A Union-Management Cooperative Project To Improve the Quality of Work Life*

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This case describes the beginning of a Quality of Work Life Project in which we are responsible for the measurement activities. In this role we have attended meetings, read correspondence and documents concerning the project, conducted interviews, and administered questionnaires. The project is part of a programmatic effort jointly sponsored by the National Quality of Work Center (NQWC), Washington, D.C. and by the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at The University of Michigan. Before presenting the case, we will describe briefly the overall Quality of Work Program.

THE QUALITY OF WORK PROGRAM

Efforts to improve the quality of work life in the United States have rarely involved organized labor.[1] Recognizing the need for joint union-management projects, Ted Mills, then of the National Commission on Productivity, developed during 1971 and 1972 a plan for joint union-management quality

*Support for the project detailed here is provided by the philanthropic foundation affiliated with the company and by the union. Overall program support for the Quality of Work Program is provided by the Ford Foundation and the Economic Development Administration of the Department of Commerce. The descriptions and interpretations expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the National Quality of Work Center, the Institute for Social Research, Battelle, or the sponsoring agencies.

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[1]Exceptions to this are described by Weinberg (1976).

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of work life projects. This plan called for a number of projects in which employees would become actively involved in designing and implementing organization change. It also involved an independent evaluation of the effects of the projects on indicators of both quality of work life and organizational effectiveness. In 1973, two cooperative projects were started as part of this program.

In 1974, Mills left the government to establish NQWC as an affiliate of ISR. NQWC took on the role of developing sites for joint union-management projects and for managing the action parts of projects. ISR took on the role of measuring the effects such projects have on individuals as well as on organizational performance and effectiveness.[2] Since the founding of NQWC, six additional cooperative projects have been started, so that at the present time eight are operational.

The program's goal is to improve the quality of work life. It attempts to achieve this through carefully measured organizational change projects in highly visible organizations. Independent measurement is included in order to facilitate learning about how quality of work life projects can best be done in order to provide a creditable record of results that can be an aid in dissemination. The program uses an intervention strategy which is intended to produce organization-wide improvements in the quality of work life. In all projects, commitment is required of key officials at all levels of the managerial and union hierarchies. This is ensured by establishing joint union-management committees at the top organizational level as well as at lower levels. This same structure is used to assist in diffusing project information through management and union organizations. Finally, the approach values the use of independent consultants whose orientation is to assist clients in designing and implementing client-driven changes.

Individual projects are designed to be multi-year efforts. After company and union members decide to proceed with a project, they then select a consultant or consultant team to fill the role of primary change agent. The consultant is hired for an 18-month period. Since the consultants' presence is limited to 18 months, they are expected to develop diagnostic and problem-solving skills among organizational members. Within the general guidelines that workplace changes must be jointly acceptable, any organization development strategy is appropriate. The measurement activities last for three years so that the long-term effects of the project can be determined.

Multi-Tier Committee Structure for Support and Dissemination

Projects may either be requested by the management or union or initiated

[2]The attitudinal data collected for these projects are described in the Michigan Organizational Assessment Package (1975), and the measures of organizational effectiveness are described by Mirvis and Macy (1976) and Macy and Mirvis (1976). The overall research design is described by Lawler (in press).

by NQWC. The first step in most projects is to establish a joint top-level union-management group in this case called the Core Committee. This committee commits itself to organization-wide change and it provides sanction, support, and visible commitment from the highest levels. Both parties sign a letter of agreement stating that either can withdraw from the project on 24 hours' notice. Consensus decision making is typically used both at this level and at lower levels as the project unfolds.

The Core Committee decides where demonstration projects will be conducted and does the initial screening of the independent consultants. It also decides how many other committees will be formed and where in the organization they will be positioned. In large organizations there are often two or more additional committees, at least one at the regional or division level and another at the workplace level. This multi-tier structure is used to assure support for projects in local workplaces by both the union and company hierarchies and especially to facilitate later dissemination throughout the union and the company. In all cases, a workplace committee is established to guide what will happen there. It determines its own goals and directions and selects an independent consultant to work with it. In the present case, the workplace committee is called the Joint Site Committee.

THE NATIONAL PROCESSING CASE [3]

This case involves a large international company and a large international union. So far, change activities have been centered in five plants. Four of the five plants produce different products that are part of a common product line, and the fifth provides finishing and shipping functions. Each of the four plants is highly interdependent with the finishing/shipping plant. The four production lines are really two sets of interdependent plants, the second plant of each set adding further value to the product made by the first. All five plants are located at the same physical location in one of the company's 14 regions. Excluding persons working in a centralized maintenance crew, there are 385 persons working in these five plants. Approximately 90 per cent of them are white males.

The international union, its local at the plants, and the company's management have had an adversary relationship over many years. The local has served as the employee representative at these plants for 26 years, and the company and this union have experienced a high grievance rate. Nevertheless, many union members say that the union's relationship with this company is better than the one it has with other companies in the same industry as evidenced by the fact that there has not been a strike originating in these plants since the mid-1960s. Older union members seem to trust the company's top management. They say that many of their problems are created

[3]Because this is an ongoing project, fictitious names and titles are used to prevent identification of the site and individuals involved.

by middle managers and not by top managers. The company president began his career as a line worker along with many of the persons who still work in one of the selected plants.

Entry Process—Achieving Joint Approval

An entry process of more than 14 months was involved in starting this project. Much of the early entry time was spent providing information to top management groups at the corporate level and to top union officials at the union's regional level. It was only during the last couple of months that significant activity took place at the five plants.

The first contact between NQWC and National occurred in late 1974 during a conference attended by a company internal consultant and an NQWC staff member. The consultant talked with the NQWC staff member and communicated to his home office what he learned about NQWC. His superior, a vice president for internal development, expressed interest and arranged a meeting among his staff, NQWC, and two executive vice presidents. National's managers were impressed, and additional meetings between NQWC and several other company executives took place.

Finally, a meeting was arranged between NQWC and National's president. The president seemed willing to proceed with the project and delegated authority for it to an executive vice president. The president expressed hope that the program would eventually lead to company-wide efforts. This was a decisive meeting in two respects: it firmed up the company's commitment to start the project, but failed to gain the president's direct involvement in the project's development. The president's lack of involvement was and continues to be a source of concern, since it may cause problems in spreading the project throughout the company.

While the program was described by NQWC as being directed toward increasing both quality of work life and productivity, there is some indication that the company's interest in it was due to their desire to increase productivity. Some company documents written at this time refer to the project as a productivity improvement program, and quality of work life issues are mentioned in the context of how they ultimately will improve productivity.

Soon after being assured of the company's interest, NQWC initiated meetings with the two largest unions in National Processing. The smaller of the two unions, wary of management-directed, "job enrichment" efforts elsewhere, showed little interest and decided not to participate. In the larger union, the international president was contacted, and the Quality of Work Program was described to him. NQWC carefully explained that if the union was interested in a joint quality of work life project, one could be set up with National or with some other company. The international president was noncommittal and expressed some specific concerns, including how the

project might affect the traditional adversary relationship between the company and the union. He also asked whether the project might result in a loss of jobs through organizational restructuring. NQWC explained that since the project would be jointly owned, no such change could occur without union sanction.

NQWC suggested that union officials independently contact the company and determine how committed it was to the project and how much it was using the project for purposes of increasing productivity.[4] The international president mentioned that contract negotiations with National were currently under way and that negotiations would have to be completed before the union could commit much time to this project.

In later discussions with NQWC, the company's vice president for internal development identified a regional union president who would turn out to be a key in establishing a project at National. The vice president said that the union regional president believed that NQWC had been involved in a similar project for another company in the same industry. This project was believed to have hurt the union; consequently, some union officials had doubts about NQWC's credibility. The NQWC representative contacted the regional union president and assured him that NQWC projects are not oriented exclusively toward management goals. Apparently convinced that NQWC could be trusted, the union regional president said that the union's international president told him he could proceed. The regional president, describing himself as "bold and eager for change," indicated his own willingness to proceed, noting, however, that he would have to obtain an endorsement from his executive committee. He suggested that NQWC wait several months until the contract negotiations were over before proceeding. NQWC agreed and said that the next step would be a meeting between National executives and him so that a joint decision could be made.

Once the contract negotiations were over, the union regional president had a meeting with his executive committee and introduced the notion of starting a quality of work project in one of the National locals. In order to help answer the questions that it thought would come up at this meeting, NQWC sent a union member from one of its other ongoing projects to the meeting. Questions were asked about the activities included as in projects, the effects the project would have on the contractual and adversary relationship with National, and whether participants could withdraw from the program if they wished. The presence of the representative from the other project was decisive in dealing with these questions. He provided examples of what could be done and reduced fears about possible negative effects on the contractual and adversary relationship. The meeting ended with a unani-

[4]NQWC views productivity increase motives as proper for a company and encourages companies to be open about it. Unions are told that because projects are jointly controlled efforts, they need not fear a company's productivity motives.

mous favorable vote and solidified regional union involvement in the project. At this point union enthusiasm was strong; a number of locals wanted to be chosen as the first project site.

The regional union president next accompanied a NQWC staff member to Europe to learn about the rising participative activity occurring there. The president toured various European plants and was particularly enthusiastic about quality of work projects after talking to some European practitioners.

In summary, NQWC spent much time and effort during the 14-month entry period bringing the project to a point where it had joint approval. It was achieved through many hours in meetings soliciting the support of key officials from both parties. Usually, the parties expressed keen interest in a project but the interest was accompanied by a healthy caution. The company appeared to hope for productivity increases, and this was important in gaining its approval. The situation was more problematic on the union side. The union was concerned that its own power would be weakened and needed a number of assurances that it would not be harmed. It also needed education and exposure to an array of possible project activities before it was willing to agree to a project.

Core Committee Start-Up

Early in 1976, the top union officials and executive company officers joined together for the first joint Core Committee meeting. At this joint meeting, NQWC again reviewed the purpose and form of quality of work projects, and ISR described the kinds of measurement activities that would occur. Both parties expressed concerns about the measurement. Company representatives questioned why their own assessment staff could not perform the same functions. They were told that having independent assessors adds credibility to the project, and that using in-house skills might reduce the union's trust of the ongoing activities. The union was concerned about industrial engineers and whether time-and-motion studies would be part of the measurement package. The union was assured that this would not happen.

Another issue was the nature and manner of funding of the assessment work. It was decided that the money to support the assessment work was to be provided through the company's affiliated philanthropic foundation, while the cost of consultants would be paid for by the company through a no-strings-attached grant to NQWC. This financial structure ensured that third parties would control the distribution and allocation of funds for both the research and measurement.

The issue of membership on the Core Committee was also discussed. The company proposed that there be three management members: the executive vice president for operations, the executive vice president for administration, and the vice president for internal development. The union proposed their regional president and two regional vice presidents. It was also decided that

the company vice president for internal development would act as recording secretary and project coordinator. The union regional president assumed the role of the Committee's first chairperson, and it was agreed that an NQWC representative would continue to meet with the Core Committee in order to help the committee function effectively.

The next issue dealt with at the meeting was the selection of the particular workplace for the first demonstration project. Since NQWC previously had discussions about this with both the company and the union, this was a relatively short discussion. NQWC emphasized the need to avoid imposing the project on rank-and-file union members as well as on supervisory personnel. The union identified several acceptable locations, as did the management. A complex of plants in Fallsteppe, located in National's Hilltop Region, was acceptable to both. Since the union had already obtained a favorable reaction from its local leaders, the only thing needed was for the company to inform its local managers about the nature and scope of the project and to determine their interest. The company's executive vice president for administration expressed a strong preference that he personally introduce the project to the Hilltop Region managers who were responsible for the Fallsteppe location.

Workplace Start-Up

Approximately six weeks after the first Core Committee meeting, NQWC went to Fallsteppe for several weeks of meetings and activity that was decisive in establishing the workplace where the program would begin. First they met with the vice president for Hilltop Region, the personnel manager, and the manager of the Fallsteppe works. The Hilltop vice president was concerned about the commitment level of the company's top management. He described other development projects where initially there was much encouragement from top management, but where, after a short period of time, top management lost interest, leaving Hilltop with a project but little support. NQWC gave specific examples illustrating National's commitment and noted that the executive vice president planned to come to Fallsteppe the following week to brief the region's Executive Committee.

NQWC also mentioned that the local union president had already expressed some preference for beginning in a particular plant, Works #1. The Hilltop vice president explained that Works #1 would not be suitable because it was a money loser, and he expressed concern that the union might already be locked into the decision. NQWC reminded the vice president that selection decisions must be made by a joint region-level committee.

The same day NQWC met at the local union hall with several union officials to answer their questions. The union's regional president attended, as did the local president, two local vice presidents, and shop stewards from Works #1. The union officials were favorable to the idea of a project, and

the first Regional Committee meeting was scheduled for the following day so that a specific workplace could be selected. This promised to be a crucial meeting since the union and management had definite—but different—preferences about a site.

The next day at the first Regional Committee meeting the local union president described how he came to learn about the project and noted that the project had been received favorably by the union's local leadership. The company's regional vice president said that he saw the project as an opportunity to try a different approach for solving the problems of managing and working in an organization. Discussion progressed to the workplace selection. The company's regional vice president outlined the criteria suggested by NQWC and accepted by him: 1) a sufficient number of affected people to maximize the opportunity for change; 2) sufficient supervision levels to allow restriction or expansion of supervisory functions; 3) discrete rather than continuous-process operations to make it more feasible to experiment with job design; and 4) the presence of jobs which would allow workers to develop some discretion. He thought that most of the plants in Fallsteppe met these criteria.

One union representative asked whether the five plants that produced similar products could be involved. The company's regional vice president expressed concern about starting with too many plants and was dismayed that the union's position appeared to be firm. He noted that Works #1 was doing poorly in the market, and consequently it would not be a useful place to determine whether increased effectiveness and productivity would result. NQWC suggested having a single workplace committee with representatives from several plants and noted that subcommittees could be appointed to address problems of specific plants. The company vice president offered a compromise solution. He suggested that the project could start in Works #1 if the union agreed to expand the project to Works #2, a more profitable plant, soon after the project started. This was agreed to on the condition that the union first obtain approval from its members in Works #2.

Several days later NQWC and the local union president met with union officials from Works #2. The meeting lasted about two hours, and NQWC explained how the project would affect collective bargaining, the contract, grievance procedures, and seniority issues. Other issues related to what rank-and-file workers have to gain from the project and whether NQWC works with nonunion companies. NQWC used many examples from other projects to illustrate the kinds of activities that can occur during these projects. These union representatives decided that the project was worthwhile, and one of the officials spent much of his own time informing other rank-and-file workers about the project.

Two weeks later NQWC held meetings with the superintendents of Works #2 to inform them of the nature of the project. Foremen from all

shifts attended this meeting and asked the same kinds of general questions asked elsewhere. They wanted to know what hourly workers were to get out of the project if the company gets increased production, how much nit-picking occurs at committee meetings, how the project coordinates people who have to interface with each other, and if the project would result in a loss of their authority or power. They also wondered whether they could really say that they did not want to participate.

Joint Site Committee

In late Spring, 1976, after the initial visit by NQWC to Fallsteppe, the first meeting of the workplace committee was held. It was decided to call it the Joint Site Committee. To ensure upper-level support of project activities and to provide linkages between committees, three union officials and two plant superintendents were made members of both the Regional Committee and the Joint Site Committee. Union membership on the Joint Site Committee was determined by different methods in each plant. A crew-type meeting was held in one plant, and another plant had a meeting at the union hall to elect its representatives. Persons were elected to or self-selected for committee membership. While every rank-and-file member was not involved in the selection process, the union members felt that the Joint Site Committee was representative of a cross section of work areas and shifts. Management personnel who expressed interest were appointed to the committee. At the first Joint Site Committee meeting, there was further questioning of adequate representation, and additional foremen and hourly workers were appointed to the committee. One Joint Site Committee member noticed that no women were present at the meeting, and committee members went out to recruit several women hourly workers. Although the decision made at the Regional Committee was to involve two plants, five plants were represented at the first Joint Site Committee meeting. Most of the time at the first meeting was spent describing the project to committee members.

The second Joint Site Committee meeting was scheduled for the following week. At this meeting the project and its measurement component were again described, but there appeared to be little real understanding of it. At both meetings, concerns were expressed about the possible impact of the project on the traditional adversary relationship between management and labor and also about how individuals from non-daylight shifts could become involved in the project. It was mentioned that individuals who came in during their off-shift, as well as those who had to come early or stay late, would be reimbursed for their time at their regular rates. The company and the union agreed to share the costs of this additional time. This decision extended the union's commitment to the project to a financial one. Plans were also made for the Joint Site Committee to select the independent consultant team later in the week.

In summary, the start-up process was one that provided information to possible project participants about the nature and scope of quality of work life projects, that solicited commitment to the project by both management and union, that began a participative decision-making process through the use of consensus, and that ensured higher-level support and further dissemination by establishing a multi-tier committee structure with overlapping membership.

Consultant Selection

Criteria. The process for consultant selection was structured by NQWC so that the Core and Regional Committees would screen candidates and the Joint Site Committee would make the final selection. NQWC's role was first to screen potential applicants for the consultant job and then, since most members of these committees had little experience with consultants, to spend time briefing each committee on how to assess consultants. NQWC recommended the following criteria for consultant selection: 1) a person or team having some experience with labor and management relations; 2) a person or team providing a great deal of on-site presence; 3) the lead consultant being the person with the most on-site presence; 4) persons who could walk and talk on the shop floor; 5) a person or team able to explain adequately its approach and describe its skills; and 6) a team that valued using workplace expertise for designing change rather than one wanting to impose its own ideas on the client. A number of consulting groups applied to NQWC. Those not expressing a client-directed approach were screened out by NQWC immediately.

Four qualified consultant teams were recommended to and interviewed by the Core Committee. One was rejected outright. The Core Committee decided that it could live with the others if certain changes were made. (With one consultant team, for example, the academic member had to be removed.) When the regional committee met with three consultant teams, one was rejected because of its Eastern-establishment appearance and manner. Thus, the Joint Site Committee had only two consultant teams left to interview. This seemed like a lack of choice to them, and they wanted to know how much control the Core and Regional Committees would impose at later points in the project. NQWC explained why it was important for the Core and Regional Committees to be comfortable with whatever consultant was chosen, as well as the importance of maintaining communication linkages with all committees.

The Joint Site Committee had difficulty in deciding between the two remaining consultant teams because it liked both teams. It finally chose the one team that seemed best able to communicate with and relate to hourly workers. The team consisted of three white male consultants who work for

a national consulting firm. The leader of the team is known for his previous work as a personnel manager and for his use of survey feedback methods, Scanlon plans, and team building. His approach to consulting can best be described as pragmatic and eclectic; he uses no one technique but, rather, a diagnostic approach, and he tries to build a consensus around changes.

Several biases were apparent in the Core and Regional Committee interviews. The committees were anti-academic, anti-youth, and anti-Eastern establishment. Most members thought that people from these backgrounds would not be able to walk and talk on the shop floor (one consultant was asked whether he would wear his three-piece suit around the plant). Management members of the company also expressed concern about the ability of consultant groups to deal with organized labor. Management wanted to ensure that the consultant team would not be perceived as working solely for management. All three committees expressed concern about whether the measurement and assessment program would interfere with the consultant's activities. Some consultants articulated reservations about their ability to be assessed by independent observers who did not understand their approach and techniques; other consultants welcomed the opportunity to work with the independent assessment team.

In summary, the consultant selection was a sensitive process. It reinforced the requirement for key person support by having the Core and Regional Committees screen potential consultants first. But this resulted in some concern among Joint Site Committee members about possible upper-level interference. The interviewing sessions were difficult for the consultant because committee members did not hesitate to ask hard questions. Finally, the critical characteristic for selection appeared to be the consultants' ability to relate to the clients at all hierarchical levels.

Consultant Activities

Once the consultant team was selected, it immediately began work. Through Summer and Fall, 1976, the lead consultant spent three or more days a week diagnosing the organization, meeting with workers, making the project visible, and building a team within the committee structures. In addition, an attitude survey was conducted as part of the independent measurement program. The results of this survey were fed back by the consultant, and meetings were held to discuss them. A number of problems were identified in the areas of job design, training, safety, and communication; and some solutions have been implemented recently. Most of the activity to date has taken place in Works #1 and #2, with representatives from the other three plants observing the process.

Overall, through the end of 1976, progress on this project has been slow for three reasons. The first has to do with the structure of the Joint Site

Committee. Five plants were involved in the consultant selection process, and the Joint Site Committee contains representatives from all five plants. This situation has had the effect of building up expectations that all five plants would be involved in the project. In fact, at a later Regional Committee meeting, the regional vice president was surprised to learn that there were persons from five plants actively involved. He had originally wanted only two plants, and expressed dismay that the project had grown so large without his knowing about it.

A second reason is that the Joint Site Committee has become bogged down in procedural issues. This committee wants to control the activities of the subcommittees that have been formed to deal with individual plants. This is not surprising since, during its start-up, this committee was told that it would have control over the project once it began. In addition, some union leaders have two reasons for wanting all problem solving done by the Joint Site Committee. First, the union sees one plant as very independent and fears that this plant may get into contractual issues without regard for approval from other levels of union hierarchy. Second, the union leaders are worried that some people will miss out if specific activities start in only one plant. They feel that all can learn about the process only by including the entire Joint Site Committee in it.

A third reason is that while Joint Site Committee members have some knowledge of the project, rank-and-file workers through the plants have very little. To improve this situation, the Joint Site Committee attempted to place bulletin boards in strategic places in the plants, but there was little follow-up. Lack of knowledge about the project was evident when the attitudinal survey was administered about four months after the Joint Site Committee was formed. Few persons seemed aware of the project and the nature of its deliberations. This is not too surprising since the logistics problems in this site are substantial. The five plants involved cover a large land area, multiple shifts are involved, and many production jobs involve the operation of complex, noisy machines. The consultant team responded by making a concerted effort to inform persons throughout the plants about the nature of the project and by involving them in it through the use of the subcommittees.

The lead consultant has made some specific recommendations about how the committee structure could be changed. He has suggested that the roles of the Regional and Site Committees are overlapping and has proposed that the Site Committee be disbanded and that its functions be assumed by the Regional Committee. In his model, the Regional Committee would serve in an advisory capacity for the project and would have as members managers and union officials ex officio. Each plant would have a committee that would deal with its problems on an ongoing basis and would be more representative of the plant as a whole.

Resistance to the proposal was strong because the Joint Site Committee

union members were afraid that the plants might make decisions that would weaken the union or the contract. For example, people in one of the sites see the nature of the contract as constraining their efforts and would now like to suspend some of the contract provisions temporarily. This has reinforced the position of the stronger union members of the Joint Site Committee that their committee should continue to serve as watchdog over lower-level committees. As a result, a compromise solution was accepted. Under it, the Regional Committee and Joint Site Committee will continue to exist, and actions by subcommittees from each plant will have to be accepted by the Joint Site Committee.

It seems apparent at this point that if significant change is going to take place in these five plants, something has to be done to free up the plants. Making this happen is the major challenge faced by the consultant team. If it does happen, there is a good chance that the changes will be disseminated to other parts of the company since the multi-tier structure is in place. The multi-tier approach was designed to insure that there would be support from all levels of management and the union for dissemination. These committees are continuing to meet and they already have established a new basis for communication between the union and management. Interestingly, NQWC has played a continuing role in the functioning of the core committee. The committee decided soon after the consultant was selected to continue to use NQWC as its consultant. Ultimately, the continued existence of the multi-tier structure depends on a success at Fallsteppe. It may well be two years or more before it can be known whether that success will be realized.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

This is one of the most complex union-management cooperative projects that the NQWC/ISR program has undertaken and one of the most complex in the literature. It represents an effort to change the quality of work life in one of the largest companies in the United States, and it involves a major international union representing over 20,000 of the employees who work for the company. Thus, the potential for learning from it about large system change and union-management cooperation are appreciable. So far the major lessons relate primarily to *how such projects can be started.* Several years from now we should be in a position to talk about issues of workplace change.

In most union-management situations there are some pressures that favor the kind of project that was started in National Processing. However, the forces against it usually are stronger. The role of NQWC in this project was to reduce the negative forces so that a Quality of Work project could take place. Let us identify briefly the forces that were at work in the system and note how the NQWC model affected them.

Reducing Negative Forces

Both the top union and management officials were tired of the traditional adversary model because of its unproductive aspects. They both felt that work could be improved in many ways that would benefit both the union and management. However, these forces were more than offset by the forces favoring the traditional relationship. These include the different goals of the union and management, the lack of any model of or experience with successful cooperative problem solving, the desire of both parties to maintain a contract, the risk to both the union officials and company management in changing a relationship which brought them to power, and the time and cost required to change. NQWC reduced the forces against a Quality of Work project through a number of specific actions: it stressed that projects do not bring about the demise of collective bargaining, rather that they exist solely as an auxiliary to it; it specified common goals; it suggested a joint committee structure with consensus decision making; it suggested a letter of agreement with provisions for easy escape and joint ownership; and it introduced both the union and management to successful projects elsewhere. The net effect of all these activities was to make a project, directed at improving quality of working life, less threatening, more understandable, and more practical.

Role of third party. Would there have been a project in National if a third party like NQWC had not been active? It does not seem likely. National had attempted one many years earlier that was not successful. At the beginning of the present project, NQWC intervened by providing most of the communication and energy needed to get it started. Our conclusion is that a third party, at least in this instance, was essential for project start-up.

How and Where To Form Tiers?

The present case also illustrates some of the crucial structural issues that arise in large system change. The multi-tier structure that NQWC established has potential advantages in terms of dissemination and support, but it also may slow the initial progress at a site. It requires more approval and the formation and education of more committees than would a strategy that simply involved changes in a single plant. It also creates some difficult strategic problems: for example, how many committees should be formed and for how large a part of the organization should a committee be responsible. In the present case, committees were initially formed at three levels. It now appears that one of these committees (the Site Committee) may have been inappropriate and that change would have occurred more rapidly if a number of site committees had been formed. It is possible that with better analysis this could have been determined in advance. However, there is little theory or practice to guide this kind of entry process. Hopefully, out of this and

similar projects, data will emerge on the efficacy of the multi-tier model and on how and where to form tiers. At this point, it can only be concluded that the model has proved to be a successful vehicle for starting such projects.

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The Process of Change at Bolivar

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The experiment that we describe in this paper took place between October 1975 and March 1976. It was first proposed by Paul Reaves, a production foreman in the pre-assembly area of the Assembly Department of a Harman International Industries plant in Bolivar, Tennessee, within the framework

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