

A STUDY OF THE ROLE OF THE UNION STEWARD

A Thesis

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

The role of the union steward is important in the relationship between the union and the company: the steward is to the union what the foreman is to the factory. In theory stewards are the backbone of the union, the line of communication between the officers and members.

If a harmonious relationship does not exist between the union steward and management, any small grievance may become a major issue. The steward has as his major responsibility the handling of employee grievances, which may be through formal or informal lines of communication.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study to evaluate the role of the union steward in Beech Aircraft Corporation, Wichita, Kansas, and the Coleman Corporation, Wichita, Kansas, in order to (1) appraise the duties of the union steward, (2) analyze the role of the union steward in the grievance procedure, and (3) note the satisfactions he receives from his role of union steward.

Importance of the study. This study tried to develop some understanding of the duties and limitations

of the union steward. The role of the union steward has been emphasized by E. Ronald Fishman. "You, the steward, are a very important individual to both the union and the management. To the members you ARE the union."¹

Limitations of the study. This study is limited to interviews with the following companies and does not attempt to hypothesize any "norms" for the total industry. Manufacturing companies included were: Beech Aircraft Corporation, Wichita, Kansas, and the Coleman Corporation, Wichita, Kansas.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Union Steward. Throughout this study, the term "union steward," used synonymously with chapel steward and shop steward, shall be interpreted as meaning a union representative who carries out union duties in the plant, e.g., handles grievances, collects dues, and recruits new members. He is elected by union members in the plant or appointed by higher union officials. The shop steward continues to work at his regular job and handles union duties only on a part-time basis.

¹E. Ronald Fishman, The Steward's Bible (Hollydale, California: The Almark Company, 1961), p. 1.

Chief Steward. Throughout this study, the term "chief steward" shall be interpreted as meaning a union representative elected by his fellow workers to whom the union steward is responsible in union officialdom. There will be only one chief steward to a plant. The chief steward may be compensated by the company or the union for his services.

Grievance. Throughout this study, the term "grievance" shall be interpreted as meaning a statement of dissatisfaction, usually by an individual but sometimes by the union or management, concerning interpretation of a collective bargaining agreement or traditional work practices. The grievance machinery (i.e., the method of dealing with individual grievances) is nearly always spelled out in the union contract. If a grievance cannot be handled at the shop level (where most of them are settled), and the grievance arises out of an interpretation of the contract, it is usually resolved by arbitration.

Complaint. Throughout this study, the term "complaint" shall be interpreted as meaning a dissatisfaction of the employee in the initial stages. This dissatisfaction may become a grievance when put in writing and delivered to the foreman.

Business Agent. Throughout this study, the term "business agent" shall be interpreted as meaning a person employed by a local union to assist in negotiating agreements with the employer. The business agent is a full-time representative of the union and paid by the union.

III. PROCEDURE

For the purpose of this study, the interview technique was used. Owing to the various types of data collected, this method was most satisfactory and seemed to add more personal relationship through which to gather information from the individuals being questioned. Cooperation was obtained in this way when in some cases it would have been impossible otherwise.

The following procedures were used in completing this study:

1. An extensive review of published materials was made. This included library research over both periodical literature and studies already completed. This information provided a basis for the writing of this report.
2. Two major Kansas manufacturing companies were selected to be interviewed.
3. Tentative interview guides were prepared in order to maintain continuity in the collection of data.

4. The interview guides were administered to three professors at Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, and to two professional men. The guides were then analyzed and revisions made.

5. Interviews were given to union stewards and to foremen at Beech Aircraft Corporation in Wichita, Kansas, and the Coleman Corporation in Wichita, Kansas.

6. The data collected through personal interviews and the information from periodicals and books were summarized, analyzed, and interpreted.

7. Conclusions were reached on which recommendations could be based.

IV. PRESENTATION OF MATERIAL

The second chapter is a review of related literature pertaining to the role of the union steward. Chapter III is the summarization and interpretation of the data collected from interviews with union stewards and foremen at Beech Aircraft Corporation, Wichita, Kansas. Chapter IV is the summarization and interpretation of the data collected from interviews conducted at the Coleman Corporation, Wichita, Kansas. Chapter V is a summary of the data collected and any conclusions and recommendations that result from this study.

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CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The daily link between the local union and its membership is usually provided by the shop steward. The shop steward is considered to be the low man on the totem pole as far as union officialdom is concerned.¹ If a plant has large departments, usually one steward will serve each department.²

In some cases the workers in the plant as a whole elect a chief steward who represents the union in negotiations with higher plant officials. The shop steward is directly responsible to the chief steward.³

Generally, stewards are elected by the specific group of workers in the shop whose grievances they will have to handle. In some locals, the stewards are appointed by the local's officers or business agent.⁴ The union steward

¹Arthur D. Butler, Labor Economics and Institutions (New York: Macmillan Company, 1961), p. 117; John M. Pfiffner, The Supervision of Personnel (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1951), p. 81.

²Carrol R. Daugherty and John B. Parrish, The Labor Problems of American Society (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952), p. 269.

³Florence Peterson, American Labor Unions (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1945), p. 80.

⁴Abraham L. Gitlow, Labor Economics and Industrial Relations (Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1957), p. 107; Florence Peterson, American Labor Unions (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1945), p. 222-223.

is on the payroll of the employer and spends part of his time on union business. Union stewards are company employees while a business agent is a full-time representative of the union.⁵ The amount of time that the union steward may spend on union business will be outlined in the union contract.⁶

The Labor-Management Institute at the University of Connecticut says:

As representative of the union in your plant, you, the steward, are the key man in relationship of the union to management and the union to its members. Upon you depends, in large part, the success or failure of collective bargaining in your plant. Collective bargaining is a constant process and you, as steward, will be doing the day-to-day bargaining.

Without you, and others like you, even the best contract is meaningless. You give it life, you make it work. The wisest union leader, the most effective business agent cannot build the union, and make it function efficiently without your help. The union depends on you and your fellow stewards for future leadership. The men and women who will in the future represent labor in industry-wide conferences and at national policy-making conventions will come from the ranks of those who are today adjusting plant grievances and collecting union dues.

Management also depends on you for good industrial relations. Spokesmen for management have said many times that a union steward who performs successfully the responsibilities with which he is entrusted is an asset to the company as well as to the men he represents.

⁵Peterson, op. cit., p. 251.

⁶Pfiffner, op. cit., p. 364.

Do what you think is right. Be fair in your judgments and you will win the respect of all concerned.⁷

Authorities are not in agreement concerning the specific duties of the union steward. Black says there is some variation among unions in defining the responsibility of the union steward in the grievance procedure as well as his other duties, and many locals have a separate grievance committee.⁸

The duties of the union steward as outlined in The Steward's Bible are as follows:

Know the contract. Police the contract. Know your people personally. Enforce safety conditions. Serve on committees willingly. Create a good impression of the union. Support your leadership. Do not knock management unnecessarily. Never make "side agreements."⁹

The duties of the union steward may vary from one union to another, but in general they tend to cluster around some essential responsibilities. The union steward should be a negotiator, organizer, educator, and leader.

⁷John J. Glynn, The Union Steward and His Job (Connecticut: University Labor Management Institute, Bulletin No. 11), 1950, p. 11.

⁸Letter from F. E. Black to Martin Ward, Emporia, December 4, 1963. (In possession of the above mentioned recipient.)

⁹E. Ronald Fishman, The Steward's Bible (Hollydale, California: The Almark Company, 1961), p. 20.

As a negotiator the union steward's responsibilities are:

1. Settle grievances
2. Eliminate phony grievances
3. Enforce the contract
4. Check working conditions
5. Enforce labor legislation
6. Check time studies
7. Review merit ratings
8. Keep written records¹⁰

The union steward, as an organizer, is responsible for the maintenance of conditions in the shop favorable to the union,¹¹ and he is responsible for the organization of non-unionists in his department.¹² In the absence of a check-off arrangement, the union steward collects dues for the union.¹³

The union steward's duties as an educator are:

1. Keep members fully informed
2. Discuss and explain policies
3. Tell about union counselling

¹⁰Glynn, op. cit., p. 7.

¹¹Gitlow, op. cit., p. 107.

¹²Daugherty, op. cit., p. 298.

¹³Ibid.

4. Clarify trade-union objectives
5. Explain legislative program
6. Stress registering and voting
7. Interpret labor legislation
8. Tell economic "facts of life"¹⁴

The union steward is an integral and vital part of the local's machinery for handling member grievances against their employer.¹⁵ The steward may even be responsible for distributing monthly reports of the union.¹⁶

As a leader the union steward should:

1. Work for the group welfare
2. Fight for what is right
3. Act promptly and decisively
4. Establish friendly relations
5. Hold no grudges
6. Discourage factional bickering
7. Develop team-work
8. Lead instead of drive¹⁷

The main function of the union steward is to represent his constituents and bring their grievances to the attention

¹⁴Glynn, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁵Gitlow, op. cit., p. 107.

¹⁶Peterson, op. cit., p. 118.

¹⁷Glynn, op. cit., p. 10.

of the foreman. ". . . he can make or break the union-management relationship."¹⁸

The union steward and the foreman take part in daily collective bargaining as a continuation of the bargaining engaged in by the bargaining representatives during the contract negotiations.¹⁹

Disputes over the interpretation and application of the contract to a particular case are settled through the grievance procedure, which serves the judicial function within the system of industrial jurisprudence.²⁰ The great bulk of grievances tend to cluster around job evaluation or position and classification.²¹ Grievances may also result from inadvertently included inconsistencies or "blank spaces" in the agreement.²² "Many charges involving contract violations arise merely because union and management representatives do not agree on the meaning of a particular contract provision."²³ Many problems are

¹⁸Daugherty, op. cit., p. 298.

¹⁹Chester A. Morgan, Labor Economics (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, Inc., 1962), p. 215.

²⁰Butler, op. cit., p. 170.

²¹Pfiffner, op. cit., p. 364.

²²Dale Yoder, Manpower Economics and Labor Problems (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1950), p. 478.

²³Fred Witney, Government and Collective Bargaining (Chicago: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1951), p. 378.

related to class, allotment of overtime assignments, vacation periods, and assignment of shifts.²⁴

The essential characteristics of grievance procedures have as their basic objective the settling of alleged contract violations in a friendly and orderly manner.²⁵

Through the grievance procedure, the union participates in the settlement of alleged injustices on the job and protects workers from unjustified penalties by management.²⁶

Werne and Yoder describe the grievance procedure as being set into motion when an employee, feeling that he has been denied his rights under the contract, complains to his union steward. The shop steward, the foreman, and the employee discuss the grievance. The grievance may be settled at this point; if so, that ends the matter. If agreement is not reached at this stage, the process continues to the chief steward. If settlement is not reached, the grievance goes to union officials.²⁷

²⁴Priffner, op. cit., p. 368.

²⁵Witney, op. cit., p. 378.

²⁶Richard A. Lester, Labor and Industrial Relations (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), p. 163.

²⁷Benjamin Werne, The Law of Labor Relations (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), p. 300; Dale Yoder, Manpower Economics and Labor Problems (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc.), p. 478.

The stewards may exercise a substantial amount of authority in the settlement of grievances depending on the status of union-management relations in the plant. Or they may be caught in the middle of a feud between the workers and the foreman.²⁸

Even when the steward hesitates to negotiate directly with management, he wants to be consulted and informed. Many locals provide that stewards shall sit in on all formal conferences regarding grievances in their own department. Furthermore, many grievances are settled through informal discussion without the necessity of calling a formal meeting.²⁹

Officers often keep tight control over union stewards because they are fearful that the stewards may inadvertently establish a condition through their actions unfavorable to the union. Sayles and Strauss told of a case where a steward resigned after being censured by a local president for letting a supervisor take over a machine while the operator went to the rest-room. The steward claimed that since this technical violation of the contract actually helped the man there was no harm done. The officers feared

²⁸Butler, op. cit., p. 117.

²⁹Leonard R. Sayles and George Strauss, The Local Union: Its Place in the Industrial Plant (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 39.

that such actions would establish a precedent allowing management to take work away from union workers.³⁰

Phelps found, in general, that unions want their stewards to participate and to assume the deciding role in all the negotiations of employees with their supervisors because they feel that such day-to-day personal service increases loyalty to the union.³¹ Unions claim that by having all complaints channeled through the stewards there is more uniformity in decisions throughout the plant, and there is less likelihood of partiality or discrimination on the part of the foremen.³²

Sayles and Strauss argue that management usually prefers to have an aggrieved employee take his complaint directly to his foreman, maintaining that this procedure preserves a healthy personal relationship between workers and their foreman, that it is less time consuming, and that stewards tend to magnify troubles and make unimportant differences become "issues."³³

The flexible nature of the real grievances procedure (as distinct from that outlined in the contract) encourages

³⁰Sayles, op. cit., p. 38.

³¹Orme W. Phelps, Introduction to Labor Economics, 3rd Edition (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1961), p. 273.

³²Ibid.

³³Sayles, op. cit., p. 177.

a general tendency to "by-pass" the steward and deprive him of his position as the first-line bargaining agent. Not only is the steward by-passed in a formal sense, but in many cases he is not included in the mainstream of union intelligence. In addition to his being deprived of the opportunity to participate in the settlement of grievances concerning his own department, in many cases settlements are made entirely without his knowledge.³⁴

³⁴Ibid., pp. 41-42.

CHAPTER III

PRESENTATION OF DATA COLLECTED FROM INTERVIEWS WITH UNION STEWARDS AND FOREMEN AT BEECH AIRCRAFT CORPORATION IN WICHITA, KANSAS

I. UNION STEWARDS

This section is devoted to the presentation of information collected from interviews with eleven union stewards. The union stewards were chosen by the chief steward as a representative sample from the first shift at Beech Aircraft Corporation, Wichita, Kansas.

While the stewards were interviewed at Beech, it was necessary to have one member of management and one union representative present. These two men took no active part in the interview unless specifically questioned by the interviewer; the presence of these two men was necessary because of an union-management agreement. The interviews were held in the conference room at Beech Aircraft Corporation.

At the present time a contract is binding between the International Association of Machinists and Beech Aircraft Corporation. Details of the contract concerning the union steward are shown in the Appendix.¹

¹See Appendix, p. 62, Exhibit C.

Presentation of the material below is in the order of the questions asked. (A copy of the interview form is shown in the Appendix.²)

Complaints and Grievances Procedures

The steward's responses to the question "What steps do you take in the settlement of a complaint or grievance?" fell into six major categories: (1) Discussion of the grievance with the aggrieved employee. (2) Investigate the grievance to insure validity. (3) Speak to the crew chief and foreman about the grievance. (4) File the written grievance. (5) Contact the shop chairman if the written answer from the foreman is not satisfactory. (6) Go with the shop chairman, the aggrieved employee, and the foreman to the plant manager. All stewards replied that a grievance may be settled at any of these points and they tried to reach a settlement as soon as possible. Only one steward had carried a grievance to the plant manager. The stewards also indicated that they wished to be contacted by the employee when there was a potential grievance.

All stewards were not in complete agreement over the individual steps they would take. Some stewards omitted one point while others omitted another which will be evident from Table I.

²See Appendix, p. 60, Exhibit A.

TABLE I

RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION: "WHAT STEPS DO YOU TAKE
IN THE SETTLEMENT OF A COMPLAINT OR GRIEVANCE?"

Answers Given	Number of Responses
Discuss the grievance with the employee	2
Investigate the grievance to insure validity	6
Speak to the crew chief and foreman about the grievance	11
File the written grievance	10
Contact the shop chairman	3
Go to plant manager	5

The steps outlined by the union stewards were mentioned as follows: Two union stewards said that they would discuss the complaint with the employee to ascertain if the employee had a legitimate complaint; six union stewards said they would investigate the complaint more thoroughly to insure the validity of the complaint; all eleven stewards said that they would speak to the crew chief and the foreman about the complaint; ten union stewards replied that the next step in the settlement of a complaint was to file a written grievance; three union stewards mentioned that they would contact the shop chairman; and the last step mentioned by five stewards was to take the grievance to the plant manager. From these figures, it appears that the stewards were most concerned with discussing the complaint with the foreman and the crew chief. All but one steward mentioned that he would need to file a written grievance as part of the steps involved in the settlement of a complaint. This indicates that all union stewards were aware of the fact that they were to participate in the discussion of a grievance with the crew chief and foreman.

The steps outlined by the stewards were requested to be in logical sequence. It will be noted that all steps were not mentioned by each steward. This seemed to be due to the fact that many stewards had not had the opportunity to participate in many negotiations with management.

The next question was: "May you speak to anyone in management about a complaint or grievance, or are you restricted to your foreman?" One steward, or 9.090 per cent, replied with an "Unqualified Yes" to the question. Six stewards, or 54.545 per cent, replied with a "Qualified Yes"; and four stewards, or 36.363 per cent, replied "No." The responses are tabulated in Table II.

The reasons given for the "Qualified Yes" answers fell into three major categories: (1) Unrealistic foreman. (2) Channels of communication as outlined in the contract should be followed. (3) Personal qualifications of the steward.

In response to the next question "Do you normally participate in the formal settlement of a grievance?" all stewards replied that they do participate in the formal settlement of a grievance.

Seven stewards, or 63.636 per cent, replied that they could handle grievances or complaints outside their department and four stewards, or 36.363 per cent, replied that they could not handle grievances outside their departments in response to the question: "May you handle grievances or complaints outside your department?" Table III shows the responses to this question. It was interesting to note that the "Yes" answers were supported by qualifications which

TABLE II

RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION: "MAY YOU SPEAK TO ANYONE
IN MANAGEMENT ABOUT A COMPLAINT OR GRIEVANCE, OR
ARE YOU RESTRICTED TO YOUR FOREMAN?"

Answer Given	Number of Responses	Percentage
Unqualified Yes	1	9.090
Qualified Yes	6	54.545
No	4	36.363
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES	11	

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TABLE III

RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION: "MAY YOU HANDLE GRIEVANCES
 OR COMPLAINTS OUTSIDE YOUR DEPARTMENT?"

Answers Given	Number of Responses	Percentage
No	7	63.636
Yes	4	36.363
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES	11	

were: in the absence of another steward and only on a specific request from an aggrieved employee.

Compensation for Duties

All stewards replied to the question "What percentage of your weekly time may be spent on union business?" that they could spend as much time as was necessary. One steward replied that he could spend fifty per cent of his time on union business if it was necessary.

In response to the question "Who pays you for these hours?" nine stewards, or 81.818 per cent, replied that the company paid them; one steward, or 9.090 per cent, replied that the union did; and one steward, or 9.090 per cent said he did not know. Table IV is a presentation of the results.

Method of Securing Position

When the stewards were asked if they were elected or appointed, all stewards replied that they were elected by a simple majority. The union stewards also said that they could be removed from office by the members of their shop.

Value of Steward in His Opinion

The next question was: "Would employees be able to do justice to their complaints and grievances without you?"

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TABLE IV
RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION: "WHO
PAYS YOU FOR THESE HOURS?"

Answers Given	Number of Responses	Percentage
The Company	9	81.818
The Union	1	9.090
Doesn't Know	1	9.090
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES	11	

Most stewards did not think all employees would be able to do justice to their complaints or grievances without union stewards. Table V is a presentation of the answers received.

Six stewards, or 54.545 per cent, replied that they thought possibly an employee would be able to do justice to his or her complaint without him; four stewards, or 36.363 per cent, replied that employees would not be able to do justice to their complaints without a steward; and one steward, or 9.090 per cent, replied that he thought that his role was unnecessary.

Stewards giving an answer of "possibly" said that individual personalities of employees were involved. They said that some people would not mind going to their boss and discussing a problem with him while others would not want to speak directly with their foreman. One steward said he had all women in his shop and he did not think any of them would want to speak with their foreman without having him with them. Another steward replied that he thought "being a spokesman for the group" was the reason for his existence. He said that some people would not mind talking to their superior while others would rather have someone else do the talking for them.

From these responses, it appears that the union steward is vitally important in the relationship between some employees and management while other employees would

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discussing it

TABLE V

RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION: "WOULD EMPLOYEES BE ABLE TO DO JUSTICE TO THEIR COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES WITHOUT YOU?"

Answers Given	Number of Responses	Percentage
Possibly	6	54.545
No	4	36.363
Yes	1	9.090
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES	11	

444 121

The

be able to handle their own complaints. This feeling also seemed to be present in the discussion that followed each of the questions.

Other Duties

The responses to the next question "What are some of your other duties in addition to the handling of complaints and grievances?" fell into eight categories: (1) personal problems, (2) death benefits, (3) insurance, (4) safety, (5) interpretation of contract, (6) miscellaneous duties for the union, (7) disciplinary actions, and (8) miscellaneous. Table VI shows how many times each of these items were mentioned.

The following is an elaboration on the points mentioned by the stewards.

Personal problems. Personal problems of the employees were mentioned seven times. The stewards replied that they were called upon for advice on presidential candidates, marital problems, taxes, etc. The stewards said they felt they were merely a "sounding board" for any gripes that the employees had and by using the stewards as a "sounding board," employees were able to relieve some of their day-to-day tensions.

Death benefits. Death benefits were discussed by two stewards. The stewards said that they were responsible for

TABLE VI

RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION: "WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR
OTHER DUTIES IN ADDITION TO THE HANDLING OF
COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES?"

Answers Given	Number of Times Mentioned
Personal problems	7
Death benefits	2
Insurance	3
Safety	1
Interpretation of contract	4
Miscellaneous duties for union	8
Disciplinary actions	1
Miscellaneous	10

notifying the union in the case of a death so that the union may send flowers or a bible to the family.

Insurance. Insurance was mentioned by three union stewards. The stewards replied that they were responsible for discussing the insurance program with employees and giving the employees their advice.

Safety. The one steward mentioning safety stated that he is responsible for safety conditions in his shop. He also said that it was his duty to call safety violations to the attention of the foreman.

Interpretation of contract. Four stewards said they were responsible for the interpretation of the contract as well as seeing that the contract is carried out. Their responsibilities were to "police" the contract to make sure the employees and management were both functioning properly.

Miscellaneous duties for the union. Duties mentioned were: (1) attend union meetings, (2) work on elections, (3) account for union dues, and (4) responsibility for absentee ballots.

Disciplinary actions. The one steward mentioning disciplinary action said that the foreman would report to him when someone stepped out of line and he was supposed to take action. This he considered as part of his major function.

He said that by the foreman speaking to him unnecessary conflict between the foremen and employees would be eliminated.

Miscellaneous. Items mentioned of a miscellaneous nature were: (1) Set good example for everyone in the shop. (2) Promote goodwill. (3) Keep abreast of layoffs. (4) Keep abreast of information on retirements. (5) Keep bulletin board posted on seniority list. (6) Answer questions about vacations and holidays. (7) Responsibility in Christmas drive. (8) Responsibility for welfare of people in department.

It was interesting to note the number of times "personal problems" were mentioned by the union stewards. Each steward mentioning this stressed that he thought that this was one of his most important functions. By the employees being able to share their personal problems with someone, the stewards felt that many frustrations were eliminated that might at a later date cause the employees to step out of line with their foremen. They also suggested that management was aware of such discussions of a personal nature and had never censured them for such action.

Personal Relations with Immediate Supervisor

Only one steward replied that he did not think his personal relations with his supervisor were important to

effective functioning as a steward to the question "In order to function effectively as a steward, how important do you consider your personal relations with your immediate supervisor?" The other stewards related that they considered their relationship with their immediate superior to be very important.

Personal Satisfaction

When asked "What satisfaction do you derive from the role of union steward?" the most common answer was personal satisfaction from helping someone with a need. Other answers received were: (1) Stewards are shown respect. (2) Likes to talk to people. (3) Getting in contract what the steward deserves. (4) Gets to know supervision. (5) Gets to know everyone in the department. (6) Right is right; wrong is wrong. If the steward is right, this is satisfaction. (7) Keep abreast of what is going on. (8) Two stewards replied that they did not know what satisfactions they get from their role of union steward.

Management Relations with Stewards

All eleven stewards replied that they were satisfied with the relationship between management and themselves to the question: "Are you satisfied with the relationship between management and the union steward? If not, why not?" The stewards also volunteered that they had had a good

relationship in the past and they hoped that in the future the relationship would continue to be satisfactory.

II. FOREMEN

This section is devoted to the presentation of data collected from interviews with three foremen at Beech Aircraft Corporation in Wichita, Kansas. The interviews were conducted with the foremen in their respective offices with a member of the personnel department present.

Presentation of the material is in the order of the question asked. (A copy of the interview form is shown in the Appendix.³)

Complaints and Grievances Procedure

The first question asked was: "What procedures are used by the union steward in the settlement of complaints and grievances?" The answers received were in agreement; consequently, only the steps that are taken are here shown. First, the employee reports a grievance to his steward and a discussion is held to ensure validity of the complaint. Second, the steward and the employee talk with the foreman about the grievance. Third, if settlement has not been reached, the aggrieved employee reduces his complaint to writing and submits it to the foreman. Fourth,

³See Appendix, p. 61, Exhibit B.

if the foreman does not produce a satisfactory answer in writing, the chief steward is called in and the grievance travels to the general foreman. Fifth, if settlement is not reached, the grievance travels to the personnel office.

When asked "Is the union steward included in the formal settlement of a grievance?" two foremen replied that the steward would be included and one foreman said that he could not answer the question.

The next question was: "Are grievances or complaints ever settled with the foremen? Is this usual or unusual? What kind of complaints would be settled with the foreman?" All foremen replied that most grievances are settled with the foremen and that this procedure was quite common. Two types of complaints were noted that would probably travel beyond the foremen: (1) Physical deficiencies (people feel that they cannot do the job assigned to them by management), and (2) Job assignments (higher wages).

Three distinct answers were received to the question: "May the steward handle complaints or grievances outside his department?" Answers received were: (1) Officially he can. (2) He is not supposed to unless another steward is absent. (3) No. Only the chief steward has such a privilege.

Compensation for Duties

In response to the question "How many hours may the union steward spend on union business during a week?" all foremen replied that there was no limitation to their knowledge. One foreman volunteered that any time over four to five per cent would be excessive. All three foremen reported that Beech Aircraft Corporation pays the union steward for his duties in response to the question "Who pays the steward for these hours?"

The next question was: "May the union steward come to any level in management for discussion of a complaint or grievance, or is he restricted to discussing the complaint or grievance with the foreman?" All three foremen reported that the union steward should report the complaint to them first. They also replied that after the complaint had been reduced to writing (which is actually a grievance), they thought the union steward could speak to someone else if he so desired.

Effective Stewards

In response to the question "What makes an effective steward? What type of man?" the following answers were given. (1) An effective steward is a leader and should give a fair representation to the men in his shop. (2) The steward should be able to see both sides of the coin.

(3) The steward should be reasonable and have enough gumption to tell a man he does not have a complaint. (4) The steward should know the contract and be able to interpret it properly.

Improvement of Relationship

Answers to the question "How could the relationship between the foreman and the union steward be improved?" were: (1) Keep the steward informed of changes in operations. (2) Inform the steward of company policy that will effect the workers. (3) Establish and keep good lines of communication.

Vacancy in Steward's Position

All foremen replied that a vacancy in a steward's position was difficult to fill. One foreman said the tendency was to pass the job to someone else, because most people do not wish to have the responsibility. He said that it was just easier to let someone else do the dirty work. The foremen also mentioned that in their opinion not always the best men were elected. The employees would often vote for the man that would talk the loudest and longest, but not for the most conscientious man.

Election of a Steward

The foreman said that management does not have the right to reject the election of a particular steward as

long as he meets the requirements of one year of employment with Beech Aircraft Corporation prior to his election to the question "Does management have the right to reject the election of a particular steward?" The steward may be elected on company property as long as the foreman is notified before the election.

Seniority and Safety Committee

The next question was: "What part does seniority play in the eligibility of a steward and what happens to seniority after he is selected?" The foremen reported that seniority as such plays no active part in the election of a steward. Again they cited that the steward must have been employed by the company for more than one year. The foremen also reported that the steward is not automatically placed on the safety committee by virtue of his election to the question "Does the steward have any function on the safety committee?"

Management Relations with Stewards

All foremen replied that they were satisfied with the relationship between management and the union steward to the question: "Are you satisfied with the relationship between management and the union steward? If not, why not?" The foremen also said that they had had a good relationship

in the past and they hoped that in the future the relationship would continue to be satisfactory.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA COLLECTED FROM INTERVIEWS WITH
UNION STEWARDS¹ AND FOREMEN AT THE COLEMAN
COMPANY IN WICHITA, KANSAS

I. UNION STEWARDS

This section is devoted to the presentation of material collected from interviews with two union stewards at the Coleman Company in Wichita, Kansas. The first steward was interviewed in an office at the North Plant of the Coleman Company in Wichita. The second steward was interviewed at the headquarters of the United Mine Workers Union in Wichita. The request for the interview to be held at a different location was made by the steward. The steward informed the interviewer of his willingness to speak about his role, but he said that he would feel much more at ease if the interview were conducted elsewhere.

At the time the interviews were conducted, a contract between the employees' union and management was not in existence. Previous to this time a contract was held between the United Auto Workers Union and the Coleman

¹The title of this employee was "committeeman." For purposes of this study the employee will be referred to as a "union steward."

Company. The stewards were questioned to ascertain if this lack of contract had affected their role in any way, and they said that initially their role had stayed the same. Where questions are cited concerning the steps to be taken in the settlement of a complaint or grievance, the reader must bear in mind that these answers were given in the opinion of the steward without specific reference to a written contract.

Presentation of the data collected is in the order of the questions asked. (A copy of the interview form is shown in the Appendix.²)

Complaints and Grievances Procedure

The first question was: "What steps do you take in the settlement of a complaint or grievance?" The first steward replied that he would take these steps: (1) The employee would first discuss the complaint with the foreman before discussing the complaint with his steward. (2) If the employee cannot get a satisfactory answer from the foreman, he then contacts his steward for a discussion of the grievance. (3) The steward said he would then investigate the complaint thoroughly to ascertain if the employee had a legitimate complaint and then discuss the complaint with the foreman. (4) The steward said the next

²See Appendix, p. 60, Exhibit A.

step was the filing of the written grievance. The steward replied that he was responsible for filing the grievance rather than the employee filing the grievance himself. It was interesting to note that this procedure was different from the procedure found at Beech Aircraft Corporation where the employee files the grievance. After the grievance has been filed with the foreman, the steward would no longer participate in the settlement of the complaint.

Even though the steward is not included in the settlement of a complaint beyond the points mentioned above, he volunteered the following information. (5) The next step in the settlement of a grievance was to take the grievance to the factory manager. (6) The last step before arbitration was to take the grievance to the personnel director, shop chairman, and a member of the union lodge. (7) The final step was arbitration where an impartial third party renders a decision which is binding on both the union and the employer.

The second steward did not enlarge on the beginning steps as outlined by the first steward, but both stewards were in agreement over the exact grievance procedure, and that was three-fold: (1) The written grievance is filed with the foreman. (2) If the grievance is not settled at this point, the grievance travels to the factory manager and the shop chairman. (3) The third step is taking the

grievance to the personnel director, shop chairman, and a member of the union lodge.

The next question was: "May you speak to anyone in management about a complaint or grievance, or are you restricted to your foreman?" Both stewards replied that they should discuss the complaint with their foreman first, but the stewards felt after this initial discussion, they would be able to speak to someone else in management. The stewards replied that they normally tried to follow the accepted procedure, but if they found that it was necessary to do otherwise, they would not be hesitant about doing so.

The following question was: "Do you normally participate in the formal settlement of a grievance?" The stewards replied that they would not. Both stewards stated that if management or the union requested their presence, they would participate, but otherwise they were not included.

Both stewards replied to the question "May you handle grievances or complaints outside your department?" that they were able to handle grievances or complaints only in their own department. When questioned about a procedure in case of the absence of a union steward, the stewards replied that an alternate steward was present in each shop.

Compensation for Duties

The stewards answered the question "What percentage of your weekly time may be spent on union business?" that

four hours was the maximum time that the Coleman Company would pay for union duties. If a steward were to work more than his allotted time on union business during the week, he would receive his remuneration from his union. The stewards volunteered that the chief steward could spend twenty hours a week on union business and any time over this would be compensated by the union. Agreement was found in these responses; so the following question was eliminated.

One steward interviewed expressed his opinion on the chief steward being limited to twenty hours per week. He said he believed the company felt that if they were to allow the chief steward more time, this would only tend to magnify troubles. The steward expressed an opinion that he did not consider twenty hours a week sufficient time for the chief steward to spend on union business.

Method of Securing Position

Both stewards replied that they were elected by a simple majority in their respective zones to the question "Were you elected or appointed to your position? If you were appointed, who appointed you?"

Value of Steward in His Opinion

The union stewards expressed that they did not think employees would be able to do justice to their own complaints or grievances to the question "Would employees be able to

do justice to their complaints or grievances without you?" One steward replied that he did not think any state in the United States would have been able to accomplish much during World War II. This he likened to an employee trying to settle his own complaints or grievances. They were asked if they thought some employees might be just as effective as a steward. To this they also replied that they considered their role to be of the utmost importance. From these statements, it appears that the union steward is vitally important in the relationship between management and the employees.

Other Duties

Responses to the question "What are some of your other duties in addition to the handling of complaints and grievances?" were centered around contract violations and interpretation. The stewards replied that their duty was to "police" a contract and call any violations of the contract to the attention of the foremen. If the employees were violating the contract, the stewards should censure the employees for such action.

Personal Relations with Immediate Supervisor

The next question was: "In order to function effectively as a steward, how important do you consider your personal relationship with your immediate supervisor?" The first steward considered his personal relationship very

important with his supervisor. The first steward said that he always tried to maintain a good relationship so that he would feel free to discuss any problems with his foreman. The second steward voiced that he tried to always stay on speaking terms with his foreman, but that he did not consider a good relationship very important.

Personal Satisfaction

In response to the question "What satisfaction do you derive from the role of union steward?" the first steward interviewed said that in his opinion the most satisfaction came from keeping individual personalities out of the relationship between management and the employees. The steward also said he received much personal satisfaction from giving protection to employees that they would not be able to give themselves. The second steward replied that his greatest satisfaction came from keeping the company in line.

Management Relations with Stewards

The next question was: "Are you satisfied with the relationship between management and the union steward? If not, why not?" The two union stewards answered the question with a definite "Yes."

II. FOREMEN

This section is devoted to the presentation of data collected from interviews with two foremen at the Coleman Company, Wichita, Kansas. The interviews were conducted with the foremen in their respective offices.

Presentation of the material is in the order of the questions asked. (A copy of the interview form is shown in the Appendix.³)

Complaints and Grievances Procedure

The first question asked was: "What procedures are used by the union steward in the settlement of complaints and grievances?" The first foreman interviewed replied giving the following steps: (1) The employee presents his or her complaint to his foreman and a discussion of the complaint is held. (2) If the foreman and the employee cannot reach a satisfactory agreement, the employee contacts his union steward. (3) The union steward takes the complaint and tries to collect all of the pertinent facts before coming to the foreman. (4) The union steward writes a formal grievance and presents this to the foreman. When the grievance is reduced to writing and presented to the foreman, this is the initial step in the grievance procedure.

³See Appendix, p. 61, Exhibit B.

(5) If the foreman does not produce a satisfactory answer within three days, the grievance may be appealed to the factory manager. (6) If settlement cannot be reached at the above stage the grievance travels to the personnel office. (7) The final resort would be arbitration.

The second foreman interviewed said he was not acquainted with the first steps the employee would take. He said the only procedure he was aware of was the actual grievance procedure.

The next question was: "Is the union steward included in the formal settlement of a grievance?" Both foremen replied that the union steward was not included unless specifically requested to attend a meeting by management or by the union.

In response to the question "Are grievances or complaints ever settled with the foremen? Is this usual or unusual? What kind of complaints would be settled with the foreman?" both foremen replied that nearly all complaints are settled with them. They cited that labor standards would probably be the type that would go beyond them.

To the next question "May the steward handle complaints or grievances outside his department?" both foremen replied that the union steward was restricted to his zone. Even though the wording of the question included "department,"

zone was interpreted as meaning the steward is restricted to a specific group of workers.

The foremen replied to the question "May the union steward come to any level in management for discussion of a complaint or grievance, or is he restricted to discussing the complaint or grievance with the foreman?" that the steward was expected to discuss the complaint or grievance with the foreman first. They also said that they thought only the chief steward would be able to go to any level in management for discussion of a complaint.

Compensation for Duties

In response to the question "How many hours may the union steward spend on union business during a week?" the first foreman replied five hours and the second foreman replied four hours. These foremen replied that the Coleman Company pays the union steward for these hours and any time over this would be paid by the union.

Effective Stewards

Responses to the question "What makes an effective steward? What type of man?" were as follows: (1) A well educated man. (2) A mentally alert individual. (3) A man that can tell an employee when he does not have a legitimate complaint. (4) A man that can see all the facts. (5) An honest man.

Improvement of Relationship

Answers to the question "How could the relationship between the foreman and the union steward be improved?" were: (1) Both the foreman and the union steward should deal fairly with each other. (2) The employees should be most careful of the steward they elect. The employees do not always elect the right man for the job.

Vacancy in Steward's Position

Neither foreman had any comment on the question "Is a vacancy in a steward's position easy to fill?"

Election of a Steward

There were two distinct answers to the question "Does management have the right to reject the election of a particular steward?" The first foreman said "No" and the second foreman replied "I don't know."

Seniority and Safety Committee

The foremen reported to the question "What part does seniority play in the eligibility of a steward and what happens to seniority after he is elected?" that the steward must be employed by the Coleman Company one year before his election. To the latter part of the question, the foremen said that after being elected a steward, the employee would receive super-seniority; that is, he would be the last man to be laid-off in a particular shop.

The foremen reported that the union steward has no function on the safety committee unless appointed to this position.

Management Relations with Stewards

The last question was: "Are you satisfied with the relationship between management and the union steward? If not, why not?" The first foreman interviewed replied that he thought the relationship was quite satisfactory and he said he tried to keep a good relationship between the steward and himself. The second foreman replied that it was not important to have a good relationship as long as management's rules were followed.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. SUMMARY

It was the purpose of this study to appraise the duties of the union steward, analyze the role of the union steward in the grievance procedure, and note the satisfactions he receives from his role as union steward. The basis of this study was a review of related literature and interviews conducted at Beech Aircraft Corporation, Wichita, Kansas, and the Coleman Company, Wichita, Kansas, with union stewards and foremen.

The union steward is an employee whose function it is to represent his fellow workers in negotiations with management. He may be elected by the workers in his shop or appointed by the union. All union stewards interviewed were elected by their fellow workers. The amount of time a union steward may spend on union business will be determined in the contract. The stewards at Beech Aircraft Corporation replied that they had unlimited time while the union stewards at the Coleman Company were limited to four hours a week.

The role of the union steward in the grievance procedure will also vary from one company to another depending on the contract. Even so, the union steward

still has as his major function that of representing the employees before management. The stewards interviewed entered the settlement picture at different points, but they were always concerned with representing the aggrieved employee. It was found at Beech Aircraft Corporation that the union steward was included in the formal settlement of a grievance while the union steward at the Coleman Company was not so included. It was also found that most complaints in both companies are settled with the foremen.

It was found that the union stewards interviewed were restricted to representing the employees in their shop, except that at Beech Aircraft Corporation where the employee was able to enter another shop in the absence of a steward or on a specific request from an aggrieved employee.

The union stewards at Beech Aircraft Corporation were divided in opinion whether or not an employee would be able to do justice to his complaint or grievance without stewards. The union stewards at the Coleman Company felt that they were absolutely necessary and that without them employees would not be able to handle their own complaints. The stewards thought that personality was the most important factor in considering whether an employee would be able to handle his own complaint.

Other duties mentioned by the stewards that would be performed in addition to the handling of grievances were:

(1) Personal problems. (2) Death benefits. (3) Insurance. (4) Safety in the shop. (5) Interpretation of the contract. (6) Miscellaneous duties for the union. (7) "Policing" the contract. The most consistent answer was personal problems. Most stewards thought that being a "sounding board" for the employees was their most important duty.

Personal satisfactions that the stewards derived from their role of union steward ranged from enjoyment of the respect shown to a steward to keeping management in line. All the stewards and the foremen interviewed were satisfied with the relationship between management and the union steward.

The foremen thought that an effective steward is a man who (1) can see all the facts, (2) knows the contract, (3) is a mentally alert individual, and (4) is a leader.

Improvement of relationship would be centered around keeping the steward informed of changes in company policy which will affect the employees. Establishing good lines of communication between the union steward and the foremen were also mentioned. The foremen seemed to be more cognizant of the need for a good relationship between themselves and the union stewards than did the union stewards.

Even though the foremen were hesitant about the question concerning a vacancy in a steward's position, all foremen interviewed expressed the need for careful selection.

It was also found that the foremen do not have any right to participate in the selection of a particular steward.

A difference was found between the Beech Aircraft Corporation and the Coleman Company in the seniority position of the union steward after he is elected. No advance in seniority took place at Beech Aircraft Corporation, while at the Coleman Company the steward was given super-seniority. It was also found that the election of a union steward does not automatically place him on the safety committee in either company.

II. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions from this study are as follows:

1. All stewards are not completely aware of the contract. This is evident from responses given to the questions.
2. All foremen are not aware of all the duties of the union steward. Some lack of specific information concerning the contract was also evident.
3. A lack of a complete informal understanding of the duties of the union steward was evident from the fact that some of the foremen were not aware of the initial steps an employee would take in the settlement of a complaint.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that forums dealing with the union steward be held between management and the union. These could be conducted where the union informed the steward of his responsibility one night and the management of a company could hold the forum with the stewards the next night explaining their position. The specific duties of the union steward should be outlined so that both the foremen and the union stewards will have a better understanding of the position of the union steward.

By having both the union and management preside at one of these meetings, a clear-cut explanation of the interpretation of the contract could be made. The petty semantic disputes could be eliminated at this point.

In conclusion, it is hoped that this study has brought new understanding of and about the union steward from which better union-management relationships may be derived.

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APPENDIX

EXHIBIT A

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR UNION STEWARDS

1. What steps do you take in the settlement of a complaint or grievance?
2. May you speak to anyone in management about a complaint or grievance, or are you restricted to your foreman?
3. Do you normally participate in the formal settlement of a grievance?
4. May you handle grievances or complaints outside your department?
5. What percentage of your weekly time may be spent on union business?
6. Who pays you for these hours?
7. Were you elected or appointed to your position? If you were appointed, who appointed you?
8. Would employees be able to do justice to their complaints and grievances without you?
9. What are some of your other duties in addition to the handling of complaints and grievances?
10. In order to function effectively as a steward, how important do you consider your personal relations with your immediate supervisor?
11. What satisfaction do you derive from the role of union steward?
12. Are you satisfied with the relationship between management and the union steward? If not, why not?

EXHIBIT B

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MANAGEMENT

1. What procedures are used by the union steward in the settlement of complaints and grievances?
2. Is the union steward included in the formal settlement of a grievance?
3. Are grievances or complaints ever settled with the foremen? Is this usual or unusual? What kind of complaints would be settled with the foremen?
4. May the steward handle complaints or grievances outside his department?
5. May the union steward come to any level in management for discussion of a grievance, or is he restricted to discussing the grievance with the foreman?
6. How many hours may the union steward spend on union business during a week?
7. Who pays the steward for these hours?
8. What makes an effective steward? What type of man?
9. How could the relationship between the foreman and the union steward be improved?
10. Is a vacancy in a steward's position easy to fill?
11. Does management have the right to reject the election of a particular steward?
12. What part does seniority play in the eligibility of a steward and what happens to seniority after he is selected?
13. Does the steward have any function on the safety committee?
14. Are you satisfied with the relationship between management and the union steward? If not, why not?

EXHIBIT C

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE BEECH AIRCRAFT CORPORATION
AND THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MACHINISTS
Effective July 1, 1963

ARTICLE IV
UNION STEWARDS

(a) The employees may select a committee of employees with one (1) year or more seniority, who shall be designated as stewards to represent the employees of each department and shift covered by this agreement. A shop chairman may be selected from the stewards for each shift.

(b) In the event that an election of either shop chairman or steward is to be made on Company property, the foreman or proper supervisory head of the department concerned shall be notified in writing at least forty-eight (48) hours prior to said election.

(c) The Union agrees to use discretion in the number of stewards so selected, and in no event will the number of the stewards exceed the number of supervisory personnel in charge of a shift or department.

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ARTICLE VI
GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

(1) An employee having a grievance regarding wages, hours or working conditions may present his or her grievance to the supervision of the department on the shift to which the employee is assigned, or to the steward of the department on the shift to which the employee is assigned. In either case, if the grievance is not answered satisfactorily within three (3) days, then the employee may present the grievance in writing to the departmental steward for further handling.

(2) The departmental steward will proceed to handle the grievance with the supervisory personnel, presenting a written copy of the grievance to whomever may be in charge of the department concerned for their permanent records. Upon failure to reach a mutual or satisfactory settlement within three working days, the matter will be referred to the shop chairman of the shift to which the employee is assigned.

(3) To contact the shop chairman or make investigation on business pertaining to the operation of the department or the plant, the Departmental Steward upon request, shall be granted permission to leave his department by the foreman, supervisor, or specifically authorized supervisory personnel of the department in which the employee is assigned.

(4) The shop chairman and the steward will proceed to handle the grievance with the supervision of the department concerned. If this again results in failure to reach a mutual or satisfactory settlement within three working days, the shop chairman and the steward shall proceed to the person in charge of the shift involved.

(5) If satisfactory settlement is not reached in Step No. (4) above, the shop chairman and steward may appeal the case to the general foreman or department head of the department concerned.

(6) The business agent may at any time enter into any stage of the Grievance Procedure.

(7) In the event it is necessary to carry a grievance beyond this point, the decision may be appealed to the President of the Company or his duly chosen representative.

(8) In the event the settlement of the grievance involved would determine whether or not the employee would continue to be actively employed, laid off, or discharged, such grievances, upon request by the Company or the Union, may be referred to arbitration as hereinafter provided: Such requests must be made within three days from the date of decision in Step (7).

(9) Board of Arbitration--The Board of Arbitration shall consist of one representative to be chosen by the Company, one to be chosen by the Union, and these two shall

select a third member who will be Chairman of the Board. The Board shall meet within five (5) days and render their decision within three (3) days after hearing the grievance. The majority decision of the Board shall be final and binding upon both parties. The expense of a third member shall be shared equally by the Company and the Union.

The Board of Arbitration shall not have the jurisdiction or power to arbitrate provisions of a new agreement or to arbitrate away, in whole or in part, any provision of this agreement; nor shall it have the power to add to, delete from, or modify any of the provisions of this agreement.

(10) In the event an employee handles his complaint or grievance direct with the supervision, and his grievance is not of a routine nature and pertains to provisions in the Union Agreement, it shall be the Company's responsibility to notify the Union of the action taken.