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Comments

Survey Report Submitted to the Commission on the Future of Worker-Management Relations

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*Hot topic
Future Work Management* P.2

The Harris Poll

THE HARRIS POLL 1994 #6
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HARRIS POLL SUGGESTS CONTINUING EROSION OF LABOR UNION SUPPORT AND INFLUENCE MADE WORSE BY FIGHT AGAINST NAFTA

By Humphrey Taylor

Most Americans, most working people and nearly half (44%) of members of union families rate the labor unions negatively. While most people give credit to labor unions for improving the wages and working conditions of their members, they are widely perceived as being too involved in politics, too concerned with fighting change, and too prone to stifle individual initiative. Most people, and a large minority (42%) of members of union households believe unions do not give their members value for their union dues.

The Harris Poll suggests that the NAFTA debate was a disaster for organized labor. A majority of the public and of all working people now favor NAFTA, as do fully 44% of union family members. By large majorities, most people give labor negative ratings for its performance in the NAFTA debate while giving the President positive marks.

These are among the results of a Harris Poll about labor unions conducted among 1,250 adults between Dec. 20 and 26, 1993. They suggest that the many pundits who wrote that President Clinton needed to rebuild his relations with labor after the NAFTA debate were wrong. More accurately, labor needs to rebuild its relations with the administration.

Major findings of the survey include:

- Majorities of all adult Americans (62% to 34%), all working people (also 62% to 34%) and even all adults in union households (55% to 44%) rate the job done by labor unions negatively.
- While most people (73%) give labor unions credit for improving wages and working conditions, substantial majorities criticize them for being too involved in politics (70%), being more concerned with fighting change than bringing it about (65%), and stifling individual initiative (59%).
- Modest majorities (54%) are also critical of unions for not giving their members their money's worth and for not working for legislation that would help all working people.
- While people in union households are somewhat less critical than the general population, many of them share the public's negative views. Most of them are not enthusiastic union loyalists: for example, union family members are split 50% to 49% on whether unions give members their money's worth for the dues they pay.

- Modest majorities of the public (51% to 41%) and of all working people (53% to 40%) now favor NAFTA (compared to a 45% to 41% plurality of the public opposed to it, on the eve of its passage through the Congress).
- Even among union households only a very modest 48% to 44% plurality now oppose NAFTA.
- By an overwhelming 62% to 27% majority, most Americans rate the labor unions handling of the NAFTA issue negatively. By contrast a 61% to 35% majority rate President Clinton's handling of NAFTA positively.

These results will provide little cheer to union loyalists. There is no evidence of any tide of public opinion which might reverse the steady erosion of unionization and union power or the marginalization of union activity in many industries. The survey suggests that labor desperately needs new leadership, fresh thinking and new strategies.

Humphrey Taylor is the President and CEO of Louis Harris and Associates, Inc.

TABLE 1
RATING JOB DONE BY
CORPORATE AMERICA AND LABOR UNIONS

In general, how would you rate the job being done by Labor
Unions/Corporate America, excellent, good, fair or poor?

	<u>EXCELLENT</u> %	<u>GOOD</u> %	<u>FAIR</u> %	<u>POOR</u> %	<u>NOT SURE</u> %	<u>POSITIVE</u> %	<u>NEGATIVE</u> %
<u>Among Adults</u>							
Labor Unions	4	30	39	23	4	34	62
Corporate America	4	39	44	11	3	43	54
<u>Among Those Working</u>							
Labor Unions	5	30	38	24	4	34	62
Corporate America	4	40	44	9	3	44	53
<u>Among Union Households</u>							
Labor Unions	9	35	37	18	1	44	55
Corporate America	5	33	46	14	2	38	60

TABLE 2

**AGREEMENT WITH SIX STATEMENTS
ABOUT LABOR UNIONS (ALL ADULTS)**

Now let's talk specifically about unions for a moment. We'd like to get your reaction to some statements that are sometimes made about unions. Tell me if you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly that...

	<u>AGREE STRONGLY</u> %	<u>AGREE SOMEWHAT</u> %	<u>DISAGREE SOMEWHAT</u> %	<u>DISAGREE STRONGLY</u> %	<u>NOT SURE</u> %	<u>TOTAL AGREE</u> %	<u>TOTAL DISAGREE</u> %
<u>Adults</u>							
Unions are too involved in political activities	41	29	18	10	3	70	28
Unions improve wages and working conditions of workers	31	42	15	10	2	73	25
Unions today are more concerned with fighting change than with trying to bring about change	30	35	20	9	5	65	29
Unions stifle individual initiative	24	34	25	12	5	59	37
Unions work to get legislation that helps all working people, whether they are union members or not	17	25	26	28	3	42	54
Unions give members their money's worth for the dues they pay	14	28	26	28	4	42	54

TABLE 3
AGREEMENT WITH SIX STATEMENTS
ABOUT LABOR UNIONS (MEMBERS OF UNION HOUSEHOLDS)

Now let's talk specifically about unions for a moment. We'd like to get your reaction to some statements that are sometimes made about unions. Tell me if you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly that...

	<u>AGREE</u> <u>STRONGLY</u> %	<u>AGREE</u> <u>SOMEWHAT</u> %	<u>DISAGREE</u> <u>SOMEWHAT</u> %	<u>DISAGREE</u> <u>STRONGLY</u> %	<u>NOT</u> <u>SURE</u> %	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>AGREE</u> %	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>DISAGREE</u> %
<u>Union Households</u>							
Unions are too involved in political activities	37	25	18	17	3	62	35
Unions improve wages and working conditions of workers	43	32	13	11	1	75	24
Unions today are more concerned with fighting change than with trying to bring about change	27	34	23	14	2	61	37
Unions stifle individual initiative	21	30	27	18	3	51	45
Unions work to get legislation that helps all working people, whether they are union members or not	27	27	24	19	2	54	43
Unions give members their money's worth for the dues they pay	20	30	20	29	2	50	49

TABLE 4
SUPPORT/OPPOSITION FOR NAFTA

Do you favor or oppose NAFTA?

	<u>All Adults</u> %	<u>Union Household</u> %	<u>All Working</u> %	<u>All Adults Nov. '93</u> %
Favor	51	44	53	41
Oppose	41	48	40	45
Not sure	8	8	8	15

TABLE 5
RATINGS OF KEY PLAYERS ON HANDLING NAFTA
(ALL ADULTS)

How would you rate the job...did in handling NAFTA -- excellent, pretty good, only fair or poor?

	<u>EXCELLENT</u> %	<u>GOOD</u> %	<u>FAIR</u> %	<u>POOR</u> %	<u>NOT SURE</u> %	<u>POSITIVE</u> %	<u>NEGATIVE</u> %
President Clinton	20	40	22	13	4	61	35
Corporate America	8	36	38	11	7	43	50
Congress	6	38	36	16	5	44	51
Ross Perot	5	19	24	45	7	24	69
Labor Unions	4	24	36	26	10	27	62

METHODOLOGY

This Harris Poll was conducted by telephone within the United States between Dec. 20 and 26, among a nationwide cross section of 1,250 adults. Figures for age, sex, race, education and number of adults in the household were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

In theory, with a sample of this size, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 3 percentage points of what they would be if the entire adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in all polls or surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. They include refusals to be interviewed (non-response), question wording and question order, interviewer bias, weighting by demographic control data and screening (e.g., for likely voters). It is difficult or impossible to quantify the errors that may result from these factors.

This statement conforms to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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Contact Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., Information Services, 630 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10111, (212) 698-9697, for complete demographic details for the questions in this release.

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