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Collective Bargaining Amidst Education Reform

Abstract

[Excerpt] It is increasingly clear that the prospects for educational reform in America and the future of collective bargaining in public education are closely intertwined and becoming more so. The authors of this paper attempt to provide a framework for understanding both sets of developments and their interrelationships. Tracing the evolution of the current reform movement, then discussing the origins of the present system of bargaining in public education, we argue that reformers and bargainers alike are beginning to grapple with the same realities: new issues and new kinds of power that are inherent in the changing labor and product markets, work processes and management system of public education itself.

Keywords

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Comments

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COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AMIDST EDUCATION REFORM

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INTRODUCTION

It is increasingly clear that the prospects for educational reform in America and the future of collective bargaining in public education are closely intertwined and becoming more so. The authors of this paper attempt to provide a framework for understanding both sets of developments and their interrelationships. Tracing the evolution of the current reform movement, then discussing the origins of the present system of bargaining in public education, we argue that reformers and bargainers alike are beginning to grapple with the same realities: new issues and new kinds of power that are inherent in the changing labor and product markets, work processes and management system of public education itself.

As we will note, the present system of collective bargaining in public education was patterned largely after the top-down management ideology that was ascendant in education when teacher unions first won recognition. The basic dilemma for school managers and teacher unions alike is that there has never been anything but an imperfect match between that management ideology and the basic work processes and public expectations in most school systems. Frustration with this dilemma is one of the factors that has prompted teacher unions to abandon the reactive approach that industrial unions have, typically followed and prompted them to join, as active participants, the debate over how school systems should be managed.¹

WAVES OF REFORM

When Terrell Bell came to Washington in 1981 to become Ronald Reagan's first Secretary of Education, he expected to stay just long enough to fulfill one of President Reagan's campaign pledges: the dismantling of the Department of Education. But complaints were mounting about the quality of education in this country, and these complaints captured Secretary Bell's full attention. In short order Bell formulated a proposal to establish a National Commission on Excellence in Education, obtained the President's support for his proposal, and proceeded to appoint the members of the commission.

The result of the commission's work, of course, was the now famous report, *A Nation at Risk*, published in April, 1983. In the most frequently quoted passage in the report, the commission said, "The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war" (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983). The commission documented many signs of mediocre performance, such as declining scores on standardized tests, persistently high dropout rates, and a growing level of functional illiteracy.

On the basis of its findings, the commission then made recommendations: reforming curricula (more English, math, and science), lengthening the school day (to seven hours) and the school year (to at least 200 days), relying more on standardized tests, improving student discipline policies, and raising college admissions standards. Its recommendations on teachers' pay proved to be especially controversial. It advocated not only substantially increasing teacher

salaries, but abandoning the traditional teacher salary schedule in favor of a system of merit pay, and developing career ladders and master teacher plans.

The publication of *A Nation at Risk* inaugurated what has been called the "first wave" of the education reform movement. Its initial theme was a return to traditional values in the classroom. In part it was a reaction to the reforms of the 1960s. Then, reform efforts had stressed values such as relevance, equity, and choice. Reformers of that period wanted to use the schools to promote equal opportunity and social welfare. But in the 1980s, new concerns with economic competitiveness and worker productivity-caught the attention of education reformers. *A Nation at Risk* focused reform efforts on making standards tougher and more uniform, testing teachers and students, and paying teachers according to merit. In the 1980s, we began to stress sound training in the "three Rs" rather than "relevance," excellence rather than equity, and selectivity rather than equal access. Our concerns with the competitiveness and productivity of the economy overwhelmed our concerns with equal opportunity and social welfare.

The first wave of education reform in the 1980s was thus a movement that emphasized conservative values. When William Bennett succeeded Bell as Secretary of Education, the conservative reformers found a new and effective spokesperson, who added a new theme to the debate. Bennett insisted that the country was already spending enough money on public education-over \$300 billion. He maintained that we ought to be able to improve the quality of education in this country without spending an extra dime. The key, in Bennett's view, was

accountability. Accountability became the central theme sounded by the Reagan administration and its conservative allies (see Olson 1987, pp. 1, 16).

But conservatives have not been the only ones calling for reform. The education reform movement of the last decade was-and is-a complex and multidimensional movement characterized by different, sometimes conflicting, values and themes. What has been characterized as a "second wave" of reform was launched by the 1986 publication of *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* by the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy (1986). The principal theme enunciated by the Carnegie report was the need to transform teaching "from an occupation into a profession." To achieve this objective, *A Nation Prepared* offered numerous recommendations: abolish the bachelor's degree in education and require future teachers to major in one of the traditional disciplines, create a new Master's degree in teaching based on internships and residencies, restructure teaching staffs by creating new teaching positions (lead teachers, managing teachers), provide teachers with more support staff (paraprofessionals, interns, residents, people on loan from corporations, volunteers, etc.) and increase the pay of top teachers by 50 to 100 percent.

A Nation Prepared held that members of the new category of "lead teachers" should be chosen from experienced and highly regarded teachers in a school. These lead teachers would continue to teach but would also undertake a variety of other tasks such as the supervision of new teachers and the design of new curricula. Lead teachers and managing teachers, in the view of the Carnegie report, should manage the academic side of the schools while principals would have the scope of their responsibilities sharply reduced.

A Nation Prepared also called for the creation of a National Certification Board, which was to be charged with setting standards for the profession as well as preparing and administering a national certifying exam for teachers comparable to the bar exam for lawyers. The Carnegie report recommended that a majority of the proposed board's members be drawn from the nation's outstanding teachers. Subsequently, in May 1987, the Carnegie Foundation did create the National Teacher Certification Board, headed by former Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. of North Carolina. A majority of the members of the board are teachers.

From the outset of these reform debates, the nation's teacher unions have played an important and increasingly proactive role. The National Education Association, with over two million members, and the American Federation of Teachers, with roughly three-quarters of a million, were initially cast in the role of opposing reform (although the AFT managed to deflect most of the criticism onto its larger rival.) The NEA was already poised to challenge the Reagan Administration's efforts to eliminate the new Department of Education, created during the Carter administration with strong NEA support (and over AFT objections). When *A Nation at Risk* was then published, the President focused on its merit pay recommendations and their anticipated contribution to ridding the nation's schools of incompetent teachers. In a commencement address at Seton Hall University, delivered in May 1983, he declared, "Teachers should be paid and promoted on the basis of merit Hard earned tax dollars should encourage the best. They have no business rewarding incompetence and mediocrity" (Reagan 1983). The President's focus on incompetent teachers and Secretary Bennett's subsequent argument that significant reforms could be accomplished without new

expenditures provoked a strong reaction from the National Education Association and, to a lesser degree, from the American Federation of Teachers.

But the leaders of both unions were astute enough to recognize that dissatisfaction with the quality of public education offered them opportunities to win new public support for education and more influence for their organizations and their members, provided that the terms of the debate could be redefined. It is not surprising, then, that the NEA's president, Mary Hatwood Futrell, and the AFT's Albert Shanker were both active members of the Carnegie Task Force that initiated the "second wave" of reform. Shanker warmly endorsed the recommendations contained in *A Nation Prepared*, saying, "This report deserves full support. It promises to turn teaching into a full profession, make major structural changes in schools, and take giant steps in the improvement of learning" (Shanker 1986). Futrell endorsed many of the report's ideas "wholeheartedly," but expressed reservations about others. She applauded its call for higher teacher salaries and greater teacher involvement in educational decision-making, but had "deep reservations about some of the report's conclusions and recommendations because they are inconsistent with what my many years of experience in the classroom and as an NEA leader tell me will help students learn." She expressed particular concern about the lead teacher concept because "it suggests that some teachers are more equal than others" and "it is not adequately differentiated from the flawed merit pay and job ladder plans" (Futrell 1986).

Despite Futrell's lukewarm support, the Carnegie report was viewed by many as strongly pro-teacher. Some critics have complained that principals, superintendents, and school board members have played only a limited role in the Carnegie reform efforts. Others have gone

farther and have charged that implementation of the Carnegie recommendations would be tantamount to turning over control of the schools to the teachers. And in the view of some critics, this meant ceding control of the schools to the teacher unions. In 1987, for example, Gabler (1987), President of the American Association of School Administrators, labelled the new certification board "an attempted takeover of American schools by the teacher unions." At the same time, the National School Boards Association appeared prepared to challenge the NEA and AFT directly for the control of the schools. In April 1987, the NSBA set up a task force to study "alternatives to collective bargaining in public education." Thomas Shannon, President of the NSBA, said, "Collective bargaining is a massive stumbling block to change. You can't have collegial relations in an adversarial setting." He suggested that the NSBA might be prepared to try to phase out collective bargaining in education (Mitgang 1990).

But employers, too, have taken different positions with respect to the roles of collective bargaining and teacher unions in educational reform. While the national leaders of different unions and associations spar with one another, many state and local leaders have proceeded to forge new arrangements, using state legislation and local collective bargaining agreements to redefine the roles that teachers play, both individually and collectively, in the management of school systems. Collective bargaining is increasingly-but by no means, universally-being recognized as a vehicle for reform itself (Kerchner and Mitchell 1986; Johnson 1987; McDonnell and Pascal 1988). The very meaning of collective bargaining is changing as a consequence.

THE ORIGINS OF EDUCATION BARGAINING

To understand where collective bargaining in public education may be headed, we must understand where it came from. Except for restrictions on the right to strike and the substitution of various third-party impasse procedures, most of the features of collective bargaining in public education were borrowed from the private sector: district-wide bargaining units; the periodic negotiation of comprehensive agreements that last for fixed periods of time; legal restrictions that limit bargaining to so-called "bread-and-butter" issues and that require the parties to negotiate "in good faith"; multi-step grievance procedures for the resolution of disagreements that may arise during the life of an agreement; and the use of binding arbitration to resolve such mid-contract disputes, if the parties are unable to resolve them on their own.

Why did education bargainers embrace a set of arrangements derived from the private sector? The simplest answer is that neither teachers, nor administrators, nor those "experts" who helped design the first public sector bargaining laws may have recognized that they had any alternative. The features of "traditional bargaining" had become so embedded in people's minds as "the way collective bargaining is conducted" that it didn't occur to many people that a different system might be feasible.

These features were-and still are-so common in the private sector today that it was easy to forget that most of them were less than half a century old when they were transplanted into public education. In fact, they were invented specifically for labor-management relations in

America's burgeoning factories, and at the time they were developed represented sharp departures from an even earlier form of collective bargaining.

Craft unionism, which was the "traditional" form of unionism until the 1930s, was based on principles that were fundamentally inconsistent with the factory system. It was based on the principles: (1) that workers had to be members of a union before they could be hired, (2) that it was the union's responsibility to train workers and to certify when they were ready to be employed, (3) that foremen or immediate supervisors had to be members of the union and subject to union discipline, and (4) that the union would control the work process through its unilateral specification of work rules. All four of these principles were fundamentally incompatible with the unskilled labor markets, standardized mass product markets, machine technologies and hierarchical managerial systems on which factory systems were based. With hindsight, it is clear that these principles had to be abandoned for unions to make inroads into the industrial sector of the economy.

And that is exactly what happened. The workers in smokestack industries abandoned the notion that a "real" union must control hiring, training, immediate supervision and the work process itself, and acknowledged that control of such processes was the prerogative of management. Workers got somewhat higher wages, more job security, and increasingly detailed agreements, with substantive and procedural protections against favoritism and arbitrary exercise of management authority. Management, in turn, got a more stable workforce, prepared to accept its directions. The higher wages and benefit packages linked contractually to fixed job descriptions, job ladders and seniority had the effect of lowering quit

rates and tying workers with specialized skills to the employer, in what one scholar called a new "industrial feudalism" (Ross 1958; Block 1978). Seniority clauses governing reassignments, promotions and layoffs all protected more experienced workers from the threat of competition from junior workers, thus eliminating an obstacle to the informal sharing of job knowledge among workers (Thurow 1975). Layoff and recall procedures provided employers with a way of temporarily reducing employment during slack periods, without permanently losing the knowledge and skills of the workers who were laid off (Medoff 1979).

The union's formal acknowledgement of management authority was embodied in several provisions of the parties' negotiated contract. The discipline procedures in industrial union contracts established the principle that a worker's basic obligation to his or her employer was obedience: insubordination (not incompetence) was the primary grounds for discipline and/ or dismissal. The grievance procedures in such contracts provided top management with information about shop-floor problems and first-line supervisory behavior that top managers would never have gotten through their own management hierarchies.

The linchpin in these arrangements was contained in the arbitration procedures of the parties' negotiated agreements, in the often-overlooked provision that specified that the terms of their agreement would remain in place for a fixed period of time, and in the union's promise not to call strikes during the life of the agreement. Together, these provisions helped establish the central principle of labor-management relations in the industrial setting, namely, that it is "management's right to manage" and that any rights employers have not given up, either by express contract language or by mutually acknowledged past practice, remain rights which

employers are free to exercise as they see fit for the duration of the agreement (Elkouri and Elkouri 1976).

The structure of this deal reflected the strategic relationship between laborer and employer in factories. Industrial unions took advantage of the fact that the effective operation of factory systems depended upon the willingness of workers to voluntarily accept orders from their supervisors. The systems were simply too complex (and their dependence upon large numbers of workers was too great) to pretend that obedience could be coerced from each individual, especially if workers were prepared to act collectively in the face of such coercion. The benefits and guarantees which soon began to fill industrial union contracts were the price an employer had to pay to secure the necessary obedience.

The structural arrangements that provided the starting points for collective bargaining in public education in the 1960s, then, were features that originally had been developed to reflect the types of markets, technologies and management systems of America's mass production industries. We make no claims to have made an exhaustive historical analysis, but there are reasons to believe that the policy makers and bargainers who launched education bargaining did not simply overlook that fact, but actually may have found the factory parallel attractive. It was natural for teacher unions to adopt factory union strategies in the 1960s, because the administrators and school board members whom they faced insisted on acting like factory managers. Indeed, one of the basic reasons so many teachers chose to join unions was that the prevailing logic of education management was itself patterned on the industrial model (Callahan 1962; Cole 1969).

School boards and administrators have had an on-again, off-again love affair with industrial management models for most of this century, from the first two decades, when school reformers used "scientific management" principles to give the new discipline of educational administration a body of supposed expertise (Callahan 1962), to the late 1950s, when post-Sputnik reformers issued repeated calls to overhaul the structure and management of school systems. What, in most systems, had been collections of largely autonomous units dominated by building principals were now to be "rationalized," by centralizing the control of educational policies and programs in the hands of district superintendents and central office staff experts (Tyack and Hansot 1982).

If schools were to be run like factories, with hierarchical controls and centralized planning, evaluation and policy-setting mechanisms, then teacher unions would necessarily have to act like factory unions, resorting to roughly the same sorts of strategies for protecting the interests of their members. Like their industrial sector counterparts, teacher unions often challenged particular management decisions and insisted that management put in writing policies that administrators might have preferred to leave to their own discretion. At least in the early years of bargaining, teacher unions played essentially the same reactive role as their industrial counterparts, insisting that it was management's job to set policy and manage; the union's job was to negotiate and then police protections against abuses of that authority.

In fact, teacher unions have provided district-level administrators with many of the same benefits that industrial managers gained from collective bargaining: access to information about school-level problems, orderly procedures for disposing of various personnel issues, and

grounds for insisting that school principals adhere to policies prescribed or agreed to by central administrators. Indeed, case studies of school district power relationships indicate that collective bargaining has provided central administrators with one of their most effective tools for centralizing management authority and power in their own hands. Not only has it helped them control their subordinate managers; it also has helped them insulate themselves-and their staffs-from school board "interference" in their day-to-day decision-making, by insisting that board members and administrators must present a "united front" in the face of union pressure (Bacharach 1981). The structures, processes and myths of industrial unionism complemented and in some ways even supported the top-down managerial ideology that existed in most school systems when teacher unions first won recognition, just as they fitted the factory management systems of the 1930s.

Until recently, top-down models of factory or bureaucratic management were the only models that offered any coherent explanation of how school boards and administrators might coordinate what goes on in their schools. Since coordinating the flow of students through the system-and assigning teachers, specialists, support personnel, curriculum requirements, material resources, space and time schedules to serve students as they pass through--are jobs that have fallen to boards and administrators to perform, it is not surprising that so many boards and administrators would find those top-down models so attractive.

But those models are now under severe attack. The factors that make coordination so difficult and therefore so necessary-multiple constituencies with various demands, work techniques with uncertain consequences, unpredictable situations demanding quick responses,

constant interaction with others, and direct contact with organizational clients or customers with many different needs-also generate pressure on boards and administrators to allow their teachers a wide degree of latitude over how they organize, plan, execute, and monitor what goes on in their individual classrooms. Indeed, debates over how school systems should be managed (and debates over how they should be "reformed") almost always hinge on the relationship between the need to allow individual teachers discretion and the need to coordinate their individual efforts. Metaphors and strategies that focus on the former evoke images of autonomous professionals or crafts persons; those that focus on the latter evoke images of assembly lines and purposeful bureaucracies. Neither set of metaphors or strategies captures the truly demanding task of school management, which is somehow to satisfy both sets of needs *simultaneously*. It is this dilemma, we would argue, that lies at the heart of the debates over educational reform and the future of collective bargaining in public education. In fact, as we will note, essentially the same dilemma lies at the heart of debates over management and bargaining in *all* sectors of the economy.

RETHINKING MANAGEMENT AND BARGAINING

The top-down strategies which have ostensibly guided school management for most of this century have never made complete sense in public education and have never been strictly observed. At one moment teachers are treated like workers on an assembly line, at another like bureaucrats executing general directives, at still another like independent professionals who are expected to figure out for themselves what it is they should be doing. Observers who have styled themselves as realists have assumed that school systems must be satisfied with constant

tension and watered-down compromises between two needs that are equally important and inherently in conflict with each other. Like a fitted sheet one size too small for the bed it is expected to cover, the management approaches employed by school systems could always be adjusted to fit one need or another but never (it seemed) the whole system. Researchers confirmed that teachers and administrators in most systems had informally negotiated "zones of influence," each acknowledging the other's primacy within their respective zones. Teachers would agree to respect administrators' decisions over matters outside the classroom, and administrators would respect decisions that teachers made within their classrooms, so long as the latter did not cause problems for anyone else. The arrangement did not serve the need for coordination or the need for teacher discretion well, but it did allow both needs to be served (Lortie 1975).

These laissez-faire arrangements, we would argue, are now beginning to collapse under the weight of new and more complicated public pressures. School systems that could rely upon "reform" coming in manageable doses for "rigor" one year, "equity" another, "cost cutting" the next—are now being subjected to demands to satisfy all these demands at once. For the nation's governors, who have been more responsible than anyone for keeping reform at the forefront of public attention, the primary motivation has been to revitalize their states' economies and to forge an "education strategy" for doing so (Osborne 1988). "Excellence" (of some sort) was to be expected of an ever-growing proportion of school graduates.

These new market pressures are forcing school boards to rethink their human resource management policies, just as analogous pressures are forcing private sector employers to

reassess theirs. Michael Piore, an economist who has paid special attention to the relationships between product markets, work processes and models of unionism, points out that the logic that once dominated the design of manufacturing work processes—the logic of a detailed, explicit division of labor and of top-down control—assumed that it was feasible to separate the planning of work from its execution. That is, it was feasible to assign the planning function to managers, supervisors and staff experts, and to assign relatively fixed sets of routine duties to individual "line" employees (Piore 1982, 1985).

Piore points out that such a division of labor is practical only in settings where large volumes of standardized products are to be produced, using production methods that are reasonably stable over long periods of time, and that these conditions are now breaking down in large sections of the manufacturing economy. Increasingly stiff international competition and product specialization, improved transportation systems, and new computerized production technologies are all undermining the economies of scale that America's mass production giants once enjoyed. The top-down management techniques and sharp horizontal divisions of labor that were sources of efficiency in an earlier era have grown increasingly inefficient in today's more specialized, varied and variable product markets (Rosenfeld 1988).

These market changes affect both the design of individual jobs and the planning and coordination of work across groups of workers. The more frequently products or services are modified, the more often the tasks necessary to make those products or provide those services change. As tasks change, so must the duties assigned to each employee, rendering jobs with fixed sets of responsibilities obsolete. The more rapidly job duties change, moreover, the less

likely it is that staff experts at higher organizational levels will be able to anticipate and decide what all those duties ought to be. Employers, thus, have increasing need of employees who are willing and able to adapt to different work demands and who can determine for themselves what work needs to be performed (Rosenfeld 1988).

But granting individual employees more discretion increases the problems of coordinating their separate activities. Granting employees more independence restricts management's access to information about existing or anticipated problems in the work process, right when other developments are making it imperative that such problems be anticipated and resolved before production begins. In simpler times, manufacturers could resolve such problems by centralizing authority and tightening management control over individual workers, but it is their own efforts to relax such controls that are partially responsible for their current planning and coordination dilemmas. Thus, manufacturers have shown growing interest in computerized information systems that help them keep tabs on the flow of materials and products through their systems. But manufacturers have also expressed interest in mechanisms like self-managed work groups and quality circles that require employees to work cooperatively to identify and solve problems that once were the responsibility of managers to address.

All of these developments point to new forms of work organization and management, as well as changes in the kinds of training that workers receive. Managers throughout the economy are attracted to job enrichment programs, "pay for knowledge" compensation systems, and other strategies aimed at breaking down narrow job definitions and assigning

individual workers and groups of workers wider sets of responsibilities and more discretion over how they perform their work (Kochan 1985; Schonberger 1986). They are attracted, as well, to schemes for involving workers in decision-making beyond their immediate work assignments (Walton 1985).

As these developments take hold, industrial unions throughout the economy are being forced to reconsider strategies that have served them well for half a century. As Piore points out, the same factors which are forcing a reassessment of traditional management approaches are undermining traditional "job control" unionism as well. A unionism that is premised on fixed job categories, close links between specific duties and compensation, and detailed rules on how job assignments are made-and on a "common law" that prevents managers from holding workers accountable for mistakes in the organization and planning of work-is bound to be threatened by current economic changes.

But many private sector unions are also discovering new *potential* in the new kinds of dependence that their members' employers are experiencing. Managers are becoming increasingly dependent upon their employees for information about production processes. Managers also need more flexibility in the ways they organize and manage the work that is done. Union tactics that assume that management expects only blind obedience from employees may be undercut by such new management approaches, but tactics that tap these new forms of dependence might serve as the bases for renewed union strength.

Few employers are more dependent than school boards and administrators on their employees' discretion, professional judgment and willingness to cooperate in translating

general policies into concrete action. Few employees have as much responsibility as teachers for planning and evaluating the results of their day-to-day activities, much less for planning, directing and evaluating the activities of others. In most settings, these activities are still defined as management responsibilities, even if employees are being invited to share some of them. In public education, they represent the very core of the work of teachers (Conley, Schmidle, and Shedd 1988).

The fact that teachers plan, direct and evaluate the work of others-that is, the work of their students-does not make them supervisors or managers in the traditional labor relations sense, because their "subordinates" are not employees and the decisions they make are not, strictly speaking, "personnel policies." But teachers are supervisors and managers in the more generic sense of those terms: they are responsible for translating general policies into particular objectives; planning, supervising and adjusting work activities; securing needed resources; and evaluating both individual performance and the overall success of their work plans (Shedd and Bacharach 1991).

If teacher unions are threatened by the demise of top-down management strategies, they are also in a good position to take advantage of that demise. For one thing, they are not threatened by the declining employment base that is making it difficult for private sector industrial unions to convince their members to even think of "cooperating" with management. For another, pressing for collective teacher involvement in school and district decision-making offers the possibility of overcoming the split between "union" and "professional" factions within their own organizations, by shifting the focus of thinking about "professional" issues

away from individual autonomy. Perhaps most importantly for the unions, such a shift might allow teacher unions to finally take advantage of a source of potential influence-or to put the matter more bluntly, a source of power-that industrial union principles have always required them to overlook: the fact that their members, as individuals, already manage much of what goes on in school systems themselves. The prospect that a reassessment of union strategies might allow them to end the internal bloodletting, secure new monies for education, and build a stronger, more unified organization has provided union leaders with a powerful incentive to try.

NEW STRUCTURES IN EDUCATION BARGAINING

The basic structure of the agreements that education bargainers will negotiate in the future can be expected to reflect the structure of the overall labor-management relationship in public education, just as the structures of craft and industrial union contracts reflected the relationships which produced them. While teachers will insist on playing a more active role in setting educational policies and programs, boards of education and administrators will almost certainly insist that fixed-term, fixed-length agreements are cumbersome and therefore inappropriate vehicles for addressing those issues. Teachers and their representatives, in turn, will demand guarantees that their involvement in policymaking is more than token. The result-already emerging in many systems-will probably be an increasing reliance on comprehensive negotiations to establish the structure and ground rules for joint decision-making, with longer intervals between each negotiation, fewer restrictions in master agreements, and more explicit procedures for securing "waivers" of contract provisions.

What is more speculative but more intriguing is the possibility that some school districts and teacher unions might go further and eliminate the provision that prevents one party from "reopening" negotiations before the end of a contract without the other party's consent. That provision is a key element in the industrial sector deal that protects the employer's "reserved right" to make management decisions unilaterally. If a union were free to demand that negotiations be "reopened" at any time, the principle that management retains unilateral discretion over issues not covered by the contract would be meaningless. It is not clear that school districts either need or necessarily would want such protections, since they force unions to file grievances and arbitration appeals (or in some states, demands for single-issue "impact" negotiations) over issues generated by the changing circumstances of school system management. Giving either party the right to reopen negotiations on any or all provisions of a district-wide agreement would provide managers with increased flexibility and would remove one of the principal objections to expanding the scope of bargaining.

In addition to changes in the scope of bargaining, changes in the structure of agreements, and changes in the bargaining process itself, many observers expect teacher unions and school systems to negotiate changes in the structure of the teaching profession itself. Indeed, many of the recent debates over education reform have focused on the development of so-called "career ladders" that draw distinctions between the duties of teachers at different "career levels" and that pay teachers according to the level of the ladder that they occupy. We agree that such systems are likely to be discussed and experimented with

over the next several years, but the line of argument we have developed here casts a different light on their prospects for success.

Drawing close connections between specific sets of duties and different levels of compensation is a basic feature of the top-down systems in industrial work settings. It is that feature, in fact, that managers in the manufacturing setting are now struggling to overcome and that is forcing unions in those settings to reassess some of the basic tenets of industrial unionism. To suggest that public education should move toward more formal differentiation of teaching duties would be to suggest that it should move closer to, not farther from, the industrial model, with its detailed rules on who has a right to bid on what duties, what career level gets what new duties, when the assignment of "some" higher level duties requires a temporary promotion, and so forth.

Many of today's reformers characterize job differentiation as a way of involving more teachers in decisions that have typically been reserved for administrators. But the unified salary schedule that most school systems use is not an obstacle to such involvement, whereas a differentiated salary schedule would be: formal differentiation would mean that only a limited number of teachers could be involved in such activities, and any teacher would be entitled to refuse to accept responsibilities outside the job description for his or her career ladder position (Bacharach, Conley, and Shedd 1986).

If there is any aspect of current salary practices in school systems that does represent an obstacle to increased teacher involvement in management, it is the ad hoc practice of treating formal assignments outside the classroom and outside the normal work day as "extra" duties

and of paying for each such set of duties separately. That practice is inevitable, of course, as long as the "normal" teacher work day ends roughly when the normal school day ends and as long as the work year for teachers is approximately the same as the school year. Those practices are real obstacles to developing a broader concept of teachers' basic professional responsibilities.

Most teachers, in our experience, devote much more than forty hours per week to their profession, but much of that time is spent at home, reviewing student work and planning lessons. Such activities, performed in isolation, go officially unrecognized. If teachers' formal work day or work year were lengthened without a corresponding increase in the school day or school year, or if new staffing arrangements were developed that allowed teachers to rotate assignments and share duties with each other, then the basis for a new "deal" between teachers and their employer would be created. Boards and administrators would be in a position to insist that many duties that presently call for extra compensation would henceforth fall within the scope of teachers' basic responsibilities. Teachers would be in a position to demand assurances that they would have greater control over how they spend their time outside the classroom.

The willingness of teacher unions and employers in public education to even entertain such radical departures from traditional practices probably says more about the pressures that school systems are under than it does about the specific formulas that the parties will agree to live by in the future. It undoubtedly will take some time for them to work out and finally accept

new ground rules, just as it took employers and industrial unions time to work out all the details of what today is recognized as the "traditional" labor-management formula.

But the historical parallel gives reason to have confidence in the basic argument outlined here. Economic developments, changes in public expectations, and changes in the ways in which organizations like school systems are being managed are once again undermining the bases of one form of unionism and are creating new forms of power in the employment relationship. Put simply, employers throughout the economy-but above all, in public education-are becoming increasingly dependent on their employees' detailed knowledge of work processes and client needs, on their individual willingness and ability to exercise discretion and judgment, and on their willingness to work cooperatively with one another in the face of constantly changing work situations.

The important question is not whether employers will try to make adjustments to these new forms of dependence-they must do so to survive--but whether unions will be able to develop strategies that allow them to marshal the power inherent in that dependence. If they can, they will have created a new form of union that has the potential of being every bit as vigorous and powerful and as appropriate to their setting as craft unions and industrial unions were to theirs. There are good reasons to believe that is exactly what is happening today in public education.

But all these changes are likely to cost money and generate struggles for power **within** school systems. Getting "from here to there" is likely to pose serious, perhaps insurmountable, obstacles.

Nevertheless, we are optimists. Negotiations like those between the Rochester, New York school district and its AFT local, which incorporated many of the Carnegie concepts, reflect a political courage, a willingness to take risks, and a capacity to sustain both cooperation and conflict that bode well for the future of public education and unions. The leaders in Rochester have been willing to confront directly the magnitude of problems we face in public education, and have taken some lumps from their clients and constituents for having done so. All of us interested in improving the quality of education must be equally willing-not to set aside different interests-but to find creative ways of reconciling differences and meeting the multiplicity of demands which our public school systems now confront.

NOTE

1. See National Education Association/National Association of Secondary School Principals (1986); also, American Federation of Teachers Task Force on the Future of Education (1986).

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