2	25.8	13.1
1987	35.5	21.1	26.0	13.2
1988	34.1	19.7	24.6	13.2
1989	31.6	18.6	24.9	12.0

NOTE: Shows union membership divided by GB employment. Should not be read as an indicator of union density, since industries are multi-union, and unions have some members in other sectors, outside GB and non-employed.

SOURCES: Union membership – Annual Report of the Certification Officer, various years Employment – Employment Gazette, various issues.

SCHEDULE FOR INTERVIEWS WITH LOCAL UNION OFFICIALS

INTRODUCTION

Aims of Research
Personal Confidentiality

YOUR OWN ACTIVITIES AS A UNION OFFICIAL

I would like to begin by finding out a little bit about your job.

1.   What is your job title?

2.   Please rank the following according to the amount of time you spend on each.

      CARD   (a)   Helping or advising union stewards or representatives.

                      (b)   Negotiating with employers.

                      (c)   Preparing for negotiations.

                      (d)   Attending union branches/committees.

                      (e)   Helping members with individual problems.

                      (f)   Recruitment.

                      (g)   Routine office work.

                      (h)   Others (please specify).

3.   Have any of these become significantly more time consuming over the last 3 to 5 years? Why is this?

      CARD

4. Have any of these become significantly less time consuming over the last 3 to 5 years? Why is this?

CARD

5. Which of these would you like to spend more time on? Why?

CARD

RECRUITMENT

I would like to go on now to discuss recruitment in particular.

6. What is the typical approach to recruitment in your union?

Probe areas: Role of full-time official?
                 Role of lay members?
                 Specialist recruitment officials?

7. Who is responsible for monitoring and coordinating recruitment activity within your union?

Probe areas: Monitoring of membership and recruitment?
                 Reporting system?
                 Copy of report forms?
                 Local level?
                 National level?
                 Any recent changes?
                 How information used?
                 Recruitment quotas or incentives?

8. Has the union launched any recruitment campaigns in recent years? Details?

Probe areas: Why/not?
                 Target groups?
                 Why these?
                 Method of target selection?
                 Seeking to expand field of recruitment?
                 Source of initiative?
                 National or local campaign?
                 Impact on your work?
                 Copies of literature?
                 Innovations in approach/methods?

9. How successful have these campaigns been?

    Probe areas: Recruitment figures?
                      Recognition?
                      Cost–effectiveness?
                      Continuing campaigns?
                      Future plans?

10. What are the most common problems you face in recruiting members?

    Probe areas: Specific examples?
                      Reasons?
                      Recent trends/developments?

11. What are the most common problems you face in retaining members?

    Probe areas: Specific examples?
                      Reasons?
                      Recent trends/developments?

12. What is the union doing to try to overcome these difficulties?

UNION SERVICES

I would like to look briefly at developments in the union's services and
benefits. (IDENTIFY INNOVATIONS, WHERE APPROPRIATE).

13. Have there been any/any other initiatives on services or benefits?

    Probe areas: Literature?
                      Local initiatives?

14. What is the thinking behind the new services?

    Probe areas: Source of initiative?
                      Your views on them?
                      Interest from members?
                      Evidence?

426

15. In your experience, do the new services and benefits referred to help in the recruitment and retention of members?

16. Do they allow you to recruit and retain members even where you lack recognition from the employer?

    Probe areas: Evidence?
                      Envisage being possible in future?

17. Do you feel that you would lose members to other unions if you did not develop new services and benefits?

    Probe areas: Evidence?
                      Which sectors/unions?

18. What future developments in services and benefits do you envisage?

CONTRIBUTIONS

Having looked at the benefits of union membership, it seems sensible to finish by looking at the costs.

19. What is the current level of contributions?

    Probe areas: Categories?

20. When was this last increased?

    Probe areas: Details?
                      Any controversy?

21. Is the level of contributions a problem in the recruitment and retention of members?

    Probe areas: Evidence?
                      Conscious of rates of other unions?

22. In your opinion, does inter-union competition keep contribution rates down?

CONCLUSION

Are there any comments you would like to make?

Probe areas: Key issues omitted?
                        Questions?

Thanks.

MEMBERSHIP TURNOVER: SOME EXAMPLES

The level of union membership is a stock, which is affected by inward and outward flows, and can be influenced by policies aimed at either of these flows. Three simple examples, shown in Tables A4.1, A4.2 and A4.3, will illustrate the point.

TABLE A4.1:   TGWU Membership, 1985-9

000's	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Membership, 1 Jan[1]	1,491	1,434	1,378	1,349	1,313
Membership Lost[2]	277	294	270	281	324
Members Recruited[3]	220	238	241	245	282
Membership, 31 Dec[4]	1,434	1,378	1,349	1,313	1,271

Notes:

[1 & 4] From Annual Reports of the Certification Officer.
[2] Equals (1) plus (3) minus (4).
[3] From TGWU Record, September 1990, p10.

During 1989, a net fall in TGWU membership of almost 42 thousand was produced by a loss of 324 thousand (25 per cent of 1988 membership) and a gain of 282 thousand (21 per cent of 1988 membership). Even in the apparently unfavourable climate of the late-1980s the union was able to recruit over a quarter of a million members during the year.

TABLE A4.2:   USDAW Membership, 1988-9

	000's
Membership, 31 December 1988	395
Members Lost During the Year	135
Members Recruited During the Year	115
Membership, 31 December 1989	375

Source: Financial Times, 23 April 1990, p.8.

Similarly, during 1989, USDAW suffered a net fall of around twenty thousand members. In spite of recruiting over 115 thousand new members during the year (equal to almost thirty per cent of its 1988 membership), the union lost over 135 thousand members during the year (over a third of its 1988 membership).

TABLE A4.3:   AEU Membership, 1988-9

	000's
Membership, 31 December 1988[1]	794
Members Lost During the Year[2]	110
Members Recruited During the Year[3]	58
Membership, 31 December 1989[4]	742

Notes:

[1,3,4]   From AEU Annual Report and Accounts, 1989.
[2]   Equals (1)+(3)-(4).

The AEU lost 110 thousand members during 1989, equivalent to nearly 14 per cent of its membership, whilst recruiting 58 thousand or 7 per cent of its membership.

430

THE DEMAND FOR UNION SERVICES:
A TIME-SERIES APPROACH

In this appendix, we briefly describe our attempt to estimate a demand for union services model, using data for the period 1951 to 1988 (see Appendix 7 for details of the data). Our approach is broadly similar to that of Pencavel (1971).

Variables Used in the Analysis

The dependent variable is union density (UDEN), preferred to union membership because density has the advantage of separating out any growth attributable simply to employment growth.

The "price" variable is real union income from members per head of membership (RPCMIN). This is taken to represent the average contribution paid, measured in £'s per annum. This variable is an imperfect proxy for the average contribution rate for three reasons. Firstly, it ignores the fact that some of those in membership on 31st December (the date at which membership figures are assessed) will only have been contributing for part of the year. This may be offset by those who contribute for some of the year, but who are no longer in membership on 31st December (although unions are notoriously slow to adjust their records to take account of non-payers, and members may be in arrears with their contributions for long periods before being removed from the membership register).

Secondly, some unions levy entrance fees for new members, in addition to annual contributions, and these are included in the data under the heading of "income from members". Hence, PCMIN will tend to be an overestimate of the annual average contribution rate when membership is increasing. This

overestimate is, however, likely to be small, since entrance fees were restricted mainly to the older craft unions.

Thirdly, unions tend not to collect all the contributions that are due, because of inefficiencies in their collection systems, so that PCMIN will underestimate the true contribution rate. This distortion is likely to have become less important in recent years, to the extent that check-off and direct debit have led to greater efficiency in the collection of contributions due.

In spite of these difficulties, however, we feel justified in following Pencavel's example in using PCMIN as a proxy for the average contribution. The above distortions will to some extent net off against each other, and in the absence of an alternative covering such a long period, PCMIN represents the best available series.

As is usual in demand estimation, we include an income variable, in the form of real personal disposable income per head of population (RINCPC).

Following Pencavel (1971), we estimated the equation in linear form, and we specified a partial adjustment process by including the dependent variable lagged by one year (UDEN$_{t-1}$)as an additional independent variable. The assumption here is that actual union membership takes some time to adjust to its desired level. Thus, when contributions are reduced, we expect the increase in membership to be delayed because of inertia on the part of workers, by possible employer resistance to unionisation and by possible union inertia in meeting any latent demand for union services in previously ununionised sectors. When contributions are increased, we expect the fall in membership to be delayed because of inertia on the part of workers and also because members ceasing to pay contributions are usually allowed to accrue several months' arrears before being officially excluded from membership.

The estimating equation is of the following form:

$$UDENt = Ao + A1.UDENt-1 + A2.RPCMINt + A3.RINCPCt + Ut$$

The short-run demand curve has a slope equal to the estimated value of A2, whilst the long-run demand curve has a slope of A2/(1-A1). Elasticities can then be calculated in the usual way.

Empirical Results

The results are shown in Table A5.1, and the implied price elasticities appear in Table A5.2, evaluated at their 1988 levels. We present the OLS results as equation I. However, the Durbin h statistic is suggestive of autocorrelation, and so we followed Pencavel (1971: 188) in using an instrumental variables approach presented as equation II, whereby lagged values of the other independent variables (RPCMINt-1 and RINCPCt-1) are used as instruments for the lagged dependent variable (UDENt-1) in an attempt to ensure consistency of the estimates. We found that this made little difference to the estimates.

The estimated adjustment coefficient (1-A1) is around 0.15, suggesting that union density achieves about 15 per cent of any desired adjustment over a one year period. This is consistent with complete adjustment in almost seven years, which does appear to be rather slower than one might expect, and compares with an adjustment coefficient of 0.46 in Pencavel (1971).

Judging from the significant positive coefficients on the real income variable, union services are a normal good.

The implied price elasticities from our equations are presented in Table A5.2, evaluated at their 1988 levels. In clear contrast to those of Pencavel (1971), our results suggest that, whilst the short-run price elasticity of demand for union services is less than unity, over the long run demand is highly elastic.

433

TABLE A5.1: Demand for Union Services: Time-Series Results

(Dependent variable is UDEN)

	I OLS	II INV	III OLS
UDENt-1	0.864319*** (15.18693)	0.821932*** (7.79458)	–
RPCMINt	-0.526166*** (-4.05836)	-0.657557*** (-3.74493)	-1.714944*** (-5.97369)
RINCPCt	0.003447*** (3.35266)	0.004521*** (2.77501)	0.015768*** (9.71333)
Constant	8.639914*** (3.85050)	10.442884*** (2.83440)	38.234290*** (11.29732)
R2 adj	0.97533	0.97119	0.79360
F	475.40225***	405.48520***	72.13211***
DW	1.38307	1.51842	0.54836
Durbin's H	1.89048	1.67240	Undefined

Significant at: 1% level ***

TABLE A5.2: Implied Price Elasticities of Demand

(1988 levels)

Equation	Short Run Elasticity	Long Run Elasticity
I OLS	-0.41	-3.04
II INV	-0.52	-2.90
III OLS	–	-1.35

We were surprised to find such high estimated price elasticities, given the much lower estimates of Pencavel (1971), and the fact that the officials we interviewed claimed that contributions increases had only a marginal impact on membership. We were also concerned that the adjustment coefficient was

434

rather higher than we expected. Indeed, when we estimated the OLS equation in full-adjustment form (ie without the lagged dependent variable), shown as equation III, we derived on elasticity of only 1.35. When we began to review the literature (Willman and Morris, 1988a; 1988b) and press coverage on contributions increases during the 1980s, it became clear that most commentators envisaged a causal link from falling membership to increased contributions, rather than the reverse as is implied by the price elasticity of demand analysis. This view was also suggested by many of the union officials we interviewed.

We find in Appendix 6 that the level of membership and density do indeed appear to influence the level of contributions, possibly via some form of satisficing behaviour in setting the contribution rate. Whilst we found some evidence of a causal link running from contributions to membership and density, it does seem that our estimates overstate the true price-elasticity effect.

Furthermore, the presence of positive autocorrelation is suggestive of an omitted variable problem, which would also introduce bias into our estimates. This is likely, since we make no allowance for the cyclical and structural influences on union density, as discussed in Chapter 3, where we alluded to the difficulties in estimating a structural demand equation which incorporates such variables.

In sum, there does appear to be a price elasticity effect, although we cannot state with any degree of certainty that the elasticity is greater than one. In principle, there is a need to allow for the endogeneity of contributions and to deal with the likely omitted variable problem by constructing a more sophisticated demand equation which draws on the findings of the union growth literature. However, we have already referred to the tendency for this literature to concentrate on reduced-form equations, due to the difficulties in specifying a demand curve (see Chapter 3), so that we do not attempt such

an analysis here. Further research on the price elasticity question is clearly required, although given the above problems it may be that such research will be of a non-econometric nature, for example involving surveys or the direct monitoring of the impact of contributions increases.

GRANGER CAUSATION TESTING OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND UNION MEMBERSHIP

The price-elasticity analysis of Appendix 5 appeared to suggest that higher contributions would reduce union membership. However, we decided to carry out further tests to determine the direction of causation in this relationship. Did higher contributions result in lower membership (a price elasticity effect), or did falling membership lead unions to raise contributions to restore their finances (a price satisficer effect)?

Granger causation testing offered to provide an answer to this question. Following Maddala (1988) we estimated the following equations to test for Granger causality:

$$MSHIP_t = a + \sum_{i=1}^{k} b_i \, MSHIP_{t-i} + \sum_{i=1}^{k} c_i \, RPCMIN_{t-i} + U_t \qquad \text{....1}$$

$$RPCMIN_t = d + \sum_{i=1}^{k} e_i \, RCPMIN_{t-i} + \sum_{i=1}^{k} f_i \, MSHIP_{t-i} + V_t \qquad \text{....2}$$

Where: $RPCMIN_t$ is real per capita membership income (our proxy for contributions) in period t.

$MSHIP_t$ is union membership in period t.

k is the number of lags included in the equation.

In equation 1, we tested the null hypothesis that $c_i=0$ $(i=1,2,...,k)$, using a standard F-testing procedure for restrictions on the model. If the restrictions were accepted, this would imply that lagged values of RPCMIN made no significant additional contribution to explaining trends in MSHIP, once MSHIP's own autocorrelation was allowed for, thus suggesting that RPCMIN does not "cause" MSHIP. The same procedure was applied to equation 2, in an attempt to determine whether lagged values of MSHIP explained the current level of RPCMIN.

One problem with such a procedure is that it does not usually provide us with any guidance on the number of lags to include in the model. Hence, we repeated each of the tests for between one and six lags. The associated F-values for each test are presented in the following table:

Equation 1 - MSHIP regressed on lagged MSHIP and lagged RPCMIN

Number of Lags	Calculated F Statistic
1	2.15
2	1.32
3	2.01
4	1.10
5	1.04
6	0.94

Equation 2: RPCMIN regressed on lagged RPCMIN and lagged MSHIP

Number of Lags	Calculated F Statistic
1	1.05
2	3.55**
3	2.41*
4	3.97**
5	3.50**
6	3.46**

Key: *   can reject the null hypothesis at 10% level of significance.
      ** can reject the null hypothesis at 5% level of significance.

Thus, we have some grounds for rejecting the restrictions on equation 2, but not on equation 1. This suggests that it is more plausible to argue that causation runs from MSHIP to RPCMIN, since lagged values of MSHIP do appear to contribute towards explaining RPCMIN, but not vice versa. Similar results were found for tests using union density (UDEN) in place of MSHIP, with UDEN "causing" RPCMIN rather than the reverse. The restrictions on equation I were rejected only once, at the ten per cent level, for the single-lag version. Similar results were also found using annual proportionate rates of change rather than levels of MSHIP, UDEN and RPCMIN.

However, we cannot necessarily rule out the possibility of some causal link from RPCMIN to MSHIP. When we repeated the above tests with current RPCMIN and/or real income per capita (RINCPC, the other independent variable used in Appendix 5) included as additional regressors along with the lagged variables, we rejected the null hypothesis for equation 1 in the single-lag version, although the null hypothesis of no causal link was still accepted with k greater than one. For equation 2, the restrictions were again rejected for all but the single-lag version.

What emerges from the above is that the relationship between MSHIP and RPCMIN appears to be dominated by a price-satisficing effect in the long run, with the level of membership and density influencing the level of real contributions, with a lag of two years or so. Whilst we cannot rule out a price-elasticity effect, this may be of a more short-term nature (as suggested by the disappearance of any "causation" with k greater than one). It seems that the long run elasticity estimates of Appendix 5 are likely to seriously over-state the true impact of contributions on membership.

DETAILS AND SOURCES OF DATA USED IN
THE TIME-SERIES ANALYSIS OF UNION CONTRIBUTIONS

This appendix discusses the data sources for the time-series analysis presented in Appendices 5 and 6. The analysis covers the period 1951 to 1988 inclusive.

The variables used were as follows:

1. Aggregate union membership (in 000's).

    Sources: 1951-71   Report of the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies, Part 4 (London: HMSO, annually).

    1975-88   Annual Report of the Certification Officer (London: Certification Office for Trade Unions And Employers' Associations).

2. Real per capita membership income (in £ 000's)

    This is calculated by dividing gross income from members by aggregate membership. The general index of retail prices is used to convert to 1985 prices. (The GDP deflator was also used, with no significant differences in the results).

    Sources: Gross membership income and aggregate union membership
    – as 1.

    General index of retail prices – Economic Trends Annual Supplement (London: CSO, 1991).

3. Real personal disposable income per head of population (in £ 000's).

Income (in £ millions) is deflated by the implied consumers expenditure deflator (1985=100), and divided by UK population (in 000's).

Sources: Income – Economic Trends Annual Supplement (London: CSO, 1991).

Population – Annual Abstract of Statistics (London: CSO, 1981 and 1991).

NOTE:

The Registrar of Friendly Society data for 1972 to 1974 inclusive is incomplete, due to the deregistration of unions during this period. We dealt with this by interpolating the membership and membership income series to derive values for the missing three years.

DETAILS AND SOURCES OF DATA USED IN THE
CROSS-SECTION ANALYSIS OF UNION CONTRIBUTIONS

This appendix discusses the data sources for the cross-section analysis presented in Chapter 7. Much of the data is taken from the TUC Annual Returns (1980 and 1985), and we begin with a discussion of this return.

The TUC has requested an annual return from affiliated unions since 1971. This was initiated following the passage of the Conservative government's 1971 Industrial Relations Act. TUC unions refused to register under the new Act, and so did not submit returns to the Registrar. The TUC has continued to request and publish returns even after the repeal of the Act, and the establishment of the Certification Office in 1976. The TUC returns thus provide an additional source to the latter.

TUC affiliates are not, of course, bound by statute to submit a return to the TUC (as they are to the Certification Office), but the response rate is generally good. In 1985, 78 per cent of affiliated unions submitted a return, covering 97 per cent of the affiliated membership.

The TUC allowed us access to returns for 1985, from which we extracted the following information for each union:

1.   Total membership as at 31 December.

2.   Female membership as at 31 December.

3.   Total income for the year to 31 December.

4. Total income from members (mainly comprises income from contributions but may also include smaller amounts from sales of diaries etc).

5. Total expenditure.

6. Total expenditure on members' welfare benefits (all benefits except for 7.)

7. Total expenditure on dispute benefits.

8. Remuneration and expenses of staff and officials.

9. Total assets at year end.

10. Weekly contribution rates. Unions were asked to record up to five different rates according to category of membership. Where given, these were recorded by us in full.

11. Number of members contributing at each of the above rates.

12. Whether each of the above rates has subsequently been increased, and if so by how much.

13. Whether or not each of the following services/benefits were provided to members during the specified year:

   (a)   Dispute benefit
   (b)   Unemployment benefit
   (c)   Sickness/accident benefit
   (d)   Permanent incapacity
   (e)   Superannuation (members, not officials or staff)

(f)   Death/funeral benefit.

(g)   Benevolent grants

(h)   Legal aid

(i)   Others (specified).

In addition to the above TUC annual return data, we collected the following data on each union:

1.   Whether or not the union had a political fund. (Source: Certification Officer – Annual Report , relevant years).

2.   The TUC Trade Group to which the union belongs (Source : TUC Annual Reports).

3.   The Standard Industrial Classification (SIC 2 digit) to which the union's primary job territory belongs. (This categorisation was inevitably subjective, particularly since many large unions have members in several industries. The categorisation was based on the classifications used in the Dept. of Employment's Directory of Employers' Association, Trade Unions, Joint Organisations & C. , HMSO).

4.   The density of union membership within the union's primary job territory, as defined under 3. above. This data comes from the 1984 Workplace Industrial Relations Survey, and relates to that year. (Source : Millward and Stevens (1988)).

5.   Whether the union organises a majority of public or private sector workers. (This was based on information provided in Eaton and Gill (1983)).

6.   Whether the union organises a majority of white collar or blue collar workers. (Source : Eaton and Gill (1983)).

7.   The average gross weekly earnings of male manual workers in the union's primary SIC (as identified under 3.), April 1985. (Source : New Earnings Survey, 1985).

CHOW TEST ON THE DIVISION OF THE CROSS-SECTION SAMPLE INTO BLUE- AND WHITE-COLLAR UNIONS

Separate equations were estimated for the two sub samples. The residual sum of squares of these equations were compared with that for the common equation reported in Table 7.5 using the formula:

$$F = \frac{(SR - S)/k}{S/(T_1 + T_2 - 2k)}$$

where:

SR = residual sum of squares of the common equation.

S = combined sum of squares from the two sub-sample equations.

K = number of parameters in the common equation.

$T_1 + T_2$ = total observations.

This gives a calculated F – value of 0.2815 for the PCMIN equation and 0.5068 for the MCR equation, both of which are less than the respective critical values (degrees of freedom 7 and 58, and 6 and 49 at 10% level) of 1.82 and 1.93. This leads us to accept the null hypothesis that the common equations are acceptable. Thus we reject the splitting of the sample.

CATEGORISATION OF UNIONS ACCORDING TO THE DEGREE OF ORGANISATION OF CORE JOB TERRITORIES

The analysis in Table 9.5 is based on the following, which categorises unions according to the level of density in their assumed "core job territories". We have identified core job territories from Eaton and Gill (1983), whilst union densities are from Millward and Stevens (1988). The aim here is not to determine the precise density in the unions' job territories, but simply to distinguish between those unions which have a significant core of members in highly-organised job territories and those which organise primarily in lower-density sectors. The distinction is thus more qualitative than quantitative.

TABLE A10.1: Union Density in Core Job Territories

Union	Core Job Territories		WIRS 1984 Density (%)
	SIC	Comments	
High Density			
AEU	31-37	Engineering/Manual	66 to 93
EETPU	–	General	58*
GMB	–	General	58*
NALGO	91	Public Admin/Non-Manual	80
NUPE	91/93/95	Public Sector/Manual	57 to 73
TGWU	–	General	58*
Low Density			
BIFU	81/82	Banking, etc/Non-Manual	45
UCATT	50	Construction/Manual	42
USDAW	61-65	Distribution	32 to 34

* Have assigned density level for *"all employees"* to these multi-industry unions.

SIC is Standard Industrial Classification (1980).

447

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