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Self-regulation of health and safety
in a Local Authority with particular
reference to safety representatives,
supervisors and safety committees

by

Anita Levinson

MARCH 1984

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy from the
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For my children

Fiona and David

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ABSTRACT

Self-regulation of health and safety in a Local Authority with particular reference to safety representatives, supervisors and safety committees

by

Anita Levinson

The Report of the Robens Committee (1972), the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations (1977) provide the framework within which this study of certain aspects of health and safety is carried out. The philosophy of self-regulation is considered and its development is set within an historical and an industrial relations perspective.

The research uses a case study approach to examine the effectiveness of self-regulation in health and safety in a public sector organisation. Within this approach, methodological triangulation employs the techniques of interviews, questionnaires, observation and documentary analysis.

The work is based in four departments of a Scottish Local Authority and particular attention is given to three of the main 'agents' of self-regulation - safety representatives, supervisors and safety committees and their interactions, strategies and effectiveness. A behavioural approach is taken in considering the attitudes, values, motives and interactions of safety representatives and management.

Major internal and external factors, which interact and which influence the effectiveness of joint self-regulation of health and safety, are identified. It is emphasised that an organisation cannot be studied without consideration of the context within which it operates both locally and in the wider environment. One of these factors, organisational structure, is described as bureaucratic and the model of a Representative Bureaucracy described by Gouldner (1954) is compared with findings from the present study. An attempt is made to ascertain how closely the Local Authority fits Gouldner's model.

This research contributes both to knowledge and to theory in the subject area by providing an in-depth study of self-regulation in a public sector organisation, which when compared with such studies as those of Beaumont (1980, 1981, 1982) highlights some of the differences between the public and private sectors. Both empirical data and hypothetical models are used to provide description and explanation of the operation of the health and safety system in the Local Authority.

As data were collected during a dynamic period in economic, political and social terms, the research discusses some of the effects of the current economic recession upon safety organisation.

GLOSSARY

| | |
|------------------|---|
| ACAS | Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service |
| ASTMS | Association of Scientific, Technical & Managerial Staff |
| AUEW | Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers |
| CBI | Confederation of British Industry |
| EETPU | Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union |
| EPA | Employment Protection Act |
| GMBATU | General Municipal Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union |
| GMWU | General and Municipal Workers Union |
| HASAWA | The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act |
| IRA | Industrial Relations Act |
| JCC | Joint Consultative Committee |
| NALGO | National and Local Government Officers Association |
| NUPE | National Union of Public Employees |
| SRSC Regulations | The Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations |
| TGWU | Transport and General Workers Union |
| TUC | Trade Union Congress |
| TULRA | Trade Union and Labour Relations Act |
| UCATT | Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians |

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Origin of the research project

This study of health and safety provision in one part of the public sector in the United Kingdom was prompted partly by a general increase in interest in health and safety both as a result of legislation and in increasing expectations of the quality of working life, and partly because, at the time of initiating the research, there was a lack of published work in the area. Researchers in the United States have produced some important seminal work, for example on the workings of safety committees; however, caution has to be used when relating these findings to the British context because of certain important differences such as the industrial relations systems of the two countries.

For example, there is a higher degree of unionisation in the U.K. (approximately 50% as opposed to 20% in the U.S.A.). Trade union safety representatives have a statutory right to consultation with management on health and safety matters in the U.K. which does not exist in the U.S. legislation. In the U.S.A., unlike the U.K., unionisation is particularly weak among white collar and public employees which is important because a higher proportion of the workforce are in these occupations than in the U.K.

In the U.S.A., the trade unions are not directly connected to a major political party as are their British counterparts. This may mean that they have less potential influence on the introduction of employment legislation.

It is therefore important to build up a foundation of research based in the United Kingdom to use as a basis for future studies leading to the further development of health and safety as a recognised academic subject area. The research work that has been carried out in this country has nearly all been based in the private sector, and it is therefore apposite to examine how certain aspects of health and safety legislation are being implemented in a Local Authority.

Local government has certain characteristics which make it interesting to study. For example, it is bureaucratic in nature, it is under more direct governmental control than private industry, and it has a longer history in the use of joint consultation between management and trade unions.

1.2 Scope of the project

It was decided to examine one aspect of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (1974) which was an innovation on previous safety legislation - that is self-regulation, and to try to define this concept and the ways in which it can be operationalised.

The implication of the Robens Report (1972) that health and safety is an area where a unitary perspective is appropriate also leads to a potentially interesting research topic. Is a purely co-operative, consultative relationship between management and trade union safety representatives to be found? Or, is the Robens view too simplistic and does an element of negotiation,

indicative of the pluralistic perspective of industrial relations exist?

The scope of the research project and the breadth and depth of the work carried out is governed by obvious constraints of time and labour. In this case the entire project was carried out by one researcher, and there was limited time available to carry out the work. Because of these constraints a realistic area of work had to be identified. Breadth of coverage was sacrificed in favour of depth, by using a case study approach using a Scottish local authority as the organisation to be studied.

The aim was to obtain rich, abundant data which although initially descriptive should generate hypotheses either to be followed up in the present work or by future researchers. The fact that generalisations cannot be made from the data collected in this study was considered to outweigh the superficiality of data described in some of the studies reviewed in Chapter Five where larger samples were used.

Four departments (described in Appendix Two) were studied in detail within the Local Authority, each with its own health and safety problems, and the researcher had to be selective about what information to use in the final study as co-operation from those concerned was so forthcoming.

Very little research in the area of health and safety has been carried out in the public sector and as a Local Authority is an example of a bureaucratic organisation, the scope of the

project also includes a chapter based on the description by Gouldner (1954) of three types of bureaucracy. Gouldner described Representative Bureaucracy in terms of safety organisation which means that it was possible to try to fit the organisation under study to Gouldner's model.

In addition, a chapter which is theory-based rather than being restricted to the empirical data generated in the present study, was written on the philosophy of self-regulation and an attempt was made to describe its historical development within a framework of increasing participation and responsibility of workers in certain aspects of their work.

1.3 Objectives of the research

The aims and objectives of the research are outlined below:

1. To carry out a case study-based project in order to examine the implementation of the self-regulatory aspects of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (1974) in one part of the public sector.
2. To define self-regulation and to try to examine the effectiveness of, and roles played by some of its 'agents', for example trade union safety representatives, safety committees, senior management and supervisors; these agents being those who mainly impinge upon the shop floor.

3. To test certain hypotheses with regard to the functioning of the above agents of self-regulation using relevant research methods which can allow an element of cross-checking or validation of data.
4. To carry out a full literature review of the limited available research and to use this as a basis for the present study.
5. To examine Gouldner's concept of Representative Bureaucracy to determine whether the Local Authority can be described as an example of this type of organisation in relation to health and safety.
6. To comment upon the philosophy of self-regulation and its development.
7. To draw conclusions from the completed study and to make recommendations for further research as appropriate.

1.4 The layout of the project

Chapter Two provides a short summary of the background and legislation necessary to provide a context within which the concept of self-regulation, which is described in Chapter Three can be appreciated.

Chapter Four deals with the various types of methodology used in this study and explains the value of methodological triangulation in validating data. The use of various techniques to collect data is in itself a useful learning experience for the researcher, as is coping with the problems generated when trying to gain access to an organisation, which are also described in this chapter.

The literature review which was carried out is described in Chapter Five. Chapter Six contains a brief appreciation of the differing perspectives of the management/trade union relationship in a health and safety context which interact with the industrial relations frame of reference within which the relationships occur.

A separate chapter is given to each of the three agents studied - safety representatives, supervisors, and safety committees. There is considerable overlap here; that is, some data are relevant to more than one chapter. The result of this is very occasional repetition of data in order to interpret them in a different context. The other result is that compared with the chapters on safety representatives and safety committees, the chapter on supervisors is shorter. The reason for this is that much of the data on supervisors has been incorporated into the safety representatives chapter in order that comparisons between these two groups may be made. Several questions on the two questionnaires were deliberately made common to both and are mainly discussed in the safety representatives chapter. It should be noted that not all aspects of self-regulation have been considered. The role of the safety officer, the safety policy and organisational arrangements for example, if studied would have broadened the scope of the thesis

beyond the resources available.

Chapter Ten is based on the study of Representative Bureaucracy by Gouldner and an attempt is made to show in diagrammatic form similarities and differences between his model and the research findings from the local authority study.

Chapter Eleven consists of an examination of the philosophy of self-regulation and its development. Chapter Twelve puts forward some conclusions as to the effectiveness of self-regulation in the organisation.

Appendices One and Two describe the structure of the local authority and the four departments under study. Appendices Three and Four contain copies of the two questionnaires which were sent out to groups of safety representatives and supervisors.

CHAPTER TWO

RELEVANT BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

RELEVANT BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

2.1 The Robens Report (1972)

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (1974) was the outcome of the Robens Report of 1972 which was produced by a committee set up in 1970 under the chairmanship of Lord Robens. Their terms of reference were: "To review the provision made for the safety and health of persons in the course of their employment...and to consider whether any changes are needed in:

1. The scope or nature of the major relevant enactments,
2. The nature and extent of voluntary action concerned with these matters."

They also had to consider whether any further steps were required to safeguard members of the public from hazards other than general environmental pollution arising in connection with activities in industrial and commercial premises and construction sites, and to make recommendations.

The Committee talked to inspectors, administrators, industrialists, trade unions and received written submissions from organisations and individuals. They made visits at home and overseas to discuss health and safety issues with managers, work people and government officials.

There are five main reasons why the Robens Committee was

looking at the system in 1970:

1. There had never before been a comprehensive review of the subject.
2. There was a high national rate of accidents and disease at work with the related costs which was considered to be unacceptable at that particular time by the Labour Government, trade unions and management.
3. The wide publicity given to cases of compensation for diseases such as asbestosis had raised concern about the insidious and potentially deadly nature of the long-term risks to which certain groups of workers might be exposed.
4. There was a rapid increase in the number of new chemical substances and mixtures being brought into use in industrial and commercial processes.
5. Attitudes or expectations about authority and decision-making had changed. Increasingly, both employers and workers expected to take an active part in the making and application of legislation of this kind.

The traditional approach to health and safety at work was based upon an extensive system of detailed statutory provisions administered and enforced by government departments and local authorities and the legislation on industrial safety had emerged in a piecemeal fashion decade after decade. This traditional

empirical approach could not keep pace in an age of rapid change in industrial structure and technology as well as in social attitudes and expectations.

The Robens Committee considered that there were three main defects in the existing statutory system: the first defect was that there was too much law. There were nine main groups of statutes supported by nearly 500 subordinate statutory instruments. The sheer mass of the law had become counter-productive.

The Committee maintained that "the primary responsibility for doing something about the present levels of occupational accidents and disease lies with those who create the risks and those who work with them." The system encouraged too much reliance on state regulations and too little on personal responsibility and voluntary, self-generating effort. It was necessary to influence attitudes and create a framework for better health and safety organisation and action by industry itself. Robens suggested that what was needed was a balance between the regulatory and voluntary elements of the overall system.

The second defect was that the existing law was intrinsically unsatisfactory to the extent of being badly structured, and badly written, too detailed and littered with obsolete or obsolescent provisions. The bulk of the existing provisions were concerned with physical circumstances, for example, the safeguarding of machines or the provision of adequate lighting and ventilation. But equally important, according to the Robens Committee were the attitudes, capacities and performance of

people and the efficiency of the organisational systems within which they work. Such factors as the roles of training, joint consultation, the arrangements for monitoring safety performance, or the influence of work-systems and organisation upon attitudes and behaviour must be included.

The third defect was the fragmentation of administrative jurisdictions. There were five government departments (Employment, Trade & Industry, Agriculture, Environment and the Home Office) and seven separate inspectorates (factories, mines, agriculture, explosives, nuclear installations, radio-chemical and alkali). These covered nothing like the whole of the working population and overlap could create uncertainty and confusion. Fragmentation of the legislation and its administration made the task of harmonising, servicing and up-dating the various statutory provisions extremely difficult.

This fragmentation had effects at various levels. One establishment may have been subject to a multiplicity of safety and health provisions under a number of acts and sets of regulations. Some workplaces, between them employing eight million people, fell entirely outside the scope of the existing provisions, for example road haulage depots, airports, schools, hospitals. Inspectorial and administrative time was being wasted on demarcation matters, depending on the definitions of premises, processes and activities.

At the national level of policy formulation and law making it may be difficult to make progress on a subject where administration responsibilities are heavily fragmented and where close and extensive consultation between several departments is needed before

a major initiative can be taken.

The Committee proposed that there was a need for a more self-regulating system of provision for safety and health at work. The traditional approach based on ever-increasing detailed statutory regulation was outdated, over-complex and inadequate. Reform should be aimed at creating the conditions for more effective self-regulation by employers and work people jointly.

The efforts of industry and commerce to tackle their own safety and health problems should be encouraged, supported and supplemented by up-to-date provisions unified within a single, comprehensive framework of legislation. Much greater use should be made of agreed voluntary standards and codes of practice to promote progressively better conditions.

The Robens Committee recommended that a National Authority for Safety and Health at Work should be set up and that the existing legislation should be revised, unified and administered by the new authority. This authority should have a comprehensive range of executive powers and functions, and statutory provisions formulated should be laid before Parliament by the appropriate Minister. The scope of the new legislation should extend to all employers and employees and should cover the self-employed where their acts or omissions could endanger other workers or the general public.

As regards sanctions and their enforcement, inspectors would be able to issue improvement notices where changes were to be made within a stated time, or prohibition notices where a process

could be stopped completely if the hazard was great. Higher fines should be provided for and these and the notices should be subject to appeal before industrial tribunals.

It was recommended that the new authority should play a promotional and co-ordinating role in safety training and it should actively participate in some neglected areas such as safety training in management courses.

It was felt that the costs of accidents had been relatively neglected and a more cost-effective approach to the deployment of public resources for accident prevention should be encouraged, and similar work assisted by industry-level organisations and individual firms.

To sum up, the objectives of future policy were to create a more unified and integrated system to increase the effectiveness of the state's contribution to health and safety at work, and to develop more efficient self-regulating systems instead of negative regulation by external agencies.

There must be acceptance and exercise of appropriate responsibilities at all levels within industry and commerce. There should be more management initiative and greater involvement of work people.

2.2 The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (1974)

The Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAWA) was brought into

force in three stages, commencing respectively on 1st October 1974, 1st January 1975 and 1st April 1975. It is an enabling Act in addition to and only partially replacing existing health and safety at work legislation such as the Factories Act (1961) and the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act (1964). The greater part of the existing acts and subsidiary regulations remain current, but repeal, amendment, revision and updating will continue as necessary over a number of years.

The HASAWA also extends the scope of health and safety legislation because it applies to all persons at work, employers, self-employed and employees, with the exception of domestic servants in private households. About eight million people such as those employed in education, research, leisure industries, medicine and in some parts of the transport industry, have legislative protection for the first time. The legislation is designed to protect not only people at work, but also the health and safety of the general public who may be affected by work activities.

The Act also aims at controlling the storage and use of dangerous substances and the control of pollution emitted into the air from certain premises.

A Health and Safety Commission and a Health and Safety Executive were set up to administer the legislation. The Commission has major research, educational and advisory responsibilities. It also undertakes the continuing job of preparing proposals for revising, updating and extending the statutory provisions on health and safety at work and for issuing approved codes of

practice which lay down minimum guidelines.

The Health and Safety Executive has the power to enforce the statutory requirements on health and safety. In particular, inspectors now have powers to issue improvement and prohibition notices, which would enable them to require practical improvements to be made within a specified time or require preventive measures immediately without first having to obtain a court order.

Employers can appeal to an industrial tribunal about, for example, notices served on them, but in the first year following the introduction of HASAWA in 1974, there were only 35 appeals arising out of 6,000 notices served.

To sum up the ways in which the situation following the 1974 Act differs from that under the previous legislation: it covers *all* people at work, which means that over eight million workers receive protection for the first time. It contains very little detail, concentrating more on the statement of broad principles which call for positive action on the part of both employers and employees, self-regulation being encouraged. Regulations and codes of practice were to follow with a demand for commitment to health and safety at the highest level in every organisation. Written safety policies must be published, together with methods for implementing them. Full information about risks must be given to employee representatives and they must be consulted about the solution to problems, usually done in a regular and structured way through the mechanisms of safety committees and safety representatives. Joint safety committees were formed with both worker and management representatives where

a two-way flow of information could make both workers and management aware of hazards and ways to overcome them.

The inspectorate must give information about hazards and their prevention, and must therefore have direct contact with employees. Additional powers were given to inspectors to issue improvement and prohibition notices backed up by the sanctions of much stiffer financial penalties than those that existed before. Fines are unlimited and criminal proceedings can be taken for breach of general or specific duties.

The laws that existed about such things as the guarding of machines were tightened up and responsibility for this placed on the designer, importer and manufacturer of machines as well as the owners and operators.

2.3 The Safety Representative and Safety Committees Regulations (1977)

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), Regulations were made on safety representatives and safety committees which became operative from 1st October 1978 (SRSC Regulations).

Among other things these Regulations brought safety committees, which had existed for some time in many organisations, into a legal framework for the first time, although it should be noted that the committees had to be established under the SRSC provisions for this to be the case.

The Health and Safety Commission published the Regulations and in addition, the approved Code of Practice which gives the minimum standards considered acceptable. Guidance Notes also offer practical advice to employers on the Regulations.

Within the same flexible framework as the HASAWA, the Regulations and Code of Practice leave employers and trade unions free to make arrangements suitable to the circumstances of each undertaking. They set out in detail how trade unions can appoint safety representatives and also the functions of these representatives and the duty of employers to permit them time off with pay to perform their functions.

This statutory support of workers' representatives in the regulation of conditions governing their health and safety heralded a major change in the system of accident prevention in this country. Also mentioned are the obligations of the employers to provide relevant information, instruction and training.

Regulation nine deals with the establishing of safety committees. An employer must set up a safety committee if requested in writing to do so by at least two safety representatives. On receipt of this request, he must consult with the safety representatives who made it and with the representatives of recognised trade unions whose members work in any workplace in which the committee would function. The employer must post a notice for the workforce to read stating the composition of the committee and the workplace to be covered by it. The final statutory requirement on the subject of safety committees states

that the committee must be established by the employer not later than three months after receipt of the request for it.

The objectives, functions, possible composition and organisation of the safety committee are suggested in the Guidance Notes. There is particular emphasis on the promotion of co-operation between employers and employees in investigating, developing and carrying out measures to ensure the health and safety at work of all employees.

The Guidance Notes also suggest that agreed objectives or terms of reference should be drawn up for the committee and examples of these are described in detail with regard to the four departments under study in this project.

The above three sections comprise the frame of reference within which the effectiveness of the self-regulatory aspects of the HASAWA (1974) are to be assessed.

For the purpose of setting out the context for this thesis, the relevant background and legislation which has been discussed here has been treated in a descriptive rather than an analytical way. Other texts deal with various legal aspects of health and safety at work from a variety of standpoints. These include: general guides (e.g. Jackson, 1979; Dewis, 1982; Selwyn, 1982), reference manuals for safety officers (e.g. Dewis, 1978), guides for managers (e.g. Howells and Barrett, 1975; Broadhurst, 1978), Health and Safety Commission publications (e.g. HSC, 1977), handbooks directed at workers and trade unionists (e.g. Kinnersly, 1973; Eva and Oswald, 1981), as well as numerous guides produced by trade unions and other organisations.

CHAPTER THREE

SELF-REGULATION

SELF-REGULATION

It is important here to clarify exactly what is meant by this concept of self-regulation.

The Robens Report (1972) stated that a rigorous enforcement policy from health and safety inspectors was "misconceived" and "undesirable" and that they should offer advice to employers rather than enforce legal sanctions. This belief was based on the idea that self-regulation on the part of those involved in the workplace is the best method of achieving a safe and healthy environment.

"A principle theme of this report is the need for greater acceptance of shared responsibility and more reliance on self-inspection and self-regulation and less on state regulation. This calls for a greater degree of real participation in the process of decision-making at all levels."

In other words, the Committee was advocating a minimum of state intervention, a more co-operative approach being more appropriate.

What this means at plant level is voluntary management - labour interaction and a general duty of the employer to consult with employees - that is, cooperation is essential for self-regulation to be effective. But is this unitary viewpoint on health and safety a valid one? The extent to which management and trade union views on safety coincide or diverge will be investigated in the course of this thesis.

But the concept of self-regulation was not without its

critics, for example Ashford (1976), who made such comments as 'naive', 'too hopeful', 'puts too much faith in human nature'. It was also suggested that the responsibility for safety would be divided among all so that it would become no-one's business.

It is hoped that this research will indicate whether self-regulation is effective in maintaining safety standards or whether the reservations mentioned above have foundation. It will concentrate on that part of the legislation which stresses the importance of self-regulation as opposed to enforcement by outside agencies.

By self-regulation is meant the setting of self-imposed standards of health and safety performance which should be continuously monitored internally to ensure that targets are being met and standards upheld. Employers must accept the responsibility for managing their organisation in a way which ensures the systematic care of the health and safety of employees.

The important function of monitoring can be carried out at various levels in the organisation from senior management to the worker on the shopfloor. Training is particularly important for those who are specifically responsible for monitoring so that they are able to make a genuine assessment of safety performance in the organisation. For example, trade union-appointed safety representatives may monitor safety standards and then on the basis of these make representations via the consultative machinery set up under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations.

Training courses for safety representatives generally have a

module devoted to inspection and monitoring of the workplace indicating that this is seen to be an important function of the safety representative.

The internal monitoring carried out by an organisation may vary depending on the circumstances prevailing and some of the main areas which are useful in providing information regarding safety performance are:

1. Safety policy

Employers must prepare a written statement related to the health and safety of employees which includes a statement of the organisation and arrangements for carrying out the policy. The policy should be displayed for all employees to see and often individual copies are provided for workers.

Monitoring should indicate whether the organisation and arrangements for the implementation of the policy are effective. The degree of effectiveness of the policy in the organisation can indirectly indicate the degree of commitment to health and safety of the employer or senior management.

2. Accident records

It is important that direct comparisons should not be made between different organisations or, in the case of a local authority, between different departments. Differences in size, numbers at risk and the number and severity of inherent hazards makes it invalid to make

direct comparisons, and it is more useful to use statistics to indicate a trend within a department by comparing present figures with past ones.

Analysis of accidents can facilitate the prevention of their recurrence.

3. Compliance with legal requirements and Codes of Practice

This may indicate the extent to which many hazards have been controlled or eliminated.

Various methods can be used to ensure that the health and safety laws are being upheld, for example, formal inspections, safety sampling or audits. Staff must be trained in these methods so that information can be collected, recorded, analysed and evaluated in a systematic way. This information can also indicate the standards of training, supervision and instruction in the organisation.

4. Achievement of objectives

An important part of self-regulation is the setting from within the organisation of targets related to a time scale. Examples may be the elimination of hazards, the provision and use of protective equipment or the training of certain groups of staff.

This is one area which is more clear-cut for monitoring purposes because it is easier to measure progress against a pre-set target. Also from the point of view of providing feedback to the workforce

this is one area which, in conjunction with trends in accident statistics, may be used as positive reinforcement for motivating employees to work safely.

Having indicated what is meant in operational terms by self-regulation in an organisation, we can now look at some of the primary 'agents' of this procedure in an organisation. Each has an important part to play in the monitoring of safety standards and in this study separate chapters are devoted to each of three 'agents' and their roles, that is safety representatives, safety committees and supervisors.

Although these three agents represent only some of the influences on self-regulation, they closely affect the shopfloor procedures for safe working. Within the scope of this project, there had to be an element of selection of subject areas to be studied because of constraints on time and workload, and the three areas considered to be most useful from the point of view of directly influencing health and safety on the shopfloor, were safety representatives, safety committees and supervisors.

These three areas are in turn affected by overall management policy on health and safety. However, by confining the study to what was essentially a single organisation, management influence may be regarded as 'a constant', that is this study is not a comparative study on, for example, safety officers or safety policies.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

4.1 The Case Study

According to Yin (1981), the main feature of the case study as a research strategy is that unlike experiments, it attempts to examine a contemporary phenomenon in its real life context. The case study can use either qualitative or quantitative data or as in this project, a mixture of both. There is a place for both types of data, which can be used in conjunction to provide evidence around specific topics. Yin (1981) notes that with care, a case study can be conducted systematically, although he agrees with Miles (1979) that the available methodological textbooks emphasise fieldwork and not case study design or analysis.

Doby (1967) describes the case study as "a way of ordering social data with the view toward preserving the unitary character of whatever is being studied." He says the function of the case study is "to describe the case in terms of the particularities that are observable." This means the intensive examination of the specific factors implicated in the case.

In this project the case study technique was used in the form of exploratory research. The main purpose of this design is to generate and perhaps to test hypotheses.

Within the case study framework several techniques of data collection will be used. Each of these techniques has advantages for the collection of certain types of data and by using several methods it may be possible to cross-check the data which, hopefully, will lend validity to results. This methodological

triangulation and the various methods used will be discussed in more detail later.

As with all methods of research, the case study has its strengths and weaknesses. Among its disadvantages are that it is low on control - that is, variables cannot be rigorously controlled as in experimental methods, and low in representativeness - that is, in this case one cannot generalise about health and safety in other regional councils or other types of organisation on the basis of information collected in one specific organisation. It is also difficult to differentiate cause from effect in such a study and it can be risky to infer from the intensive study of one case.

The case study has as its main advantage the richness that evolves from descriptive and concentrated study of one unit and the results may suggest hypotheses which can then, or at some later stage, be tested by other methods such as experiments or surveys. The case study is particularly useful for exploratory research into subject areas such as health and safety, where little previous research has been completed and where the generation of hypotheses may be more important than the testing of them.

Glaser and Strauss (1965) make the point that qualitative research should not be seen merely as a preliminary to quantitative research, but as a theory generator in its own right: creating new theory as well as testing current theory.

Galtung (1967) sets out an interesting table which is reproduced below.

TABLE 4.1 STIMULI-RESPONSE TABLE TO SELECT RESEARCH TOOLS
(Galtung 1967) .



This useful table can help the researcher to decide what research tools to use depending on the setting in which the study takes place and the expected response.

However, there can be a combination of unstructured and structured methods for example in the form of a questionnaire containing both open-ended and pre-coded questions. This type of questionnaire was found to be useful in the present study by giving both quantitative data and descriptive data, sometimes enlarging on the coded questions.

4.2 Methodological Triangulation

Methodological triangulation can be described as the utility of different data-gathering techniques applied concurrently to the same problem. Denzin (1970) explains that triangulation can apply to data and to method.

Some years ago, Trow (1957) suggested that sociologists should refrain from defending one research method over another and realise that no single method is always superior. He said that social scientists should move on to a position which permits them to approach their problems with all relevant and appropriate methods - that is to the use of the strategy of methodological triangulation. The main reason for using this strategy is an attempt to eliminate as many sources of error as possible and to this end Bruyn (1966) states that the only satisfactory way to verify research is to check through different sources of knowledge.

It may not be possible, as in this project, to have more than one field researcher and so it may be more useful to use several methods of studying so gaining perspectives on a particular phenomenon in order to maximise research information.

It is suggested that no method of research is without bias, and research without the use of methodological triangulation may be restricted, for it is possible that interpretative errors will not be eliminated by virtue of checking alternative data sources. That is, without multiple methods assessed against common data bodies, the researcher has no way of judging the reactive and biasing effects of the methods he has used.

So any two or more methods of collecting data can reinforce each other and lend validity to data collected.

Fitzgerald & Cox (1975) give these reasons for the use of triangulation:

1. To minimise error resulting from the use of any single method for collecting data.
2. To maximise the possibility of discovering discrepancies.
3. To make full use of the principles characterising the scientific perspective.

4.3 Problems of Field Studies

Before going to look at some methods of data collection in more detail, it is important to be aware of one of the main methodological problems of field studies.

One such problem is concern for 'hardness' versus 'depth and reality' of data. Zelditch (1962) explains that quantitative data is described as 'real and deep' but asks Zelditch what do you do if you prefer data that are real, deep *and* hard?

In this project a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data were collected in an attempt to 'solve' this problem.

Zelditch classifies field methods into:

1. Participant observation where the field worker directly observes and participates by having social relationships within the social system he is studying. He may or may not play an active part in events.
2. Informal interviewing during the event itself is considered part of participant observation, or the information may be about others or events which occurred in their absence.
3. Enumeration and samples are used in both surveys and direct, repeated, countable observations.

4.4 Observation

Vidich and Shapiro (1955) note that survey data can be used to test hypotheses from participant observation. The manner in which different research methods may be best combined to provide the greatest possible overlap of subject areas is important. For example questionnaire responses may confirm participant observation findings in quantitative terms.

Observation can supply the impressionistic, organised, total picture necessary for the development of hypotheses and the integration of structured data. It can also provide a detailed description of social events as they can be observed at first hand.

Observation can be unstructured or structured, both methods having advantages and disadvantages.

One advantage of unstructured observation is that the researcher can be purely inductive, there are no artificial constraints or pre-meditated structures imposed on her. In view of this, however, the researcher must have the ability to interpret accurately the events or interactions she observes. Another advantage is that she can probe deeply into what she observes by being flexible and able to concentrate on certain areas.

The disadvantages of unstructured observations are mainly ones which make the task more difficult for the researcher. It makes it more difficult for others to replicate her research and this opens up the question of whether it is in fact essential, or even possible, to replicate interactions or social events which, unlike chemical reactions, are complex, unpredictable, not governed by any logical rules and take place within a situation which is dynamic not static. Another point regarding the difficulty of replicating observations is the fact that being studied may have an effect on a group (the Hawthorne Effect described by Roethlisberger and Dixon, 1939) and so might alter their subsequent behaviour. According to Schwartz & Schwartz (1955) the presence of an observer affects the situation under study even if one does not go so far as to suggest that his presence 'distorts reality' (Mensch & Henry, 1953).

Schwartz & Schwartz (1955) also state that recreation of events in their settings for recording and interpreting is not possible in participant observation. When observation is used

as an exploratory technique for example, the researcher may use events she sees to raise questions and suggest explanations which may then be further investigated by other means such as interviews and questionnaires.

It is suggested that the theory produced by means of unstructured observation cannot be validated scientifically, but a fuller discussion of reliability and validity of data collected by various methods is given below.

Another disadvantage of unstructured observation is that a degree of selectivity is involved. It is possible for the observation to be comprehensive, and for the researcher to capture all that occurs or does she note only what interests her or catches her attention? It is inevitable in complex social situations that some degree of selective perception is used in order to make meaningful what is happening. If only one observer is carrying out the field work it would be physically impossible to observe everything. For these reasons, even if observation is unstructured, that is rigid categorisation schemes are not used, the researcher can still usefully select material to record.

Structured observation entails the development of categorisation schemes both during and after observation. For example, there could be a schedule drawn up for recording categories of verbal or non-verbal behaviour. However, it is difficult for the observer to keep attention in order not to miss a piece of behaviour and at the same time to be aware of what is generally going on.

It is important for researchers to try to reduce to a minimum the effects of their presence on events taking place. This is perhaps best done by being as unobtrusive as possible and in the case of meetings, attending a few meetings after the initial one where introductions were made in order to get over the 'novelty' of having an outsider (especially a female one) at a safety committee meeting for example.

It is said that all acts of observation produce reactive effects both on the observed and the observer. Group behaviour will vary according to who is present and it is important for a researcher to learn how group members define him or her and in particular whether or not they believe that certain kinds of information and events should be kept hidden from her. She can interpret evidence more accurately when the answers to these questions are known. For the above reasons, it is particularly important for the researcher to be introduced to those being observed and that the nature of the study is described. The use to which any information obtained will be put should also be clearly explained in order to allay any suspicion and distrust which can arise as a result of lack of information.

The participant observer role has been described in various ways. Schwartz & Schwartz (1955) describe it as being passive or active, where an active participant observer maximises interaction with respondents. In this study when observing safety committee meetings, or observing work on various sites, the observer was as passive as possible in an attempt to intrude as little as possible.

To sum up, it can be said that most research into social relationships involves participant observation even if this is by unconscious intent, and in the research context as a whole, participant observation should still be regarded as complementary to, rather than in competition with, or in opposition to, other research methods.

Observation was used in this study to get 'a feel' for the general climate of safety committee meetings - the atmosphere, the interactions between management and safety representatives, the control of the chairman and his authority, the inputs, the types of items raised, even the seating arrangements. This was to give the observer the chance to savour some of the highly individual problems related to each department and to suggest ideas which could later be enlarged upon by using interviewing techniques and questionnaires.

This type of observation is fairly unsystematic and personal because rigid categories are not counted and reported as this might mean a loss of some of the richness of the data. As this part of the study was exploratory, a somewhat interpretative analysis was justifiable as an instrument which might generate hypotheses which could later be tested by more quantitative methods.

Observation of work being carried out at some sites in the four departments gave the researcher some insight into the potential hazards the workers encountered in their working environment. She also observed training courses in health and safety taking place at the training section of the Personnel Department at Regional Headquarters.

Observer bias

The two main forms of observer bias are: firstly that those under investigation act differently because they are being investigated. It has to be realised that this behaviour may not be representative of that usually found in a similar situation, for example, the researcher was told on one occasion that the language was 'toned down a bit' when she was present at safety committee meetings. Secondly, there may be some subjectivity on the part of the observer who must interpret what is happening around her in order to make sense of it all. The frame of reference within which she structures this information will to some extent affect her interpretation. It is important for observers to be aware of these potential biases so that they may eliminate or at least minimise them.

4.5 The Interview

Observation does not allow the researcher to study events that have already occurred or to gain insight into the attitudes, opinions or emotions of subjects. In order to obtain such information, interviews can be effectively used, where key people are asked open-ended questions. The researcher can probe for information, that is the situation can be formal, but, when exploring the objective, fairly unstructured.

Camell & Kahn (1968) distinguish three broad, important concepts for a successful interview. The first is the accessibility of the required information to the respondent - this means

that the researcher must find out in advance who the key people are in the organisation and must ensure that she interviews people who can accurately answer her questions.

The second important point is that the respondent must be able to understand what is required of him, that is he must be asked clear, unambiguous and meaningful questions, and also that the researcher would be well advised, at the time of making an appointment to interview a respondent, to make quite clear what the interview will involve, and what subject areas will be covered. This gives the respondent a chance to look out any material he may need and at least to be prepared to answer questions on a particular subject. This in no way invalidates his replies as he should not be told in advance what questions he will be asked, only informed of the general area to be covered.

The third point made by Cannell & Kahn is that the respondent should be motivated to answer the questions accurately. Perhaps the researcher should fully explain the importance of her research and where the interview fits in with the rest of the study. Another important way to encourage people to give truthful, accurate answers is to assure them of the confidentiality of the final report. In many situations, such as in the area of health and safety involved in the present study, respondents may fear that statements they make may 'rebound' on them should they get into the hands of others, for example their superiors or trade union officials.

There are various types of interview techniques and the choice of which one to use will depend upon the prevailing

circumstances and the information to be obtained.

Fiske et al. (1956) and Gordon (1969) maintain that the focussed or guided interview allows respondents more freedom while still covering a given area in a systematic way. It has the flexibility to allow respondents to develop their views in detail.

The focussed interview was used in the present study consisting of a small number of open-ended questions around several major topics relevant to the enquiry. This gives flexibility as well as ensuring that the information collected is relevant. If informants stray from the point the skilled interviewer can gently lead them back to the relevant subject area. This is made easier by not being forced to go through a list of structured questions which for reasons of standardisation must be answered by subjects in the 'correct' order.

Structured, standardised, formal interviews are described by Fitzgerald and Cox (1975) as having a fixed question content and structure with a set of standardised responses - that is, fixed alternatives. This technique can be used when the researcher already knows something about her research problem and has a number of specific questions she wants answered.

Mann (1968) refers to the standardisation that is possible in formal interviews which allows some quantification of response. The richness of the data resulting from uncontrolled interviews is lost but uniformity is gained.

Unstructured, informal interviews are said by Fitzgerald and Cox to be useful in exploratory studies where the researcher wants

to explore general question areas and then follow up on particular topics suggested by the respondent. The structure and order may not be pre-determined which allows more flexibility although it means that direct comparability between interviews is not possible because informants are not treated uniformly.

Smith (1972) describes unstructured interviewing as non-directive where the interviewer formulates her own questions and the respondent formulates his own replies. He says it should be an individual interview where attitudes, opinions and information about underlying motives are elicited by means of the interpersonal reaction between the interviewer and interviewee.

Mann (1968) considers informal interviews to be very natural and good conversation flow is easy to maintain. The informant can develop his views and may introduce points the interviewer had not thought of. The interviewer can prompt and form real depth and insight into complex social situations. The main disadvantages as seen by Mann are that the interviews are not replicable and also there will be some selection on the part of the interviewer as to what he uses and what he discards. However, it is a good exploratory technique to be used before detailed hypotheses are put forward and elaborate questionnaires or interview schedules made up.

Dean et al. (1967) discuss some of the limitations and compensations of unstructured methods used in field work. These methods may suggest hypotheses but seldom provide the data for testing them. There is also the danger that relationships established in the field may increase the likelihood of bias if the researcher uses these relationships in this way.

On the other hand, the field worker is not bound by prejudice, the problem can be reformulated as the interview proceeds. Because of her closer contact with the field situation, the researcher is better able to avoid misleading or meaningless questions. The field worker may absorb information which at the time may seem to be irrelevant but much later, when her perspective on the situation has changed, this information may turn out to be extremely valuable.

The conduct of the interview

It is important for the interviewer to establish a relationship between herself and the respondent at an early stage of the interview. Philip et al. (1975) state that the interviewee must be put at ease and at the same time it is important that the authority of the interviewer is established. Smith (1972) says the respondent must be completely relaxed and sympathetic rapport established between him and the interviewer. He suggests that a general first question is useful to arouse interest and to motivate the respondent to communicate and discuss his feelings fully and freely. Smith also expresses the view that the interviewer, having established the necessary rapport should then become a 'passive' listener with no interruptions, indeed he says that a sympathetic silence may lead to the expressing of unconscious motives or attitudes.

The question of probing and prompting is discussed by Philip et al. who point out that matters of opinion are very sensitive to suggestion, and the interviewer must not paraphrase questions. However, open-ended questions may require probing to various

extents in informal interviews where there is more freedom to probe and challenge which can lead to errors.

Smith gives four reasons for intervention by the interviewer:

1. To keep the respondent talking to elaborate on what he has said; to go into greater detail and more deeply into the subject.
2. To obtain the reasons for what has been said.
3. To introduce a new subject that has not yet been covered.
4. To return to a point made earlier by the respondent.

Philip et al. state that replies must be recorded with scrupulous accuracy at the time they are given. This point leads on to a discussion of some of the sources of error and interviewer bias put forward by Smith who says that response errors can be either systematic or non-systematic. Systematic bias may stem from the interviewer holding strong opinions, prejudices or expectations regarding respondents' views.

Non-systematic bias can arise from carelessness in recording or misreading instructions on the part of the interviewer. These effects of bias may cancel each other out in the survey as a whole, but it is important to have clear interviewer instructions, meaningful questions and well trained interviewers where the research project uses several different interviewers.

The main sources of interviewer error and bias are according to Smith:

1. The interviewer-respondent interaction
2. Deviations in asking the questions
3. Inadequate probing
4. Faulty recording of the answers

Dean et al. describe interviewing as the best way to get at information, impressions and feelings that can be verbally reported. However, they stress three sources of possible distortion:

1. Informants may give socially acceptable answers which may modify expressed attitudes or feelings and fail to reflect the information which the interviewer is attempting to elicit.
2. Selective perception is a psychological concept used to describe the fact that we do not perceive or process all the information around us but select information which reinforces our expectations about an individual or a situation. For this reason an interviewer may select comments which back up the responses he may have expected from the informant, for example a senior manager or a trade union representative. On the other hand he may select out, that is, ignore information which appears to conflict with his pre-conceived ideas of what he will hear. As a result the interviewer reduces any cognitive dissonance he may experience as a result of such conflict.
3. The interviewer may forget details when writing up an interview later. It is difficult to take notes and maintain some eye contact at the same time. However, in

spite of the difficulties, taking notes may still be better than using a tape recorder for reasons described below.

Smith (1972) states that the interview can be reliable but not valid, but it cannot be highly valid without also being reliable. Reliability is difficult to achieve when several different interviewers are used, but is more attainable when one interviewer is carrying out all the interviews. However the more informal, unstructured and open-ended the interview is, the lower will be its reliability. Validity may be more difficult to establish as there may be little previous data against which to validate the interview in question.

Smith sums up by saying that the interview is a rich source of data, and interviewer error can be minimised if the potential sources of error described above are dealt with.

In the present study, a single interviewer carried out all the interviews - informal, unstructured interviews being carried out initially followed later by more formal, structured interviews. Only key respondents were interviewed such as safety officers and senior managers, and there was no attempt to analyse answers statistically because only a small number of interviews were carried out. These provided some interesting attitudes and views on safety and gave rise to questions asked in the two questionnaires described later.

Note-taking can be a problem with an unstructured interview, but it was found that most people expect the interviewer to take

notes and, with practice, it becomes fairly satisfactory to take brief notes which are written up immediately after each interview. A tape recorder was not used on the grounds that it can make people feel ill-at-ease and also because it can be very time-consuming to transcribe the recording.

4.6 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire is another means of collecting information about opinions, attitudes and knowledge of a group of respondents. However compared with interviews there is an increase in the possibility of misunderstanding and deception because it increases the distance, both physical and symbolic, between the researcher and his respondents, making it difficult to probe or follow up seemingly contradictory responses.

Fitzgerald and Cox (1975) state that although using questionnaires is less expensive than interviewing, the completion rate is seldom better than 60%. They make a useful distinction between the two main types of questionnaire making the point that there is a range in between. The first type is highly structured with fixed alternative responses. This type of questionnaire is easily precoded, simple to administer and relatively inexpensive to analyse. However respondents may feel compelled to select one of the alternatives when none really fits the respondent's position.

The second type of questionnaire is open-ended where the respondent is not required to choose among fixed responses set by

the researcher. This gives a degree of freedom of choice and the opportunity of giving detailed responses. However this type is more difficult and costly to analyse. In spite of these disadvantages, an open-ended questionnaire should be used if the researcher does not know all the alternative answers or when the number of possible alternative answers is very large.

Fitzgerald & Cox suggest that the researcher can benefit from both types of questionnaire by using a mixture of questions. This may be advantageous but Fitzgerald & Cox add a word of caution saying that this procedure does not eliminate the weaknesses of either type of question. The big disadvantage is that the combination of questions complicates the analysis.

Berdie and Anderson (1974) say that the questionnaire must be easy to complete with brief but clear instructions for completion. They also suggest beginning with a few interesting, non-threatening questions. They emphasise the importance of question construction. Questions can be dichotomous, open-ended or ranking and much attention has to be paid to the actual wording in order to ensure that the respondent understands exactly what is meant by the question and what his response options are.

Mann (1968) says that it is important to avoid ambiguous or leading questions, and what he calls double response to a question which because of its construction seems to indicate that two answers are needed. Also to be avoided are questions containing jargon and technical terms or those couched in emotional terms.

Philip et al. (1975) say a questionnaire can consist of

open-ended questions or those with a limited list of alternative replies. The questionnaire should be well laid out, simple and not too long. The questions should initiate responses that are acceptable indications of those variables that are to be studied. The presence of each question needs to be justified - it must gather information on a specific aspect of the study or test the accuracy of responses to other questions.

Respondents need a certain standard of education to be able to fill in a questionnaire adequately according to Krausz and Miller (1974) who also suggest the avoidance of loaded words such as 'bosses' and 'strike breakers'.

Oppenheim (1966) stresses the importance of a covering letter to respondents in a postal survey to stress the confidentiality of information collected by the researcher. This may help to increase the response rate which is notoriously low in postal surveys. With regard to the response rate, Moser & Kalton (1971) say that it is possible that only recipients having a particular viewpoint will respond to the survey - a point to be kept in mind by the researcher.

Galtung (1967) says that the standardisation offered by questionnaires is a strong advantage over, for example, interviews when the sample is a homogeneous one. When it comes to follow-up however, the interview provides opportunities for clarification and recording more subtle, non-verbal cues, that are not possible with questionnaires. The only type of follow-up here is the use of filter questions but these apply at all respondents in a certain category so provide follow-up of a different kind.

Galtung makes reference to control with regard to the filling in of questionnaires which is difficult unless there is some sort of supervision - respondents may get friends to assist them to answer the questions. However at least the use of questionnaires is free of the interviewer effect which can affect replies in a face-to-face situation. Questionnaires are inexpensive, a characteristic which makes them attractive to researchers, and can generate a considerable amount of information in a fairly short time period as all respondents can receive a questionnaire in the one posting.

The importance of carrying out a pilot study is mentioned by several researchers. Krausz and Miller (1974) describe a pilot study as a small scale replica of the main survey which tests the suitability of the data collection technique and the adequacy of the questionnaire. For example, do the questions provide the necessary indications to identify and measure the variables under scrutiny and whether this is done in an unambiguous and meaningful way. The researcher has the opportunity to confirm or modify the design proposed or suggest alternatives to it before being committed to the existing questionnaire layout.

Fitzgerald & Cox (1975) say a pilot study must be conducted on a small number of respondents who are similar in background characteristics to the target sample. This pre-test often highlights ambiguous questions and may indicate a need to change the wording, order and content of a questionnaire. Oppenheim (1966) notes that a pilot study may show up a question to be too wide or narrow in scope, too colloquial or too technical in wording or too intimate or abstract. Some free answer questions may be turned into multiple choice ones on the basis of the results of a piloted questionnaire.

In the present study, a questionnaire was constructed to be sent to all safety representatives in the four departments under study. This consisted of a mixture of closed and open-ended questions and was a lengthy questionnaire, as it was important to see if individuals would be willing to complete a long questionnaire and to answer several open-ended questions requiring some thought. It was thought by the researcher that the population being trade union-appointed representatives who presumably had considerable interest in the subject of health and safety and their contribution to safe working, would mean that they would be motivated and interested enough to complete the questionnaire. This hypothesis was later borne out by the 77% response rate.

The population on whom the questionnaire was piloted were attending a local college of education on a TUC safety representative training course. These safety representatives were divided for teaching purposes into two groups, one from the private sector and one from the public sector. Each was handed a copy of the questionnaire by the researcher with an explanation of what a pilot study is and how valuable their co-operation would be. There was a reasonable number of questionnaires returned and it was noticed that nearly all of these were from the safety representatives who worked in the public sector.

As a result of this pilot study, some alterations and improvements were made and when the questionnaire for supervisors was constructed, it was decided that it was so similar (although shorter) to the safety representative one, that it would not be necessary to carry out another pre-test. However in the light

of experience a few small changes were made in questions common to both questionnaires, for example the addition of another category to a graded response type of question, where it was felt that this would be an improvement.

We can sum up some of the possible errors in the use of questionnaires. Instructions should be clear so that all respondents answer the questionnaire in a standardised way. Questions should not be culture- or class-ridden or worded in emotive language. An important problem with questionnaires is the possibility that respondents are not answering truthfully but are giving socially desirable answers. They may provide the answers they think the researcher wants or they may suppress the truth because they fear repercussions, perhaps from employers, if they tell the truth as they see it. One way of encouraging truthful answers is to strongly emphasise confidentiality and anonymity as in the case of the present study when names were not asked for on the questionnaire. Interpretation is another important variable as different respondents may understand different meanings from the same words in a questionnaire, so emphasising the need for clarity and lack of ambiguity.

One other important potential fault occurs if the researcher, in an attempt to reduce the amount of data from completed questionnaires and to facilitate qualification of data classifies the responses. The categories used to classify the respondents' answers may be too gross and so may overlook the subtleties of meaning that the respondents may wish to convey. This point is made in the chapter on safety representatives when it is explained that a decision was made not to combine certain categories

(safety representative roles), even if the numbers in each category were small, because of the loss of interesting information. However, categories may also be combined for the purpose of statistical testing, providing a balance between a descriptive and a statistical approach to the data.

These are only a few of the potential sources of error associated with the use of questionnaires but it is vitally important for researchers to be aware of them and to try to eliminate them or reduce them to a minimum in order to be able to use the information they generate in a meaningful way,

The questionnaires in this study were used to supply quantitative data some of which was suitable for statistical analysis. These data provided both factual information regarding for example, age, trade union membership and also data regarding cognitive variables such as attitudes and opinions in relation to various aspects of health and safety held by safety representatives and supervisors in the sample populations.

4.7 Analysis of Documents

Fitzgerald & Cox (1975) describe three potential sources of error in the analysis of documents.

1. Error may be built in by the recording agency or individual, for example selective retention of recorded data.

2. Error resulting from clerical mistakes.
3. Error resulting from misinterpretations by either researcher or respondent.

The advantages of using analysis of document is that the technique is relatively inexpensive and is also non-reactive, that is the presence of the researcher has no effect on the content. The documents can provide information about events which happened in the past and which might otherwise be forgotten.

Content analysis can be used to provide validity. For example, the researcher attended a sample of safety committee meetings and later compared notes taken at the time, with official minutes to make sure that they cross-checked. The minutes were found, in this way and in the opinion of the researcher, to be an accurate representation of the main issues discussed at meetings. Other documents which could be analysed were departmental safety policies, the terms of reference and constitutions of safety committees and accident statistics.

Dean et al. (1967) say that content analysis can also be used to edit field notes, to develop categories for the classification of data, to decide upon the units to be tallied, to count or cross-tabulate or in some other way establish relations among variables. The analysis of documents was used in this study to provide an additional method of cross-checking data rather than as a research method standing on its own. For example, minutes of safety committee meetings were analysed and the types of issues discussed were classified in an attempt to validate the responses given by safety representatives in their questionnaire responses.

4.8 Reliability and Validity and Statistical Analysis

The reliability and validity of the various methods used to collect data in this study will not be discussed in detail. However the reliability of this type of social research can be examined.

The degree of consistency of dependability of a measure, that is, its reliability, had traditionally centred on some measurement of repeated use. But repetition is an almost impossible criterion of social situations. Suchman (1967) suggests that it may be better to talk about internal consistency of operational indices, that is to repeat the question or observation from another point of view which does not destroy the conceptual meaning of the datum. The inter-relationships of different indices of the same concept can then be examined. Bruyn (1966) says that a study should be capable of replication and interpretation using the same method by another independent investigator. Perhaps there could be two observations carried out simultaneously by two observers. However this idea is not without problems due to the unavoidable element of subjectivity present even in a structured observation. This is discussed in more detail below.

Validity is a notoriously difficult concept to define but it is an evaluative criterion as to whether a procedure 'measures' what it purports to measure. Smith (1972) says that validity can be difficult because there may not be previous data to validate the new data against. Bruyn (1966) suggests the verification of data by checking through different sources of knowledge - that

is through what has been described above as methodological triangulation. However Bruyn admits that there are no absolute methods for checking the validity of findings from participant observation because the researcher studies the reality directly. A situation or social interactions may occur once only never to be repeated or perhaps even remembered by the individual concerned. Because of the differences in interpretation due to perception, no two individuals will put exactly the same interpretation upon what occurred. We selectively perceive what happens around us for a variety of reasons one of which is motivated perception which makes us put more emphasis on certain aspects of, for example, an interaction. We also, for defensive reasons, may filter out certain aspects which do not fit in with our attitudes or preconceptions. This demonstrates how difficult is this concept of validity with regard to certain types of methodology. This researcher effect is minimal when using questionnaires as opposed to observation and interviews.

Construct validity is very important in research, for example it is important for the researcher to define a concept such as self-regulation and to suggest some potential criteria for its 'measurement'.

Kaplan (1964) argues that "the work of the behavioural scientist might well become methodologically sounder if only he did not try to be so scientific". The social sciences' pre-occupation with emulating the natural sciences has resulted in a tendency to test for statistical significance rather than looking for meaningful relationships. Rich qualitative data may be lost

at the expense of scientific rigour involving quantitative procedures.

Suchman (1967) says that sometimes conclusions are made that a relationship is not significant, when what is meant is that the population difference is not large enough for a small sample to determine, although a larger sample may well show a significant relationship.

Research can be described in terms of failure or success (which are in themselves subjective terms) and successful research, which may prove or confirm what is already known, gains ready acceptance. However research which is considered to some extent to have 'failed' can still be valuable.

The purpose of research is, in my opinion, not only to try to produce new knowledge in a particular subject area, but also to provide a learning experience for the researcher. Research degrees can be conferred on the basis of the scholarship and learning displayed by the researcher and not only in the situation where a major 'breakthrough' occurs.

Hypothesis generation

The researcher starts off with a theory or general idea which has to be brought down to a researchable level. Research questions are broad and general whereas research hypotheses go further and are narrow, focussed and testable. Hypotheses turn problems and questions into testable propositions subject to empirical refutation (or confirmation).

Hypotheses are generated as the result of the identification of a problem to be solved. We state, either explicitly or implicitly, that two or more variables relate to each other in some determinate way. Hypotheses enable social scientists to formalise their ideas in as open and rigorous a manner as possible where personal bias is open to scrutiny. These propositions about the relationships between variables can be tested empirically in a way that isolated facts about a single variable cannot.

Becker (1958) states that a well-formulated hypothesis makes possible a deliberate search for negative cases, particularly when other knowledge suggests likely areas in which to look for such evidence. This kind of search requires advanced conceptualisation of the problem, and evidence gathered in this way might carry greater weight for certain kinds of conclusions.

In the present study, hypotheses were generated as a result of reading, both of the background legislation and of previous research which has been carried out in the area of health and safety. Interviews with senior management, safety officers and inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive also gave rise to various hypotheses related to the part played by safety representatives, supervisors and safety committees in the self-regulation of health and safety standards in the Local Authority.

The hypotheses which were identified and tested in the present study are described in each of the relevant chapters.

Hypothesis testing

Baldamus (1972) describes the hypothesis as fulfilling the

need to "sort out one's ideas, to formulate a tentative proposition in such a manner that the possibility of an empirical test *might* be contemplated, *if* a convenient opportunity to do so presented itself."

Social enquiry is of a para-scientific nature and its associated terminology comes directly from "the scientific method". For example tests, variables, prediction, replication may not be appropriate when social research is so often a process of discovery and is essentially descriptive rather than experimentally based.

Baldamus says that statistical testing may be an empty gesture, a way of pretending to be scientific unless data that is found to be not significant is described as well as statistically significant data. Hypotheses have to be stated before examining the data or else there is a danger of 'data dredging' where researchers carry out wholesale statistical tests on their data in an indiscriminate way in the hope of discovering something significant.

There is an opinion, in my view unfounded, that only if a proposition can be tested by experimental or statistical methods, is it possible for the results to be regarded as potentially useful for administrative, political or economic decision makers.

The main statistical test that can be carried out on data of nominal type collected in this study is the Chi-squared test. Where this is used the significance level which will be accepted as indicating an association between two variables is the 0.05

level and the probability value for the relevant degrees of freedom will be given. Only association can be inferred, this test cannot indicate cause and effect.

The present research project is considered to be qualitative and descriptive rather than analytical and quantitative and the study is seen not so much as hypothesis testing as hypothesis generating and will be carried out in this spirit.

Kish (1959) describes statistical tests as designed for distinguishing results at a pre-determined level of improbability, for example $p = 0.05$, under a specified null hypothesis of random events. After finding a result improbable under the null hypothesis the researcher must not accept blindly the hypothesis of 'significance' due to a presumed cause.

Child and Partridge (1982) state that statistical tests must be interpreted conservatively and researchers must always be aware that their results in no way indicate the substantive and analytical significance of relationships.

In this project, the traditional convention will be used whereby a significant level of probability, $p = 0.05$ (the 5% significance level) is referred to as 'significant' and the significant level of probability, $p = 0.01$ (the 1% significance level) is referred to as 'highly significant'.

4.9 Problems of Access

Mann (1968) when discussing human relations skills in social research, talks of the role expectations of people in an organisation with regard to the researcher. He stresses that it is the researcher's responsibility to develop in those who are co-operating with him on an understanding of the meaning of objectivity in research role, that he is an impartial outsider. The researcher has to gain trust and to get rid of suspicion and if he gives pledges of anonymity and confidentiality, these must never be violated. These are all valid points which have been taken into account in the present study.

The subject area of health and safety at work can be an emotive one in industry and because of its obvious industrial relations associations can be divisive. The legislation, although clearly stressing the use of the trade union channels for worker representatives, also stresses the need for co-operation and consultation rather than negotiation over health and safety matters. However a researcher going into an organisation to see how a piece of legislation is being implemented, not only by examining what management is doing, but also what trade union safety representatives are contributing, is bound initially to arouse some apprehension at all levels. Management may wonder if areas found needing improvement will be reported to the unions or to the Health and Safety Executive. Trade unions may suspect that the researcher is doing a bit of 'spying' for management, and members of safety committees may wonder what the researcher is doing listening to what is going on and how to treat her.

The answer to all these potential problems is undoubtedly information - plenty of it given well in advance and in a pleasant unthreatening way. I feel that tackling some of these problems in a subject area such as health and safety has provided me with one of the most valuable learning experiences available to researchers.

The Chief Executive was written to explaining the research project and asking if it could be based in the local authority. The four departments, each with a safety officer or co-ordinator, were picked to study. Safety officers were contacted and then appointments made with Directors and senior managers in each department. During interviews, at this level, co-operation was excellent when it was explained that the research project was an academic one for a higher degree and was not to be published in newspapers and that the local authority was to be anonymous (although this was not demanded).

However in one department, the Director insisted that the safety officer was to be present during the interview and indeed he answered one or two of the questions. This seemed to indicate some insecurity on the part of the Director and was uncomfortable for the researcher who had already asked the safety officer some of the same questions.

In another department, the Assistant Director apologised for the safety officer not being present but then he relaxed and gave some interesting comments. Indeed when he thought the official interview was over, he lit a cigarette and proceeded to give some off-the-cuff but very relevant views on health and safety. The suspicions of management were definitely reduced when they

discovered that the research was for a serious purpose and when they perceived that the researcher was not likely to be a 'trouble-maker'.

When I was interviewed for the research post, I was asked if I thought that being a woman would be a disadvantage when dealing with people at all levels when I had little industrial experience. I replied that I thought it would be a positive advantage as a non-threatening, friendly, unaggressive approach could gain the researcher the co-operation and acceptance of others. I feel strongly that this indeed did prove to be the case.

Having got management approval, I thought carefully about the best way to approach the trade unions so that I could best approach their safety representatives whose co-operation with returning the questionnaire to be sent to them was vital. Either I could ask permission from full-time officials of the main trade unions first, or I could go to the safety representatives direct and possibly upset the full-time officials. I decided that formal letters to the trade unions may blow up out of proportion this aspect of the project and may delay getting the questionnaire sent out to the safety representatives. So on journeys with safety officers around different areas, I was introduced to safety representatives and they were told what I was working on. I also sat in on a few safety committee meetings initially to be introduced and explain to safety representatives that in the future a questionnaire would be sent to them. I emphasised that this would be anonymous and how grateful I would be if they returned these questionnaires.

An important event took place at one of these early safety committee meetings I observed. When I was introduced to a member of one of the major trade unions who had a responsibility for health and safety as well as being a safety representative, he objected to my presence and insisted that I should contact the full-time officials before going further. I explained the purpose of the project and the meeting continued. I later had a meeting with this person where I more fully described the research project and the atmosphere was friendly and co-operative (he later fully completed the questionnaire as a safety representative).

I then wrote to the two full-time trade union officials of the major trade unions stating that I would be sending out a questionnaire to safety representatives and would be happy to make an appointment to come and see either of them to explain the project more fully. One official did see me in his office and was interested and co-operative; the other official, in spite of being written to twice, did not respond and so the research work progressed satisfactorily with excellent co-operation from all concerned.

This highlights the problem of whether it is best to approach certain bodies with the attendant risk of delay or even a decision to withhold co-operation, or to try through informal ways, for example, social interaction, to get oneself and one's work known about and then officially inform these bodies when foundations have been laid.

Access to an organisation needs to be handled carefully, often in planned stages, in order to gain the vital co-operation

of people at all levels. The essence of the procedure is to adopt a pleasant, non-threatening approach to keep people informed well in advance of what is to take place, emphasising confidentiality and the value of their contribution to a useful piece of academic work.

During the writing of Chapter Eleven on the philosophy of self-regulation, approximately ten sources were consulted, mainly academics and health and safety experts, who were interviewed by the researcher using a flexible approach which allowed the conversation to cover a wide range of topics.

CHAPTER FIVE

LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1 Relevant Previous Work

As explained above, there is a lack of published empirical work in this area of health and safety in organisational terms, although since the field work was initiated in the present study, other work has been published.

In the United States, Kochan et al. (1977) carried out a study on safety committee effectiveness and in the United Kingdom, Beaumont has been the most prolific writer on, among other things, safety committees and safety representatives and their relationship both with management and with the workers they represent. The work of both Kochan and Beaumont is discussed below in relation to the present project.

In the 1950s, Gouldner studied the effect of a change in management on the organisational structure in a gypsum mine in the United States. As part of this study, he looked at the safety rules and procedures in the organisation and developed the model of bureaucracy he described as representative bureaucracy. The local authority to be studied is an example of a bureaucratic organisation, and an important part of this study is to test the relevance of Gouldner's model to the safety procedures in a 1980s bureaucracy in the United Kingdom.

These then are the three main authors of empirical research into organisational aspects of health and safety which form the basis of the theoretical background to this study.

5.2 Gouldner's Study

Perrow (1979) in "Complex Organisations: a critical essay", describes local authorities as having elaborate bureaucratic hierarchies where the bulk of the people in the lower and middle levels are prevented from giving their all for goal achievement because the hierarchical structure promotes rigidity and timidity. The top of the pyramid is where the power is located. Subordinates are not encouraged to express ideas for change which might imply that their superior should have thought of the change but did not. For this reason, Perrow suggests that people prefer familiar to new situations.

This lack of opportunity for individuals to use their initiative and make decisions promotes delays and sluggishness which Perrow says results from "everything being kicked upstairs for a decision". This could be because the superior insists on this or because people do not want to risk making a poor decision. Eventually, it is suggested, closely watched subordinates may give up using their initiative or imagination, and may suppress or distort information.

In the course of this study of a local authority, a watch was kept for these manifestations of bureaucratic organisation particularly with regard to health and safety issues.

Having described local authorities as bureaucracies, it is now important to examine an important study carried out by Alvin Gouldner in the United States in 1954 and described in his book 'Patterns of industrial bureaucracy'.

Before describing Gouldner's work in more detail, it may be useful to briefly summarise the main points of the study.

Gouldner revised and extended Weber's conception of bureaucracy and considered that Weber described three types of bureaucracy. One of these is the 'representative' form of bureaucracy based on rules established by agreement and which are justified technically and administered by specially qualified personnel. These rules are consented to voluntarily. The second pattern described by Gouldner is the 'punishment-centred' bureaucracy and is based on the imposition of rules and on obedience that is externally imposed. The third type is 'mock bureaucracy' where bureaucratic rules exist but are ignored - that is they are not enforced by management and are not obeyed by the workforce.

The research project was carried out by Gouldner in order to clarify some of the social processes leading to different degrees of bureaucratisation, to identify some of the crucial variables, and to formulate tentative hypotheses concerning their interconnections. Details of Gouldner's study are given in Chapter Ten.

The model of representative bureaucracy which will be featured in the present study was, according to Gouldner, characterised by numerous, complex safety rules to which workers willingly conformed as there was little resistance to the safety programme. The reason for this lack of resistance was considered to be that the safety programme was in conformity with the workers' values of personal well-being, cleanliness and neatness, as well as their knowledge that injury meant loss of earnings. Any deviations are explained by well-intentioned carelessness or ignorance. The

rules are made and enforced by experts with acceptable authority.

Another typical aspect of developed bureaucracy was the complex system of paper work and reports centred on the safety programme and the regular meetings to discuss accidents. Accidents were associated with a careful system of statistics and reports, rules, special meetings, posters and inspections. A specialist safety manager was employed which is also typical of a bureaucratic organisation. The safety work in the organisation could then be described as being highly bureaucratised. So it was not safety as such that Gouldner was studying, only the social characteristics which happened to be associated with safety in the plant.

Gouldner states that safety work was unique because management believed that adherence to the safety programme could be secured by way of 'education' through meetings, posters and discussions rather than via discipline and punishment. When accidents were discussed prevention was what was important, not fixing the blame. When one party defines the other's failure to perform, in an expected way as being due to the latter's 'carelessness' or ignorance - the 'utilitarian conception of deviance' - the response will take the form of developing a 'representative bureaucracy'.

In opposition to this idea, where one party defines the others failure to perform in an expected way as being deliberate and intentional - the 'voluntaristic' conception of deviance - the response will take the form of developing a 'punishment-centred bureaucracy'.

Gouldner sees a convergence between Weber's conception of

bureaucracy based on expertise and his own conception of the 'representative' pattern. For example, the safety engineer is expected to use his technical knowledge to prevent accidents. However, Gouldner states that the expert's authority is validated only when used to further the workers' ends and when workers have a say in the enactment and administration of the experts' programme.

Some of the specific aspects studied by Gouldner and followed up in the present study will be discussed later in more detail, but included are: workers' attitudes towards safety, the education as opposed to punishment effect, the role of the supervisor, the interdependence of safety and production, the opinions of senior management with regard to health and safety and the effects of safety meetings.

In the course of this study of a Scottish Local Authority the question of whether the organisation can be described as an example of representative bureaucracy will be examined. Some aspects of Gouldner's model will be operationalised and a number of hypotheses generated concerning the existence of these phenomena in the organisation under study.

Examples of hypotheses derived from Gouldner's model include:

1. Safety rules are given by experts - is there a Safety Officer in the department and if so what is his input to the system of safety rules?
2. Both groups, trade unions and management, initiate the rules and view them as their own.

3. The safety rules are felt by workers to be imposed upon them.
4. There are shared norms on health and safety (a unitary perspective). For example, what are the views of both management and trade unions on disregard of safety rules?
5. Both workers and management can legitimate the rules in terms of their own values
 - is neither group's values violated under most conditions?
6. The standard explanations of deviance from the rules are ignorance or well-intentioned carelessness.
7. The rules have an effect on the status of the participants.
8. The safety programme generates few tensions, little overt conflict, diminishes conflict, and increases solidarity between workers and management.

It is suggested that the Local Authority to be studied can be classified as a representative bureaucracy for the reasons given below, and that when its safety programme is studied, its organisation and administration will reveal some of the characteristics listed above.

With regard to the Local Authority being classified as a

bureaucracy, Weber (1947) described the 'ideal type' of bureaucracy as being the most rational method of work for administration on a large scale. A Local Authority is an example of a large scale administrative organisation which displays other characteristics of bureaucracy identified by Weber. There is a hierarchy of several levels with the higher levels being the locus of power. Relationships are impersonal with loyalty to the office held by an individual's superior not to him personally. There is a large number of rules which clearly define procedures and communication is generally written necessitating the need for complex filing systems for storage purposes. Officials are trained and qualified for the job (for example by the Civil Service examination system) and there are experts in certain fields such as safety.

Information to test the above hypotheses will be gathered using the techniques of interviews, questionnaires, observation and analysis of documents such as safety policies and minutes of safety committees.

5.3 The Work of Kochan, Dyer and Lipsky

Because employees and employers in organisations have different and often opposing interests, collective bargaining has emerged as a process to accommodate the needs of both parties. Conflict and mistrust is often characteristic of this bargaining relationship. Therefore, the overall trade union-management relationship which exists in an organisation will influence the degree of success of a joint attempt to tackle such issues as improved safety performance.

Kochan et al. (1977) suggest that safety in the United States is an example of an 'integrative' issue within the bargaining relationship over which the parties share more common goals. This has been discussed by Walton and McKersie (1965) who suggest that co-operative problem-solving strategies within the context of the overall bargaining relationship have to be developed to deal with safety issues.

It is important that safety is differentiated from the issues that characterise the formal bargaining process and which polarise the two parties' views. Kochan et al. suggest that where this is done successfully, an improvement in safety and health may follow, whereas failure to use problem-solving techniques will constrain the ability of the parties to achieve safety improvements.

Kochan et al. carried out a study of safety committees on the assumption that they would be highly suited for problem-solving as safety issues tended to be ones where the union and the employer held basically common goals. They interviewed managers and trade union representatives and sent out questionnaires in order to collect information concerning their views on safety committees and their functioning.

Kochan et al. found that management viewed safety committees as advising bodies with the power to make recommendations, and not as decision-making bodies with the power to establish or implement policies. They suggest that advisory status is crucial to obtaining management's acceptance of and commitment to these committees. Management feel less threatened as they are not locked into a decision and as an advisory committee is not an

extension of the collective bargaining process it encourages co-operative problem-solving behaviour rather than bargaining strategies. The two parties share information and ideas, the scope of issues is less circumscribed and it is possible to discuss alternative solutions without commitment to a position.

The safety committee being an advisory body can be advantageous to the trade unions because this reduces the threat of being co-opted into decisions that are unpopular with the rank and file members. The trade union can still reserve the right to take new safety issues or issues that continue to be rejected by management in the committee process, to the bargaining table in future rounds of negotiations.

Respondents were asked by Kochan et al. to rate the extent to which they perceived the goals of the union and the management in their plant to be in conflict. Twelve different industrial relations issues were rated and it was expected that the degree of goal conflict would be lower on health and safety issues than on others such as wages, grievance procedures and fringe benefits. The results showed that management officials saw a greater potential for union-management co-operation on safety and health issues than did union officials. Kochan et al. hypothesised that if these perceptions carried over into behaviour then the union representatives would mix negotiating strategies with the more co-operative approach of problem-solving in their interactions with management on health and safety issues.

The data suggested that union officials appeared to rely more heavily on problem-solving than on negotiating strategies but neither the union nor the management officials abandoned

negotiating behaviour on safety issues. So the position is rather more complex than the original hypothesis suggested, with union-management interactions appearing to be mixed-motive relationships characterised partly by problem-solving and partly by negotiating behaviour. The predominant mode of relationship appeared to be one of problem-solving, but in addition there were variations in the amount of pressure the parties exert on each other by using negotiating strategies.

Kochan et al. found that employers tend to choose *either* problem-solving *or* negotiating behaviour in dealing with the union on safety but that unions tend to employ a mixed strategy, combining both problem-solving and negotiating strategies in dealing with management.

Kochan et al. went on to study the determinants of the degree of problem-solving or negotiating found in the interactions. They stated the following conclusions from their analysis. Management behaviour when interacting with unions was largely a response to external pressures from legislation and from the union. This pressure has had a strong effect in deterring the use of negotiating-type responses to union influence attempts and in inducing active problem-solving behaviour by management. Union problem-solving is more directly a function of the pressure and involvement of rank-and-file members. Management commitment and policies have an important impact on deterring the union from using pressure or negotiating strategies in health and safety committees. This demonstrates how strategies are developed as a result of a two-way process of interaction between the parties involved.

Kochan et al. found that unions only become involved or active at plant level on health and safety issues when they perceive the need to induce management to improve existing conditions. When they see pressure from legislation making union pressure unnecessary they do not tend to actively pursue either problem-solving or negotiating strategies.

Kochan et al.'s methodology of using interviews and questionnaires was broadly similar to that used in the present study. However, their sample of organisations was larger and therefore the present study of one organisation has more description and depth. Another point of difference is that the industrial relations system in the United States differs from that found in this country which means that the frame of reference within which employers and trade unions interact can affect each side's perception of the situation. Some examples of these industrial relations differences given in Chapter One are the higher degree of unionisation in Britain and the statutory right to consult with management on health and safety issues enjoyed by trade union representatives. Ashford (1976) states that the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1970 in the U.S.A. puts no obligation on employers to closely interact with workers.

5.4 The Work of Beaumont et al.

One of the most prolific and important writers on the subject of health and safety in the United Kingdom is Phil Beaumont of Glasgow University. Some of the most relevant pieces of research

he has carried out are reviewed here and it must be remembered that these have been published since the present research study was initiated.

In 1978, shortly before the official introduction of the Regulations regarding safety representatives and safety committees, Beaumont wrote a paper entitled 'Management perception of the institution of collective bargaining'. In this he commented on a statement made by Allan Flanders (1967) to the effect that in Britain there is a poverty of subject matter and a limited range of substantive issues regulated by written and formally signed agreements - the principal subjects are wages and working hours. Beaumont suggested that the situation described by Flanders would change with a broader range of subject matter being settled by collective bargaining. One example of a new subject area is a wide range of health and safety at work matters. It is alleged that workers' interests have shifted away from wages and hours to the quality of their working environment and that there has been a shift in worker values or priorities, resulting in an interest in job enrichment or employee participation. Although there has been a shift in emphasis with regard to the subject matter settled by collective bargaining, the inclusion of health and safety is not at the expense of other areas. That is, there has been an enlargement of the range of subjects bargained over rather than an actual substitution of some new subjects for ones previously included.

Beaumont (1978) elicited the views of a group of managers about the value of the collective bargaining process as a means of dealing with a variety of job-related issues for manual workers. The group were asked to indicate on a questionnaire, their opinion of the importance of twelve issues to manual workers. 'Safety' appeared

third on the list after 'earnings' and 'job security'.

Walton and McKersie (1965) describe the traditional subjects of collective bargaining as 'distributive issues', that is they are job-related matters in which there is a clear cut distinction between the goals of the unions and of management. It is suggested that where there are conflicts of interest between workers and management, negotiation is necessary as management cannot be expected to act in the best interests of their workers.

In contrast, consultation takes place over matters where there is alleged to be a fundamental similarity of trade union/management interests, that is over 'integrative' issues. There is a problem-solving orientation where there is the possibility of joint gains to unions and management.

To investigate this suggestion, Beaumont asked the group to rate the extent to which they felt trade unions and management were attempting to accomplish the same or conflicting goals on each of the issues. This time 'safety' was placed second out of the list of twelve issues with a high rating in terms of basic similarity of aims.

Respondents were next asked which issues they felt collective bargaining was most helpful in dealing with. 'Safety' was third out of the twelve job-related issues, and Beaumont sees this high ranking as encouraging in view of the legislative measures which have been designed to bring about negotiations over these matters.

When the managers were asked what they considered to be the 'ideal' means of dealing with the various job-related issues, the

result with regard to safety showed that 75% of the group thought that joint consultation was 'the 'ideal' means. The results found over the whole study suggest little management support for extending the subject matter of collective bargaining except for the area of job security.

An interesting point noted by Beaumont is that all the respondents were highly doubtful of the ability of management to maintain a distinction in practice between consultation and negotiation on matters of prime concern to workers and unions such as safety matters.

Beaumont's sample of personnel and industrial relations managers on courses gives a very specific perception of collective bargaining and it is hoped that the present study, which is based in the public rather than the private sector, can shed more light on the perceptions of both supervisory staff and trade union safety representatives as to the nature of their relationship. That is, do they see negotiation, joint consultation or a mixture of both as the most prevalent process used in interactions over health and safety matters?

Beaumont (1980) carried out a study which throws some light on the function of the safety representative with regard to his relationship with management. Beaumont hypothesised that consultation and negotiation will be the main strategies used in this relationship and defines consultation as being used where the basic aims of unions and management are held to be essentially similar. Negotiation is used where there is held to be a fundamental divergence of interests between the two parties.

Beaumont asks if a basic similarity of union-management aims over a subject favours joint consultation to negotiation over that subject. He suggests that the subject area of workplace health and safety is considered to be particularly suitable for joint consultation because of the consensus view, that is, the unitary perspective.

The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) provides for safety representatives and management to consult jointly on setting up and monitoring measures to ensure the health and safety at work of employees. However, this formal obligation to consult may not work this way in practice as described in an extract from a Labour Research Department document of 1978 "...the union representative who consults and is consulted by the employer is also a negotiator".

Beaumont states that a number of union and labour movement guidance notes have argued that unions should emphasise the role of the safety representative rather than the joint health and safety committee because the safety representative is more likely to use a negotiating strategy.

In Beaumont's study, questionnaires were given to 162 safety representatives on a training course. Just over half of the subjects held the dual role of shop steward and safety representative, the others being only safety representatives, this division being mainly affected by which trade unions were involved as their policies on the matter differ. This issue will be discussed more fully later.

Beaumont wanted to know how similar safety representatives

perceived management/trade union aims and objectives in relation to health and safety matters to be. Two thirds of the sample stated that they felt that unions and management were trying to accomplish essentially similar things in relation to health and safety matters - this supports the Robens view of a unitary perspective.

Variables related to this viewpoint were identified as:

1. Size - nearly half of the number of safety representatives who perceived a similarity of aims came from the smaller plants.
2. The accident rate of the industry - safety representatives from the high accident rate shipbuilding industry tended to see a basic similarity of union and management aims on health and safety issues.
3. The general quality of the union/management relationship - where this was seen as essentially co-operative as opposed to hostile a large percentage (78%) perceived there to be an essential similarity in union/management aims over health and safety matters.

The results showed that the more likely a representative was to see an essential similarity of union/management aims over health and safety matters, the more likely he was to describe his basic representative function as one of consultation. 73% of the respondents described this function as consultation and 27% described it as negotiation.

So, the two main factors related to the consultative function were found to be:

1. The degree of similarity of union/management aims.
2. The safety representative's view of the extent of management's concern to minimise the involvement of unions in workplace decision-making. Those who felt that management were *not* trying to minimise union involvement in plant decision-making saw their basic function as consultation.

Beaumont draws the conclusion that the terms 'consulting' or 'negotiating' are situation-specific, that is, they are defined in terms of the general attitude of management towards the question of management rights and the extent to which they will allow trade unions to be involved in decision-making. There may be different operating styles used by safety representatives who see their function as either consultation or negotiation, but Beaumont writes that those consulting with management are no less active or 'successful' than those safety representatives who negotiate with management.

Some points emerge from this study by Beaumont which will be followed up in the present study. Beaumont's sample of safety representatives was drawn exclusively from the private sector, whereas in the present study the sample of safety representatives sent questionnaires is from one local authority. It will be interesting to see whether the findings are similar from these public and private sector studies. Beaumont used only the survey method to collect data. In the present study additional

methods were used such as interviews with senior managers to determine their views of issues such as co-operation. A questionnaire for supervisors contained questions concerning negotiation and consultation thus illustrating the viewpoint of junior management.

Other areas to be examined are: the relationship between the consultation and negotiation processes and the perceived degree of management commitment to health and safety. This subject of commitment will be assessed by questions in the questionnaires to safety representatives and supervisory staff, and indirectly by looking at such issues as what level of management chairs safety committee meetings.

This public sector study will add to the information from the study carried out by Beaumont with regard to the negotiation and consultation processes used by trade unions and management in the area of health and safety.

Beaumont (1981) used the same sample to examine the nature of the relationship between safety representatives and their workforce constituencies. He wanted to find out how the safety representatives saw their function in relation to their workforce constituencies, and in addition, how they saw their workforce constituencies as a resource in carrying out their representative function.

The provision of such information concerning the attitudes and behaviour of these trade union-appointed representatives is seen by Beaumont to be important because of the high cost of

industrial accidents in Britain, and also because of the special position of safety representatives in the workplace, with legal backing given to their representative functions by the Health and Safety at Work Act. This is in direct contrast with the position of shop stewards who receive little support from either official union constitutions or legislation although they do get support from management.

71% of the sample reported that health and safety matters were of some degree of concern to employees at their workplace and three-quarters of the sample described the trade union/management relationships as reasonably co-operative with 68% reporting at least one instance of industrial action at their workplace during the preceding year.

Through a questionnaire, the sample were asked what they considered to be their single most important function as safety representatives. Over half of the sample answered "taking up individual worker's health and safety complaints with management", that is they saw themselves as a channel of communication. In contrast, two further groups answered that "routine inspection of the workplace to identify potential health and safety hazards", and "investigation of actual accidents" were their most important functions. Beaumont describes these as more technical functions requiring technical training and making safety representatives different from other trade union representatives.

When looking for factors to explain these findings, Beaumont found that safety representatives from larger plants see their role as taking up workers' complaints because these are likely to

be forthcoming. On average, there were found to be more worker complaints in larger plants because of the greater potential for health and safety hazards due to the greater alertness to such hazards in the workforce. Beaumont suggests that this could be due to more complex technology or to the more 'regimented' working environment sometimes found in larger organisations. There may be more complaints in larger plants because greater trade union consciousness may make the workforce more willing to convey information to safety representatives to help them in their role. There may also be more highly developed collective bargaining arrangements than is the case in typical smaller workplaces.

Beaumont describes the roles of inspector and investigator as adaptive and which emerged when safety representatives were not confident of worker complaints being forthcoming. It was found that those who emphasised the representative role, said that employees and management at their workplace were relatively concerned about health and safety matters and management were relatively receptive to the presentation of workers' grievances. Conversely, where management was felt to be relatively unconcerned about health and safety matters, safety representatives acted on the assumption that only the representation of 'hard evidence' of work hazards in their capacity as well-trained, well-informed individuals stood any real chance of convincing management of the need to make changes in workplace organisation and practice in the interests of health and safety.

Beaumont also wanted to determine the extent to which safety representatives value and rely on their workforce constituencies as an important resource in their work and the group were asked what was the single most important factor necessary for them to

function effectively as safety representatives. Half of the sample replied that a safety representative must be well-informed about the relevant safety regulations. Beaumont interprets this by stating that there is a need for an effective safety representative to be a well-informed, well-trained individual capable of carrying out a specialist technical function rather than simply being a negotiator who relies basically on the strength of workforce commitment and backing. An alternative reply to the above question stated that the safety representative must have the full backing of the workforce in his activities implying that there must be a concerned workforce.

Beaumont claims a relationship between those likely to stress the importance of workforce backing and the perception of management as being relatively unconcerned about health and safety matters. There is likely to be a need for 'hard negotiation' with the implicit potential conflict which accompanies it. Safety representatives who answered in this way may perceive some difficulty in convincing management of the need to change workplace organisation and practice in the interests of health and safety. Other replies stated that the safety representative must have the ability to convince management of necessary changes and also that the safety representative must be well-informed about the potential causes of accidents.

The safety representatives were asked if the health and safety matters which they had taken up with management were identified by the safety representatives themselves or by members of their workforce 'constituency'. 42% answered 'themselves' suggesting that they see the onus of a contribution to improved health and safety at the workplace to fall on safety representatives.

30% answered that the workforce identified matters to be raised with management - particularly those from the larger plants - and 27% answered that both safety representatives and the workers they represent identified these matters.

Beaumont states that safety representatives attached considerable importance to the function of communicating workers' complaints to management. Less importance was attached to the role of the workforce as a back-up resource, although they had identified and passed on information regarding potential health and safety hazards to safety representatives. If the workforce are not interested in the safety representative function, they do not pass on information about hazards and the result of this, according to Beaumont, is that the safety representatives adopt an adaptive role in the form of a more active personal search for potential hazards. That is, the safety representatives adapted their attitudes and behaviour to the favourableness or not of certain environmental circumstances in which they found themselves, for example, their perception of workforce interest and attitudes to themselves as safety representatives, and to health and safety matters in general. However, Beaumont makes the point that there is a two-way relationship here as a safety representative who personally did the minimum and as a result relied on his workforce constituency to convey information to him - that is he assumed their interest in his activities - could perhaps find their interest waning because of his own lack of activity.

In the present study the perceived roles of the sample of local authority safety representatives to emerge from open-ended questions will be classified. Safety representatives who have

attended training courses will be asked which aspects of the course they had found most useful, and it is suggested that the aspects identified will relate to the perceived role and functions of the safety representatives. A further issue to be addressed is whether safety representatives receive support from various groups in carrying out their role.

A similar analysis of data obtained from a questionnaire to supervisors in the local authority will be used to describe supervisors' perceptions of the role they play in maintaining a safe working environment.

Beaumont (1981) examined the enterprise response to industrial relations legislation by looking at the position with regard to the rights of unionised employees in an organisation prior to the passage of the industrial relations legislation in question. He suggests that there are three sub-groups of firms:

1. Those firms where the rights and arrangements embodied in the legislation have been established on a voluntary basis well before the passage of the legislation.
2. Those firms that move quickly to comply with the provisions of legislation which is either imminent or has just been passed.
3. Those firms who only get round to establishing the arrangements called for in the legislation after some time has passed.

Thus, in looking at the variation in the impact of industrial relations legislation at the level of the individual employment establishment, Beaumont used as an indicator the speed or time profile with which the provisions became operative.

The Health and Safety Executive conducted a survey in October 1979 which was designed to assess the extent to which safety representatives had been appointed under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations during their first year of operation. The basic results of this survey were analysed by Beaumont (1981). For the purpose of the present study, the most interesting part of the analysis concerns the public sector.

Beaumont hypothesised that there was a significantly greater likelihood of the Regulations having been invoked during the year in question in industries predominantly or solely in the public sector. This hypothesis is based on the government's acceptance of an obligation to act as "good employer" if labour in the public sector. (See Beaumont (1981) "Government as an employer: setting an example?").

Beaumont states that this good employer obligation has frequently placed the public sector to the forefront of the process of introducing new institutional arrangements and structures in the industrial relations field in Britain, and he suggests that this effect may have encouraged a relatively rapid introduction of the safety representative Regulations.

The use of joint consultative procedures within the public

sector before the Health and Safety at Work Act may also have meant that procedures such as those for safety committees were not as new in concept as in some areas of the private sector.

As a result of this study, Beaumont found that the safety representative Regulations were most likely to have been invoked during their first year of operation in industries characterised by high accident rates, high collective agreement coverage, single employer bargaining, large sized establishments and establishments where there was a member of senior management specifically responsible for industrial relations and personnel matters. Statistical tests showed that there was a greater likelihood of the safety representatives Regulations having been invoked in public sector industries. It will be interesting to see if this concept of the Government as a 'good employer' has resulted in the operationalisation of the Regulations concerning safety representatives and safety committees within a short period of time following their introduction.

Over the period 1980 to 1982 a study was carried out by the Centre for Research in Industrial Democracy and Participation at the University of Glasgow to look at safety committees. High, medium and low accident rate sectors were represented in the sample of 51 manufacturing plants that were studied. The study was carried out by a group headed by Phil Beaumont, and the main objective was to assess the effectiveness of health and safety committees in the sample using certain external and internal criteria. The main part of the study concentrated upon the internal determinants of effectiveness as they are more controllable by the organisation. These are described more fully in

Chapter 8 and data from other sources, such as the work of Kochan et al. and from the present local authority study, are also examined.

After collecting background information, the methodology used by Beaumont et al. was interviews, carried out with members of safety committees at all levels in the organisations, to collect information regarding the objectives of the committee and the factors which the interviewees felt made their committees either effective or ineffective.

The methodology used meant that only a fairly superficial study could be made of the 51 firms concerned, and no attempt was made to cross-check views given at interviews using other methods. The firms were all in the manufacturing division of the private sector and so the findings cannot be generalised to all organisations, for example to those in the public sector.

The determinants of effectiveness described by Beaumont et al. do not produce many surprises and many of them seem to be almost obvious, for example the committee must meet regularly and should not be too large! The study will not be further described here as the details are given fully in Chapter 8. However, it is hoped to use the study as a framework within which to present some of the data collected in the present Local Authority study.

CHAPTER SIX

MANAGEMENT/TRADE UNION RELATIONSHIP
- CONSENSUS OR CONFLICT?

MANAGEMENT/TRADE UNION RELATIONSHIP -
CONSENSUS OR CONFLICT?

6.1 Introduction

As some of the empirical studies in the area of health and safety are concerned with the relationship between management and trade unions, it is necessary to set out some of the perspectives which provide a frame of reference within which health and safety issues and procedures are dealt with by the parties.

Fox (1974) describes three perspectives which are used here as frames of reference to aid interpretation of HASAWA. The first of these - the industrial enterprise as a unitary system, has one source of authority and one form of loyalty. It can be likened to a team unified by a common purpose - the football team analogy. This system is characterised by voluntary self-regulation and the virtues of joint consultation, exemplified by safety committees, are emphasised. Management is willing to share its authority in order to create a unified working environment built on harmony and mutual trust.

The effects on industrial relations within this unitary frame of reference are many. The trade union presence is seen as an intrusion into what should be a private, unified structure and there may be resentment by management against trade union or work group claims. There may also be a refusal by management to negotiate, and the trade unions are left ignorant of management policy affecting them.

So the unitary frame of reference described by Fox denies the validity of conflict in industry. Any conflict which is admitted by this model is unnatural and is due to incompatible personalities, faulty communication, the result of stupidity (failure to grasp the communality of interest) or the work of agitators inciting others who would otherwise be content.

This use of stupidity or ignorance to explain conflict is also used by Gouldner in his model of representative bureaucracy as an explanation put forward by management as to why the workforce break safety rules. This 'careless worker' approach is described later.

So to sum up, the unitary frame of reference emphasises managerial prerogatives and management's disposition to play down the realities of divergent workgroup attitudes and values in the interests of a strong unified team.

The second perspective described by Fox is the industrial enterprise as a pluralist system. Here the organisation is considered to be a coalition of divergent interests and sectional groups. These many groups, related by separate interests and objectives, must be maintained in some kind of equilibrium.

From the industrial relations viewpoint, the individual worker is seen to be so much weaker than the employer that he is allowed to combine with his fellows in collective bargaining. Acceptance of trade unionism came through its being recognised as a necessary protection for the worker and therefore management must share its decision-making with other sources of authority.

It follows that, according to the pluralist frame of reference, conflict is endemic to industrial organisations with the inevitable conflict of interest between management and workforce being resolved by negotiation and compromise. However, it does not follow that trade unions introduce conflict into the industrial scene, rather they provide a highly organised and continuous form of expression for sectional interests which would exist anyway. A high degree of organised conflict does not necessarily mean low morale as there is a belief in the inherent fairness of collective bargaining. The pluralist approach assumes that compromise solutions to health and safety problems would be acceptable to the workforce enduring the risk.

The third of Fox's perspectives is the radical approach which suggests that management use their power to achieve their aims by exploiting the workforce, that is the parties to conflict are not equal. Fox argues that given a low trust and low discretion relationship, labour will respond in a low trust manner and have a purely instrumental attachment to work.

For the purpose of this research project, attention will be concentrated on the unitary and the pluralist frames of reference as according to Ramsay (1975) the radical perspective is little used by either side in industry.

In the course of collecting information as part of this project it is intended to shed some light on the pluralist/unitary approach to organisations in relation to health and safety issues.

6.2 The consensus approach

The unitary perspective can be illustrated by a strongly held belief in a basic similarity of union-management aims in the area of health and safety in the workplace as stated by the Robens Committee.

"There is a greater national identity of interest between 'the two sides' in relation to safety and health problems than in most other matters. There is no legitimate scope for bargaining on safety and health issues but much scope for constructive discussions, joint inspection and participation in working out solutions."

Consultation and participation are the concepts which are stressed in the Robens Report (1972). The Robens Committee envisaged joint safety committees where representatives of management and workers would work together to apply themselves to the health and safety problems of the organisation. That is, that there would be a united attack on hazards and the reduction of accidents. It is suggested that safety representatives on joint safety committees would be 'consulted' by management on various safety issues, but that their prime function would be to assist management to get 'apathetic' workers to comply with regulations.

Lewis (1977) claims that the consensus view is based on the concept of the industrial enterprise as a team unified by a common purpose. He states that this approach is consistent with the view that consultation is the means of promoting action

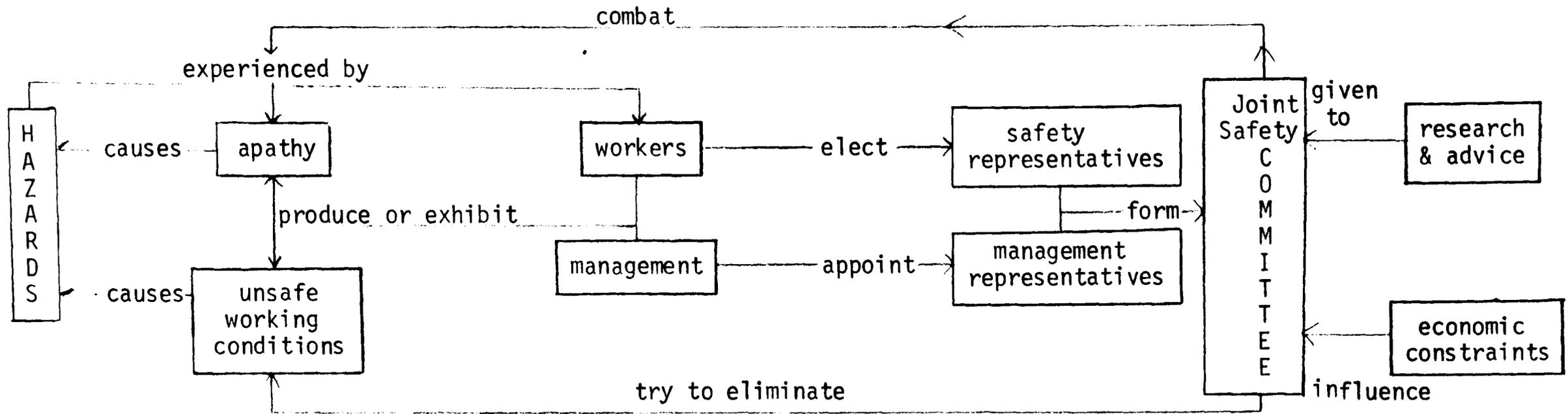
where there are no obvious conflicts. This consensus approach entails workers' and managements' representatives acting together in the formal safety system of the organisation to improve working conditions and practices, and to introduce safety equipment, safer machines and work procedures. The joint safety committee would be influenced by technological and economic constraints, making trade union representatives more aware of management limitations. Lewis's consensus approach is illustrated in Figure 6.1.

6.3 The Conflict Approach

However, Lewis notes that there will inevitably be conflict because of the differing biases of management (for maximising production or profitability) and of workers (for protection). This conflict approach sees management as being primarily responsible for unsafe working conditions and at the same time being subject to economic constraints. Workers must organise themselves to force a re-ordering of priorities in favour of safety. This would be done by bargaining as suggested by Grayson and Goddard (1975), who consider that bargaining on safety matters must be kept separate from that on other subjects such as canteens. The conflict approach is illustrated in Figure 6.2 in diagrammatic form.

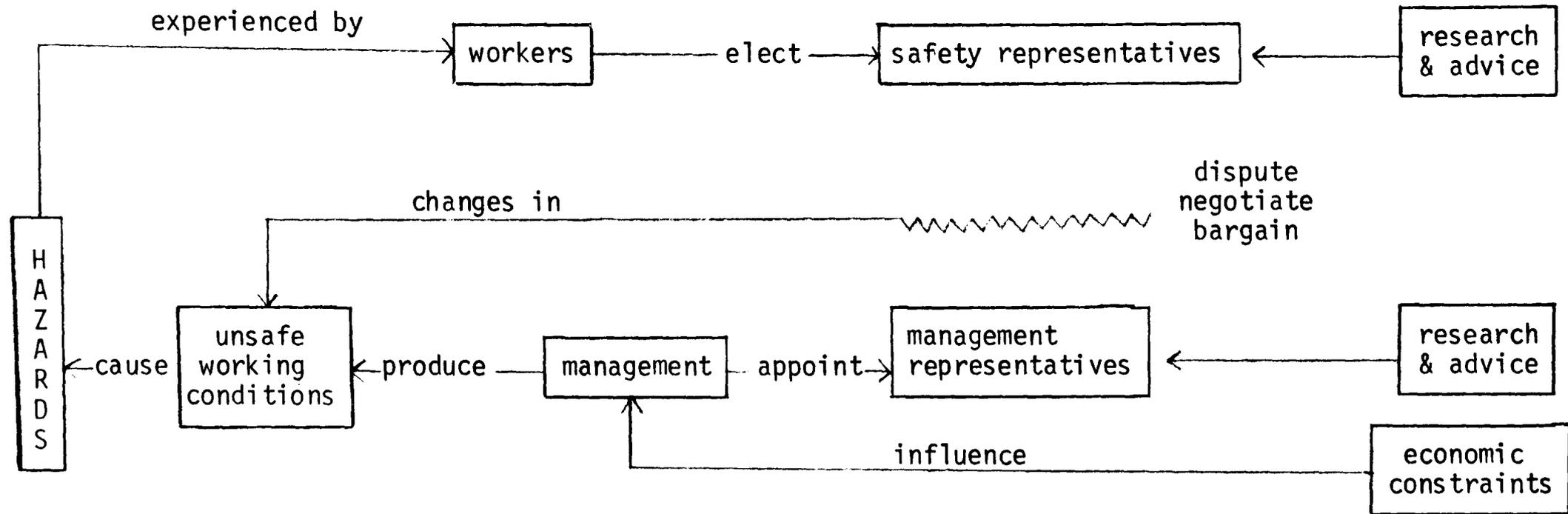
When comparing the two models of control of work hazards, the consensus view and the conflict view, several important differences can be seen. In the consensus model, research, advice and information concerning economic constraints are avail-

FIGURE 6.1 'CONSENSUS' VIEW OF THE CONTROL OF WORK HAZARDS



Simplified version of diagram from Open University Course T361 Trade Unions, Technology and the Environment; Unit 9 Control of Technology, page 4 (David Lewis, 1977)

FIGURE 6.2 'CONFLICT' VIEW OF THE CONTROL OF WORK HAZARDS



Simplified version of diagram from Open University Course T361 Trade Unions, Technology and the Environment; Unit 9 Centres of Technology, page 4. (David Lewis, 1977)

able to both safety representatives and management through the safety committee. This seems to be a more realistic context in which joint action can be taken, than the conflict view where research and advice is given separately to safety representatives and management. This information may differ, complicating the situation by providing each group with a different frame of reference within which to interpret the existing safety situation in the organisation. If the trade union representatives are not aware of the economic constraints, their demands (for example for improvements in the workplace) may be unrealistic. They may not appreciate the necessity for the setting of priorities often emphasised by management. Ashford (1976) notes the problem of inequality of access to information, for example between management and labour. He suggests that this inequality of access creates incentives to withhold or distort information which may be either damaging or beneficial. Differential access converts information into a bargaining advantage for the more knowledgeable party. Examples may be information about newly introduced substances and processes.

Information is only one of the variables which has been examined in experimental studies of the negotiating relationship carried out by, among others, Morley and Stephenson (1977). Other variables include, the medium of communication, the size of the group and the seating arrangements.

The consensus model shows some allocation of responsibility for hazards from both groups. Unsafe working conditions (management) and apathy (workforce). The conflict view acknowledges only management's contribution through providing unsafe

working conditions. This view may question the neutrality or credibility of the source of research and advice information in the consensus model and may justify the use of two separate sources of information, or emphasise the importance of safety representatives being aware of the source of information they receive. The Lewis model will be adapted to the situation found to exist in the Local Authority on the basis of the data collected. This will be described in Chapter Nine.

The unitary approach to health and safety has been challenged by, among others, Nichols and Armstrong (1973). They suggest that Robens' contention that accidents must be due to apathy because everyone is anxious to reduce accidents and to gain from safe working, is theoretically suspect and lacking in evidence to back it up. They describe his view of accident causation as being derived from 'purely homespun psychology'.

With regard to safety committees for example, the Robens Report suggested that there was a necessity for common goals to be agreed between the trade unions and management. This idea has been received by trade unions with some scepticism and A.S.T.M.S. has said that 'a successful safety committee may not be the same thing as a co-operative and harmonious one'.

Grayson and Goddard (1975) consider that there is overwhelming evidence against the consensus view of safety. They contend that the law recognises the essential conflict between cash and safety in the use of the flexible term 'reasonably practicable'. This takes into account the fact that management will at all times have to allocate resources according to a

system of priorities, and the Health and Safety Executive claim to be realistic in their acknowledgement that often safety cannot be 'brought up to standard' all in one procedure when there are other competing claims for money in the organisation - cost and trouble is weighted against the severity or extent of the hazard.

Grayson and Goddard suggest that in an economy dominated by the pursuit of private profit, conflict between the aims of workers and employers is inbuilt and inevitable. In addition, they put forward the view that an end to trade union bargaining over safety would mean an immediate deterioration in the conditions of workers in industry.

It is suggested that it is too simplistic to assume there will always be an identify of approach between management and trade unions in the area of health and safety. Among the many matters which could be legitimately discussed by managers, safety representatives and inspectors are: the severity or extent of a potential hazard, the cost/benefit equation with respect to various alternative preventive measures and the allocation of priorities where resources are limited.

Ashford (1976) states that in the United States, organised labour has not emphasised health and safety in collective bargaining for several reasons. Worker concern with inflation, economic problems, and the fear of losing jobs have meant that health and safety issues have not always had the attention they would otherwise have merited. (These issues will be further discussed in Chapter Eleven).

PAGE NUMBERING AS IN THE ORIGINAL THESIS

It was not until 1966 that the National Labor Relations Board in the U.S.A. established the principle that health and safety issues are mandatory subjects for bargaining. Ashford states that there is now a trend towards contract bargaining as a major union mechanism for achieving improved health and safety conditions. Ashford suggests that collective bargaining has the potential to go beyond the mandate of the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1970 (OSHA) by obligating employers to interact closely with workers rather than merely complying with loosely enforced and inadequate government standards. Collective bargaining may also move the responsibility for occupational health and safety out of the sole hands of management and encourage the participation of workers in controlling technology in the workplace. It can be seen that Ashford, in examining the situation in the United States, postulates that a bargaining relationship between employers and the workforce could bring about changes which would improve health and safety standards.

An interesting point to follow up in this study is that the report of the Robens Committee (1972) is essentially worded in terms of the unitary frame of reference, whereas the SRSC Regulations (1977) are implicitly pluralist in perspective. The most radical aspect of the Regulations is the concept of the trade union-appointed safety representative. For the first time there was a statutory basis given to a trade union lay official which differed from the voluntaristic industrial relations tradition. So trade union safety representatives are acknowledged to represent the interests of an specific group in the organisation. However, the SRSC Regulations may be viewed as only one instance of a general move away from the voluntaristic tradition evident in much legislation passed

during the 1970s.

It is expected that in the present study of a Local Authority there may be found to be a mixture of the pluralist and unitary perspectives used by safety representatives operationalised in the use of both consultative and negotiating tactics with management.

If we ask, 'is safety a divisive or an integrating issue?' we must examine the situation to find out if there is any struggle for power involved. The struggle which may be found is one for scarce resources because of the other competing demands on management such as the need for production or profit. Safety representatives unlike management can concentrate on safety alone.

This chapter has described the unitary, pluralist and radical perspectives identified by Fox which can be used as frames of reference within which it is possible to view health and safety. The unitary viewpoint taken by Robens suggested that bargaining would not be necessary over health and safety issues - a position that was challenged by Nichols and Armstrong, who find no evidence for the 'apathy' explanation for poor safety performance, and Goddard and Grayson and Ashford among others. The main point made by these writers is that making safety a subject for collective bargaining can improve standards.

Lewis's consensus and conflict views on health and safety were described and will be adapted later in this study to illustrate the actual situation in the organisation being

examined.

The industrial relations aspects of health and safety and the strategies used in interactions between management and safety representatives will be discussed later in relation to the work carried out by researchers such as Kochan et al. in the United States and Beaumont in Britain.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES

THE SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE

A postal questionnaire with covering letter was sent to all the safety representatives in the four departments under study in the Local Authority.

Contact was made by letter with the full-time officials of NUPE and NALGO who also represent the craft unions. An appointment was arranged with the NUPE official to explain the research project, but no acknowledgement was received from NALGO, even when a second letter was sent, therefore no personal contact was made. Problems of access are discussed in Chapter Four.

A pilot study was carried out to test the clarity of the wording of the questionnaire and to ensure that it was not overlong. The safety representatives used in the pilot study were taking the TUC training course for safety representatives at a local college. They worked in both the public and private sectors. After making a few alterations, the questionnaire was considered to be ready to be sent out to the study population.

The main objective of the questionnaire was to examine the part played by safety representatives in the implementation of the HASAW (1974) in the Local Authority. It was intended to collect information on safety representatives' perceptions of their role and to compare these with the functions of safety representatives as stated in the Safety Representatives Safety Committee Regulations (SRSC Regulations). A large amount of information was collected on the safety representative role and some of the findings are described below.

7.1 The Sample

Eighty-six representatives from the four departments under study were sent questionnaires by post. Sixty-six replies were received - a response rate of 77%.

The SRSC Regulations recommend that safety representatives should have at least two years' service with the employer or at least two years' experience in similar employment, and it was found that the safety representatives in the sample had worked in their departments for several years as seen in Table 7.1.

TABLE 7.1 Length of service of safety representatives

"For how long have you worked in this department?"

| | (%) |
|-------------------|-----|
| Under 2 years | 11 |
| 3 - 7 years | 39 |
| 8 - 12 years | 15 |
| 13 - 17 years | 14 |
| 18 - 22 years | 11 |
| 23 years and over | 11 |

When the age bands were aggregated into two ranges, it was found that 29% of the safety representatives were between 20 and 40 years old and 62% were over 41 years old.

75% of the respondents had been safety representatives for between one and four years which might be expected as the SRSC Regulations officially came into force in October 1978 although some workplaces had safety representatives in operation before

that date.

7.2 Appointment of Safety Representatives

When asked to describe exactly how they became safety representatives the respondents replied as in Table 7.2.

TABLE 7.2 Method of appointment of safety representatives

| | (%) |
|---|-----|
| Already a shop steward | 41 |
| Appointed by the trade union | 20 |
| Elected | 18 |
| Requested (by shop steward, colleague or management) | 14 |
| Volunteered | 8 |

One of the most interesting aspects of the appointment of safety representatives is the question of whether the role is best carried out combined with that of shop steward, or as a specialist without these dual responsibilities.

Trade union policy differs on this matter with some unions (such as NUPE, NALGO, AUEW and TGWU which are all represented among the respondents) suggesting that the functions of safety representatives should be carried out by shop stewards. Other unions, such as the print unions and COHSE, favour separation of the roles and functions. For a full discussion of these differing trade union policies see Stevens (1979).

The GMWU in their safety representatives' handbook state

that "in most cases some of the existing shop stewards or staff representatives should also be designated safety representatives and should combine health and safety responsibilities with their other tasks." It should be noted that although the GMWU have now amalgamated with the Boilermakers Unions (to form GMBATU) reference will continue to be made to the GMWU as this was the name of the union at the time of the study.

The National Union of Sheetmetal Workers suggest that shop stewards' committees should liaise with the safety representatives either by putting a safety representative on the stewards' committee or by arranging that a leading steward is a safety representative. An alternative suggestion is that a shop stewards' committee may set up a health and safety sub-committee with safety representatives on it.

Before going on to look at the arguments for and against the dual role described above, the results of the questionnaire can be seen to show a flexible approach where the most appropriate arrangements can be made in the individual workplace.

TABLE 7.3 Dual/single role and trade union membership of safety representatives

| <u>Trade Union</u> | <u>Dual Role</u> (Safety Rep/ Shop Steward) | <u>Single Role</u> (Safety Rep. only) | |
|--------------------|---|---|---------------|
| NALGO | 12 | 8 | |
| NUPE | 12 | 6 | |
| TGWU | 13 | 6 | |
| AUEW | 6 | - | |
| EEPTU | 1 | 3 | |
| GMWU | - | 2 | |
| Sheetmetal Workers | 2 | - | |
| UCATT | 1 | - | |
| TOTAL | <u>47</u> (71%) | <u>19</u> (29%) | <u>N = 66</u> |

It is felt by some trade unions that safety representatives who are also shop stewards will be more committed to ensuring that the workforce they represent will have a safe and healthy environment in which to work. Also only the experience and power of the shop steward will give sufficient strength to the safety representative role which will avoid the danger of health and safety being isolated from collective bargaining procedures. Shop stewards already have experience in representing members' interests in negotiations with management and so are "not as likely to be fobbed off with delays and excuses". (Caldwell et al. 1980). The combination of the strength of the trade union backing for shop stewards and the legal backing of the safety representatives provides a powerful joint role. The dual role may help to avoid clashes between the shop steward, who has no health and safety responsibilities, and the safety representative who can be single-minded about health and safety issues. These clashes might be exploited by management as might the problems of having two channels of communication between trade union members and management.

The Assistant Divisional Officer of NUPE when interviewed by the researcher stated that one individual should hold both roles or management will 'buck pass'. He also said that one would need two people who can work well together if the roles are separate and it may be easier to combine the two roles in one person.

Peter Jacques, Secretary of the TUC's Social Insurance and Industrial Welfare Committee, says of the dual safety representative/shop steward role:

"...it is the easiest way to get the system going... and the shop stewards are familiar with the industrial relations systems which is needed in big companies where it can be pretty complex."

There may also be a reduction in the amount of paperwork and communication necessary if one individual carries out the dual role.

On the other hand, one argument for single role safety representatives is that the dual role may cause work overload resulting in an individual carrying out both roles at less than full efficiency.

Nicholson (1976) states that reported role overload among shop stewards has been found to be due to the breadth of activities demanded of them, not only to the volume of work. This would suggest that the additional responsibilities and work load imposed upon shop stewards who take on the joint role of shop steward and safety representative may cause stress due to overload as well as stress resulting from potential conflict between the two roles. Particularly hazardous working environments may be better served by expert safety representatives who have the time and total commitment to devote themselves to the promotion of health and safety.

Another point, briefly mentioned above, which is to be investigated in the project is that role conflict may be experienced by those with dual responsibilities. Safety may be sacrificed in the cause of other aims - a shop steward may support the bonus scheme and back up his constituents' wish to

maximise their earnings, but in his role of safety representative he may feel the bonus scheme encourages workers to cut corners to save time and may result in unsafe practices.

Shop stewards may be up for re-election annually which is not the position with safety representatives. A need for consistency and continuity was emphasised by members of senior management who were interviewed. They stated that safety representatives who have developed expertise in the area of health and safety in their workplace should not be changed at too frequent intervals.

On the introduction of the SRSC Regulations, some managers may have anticipated shop steward safety representatives as likely to be more militant and so likely to 'make an issue' out of health and safety. At present there does not appear to be any evidence to support this view.

It was hypothesised that certain differences might emerge between shop steward safety representatives and safety representatives with the single role, and information was collected to show if the differing trade union policies are justified. 91% of the safety representatives who were also shop stewards reported that they did not find that the two roles conflicted. One of the few examples given of role conflict was the problem of fitting certain matters into which role, that is whether to take up the matter as a safety representative or as a shop steward.

It was hypothesised that there would be certain important possible differences between the two groups of safety representatives

and some of these are described below.

1. Safety representatives with the dual role may be more likely to experience conflict with the supervisor because they are used to engaging in conflict with management.
2. Those with the dual role may see their relationship with management as negotiating or a mixture of negotiation and consultation rather than purely consultative.
3. Safety representatives who are also shop stewards may say that the bonus scheme does *not* work against safe working because they want to help their constituents to maximise their earnings.
4. Those with the dual role may see management as only slightly committed to safety because of the polarisation of trade union/management attitudes sometimes demonstrated in shop stewards.

Using Chi-squared tests, there were no statistically significant differences between the two types of safety representatives on the above issues.

The fact that these hypotheses were statistically unsupported suggests that in many aspects there are no detectable differences in this study between the two groups.

This leads to the consideration of whether there are any advantages or disadvantages, from the trade union point of view,

in having safety representatives who are also shop stewards. This evaluation would require a longitudinal study of a sample of the two groups looking, from a trade union perspective, at various aspects of their effectiveness and carrying out a comparison.

Perhaps, as is the case with the majority of trade unions, a flexible approach, where the appointment of safety representatives is carried out in the workplace by whichever means are considered to be most appropriate, may be more effective. For example it may be appropriate to make all existing shop stewards become safety representatives in one organisation. The trade unions in another organisation may have a different method entirely.

7.3 The Safety Representative/Supervisor Relationship

The self-regulatory aspects of the HASAWA have meant that the relationship between the safety representative and the supervisor is very important. Stevenson (1980) says "...health and safety has to be identified as an area for co-operation demanding the development of a constructive partnership." He refers to the fact that both supervisors and safety representatives want certain things, such as to encourage workers to wear protective clothing, although perhaps for different reasons. This is representative of the unitary viewpoint described earlier.

If this supervisor-safety representative partnership is to

be effective, it is important that each of the parties receives support from senior management and the workforce respectively.

Both safety representatives and supervisors were asked about the support they felt they got when health and safety issues were raised. The two sets of results can be seen below.

TABLE 7.4 Support for Safety Representatives

"When health and safety issues are raised to you feel you get the support of:

| | Yes (%) | No (%) |
|------------------------------|-------------|--------|
| a) the people you represent? | 78 | 22 |
| b) management? | 70 | 30 |
| c) your trade union?" | 84 | 16 |
| | <u>N=64</u> | |

TABLE 7.5 Support for Supervisors

"When trying to maintain a safe workplace do you feel you get the support of:

| | Yes (%) | No (%) | |
|-------------------------------|---------|--------|------|
| a) the workers you supervise? | 67 | 33 | N=82 |
| b) safety representatives? | 95 | 5 | N=83 |
| c) senior management? | 91 | 9 | N=80 |
| d) the safety officer?" | 91 | 9 | N=77 |

It can be seen that nearly a quarter of the safety representatives feel that they do not get the support from their own members and 33% of supervisors report a lack of support from the workers they supervise. However only 9% of supervisors report

a perceived lack of support from senior management compared with 30% of safety representatives.

It should be noted here that the safety representatives were asked if they got the support of management - which could include supervisory level, whereas the supervisors were asked about senior management - that is, levels of management higher than their own.

The lack of support for supervisors which applies to only 9% of the respondents may stem from the fact that top management are usually physically removed from the hazards which may closely affect the working environment of supervisors and those they work with. For this reason, top management may find it difficult to appreciate the necessity of giving their full backing to supervisors if they want them to implement the organisation's safety policy.

Lack of support for safety representatives may result from the apathy in the workforce described by Robens. They may feel suspicious about any changes made by management especially if there is a poor industrial relations climate. The safety representative may be perceived as doing management's work in 'enforcing' safety rules and not given support by the people he is trying to represent. They may not report hazards to him when they should, and may knowingly ignore safety rules.

In an open-ended question to safety representatives asking for further comments on health and safety at work, the apathy of the workforce was mentioned by a few respondents.

In a similar question in the questionnaire to supervisors,

the main criticism of senior management was that they had not invested supervisors with the necessary authority to enforce safety rules which would enable them to cope more effectively with their legal responsibilities. This issue will be discussed more fully in Chapter Eight.

It was hypothesised that there would be a difference between the degree of management support received respectively by safety representatives and by supervisors.

TABLE 7.6 Degree of Management Support Received by Supervisors and by Safety Representatives

"When health and safety items are raised do you feel you get the support of management/senior management?"

| | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> | |
|------------------------|------------|-----------|------|
| Safety representatives | 45 | 19 | N=64 |
| Supervisors" | 73 | 7 | N=80 |

$$\chi^2 = \underline{11.93} \quad df = 1 \quad p < 0.001$$

The Chi-squared value under the null hypothesis of no association between the perceived degree of management support of the groups - that is safety representatives and supervisors - is 11.93 on 1 df which gives a p-value of < 0.001. On this evidence, it is possible to conclude that there is a relationship between the role of safety representative or supervisor, and perceptions of support given by management/senior management.

Supervisors are acting on behalf of management to implement their safety policy, whereas safety representatives represent another interest group in the organisation. This may account

for the fact that the supervisors' perceptions of the support they get from management is greater than the perceptions of the safety representatives.

91% of supervisors considered that they receive the support of safety representatives which indicates that the co-operation considered to be necessary by the Robens Committee seems to exist in reality in this Local Authority. However, this finding cannot be compared with the 75% of safety representatives who feel that they receive the support of management, because the level of management was not specified in the answer which could refer to senior management levels in addition to the supervising level.

Perceptions of conflict

Stevenson (1980) suggests that it is inevitable that the safety representative and the supervisor will have differences of opinion on many issues because although their aims are similar, that is the provision and maintenance of a safety and healthy workplace, their responsibilities are different.

The supervisor must take into account his legal responsibility both for himself and for his subordinates, whereas the safety representative's concern is to avoid the prosecution of his fellow workers as well as avoiding accidents and injuries which may occur. In his capacity of safety representative he has no legal liability.

In the questionnaires sent out to safety representatives and supervisors, each group (66 safety representatives and 88

supervisory staff) was asked if they ever experienced conflict with each other. It was hypothesised that there would be a difference between the two groups' experience of conflict on the grounds that disagreements over health and safety would be more salient to safety representatives than to supervisors who have many other competing responsibilities. The results were as in Table 7.7.

TABLE 7.7 Experience of Conflict between Safety Representatives and Supervisors

"Have you ever experienced conflict with a safety representative/supervisor over a health and safety issue?"

| | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> |
|------------------------|------------|-----------|
| Safety representatives | 15 | 51 |
| Supervisors | 4 | 82 |

$$\chi^2 = \underline{11.22} \quad df = 1 \quad p < 0.001$$

The Chi-squared value under the null hypothesis of no association between the reported incidence of conflict between the two groups - safety representatives and supervisors - is 11.22 on 1 df which gives a p-value of < 0.001.

Safety representatives are reporting a significantly different amount of conflict than supervisors - 23% compared to only 5% of supervisors. As these two groups are interacting with one another in the four departments it is necessary to examine why this difference of views has been demonstrated.

One possible explanation is the interpretation of the word

"conflict" which is an emotive word. The perception of conflict may vary between the two groups - what is considered to be conflict by a safety representative may not be classified as conflict by a supervisor. This may be because safety representatives can be single-minded over health and safety, and to them any difference of opinion with the supervisor over a health and safety issue will be regarded as an example of conflict. On the other hand, supervisors have many diverse tasks and responsibilities, of which health and safety is only one, and may be subject in their everyday work to conflict and pressure from both sides, that is, management and workforce. They may have to enforce rules and to discipline the men whom they supervise, and so compared with these areas of potential conflict, an altercation with a safety representative may be viewed as a minor aggravation rather than an example of conflict.

Most of the 59% of the sample of safety representatives who had been trained had attended the TUC course for safety representatives. When presented with a list of possible skills learned on courses (which can be seen in Table 7.12) 39% mentioned negotiating skills whereas this aspect was not mentioned by supervisors in a similar but open-ended question on training skills. As negotiating skills is a part of the TUC training course for safety representatives, it may therefore be that the safety representatives are made more aware of potential trade union-management conflict than are the supervisors whose training is more orientated towards their legal responsibilities and education of their subordinates.

This suggestion that elements in the training courses for

safety representatives, for example negotiating skills, may have an affect on their perception of conflict with supervisors, is supported by data collected from the questionnaire. A cross-tabulation showed the relationship between the two groups of safety representatives - those who had been on a training course and those who had not - and whether they had or had not experienced conflict with a supervisor over a health and safety issue. It was hypothesised that there would be an association between having attended a safety training course for safety representatives and reported experience of conflict with the supervisor. This is because the TUC have always stated their preference for a bargaining role for safety representatives in the interactions with management, and as the majority of safety representatives have attended the training course developed by the TUC, its pluralistic perspective, which will inevitably entail some degree of conflict with management, may make them conscious of conflict, actual or potential.

TABLE 7.8 Reported Conflict with Supervisors related to Trained/Untrained Safety Representatives

| | <u>Trained</u> | <u>Untrained</u> |
|--------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Conflict with supervisor | 13 (33%) | 2 (7%) |
| No conflict | 26 (66%) | 25 (93%) |

$$\chi^2 = \underline{4.72} \quad df = 1 \quad p < 0.05$$

The Chi-squared value under the null hypothesis of no association between those who had been trained and those who had experienced conflict with a supervisor is 4.72 on 1 df which gives a p-value of < 0.05. Possible explanations for this statistically significant difference were discussed above.

It is possible to look at the occasions which are described by both safety representatives and supervisors concerning such conflict over health and safety issues. Of the 13 responses from safety representatives, four concerned safety items such as an argument over men travelling on a tractor trailer, three examples concerned personal protection such as men not wearing safety boots and overalls on site, three examples concerned a lack of information, and one related an incident when he was told by a supervisor to get back to work when he was investigating an accident. There were an additional two items concerning overmanning and administration problems

Only four respondents from the larger supervisor group reported examples of conflict with safety representatives. Of those, three concerned safety in general such as trying to get the squad to move signs with them as they move when patching roads. The remaining item concerned the failure of management to provide adequate noise protection.

So it can be seen that some items such as lack of information for example, are not perceived as conflict issues by supervisors, but may be seen as such by safety representatives.

One other possible explanation for the lack of perceived conflict reported could be that supervisors are reluctant to admit conflict as they consider that it could reflect adversely on their ability to run their section effectively. This could indicate that supervisors are selectively perceiving situations - that is, they are not acknowledging the existence of conflict, or they may be giving socially acceptable answers to the question.

7.4 The Safety Representative Role and Function

In order to collect information regarding the functions and role of the safety representative in the self-regulatory aspects of the health and safety legislation, it was decided to use a combination of closed, (i.e. forced choice) questions and open-ended questions. The ease of coding closed questions may not compensate for the limitations - open-ended questions can yield more richly descriptive material which may, however, be difficult to classify.

It was decided to try to use the information collected in the questionnaire sent to safety representatives in order to classify the perceived role of safety representatives in the workplace. This technique of classifying information to identify roles has been used in research by among others Batstone et al. (1977) who looked at the shop stewards' role and Beaumont (1981) and Cook (1980) who were concerned with safety representatives. These studies are described below.

Chinoy (1950) in the United States divided local trade union officials into three categories of leaders:

- "accidental" who are reluctant, acquiescent nominees
- "ideological" who strive to actualise beliefs and values
- "ambitious" leaders whose aspirations are geared to the furtherance of their own personal needs for status and recognition

One criticism of Chinoy's work is that there is a tenuous or unspecified relationship between his taxonomies on the one hand and empirical observations on the other.

Batstone et al. (1977) looked at the way in which shop stewards and their members act within the workplace as trade unionists. Their main research method was observation and they identified ideal types of shop stewards based on two cross-cutting dimensions:

1. the extent to which emphasis is placed on a delegate or representative role,
2. the pursuit of union principles.

Their categorisation of stewards derives largely from the ideas of stewards themselves and in particular from the expectations of the convenors and more experienced stewards. The four roles identified were:

1. 'the leader' - plays a representative role in relation to his members as he attempts to implement trade union principles which he is generally able to achieve;
2. 'the nascent leader' - often sponsored by a leader. He is committed to trade union principles but without the support of other stewards is unable to maintain the necessary representative role;
3. 'the cowboy' - in the short term can maintain the representative role but is not committed to trade union principles. Is concerned with maximising the earnings of his own groups of members in the short run;
4. 'the populist' - acts as a delegate whose activities are determined by expressed wishes of his members. Lack of commitment to trade union principles and ability or desire to be a representative.

The problem with using ideal types is that an attempt is

made to collapse a wide range of complex psychological and situational factors into a classification of people. The question also arises as to whether such categories are mutually exclusive or is there a contingency effect whereby the situational factors prevalent in the workplace will affect the role taken on by the stewards? That is, perhaps the roles are not mutually exclusive but can be interchanged depending on the circumstances prevailing and the issues being dealt with. In the same way, the safety representative role may be dynamic, constantly changing, as opposed to static.

Cook (1980) carried out a series of interviews on a small sample of safety representatives in an attempt to gather information on their perception of their role. He found evidence of three categories of safety representatives:

1. Hazard reporter;
2. Secondary Educator, i.e. educator of constituents;
3. Enforcement Officer - policing the company's safety policy and keeping members in line, for example with regard to wearing protective clothing.

No evidence emerged to reinforce Cook's anticipated categories of:

1. Information Processor, i.e. keeping up-to-date with relevant literature;
2. Monitor of established standards, e.g. checking protective clothing, noise, etc.;
3. Researcher - into accidents, near misses and complaints;
4. Liaison with the Health and Safety Executive.

In the present study, instead of having pre-conceived roles before collecting data, open-ended questions asked safety representatives to state what aspects of a safety representative's work they considered to be most important, and also what issues took up most of their time. Analysis and categorisation of the responses to these questions provided interesting material regarding the perceived role of safety representatives. The results of this analysis are discussed below.

Another example of the use of the technique of role classification is the study carried out by Beaumont (1981) which was described in Chapter Five.

The three main safety representative functions described as most important by the sample of safety representatives themselves were:

1. Representative - a channel of communication,
2. Inspector/Monitor,
3. Accident Investigator.

Beaumont (1981) describes the first function as an industrial relations-based role as is the shop steward. He describes the other two main functions as technical, for example, inspecting, monitoring and investigation skills requiring specialist training which differentiates them from the 'traditional' shop steward functions.

In the present study, 55 replies were given to the question "What aspects of a safety representative's work do you see as being most important?" These were initially categorised into

eight roles as follows:

TABLE 7.9 Safety Representative Roles

| | N | % |
|--|----|----|
| 1) Concerned with general health, safety & welfare | 15 | 27 |
| 2) Inspector/Monitor | 12 | 22 |
| 3) Educator (of themselves and others) | 10 | 18 |
| 4) Management Pressuriser | 6 | 11 |
| 5) Consulter | 4 | 7 |
| 6) Enforcer | 3 | 5 |
| 7) Representative | 2 | 4 |
| 8) Others | 2 | 5 |

N=55

In order to illustrate what is meant by the various categories made by the researcher from the open-ended replies, some examples are given below.

- 1) Concerned with general health, safety and welfare in the workplace. "Improvement of workplace conditions, materials and methods".
- 2) Inspector/Monitor. "Hazard spotting and inspecting".
- 3) Educator (both of others and of themselves). "Having the knowledge of legislation and being able to put it to use".
- 4) Management Pressuriser. "Putting pressure on management to enforce health and safety in the workplace".
- 5) Consulter. "Consultation and co-operation with employers to promote health and safety issues".
- 6) Enforcer. "Getting the men to obey safety regulations".
- 7) Representative. "Following up enquiries".
- 8) Others (e.g. prevention, rectification). "Taking preventive measures".

If the categories of 'Representative' and 'Consulter' (which are in fact very similar when judged by the illustrations given by the safety representatives) are amalgamated, then a comparison can be done with the three main categories described by Beaumont.

TABLE 7.10 Comparison of Results using the Three Main Categories of Safety Representative Role described by Beaumont

| <u>Beaumont (1981)</u> | | <u>Levinson (1984)</u> | |
|------------------------|-----|---------------------------------|-----|
| Representative | 51% | Representative (inc. consulter) | 11% |
| Inspector/Monitor | 32% | Inspector/Monitor | 22% |
| Accident Investigator | 10% | Accident Investigator | - |
| Others | 7% | Others (described above) | 77% |

It can be seen that the figures are very different especially the percentage who see their role as a representative. This may be the result of different statistical procedures being used or different samples being used, that is from the public and private sectors.

Beaumont used cluster analysis to reduce a larger number of categories to three main ones. This was considered by the researcher in the present study, but in spite of the fact that some of the categories consist of small numbers, it was decided that some interesting and descriptive material would be lost by this reduction of data. So the 77% falling into the 'others' category can be divided up as described above.

Another point to be noted is that the 'accident investigator' role mentioned by 10% of Beaumont's sample was not given as the most important function by any local authority safety representative

in spite of the fact that 56% said that they investigated accidents and dangerous occurrences in the workplace, so this does not seem to be perceived by these safety representatives as a *major* function.

This was also found in a questionnaire to supervisors regarding their perception of the most useful contribution to safe working which can be made by supervisory staff. The six categories, which will be described later, did not include accident investigation although 72% of supervisors said that they do investigate accidents.

It may be that both groups - safety representatives and supervisors, see accident investigation as a *reactive* function rather than a *proactive*, preventive function, and for that reason do not see it as a major contribution to, or aspect of, maintaining a safe working environment.

Another possible explanation for safety representatives and supervisors not mentioning 'accident investigation' as an important aspect of their work, is that accidents and dangerous occurrences only happen infrequently in the workplace, and so investigation cannot be described as an ongoing function like monitoring of conditions or ensuring the proper use of equipment.

Beaumont describes the 'representative' role as a channel of communication linking workforce and management. It is an industrial relations-orientated role where safety representatives communicate their constituents' needs and views to management.

On the other hand, Beaumont sees the roles of 'inspector/'

monitor' and 'accident investigator' as adaptive and as technical roles requiring specialist training. So in Beaumont's study, the roles are split almost equally between industrial relations and technical:

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Industrial relations role | 51% |
| Technical role | 49% |

In the present study, when the eight categories were classified as being either industrial relations or technically orientated, the percentages were:

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Industrial relations role | 22% |
| Technical role | 77% |

NOTE: Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number so do not total 100%

The industrial relations/technical classification was assigned to the eight categories as follows:

TABLE 7.11 Industrial Relations/Technical Roles of Safety Representatives

| <u>Industrial Relations</u> | % | <u>Technical</u> | % |
|-----------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|----|
| Consulter | 7 | Inspector/Monitor | 22 |
| Representative | 4 | Educator (other and self) | 18 |
| Management Pressuriser | 11 | General (H, S, & W) | 27 |
| | | Enforcer | 5 |
| | | Other | 5 |
| Total % | <u>22</u> | Total % | 77 |
| N = <u>12</u> | | N = <u>43</u> | |

The low proportion of responses related to industrial relations

indicates that safety representatives in this organisation do not see this function as being one of the most important aspects of a safety representative's work. This could be due to several factors, but it may be that there is little conflict over health and safety issues in this local authority, so safety representatives use more of their time in areas such as inspection, monitoring and concerning themselves with general health, safety and welfare matters, as opposed to negotiating with management for time off, protective clothing, etc. This lack of conflict or absence of strongly opposing perspectives on health and safety of trade union representatives and management will be discussed later.

Before proceeding to discuss further Beaumont's interpretation of the 'representative' role, one possible explanation for the differences in emphasis given to the various roles by the safety representatives in Beaumont's sample and those in the present study needs to be considered. An important difference is that Beaumont's sample was drawn from the private sector, and the group in the present study from the public sector, and certain differences resulting from this might account for the disparity in the results.

Some of the important aspects relating to the public sector are described by Clegg (1979) and Thomson & Beaumont (1978) and these are applied below to the situation being analysed. Clegg (1979) gives the trade union density in the public sector in 1974 as a high 85.6% and talks of the Government's readiness to recognise trade unions, encouraging employees to join trade unions sometimes resulting in closed shop arrangements.

Trade union membership extends high up the organisational hierarchy resulting in senior officers who are relatively well-

disposed towards unionism. Clegg states that the trade unions can exert influence on a wider range of employment-related matters when compared with the private sector where wages and hours are the main areas discussed. Good fringe benefits exist because of the Government's 'good employer' obligations, and in addition there is safe employment due to the relative insulation from adverse market forces and the fact that management are less willing and less able to dismiss labour.

Thomson & Beaumont (1978) also talk of the large white collar labour force in the public sector and the high unionisation of both white and blue collar workers. They, like Clegg, state that the public sector is sheltered from competition and also by the bureaucratic system with its rules and regulations which tend to cushion overt conflict. They also mention the traditional high level of job security compared to the low job security in the private sector (a point even more relevant in the recession of the 1980s).

Thomson & Beaumont describe the bargaining relationship in the private sector as adversary and that in the public sector as traditionally co-operative. There is limited consultation in the private sector, whereas consultation is central to the industrial relations system in the public sector. Conflict resolution is through informal settlement at plant level in the private sector and through formalised, centralised procedures in the public sector.

All the points described above highlight factors relating to the public sector which may help to explain why the role of 'representative' is not found as often in the present study as in Beaumont's study. It may not be necessary to have a channel of

communication through which the workforce can express their needs and views to management because of the degree of consultation and co-operation already existing in the public sector, for example through joint consultative committees. Management are well-disposed towards the unions, and there is little overt conflict which may account for the fact that only a small proportion of the safety representative roles fall under the heading of industrial relations roles. The large proportion of technical roles may indicate that the freedom from having to act as a communicator, allows the safety representatives to develop their roles in other directions, for example an educator role.

It is interesting here to note the interpretation and possible explanation given by Beaumont of the Industrial Relations/Technical division of the safety representative role. Beaumont states that the safety representatives who emphasised the 'representative' role said that employees and management at their workplace were relatively concerned about health and safety matters and management were relatively receptive to the presentation of workers' grievances. On the other hand, Beaumont suggests that where management were relatively unconcerned about health and safety matters, safety representatives had to present hard evidence of work hazards to convince management of the need for changes in workplace organisation and practice in the interests of health and safety - that is they used the adaptive roles of inspector/monitor and accident investigator. It may be that a different explanation would, intuitively at least, be more probable - that is where management were relatively unconcerned about health and safety in the workplace, safety representatives would have to use pressurising tactics and use hard negotiating in order to get management to carry out improvements and make changes in practices.

I would suggest that where safety representatives feel that management are strongly committed to health and safety, and where safety representatives feel that they get the support of management when health and safety issues are raised, they are less likely to perceive their role (that is the most important aspect of their work) as industrial relations-orientated.

Chi-squared tests were carried out on data collected in the present study to test the relationship between the groups of roles - that is Industrial Relations and Technical - and the degree of commitment of senior management to health and safety, and also whether or not the safety representatives felt that they get management support. It was hypothesised that those who emphasised the industrial relations aspects of their role would perceive senior management to be only slightly committed and would not feel that they got the support of management. However, no statistically significant relationships were found between Industrial Relations/ Technical safety representative roles and 1) the degree of perceived senior management commitment to health and safety or, 2) the perception of safety representatives regarding the support they get from management. Whether safety representatives take an industrial relations or a technical approach to their work is not associated with these perceptions or attitudes.

Other aspects such as lack of overt conflict or the technology used in the work environment, may favour the technical aspects of the role being used in this Local Authority. For example, in the Drainage Department, special equipment has to be used in sewers and the safety representative may spend time in inspecting this, and in educating both himself and others with regard to the potential hazards and safety procedures to be observed.

When the safety representatives were asked what health and safety issues took up most of their time, the most common answers were: carrying out inspections, checking equipment, reading and writing of reports, following up reports and attending safety committee meetings. Another category named 'general conditions of work' included such items as heating in workshops and excessive exhaust fumes in garages.

These replies reinforce the answers given to the question regarding their perception of the most important aspect of a safety representative's work, for example the role of inspector/monitor, by showing that a large proportion of time is spent on activities related to the main roles identified.

Another point concerning the perceived role of safety representatives was the relationship between their perceived roles and the skills which are taught to safety representatives on TUC and other training courses. 59% of the safety representatives had attended a training course, that is, 39 individuals. Of these, 37 answered a question asking which courses(s) they had attended. Multiple answers were possible and four safety representatives gave more than one course. The majority (89%) had attended the TUC 10-day course for safety representatives. Other courses attended were a course run by the Regional Council or by their specific department, external courses such as that run by the National Water Council, and a NALGO course which had been attended by one respondent.

The safety representatives were given a list of the main skills taught on the TUC training course for safety representatives - obtained from the teaching material, and were asked to tick which

aspects of the training course they had found most useful in their workplace. Again, multiple answers were possible and from the 36 respondents who answered this question, the results were as below:

TABLE 7.12 Training Course Skills Considered to be most useful by Safety Representatives

"Which aspects of the above course(s) have you found most useful in your workplace?:"

| | |
|--|-----|
| Hazard spotting skills | 94% |
| Legal knowledge | 89% |
| Negotiating skills | 39% |
| Technical skills (e.g. sampling or monitoring) | 36% |
| Accident investigation skills | 33% |
| Committee procedures | 25% |

N = 36

It was hypothesised that there would be an association between the roles most commonly identified by safety representatives and the skills taught on training courses which are considered by them to be most useful. When cross-tabulations were performed between the skills listed above and the safety representative perceived roles, the cell sizes were too small to carry out a Chi-squared test and a Fisher Exact Test showed no statistically significant relationship. However, as discussed in the chapter on methodology, Baldamus (1972) among many others states that in social science research it is not valid to discount data simply because it is not statistically significant.

From the role classifications it can be seen that hazard spotting skills mentioned by 94% of the respondents who had

attended a training course, would be particularly relevant in the 'inspector/monitor' and 'general health and safety' roles although only some (that is 27) safety representatives cited these two roles as being the most important aspects of a safety representative's role.

Of the 64 respondents who were asked if they personally made safety inspections, 77% (that is 49 individuals) replied that they did so. It therefore seems that hazard spotting skills are also useful to those who described other aspects of a safety representative's work such as educator and management pressuriser, as being more important.

Legal knowledge was considered useful by 89% of respondents who had attended any safety training courses, which again is a necessary pre-requisite for almost all the roles mentioned, particularly educator, management pressuriser, enforcer and representative.

Negotiating skills cited by 39% of this group of safety representatives would be particularly useful in the management pressuriser and representative roles.

Technical skills such as sampling or monitoring were ticked by only 36% of the respondents although this figure might have been expected to be higher in view of the large number who previously mentioned the inspector/monitor role. However, sampling or monitoring, for example of noise or gases, is a specialist skill which is not always relevant or necessary in work situations.

Committee procedures would be useful to those who see themselves as a consulter and/or a representative.

The one result which did not 'fit in' with the perceived roles of safety representatives was 'accident investigation skills' which was ticked by 33% of the respondents, and yet as stated before, the investigator role was not mentioned in this study. This may be because accidents are infrequent events which does not mean that accident investigation skills are not useful to the safety representative only that these skills are not used as frequently as others such as inspecting. This may indeed be an area where safety representatives feel that training is particularly important as their evidence may be crucial in any enquiry carried out as a result of an accident.

The Safety Representative and Safety Committee Regulations (1977) (SRSC Regulations)

It is instructive to look at the workplace functions of safety representatives which are set out in the SRSC Regulations and which are not considered in any way to be legal duties. These are summarised below, and in looking at the functions visualised by the legislators to be part of the safety representative's role, each can be related to the findings in this project. These functions are set out and given to all safety representatives in the local authority and although all these functions may be carried out by all safety representatives this project is examining what safety representatives see as the most important aspect(s) of their work. That is, there is an objective assessment of the perceived primary function(s) of a safety representative.

SRSC Regulations - Safety Representative Functions

The bracketed roles are those identified by analysis of the

safety representative questionnaire data in this project and considered by the researcher to be equivalent to the listed functions. On occasions more than one role is associated with one function.

1. To represent employees in consultation with the employer (Representative, Consulter)
2. To investigate potential hazards and dangerous occurrences in the workplace (not mentioned as a primary function - ? Reactive)
3. To examine causes of accidents in the workplace (as No.2)
4. To investigate complaints by any represented employee related to their health, safety and welfare at work (Representative)
5. To make representations to the employer on matters arising out of causes of accidents in the workplace (Representative, Consulter, Management Pressuriser)
6. To make representations to the employer on general matters affecting health, safety and welfare at work of employees (Representative, Consulter, Management Pressuriser)
7. To inspect the workplace by agreement with the employer at least once every three months, or when there has been a notifiable accident or dangerous occurrence, or when a notifiable disease has been contracted in that workplace (Inspector/Monitor)
8. To represent the employees he was appointed to represent in consultations with HSE inspectors or other enforcing agency (Representative, Consulter)
9. To receive from inspectors, factual information relating to the workplace, or with respect to action taken or proposed in connection with the workplace (Representative, Self-educator)
10. To attend meetings of safety committees as a safety representative in connection with any of the above functions (Representative, Consulter, Management Pressuriser).

Thus, it can be seen that the main roles classified in this project which can be defined by the functions laid out in the SRSC Regulations are those of representative, consulter, and management pressuriser. The role of inspector/monitor is also common to both, however the investigatory role was not emphasised in the present study for the reason already suggested. The role of educator identified by safety representatives in this project is not described in the SRSC Regulations but is implied in the associated Code of Practice which states that safety representatives should be allowed time off for training.

7.5 Relationship with HSE Inspectorate

One interesting area with regard to the functions described above is the relationship between safety representatives and HSE inspectors. It is suggested in the SRSC Regulations that safety representatives will receive information from inspectors relating to the workplace and keeping them informed about any proposed action or steps already taken in connection with the workplace.

In the present research project the relationship with HSE inspectors was not at any stage mentioned as an important aspect of the safety representative role. However in a WEA publication, Schmoller & Grayson (1980) state that safety representatives' rights of representation, inspection and information open up new possibilities for trade union influence in the workplace. These authors suggest that safety representatives are in a position to control the activities of the inspectorate and, at times, to harness their powers for trade union use. Schmoller & Grayson do

admit, however, that inspectors are extremely reluctant to get involved in anything which may be an industrial relations matter.

The questionnaire sent to safety representatives in the Local Authority contained a series of questions regarding the safety representatives contact with the HSE inspectors. Firstly, the safety representatives were asked if any inspector had ever visited their department. The results can be seen in Table 7.13.

TABLE 7.13 Safety Representatives' Awareness of HSE Inspector's Visits

"Has a Health and Safety Executive Inspector ever visited your department?"

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| Yes | 48% |
| No | 17% |
| Don't know | 34% |
| N = <u>64</u> | |

Those who answered 'Yes' were asked another four questions and their responses are shown below.

TABLE 7.14 Details of HSE Inspector's Visits Recalled by Safety Representatives

| | Yes(%) | No(%) | N |
|--|--------|-------|----|
| 1. Have you ever accompanied an inspector on an inspection? | 24 | 76 | 34 |
| 2. Has an inspector come to speak to you during his/her visit? | 33 | 67 | 33 |
| 3. Have you received a copy of an inspector's report after a visit? | 25 | 75 | 35 |
| 4. Have you received a copy of any Improvement or Prohibition Notices served in your department? | 20 | 40* | 35 |

* 40% did not know if any had been served

So it can be seen from these results that the majority of these safety representatives have had no contact with inspectors during their visits, nor have most safety representative respondents received information concerning these visits, either in the form of reports or copies of notices served on their departments, indeed 40% did not even know if any improvement or prohibition notices had been served. So the two functions in the SRSC Regulations concerning the HSE inspectorate do not appear to be being carried out among the safety representatives who returned the questionnaire.

Morris (1981), in a study of the role and effectiveness of government inspection in health and safety found that attitudes towards the inspectorate were very similar from employers and employees - that is, on the whole favourable attitudes. However, the response rates to his questionnaire were 27% from employers and only 16% from employees. Morris suggests that this was because the questionnaire was long. However, the low response rate may be due to the fact, suggested by the present study, that employees have little contact with inspectors.

Schmoller & Grayson (1980) advise safety representatives in a workplace to negotiate the right for the appropriate safety representative to accompany the inspector on his/her visit. This point is also illustrated in the GMWU model safety agreement:

"Safety representatives will be immediately notified when a Health and Safety Inspector is on the premises and each representative will be entitled to tour his/her constituency with the inspector and communicate with him/her privately."

However, Schmoller & Grayson (1980) admit that inspectors can use their own discretion who they involve in a workplace visit.

A Labour Research Department survey of safety agreements (Bargaining Report Jan/Feb 1980) states that in well over half of the organisations covered, safety representatives were informed by management when an inspector was visiting the workplace. It seems that, in this Local Authority, the majority of safety representatives do not have direct contact with inspectors when they visit the workplace.

Complaints to the Inspectorate

Schmoller & Grayson (1980) suggest that making a complaint to the inspectorate is one way of putting pressure on management to improve conditions. They say that this type of trade union pressure can be "a positive force for change in the attitudes and enforcement procedures of the inspectorate".

In this Local Authority study, safety representatives were asked if they had ever reported to the Health and Safety Executive something which was unsafe. Of the 63 replies, 21% said they had reported something and 79% had not. Those who had reported something were asked to give examples and these ranged from fire appliances to cleaning fluid (which was finally withdrawn).

The lack of reporting is borne out by an HSE survey published in the February 1981 issue of the Employment Gazette which reports that the widespread appointment of safety representatives has not been accompanied by any significant use in the number of complaints

to HSE inspectors. This report suggests that the reason for this is that, as had been expected, mutually agreed solutions are generally being found to health and safety problems through joint discussion at the place of work. Certainly, Cook (1980) found no evidence of a liaison role with the HSE for safety representatives.

Schmoller & Grayson (1980) stress that complaints from safety representatives can remain anonymous and it is possible that safety representatives who replied to the questionnaire did not want to admit to having complained to the inspectorate although the complete confidentiality of the information was stressed.

7.6 The Safety Representative/Management Relationship

The relationship between safety representatives and management is one which has been studied by researchers such as Beaumont (1980) and Kochan (1977). One aspect of this which is considered particularly important is the degree of senior management commitment to health and safety which can be assessed by various means including data collected in the safety representative questionnaire. The degree of management commitment perceived by the safety representatives will in turn affect the strategy they use in interactions with management, so the importance of this commitment can be emphasised.

7.6.1 The degree of management commitment

In 1977 Bill Simpson, then Chairman of the Health and Safety Commission told an audience of managers that a fundamental factor in improving a firm's health and safety performance was the degree to which senior management was committed.

"It is senior management's task to establish a defined company safety organisation, which will show a clear line of responsibility from the shop floor supervisor through line management and senior management to the managing director."

Before looking at the results of a direct question regarding the perception of the degree of senior management commitment to health and safety, it may be useful to look at some indirect measures of that commitment.

Indirect Measures of Senior Management Commitment

1. The Chairmanship of Safety Committees

In the Local Authority studied, the upper tier committees are chaired either by the Director of the department himself or by his depute. It is suggested that the inclusion of senior managers in the safety committee is a demonstration to the workforce of the commitment of top management to improving health and safety in the workplace and to the operationalisation of the safety policy.

There are various competing demands on the time of, for example, the Director of a department of a local authority, and so the fact that a senior manager allocates time to chair a safety committee meeting indicates that he considers it to be important.

2. Problems Experienced by Safety Representatives

In the present study a series of questions was put to the safety representatives to see if they had experienced any problems in certain areas to do with their various functions. It is suggested that if a large majority were experiencing such problems this may be indicative of a certain lack of commitment to health and safety from those who are responsible for making policy decisions, that is, senior management.

The resources spent on health and safety for example on providing safety clothing and equipment and also a willingness to send people on training courses and to give safety representatives time off with pay when necessary may indicate the degree of senior management commitment to health and safety. These questions and the responses are seen below:

TABLE 7.15 Problems Experienced by Safety Representatives

"Have you ever experienced any problems about:

| | Yes(%) | No(%) | N |
|---|--------|-------|----|
| a) getting time off to perform safety representative duties | 5 | 95 | 63 |
| b) getting information on health and safety | 13 | 87 | 63 |
| c) getting on a training course | 6 | 94 | 63 |
| d) getting protective clothing or equipment for employees | 18 | 82 | 62 |
| e) any other aspects of safety representative functions " | 8 | 92 | 60 |

Discussion of the above results

a) Time off to perform duties

The SRSC Regulations state:

"4(2) An employer shall permit a safety representative to take such time off with pay during the employee's working hours as shall be necessary for the purposes of:
(a) performing his functions under section 2(4) of the 1974 Act."

Caldwell et al. (1980) state that from their studies written agreements specific to the organisation on time off for safety representatives seem unusual as most safety representatives felt these agreements were unnecessary. Of course this may be because this safety representative right is written into the Regulations above.

The results from the present study seem to confirm this lack of need of a specific agreement in that only 5% had experienced any such problems. It is possible that as the present recession deepens and redundancy and short-time threaten, getting time off may become more of a problem.

The respondents who had experienced problems were asked to give details and these included: difficulty because of a shortage of workforce, a general lack of time to deal with safety representative business and a safety representative being told by a superior that he needed permission from the Directorate to go to trade union health and safety meetings.

b) Getting Information on Health and Safety

The SRSC Regulations set out the various types of information to be provided by employers. Caldwell et al. (1980) states that *"although experience has varied it seems that most safety representatives have had difficulty in getting as much information as they would like."* However, only 13% answered that they had experienced difficulty getting information. Two respondents mentioned TLVs and other information with regard to chemicals and noise levels, one mentioned a lack of information from the safety officer about inspectors' visits, one said that the information provided by their trade union was not up to date. The remaining examples concerned a lack of literature on various aspects of a safety representative's functions.

c) Getting on a Training Course

Regulation 4(2) provides for paid time off for:

"(b) undergoing such training in aspects of those functions as may be reasonable in all the circumstances having regard to any relevant provisions of a code of practice relating to time off for training..."

As described in a previous section, only 59% of the 66 safety representatives who answered the questions, replied that they had been on a training course for safety representatives, and 80% of those had been on the TUC ten-day course.

Only 6% of the 63 safety representatives who answered a

question asking if they had experienced problems getting on a training course, answered that they *had* experienced problems. This may indicate a general lack of interest or motivation to attend a training course on the part of safety representatives who had not yet attended a training course, had applied and had been told that they must wait until it was possible for them to attend. They might not have perceived this to be a problem.

The three replies concerning problems were interesting. One safety representative said that he had to wait two years before being sent on a course; one said that the safety representative follow-up course, if attended, is not with full pay and a particularly interesting point was made by the third respondent who stated that he is a shop steward also and so cannot be spared to go on all courses necessary to carry out his duties as fully as he would wish. This is one aspect of the joint role which may cause some problems.

The same point was made by some members of senior management who, when interviewed, stressed that it is often not possible because of manpower shortages to send people on courses when they (the potential trainees) would like.

During the time that the research was being carried out, the safety officer in the Water Supply Services held a one-day course for all safety representatives in that department. So it is possible for management to arrange for safety representatives to receive some training and to get time off from their duties. On the whole, however,

the basic safety representatives training is carried out by the trade unions and may then be supplemented by training of a more situation-specific nature at their place of work.

d) Getting Protective Clothing/Equipment for Employees

Respondents were asked if they had experienced any problems getting protective clothing/equipment for employees and this question gave rise to the largest number of affirmative answers (18% of 62 respondents) which initially seems surprising, as in interviews the safety officers and members of senior management of the four departments, all said that they had little trouble with regard to the budget which each Director presents to the chairman of the relevant committee of the local authority.

Three out of four of the departments studied had a separate health and safety budget which is estimated by a group of people which varies between departments. Usually it consists of a group of Sub-Regional Engineers and the safety officer. In the Transport Department, where there is no full-time safety officer, the Chief Engineer plays a part in deciding how the budget should be allocated. The budgets for health and safety have been agreed by the Regional Council without dispute - only growth being debated by the relevant committee. Protective clothing and equipment is provided free in the departments to those who require it, although in one department after an initial provision, an allowance is then made for replacement.

Of the ten examples given of problems concerning protective clothing or equipment, the majority mention difficulty either in getting the required sizes of quality of clothing or delays in receiving it. This point is one which was raised at some of the safety committee meetings observed by the researcher, especially in the Highways and Drainage Departments. Initially the tendency in a local authority, where large quantities of, for example, gloves are being ordered, would be to order fairly cheap all-purpose clothing. Later, these were often found to be unsuitable for the job in question. For example, men going down into sewers must have special anti-static boots as a spark generated when there could be dangerous since gases could cause an explosion. Often at meetings gloves were discussed. If these were unsuitable they would wear out quickly or could cause dermatitis. One solution to this problem in some departments was, after discussion with safety representatives at safety committee meetings, to get groups of workers to test out various types of protective clothing and report back on how suitable they were. This was found to be very useful to the people ordering the equipment but also psychologically, as if the workforce can be made to feel involved in health and safety in their place of work they may be more committed to it. Having tested, then chosen, the type of gloves to be worn they are more likely to continue wearing them.

The 8% who cited problems with other aspects of health and safety mentioned such things as finding time and getting employees to act safely and pay attention to the Health and Safety at Work Act.

3. The Number of Safety Committee Recommendations Followed Up

This area will be discussed more fully in the chapter on safety committees but the results of a question to safety representatives can be seen in Table 7.16.

TABLE 7.16 Follow-Up of Safety Committee Recommendations

"Do you feel that recommendations and points discussed by the safety committee are followed up - always, often, fairly often, never?"

| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| a) Always | 28% |
| b) Often | 36% |
| c) Fairly often | 36% |
| d) Never | - |

N = 44

NOTE: This question was asked only of the 44 safety representatives who belonged to safety committees

Only 28% of these safety representatives felt that points were always followed up. This to some degree can be cross-checked with the minutes of safety committees (see Chapter Nine).

Whether valid or not however, it is of interest because it is still an impression or opinion of safety representatives. This could indicate a lack of confidence in safety committees or a feeling that the safety committees are effective in highlighting faults and areas to be improved, only to be 'let down' by a lack of senior management commitment to health and safety, resulting in an unwillingness to progress items and see that recommendations are actually carried out.

4. Issues Discussed with Management

The safety representatives were asked about the last occasion they were approached by management on a health and safety issue, that is what did the issue involve?

The replies were then classified as follows:

TABLE 7.17 Type of Issue Discussed with Management by Safety Representative

| | <u>N</u> | <u>Examples</u> |
|---------------------|----------|--------------------------------|
| Safety | 15 | New departmental safety policy |
| Personal Protection | 11 | Safety boots |
| Training | 2 | A one-day course |
| Health | 4 | Asbestos removal |
| Welfare | 4 | Heating, lighting |

N = 36

The safety representatives were also asked what was the outcome to find out if management are following up and dealing with issues discussed with safety representatives.

TABLE 7.18 Outcome of Discussions between Management and Safety Representatives

| <u>Items:</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|
| Dealt with satisfactorily | 25 | 69 |
| Being dealt with | 5 | 13 |
| Still awaiting action | 6 | 17 |

N = 36

69% of issues had been dealt with satisfactorily and only 17% of issues were still awaiting action. This indicates that, in the majority of cases, management are willing to allocate the resources necessary for dealing with issues

raised by safety representatives. This could be one criterion of management commitment used by safety representatives.

We can now turn to a consideration of more direct measures of senior management commitment to health and safety.

Perception of the Degree of Senior Management Commitment to Health and Safety

Kochan et al. (1977) asked a population of safety representatives and a population of plant managers the following question: "To what extent do you feel that top management of this plant is committed to creating safe working conditions in the plant?" Respondents were given five categories ranging from "not committed" to "very strongly committed" and the results were as follows:

TABLE 7.19 Senior Management Commitment to Health and Safety (Kochan et al. (1977))

| | <u>Safety Representatives (N=51)</u> | <u>Plant Management (N=42)</u> |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| | % | % |
| Not committed | 2 | 0 |
| Weakly committed | 24 | 0 |
| Generally committed | 33 | 12 |
| Strongly committed | 31 | 21 |
| Very strongly committed | 10 | 64 |

The different views of trade union representatives and representatives of management were very marked. The categories covering "not committed" and "weakly committed" accounted for 26%

of the safety representative sample, whereas these two categories were unfilled by the plant management sample.

A striking difference can also be seen when the categories of 'strongly committed' and 'very strongly committed' are combined. In the case of the safety representatives, 41% of them put senior management into these categories, while 85% of plant management thought these categories described top management. This disparity of viewpoints concerning the perceived degree of commitment of top management to health and safety is indicative of the conflict viewpoint of the Pluralist Frame of Reference as described by Fox (1974). This suggests that the conflict which is inevitable in organisations, manifests itself in differing attitudes and perceptions on the part of the two main groups involved - that is the workforce and management.

A Department of Employment survey of 1981 conducted in private sector firms in Scotland highlighted differing attitudes and perceptions of management and workforce with regard to certain aspects of work including health and safety. When asked to state the form of involvement of management and workforce in health and safety issues the results showed some disparity. 81% of management respondents mentioned consultation as opposed to only 56% of workforce representatives. Negotiation was mentioned by 24% of workforce representatives but by no management respondents. This indicates a difference in perception by the parties who represent different interest groups. The issue of which strategy is used by workforce and management in interactions over health and safety is discussed in detail later in this chapter and it may be possible to see if supervisors' and safety representatives' perceptions of the strategies used differ as much in an organ-

isation in the public sector as they do in the private sector as described in the above survey. It should be noted here that management were represented in the survey by the Managing Director, Personnel Executive and Chief Engineer. That is, they are senior management rather than the supervisory level of management as in the present study - direct comparisons cannot therefore be made.

It was hypothesised that a similar disparity of viewpoint about the degree of senior management commitment would be found in the present study and to that end a similar question was asked.

Respondents were given four categories of reply in the questionnaire for safety representatives and these were later reduced to three categories in the questionnaire for supervisors as it was felt that these would give a more balanced scale. When analysing the data, combining the 'strongly committed' and 'very strongly committed' categories gave more acceptable cell sizes for the purpose of carrying out Chi-squared tests. The results of the two questionnaires are seen below with the separate and combined data for the safety representatives shown.

Management Commitment in the Local Authority Study

TABLE 7.20 Perceptions of Senior Management Commitment
(Levinson, 1984)

"To what extent do you feel that senior management is committed to creating and maintaining safety working conditions in the departments?"

(Table 7.20 continued)

| | <u>Safety Representatives</u> | <u>Supervisors</u> |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| | N = 62 | N = 78 |
| | % | % |
| Not committed | 0 | 0 |
| Slightly committed | 27 | 26 |
| Strongly committed | 47) | 74 |
| Very strongly committed | 26) 73 | - |

The pattern of responses from the two groups were remarkably similar. In both cases there were no returns in the 'not committed' category. 27% of the safety representatives and 26% of the supervisors saw senior management as 'slightly committed'. In the questionnaire to safety representatives, the combined categories gave a figure of 73% compared with 74% in the supervisor questionnaire.

Before going on to try to account for the differences in results between Kochan et al.'s study and the present one, it may be useful to see the two sets of results set out in one table.

TABLE 7.21 Comparison of Results (Management Commitment)

| | <u>Kochan et al. (1977)</u> | | <u>Levinson (1984)</u> | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| | <u>Safety Reps (%)</u> | <u>Supervisors (%)</u> | <u>Safety Reps (%)</u> | <u>Supervisors (%)</u> |
| Not committed | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Weakly committed (Slightly) | 24 | 0 | 27 | 26 |
| Generally committed | 33 | 12 | - | - |
| Strongly committed | 31) | 21) | 47) | 74) |
| Very strongly committed | 10) 41 | 64) 85 | 26) 73 | -) 74 |
| | N=51 | N=42 | N=62 | N=87 |

It is important to note that a direct comparison of Kochan et al.'s findings and those from the present study is not possible due to his additional category of 'generally committed' which was not included here as it seemed a rather vague concept and a potential option for those who did not want to come down on the side of either slight or strong commitment. The more interesting comparisons are those already described between trade union representatives and managers at plant level (the level of management referred to by Kochan et al. is not clear - in the project set in Scotland, the level of management was first line supervisors).

It appears then, that in the present study, there are virtually no differences between safety representatives' and supervisors' perceptions of the degree of senior management commitment to health and safety, whereas there are considerable differences in the US study. This disparity is difficult to explain, but may be due to one or more of the following:

- a) differences in the industrial relations systems of the UK and USA such as those already described;
- b) the fact that a different level of management was questioned in the two studies;
- c) in the UK supervisors usually have been promoted from the shopfloor, in the USA junior management may enter directly to this position in the organisation often after gaining certain academic qualifications;
- d) Kochan et al.'s study was carried out in a number of plants in the private sector of industry, whereas the present study is set in the public sector where there may be less overt conflict, less diversity of perspective and where management may have less trouble in getting

resources to spend on health and safety than in the more competitive private sector.

In the present study, it was hypothesised that the safety representatives who considered senior management to be only slightly committed to health and safety might be the ones who had experienced the problems described in Section 7.6.

Of the 17 individuals who see management as only slightly committed, nine had experienced problems of some kind which may have coloured their attitudes with regard to how committed senior management were. These nine individuals account for 53% of the 'slightly committed' category, the remaining 47% presumably basing their opinion upon evidence other than having experienced the problems described in Section 7.6.

One variable which could have an effect on the perception of senior management commitment by both groups (safety representatives and supervisors) is whether they feel that they get the support of management or of senior management in the case of supervisors.

The data concerning management support were described and statistically tested in Table 7.6. Of the 30% of safety representatives who answered that they did not get the support of management, several stated that senior management back the regional and departmental safety policy, but that local management do not enforce safe working enough, and also that they (local management) resent the time spent on health and safety issues when they have so much to do. A lack of urgency with regard to getting work progressed was also mentioned. However it may be that safety representatives are expressing their

perceptions of supervisors in general and attributing to their attitudes that may, or may not, accurately reflect the actual attitudes held by individual supervisors.

91% of supervisors as opposed to 70% of safety representatives felt that they get the support of management. This may be because supervisors are themselves a part of management and as such have a legal responsibility under the HASAWA for the men with whom they work. If a supervisor should fail in his responsibilities, a prosecution may be brought against him as well as against senior management whose ultimate responsibility is the maintenance of a safe and healthy working environment.

Apart from the legal responsibility, senior management should be aware of the important part the supervisor can play in setting an example to the workforce and in helping to motivate and encourage workers to, for example, use protective clothing and equipment. To this end, it is essential for senior management to give support to the supervisor in his work with regard to health and safety. Indeed Kochan et al. (1980) see a committed management as able to activate the desired behaviour in lower level management.

Another aspect with regard to support, is that although management were felt to be supportive by 70% of the safety representatives they were also getting support from their trade unions (according to 84% of respondents) and, for those who had attended, comprehensive health and safety training on the TUC safety representative course.

Thus, in order for supervisors, who are the members of

management most often in contact with safety representatives, to be able to interact and co-operate with safety representatives, it is important for the supervisors to get support through access to information, attendance at training courses and general back-up which necessitates the support of senior management.

Crosstabulations were made for each of the two groups to examine the relationship between the two variables (1) support of management and (2) perception of the degree of senior management commitment to health and safety (this was reduced to two categories in each case as there was a nil return in the 'not committed' category).

A Chi-squared test was carried out to see if there were significant differences between those in each group who felt respectively that they did and did not receive management support. It was hypothesised that these safety representatives who felt that they received the support of management will tend to see management as strongly committed to health and safety.

TABLE 7.22 Crosstabulation of Management Commitment by Management Support (Safety Representatives)

Safety Representatives' view of:

Management Commitment

Slight Committed Strongly Committed

| | | | |
|--------------------|-----|---|----|
| Management Support | Yes | 9 | 34 |
| | No | 9 | 9 |

$\chi^2 = \underline{3.82}$ $df = 1$ n.s.

The Chi-squared value under the null hypothesis of no association between the perception of the degree of commitment of senior management and receiving support from management in the case of safety representatives is 3.82 with 1 df. The Chi-squared value of 3.82 is close to 3.84 the statistically significant value for 1 df at the 5% level, showing a considerable difference between safety representatives who do/do not get support from management and the perceptions of each group of the degree of commitment to health and safety of management.

It was hypothesised that those supervisors who felt that they got the support of management in their role would tend to see management as being strongly committed to health and safety.

TABLE 7.23 Crosstabulation of Management Commitment by Management Support (Supervisors)

Supervisors' view of:
Management Commitment

| | | Slightly Committed | Strongly Committed |
|--------------------|-----|--------------------|--------------------|
| Management Support | Yes | 12 | 60 |
| | No | 6 | 2 |

$$\chi^2 = \underline{10.9} \quad df = 1 \quad p < 0.001$$

The Chi-squared value under the null hypothesis of no association between the perception of the degree of commitment of senior management and receiving support from management in the case of supervisors is 10.9 with 1 df which gives a p-value of < 0.001.

There is a significant difference between those supervisors who feel that they do/do not receive management support and their perception of the degree of commitment to health and safety of senior management. Only 17% of those who felt that they get support see senior management as only slightly committed as opposed to 83% who see them as strongly committed. Of those who felt that they do not get the support of management, 75% felt that senior management are only slightly committed although admittedly this group only comprised six individuals. The two tables were then combined using Cochran's Method and the p-value was .0012. So the combined populations of safety representatives and supervisors showed a relationship between the feeling of being supported/not supported by management and the perception of the degree of commitment to health and safety of senior management. Although receiving management support was associated with the perception of a strongly committed senior management, the Chi-squared test does not show a cause and effect relationship.

7.6.2 Strategies used by safety representatives and management

The Robens Committee, having adopted a unitary perspective on the involvement of workers in health and safety emphasised the use of joint consultation through safety committees in the workplace. That is, they recommended that there was a need for real participation in decision-making at all levels. However, there is survey evidence from 1968, 1974 and 1975 that health and safety has been the subject of workplace negotiation in Britain for some time. (Workplace Industrial Relations 1968; Parker 1974 and 1973).

It can be seen that there is some difficulty in the theoretical as opposed to the practical aspects of joint consultation and negotiation. In theory these can be defined as two distinct entities which differ in the degree of similarity of aims of the two parties involved, that is management and unions. However, in practice this distinction may be less than relevant in particular in the area of health and safety where the two forms of joint decision-making could be combined. It may in any case be difficult to categorise certain interactions, such as those between safety representatives and supervisors, as being specifically either consultation or negotiation.

Clegg (1960) subscribes to the view that the purposes of negotiation and consultation are different. Collective bargaining was seen to be appropriate in the narrow area where the interests of management and workers conflict, whereas joint consultation was to be used in the wide area in which these interests coincided. So it became generally accepted that joint consultation should be kept separate from collective bargaining machinery. The Industrial Relations Code of Practice of 1972 regarded consultation and negotiation as closely related but distinct processes, although there is now a view that these distinctions are inadequate and unnecessary.

Lewis (1977) states that negotiations take place both in conjunction with and separate from consultation and an investigation into the range of bargaining of shop stewards revealed that 54% of them discussed and settled safety questions as standard practice. In some companies safety rules are included in formal agreements and it was found to be quite common for joint safety committees to combine the functions of consultation and negotiation. The implications for the functioning of safety committees and the use

of these alternative strategies will be discussed more fully in the chapter on safety committees.

Lewis sums up by saying that the distinction between negotiation and consultation which is theoretically based on the ultimate location of authority (that is consultation leaves the final decision with management) is now obsolete. There should be a merger of negotiation and consultation machinery. While the initiative must come from management, it is the trade unions' function to jog management. This endorses the safety representative role of 'management pressuriser'. Lewis considers that the trade unions have started to insist that safety is a fit subject for negotiating through collective bargaining.

Ramsay (1975) describes a study carried out in a shipyard where workers were asked if they agreed or disagreed with a statement suggesting that "a firm is like a football team in which management and workers are on the same side because good teamwork is to everyone's advantage." 79% were in agreement with the statement. However, when they were then asked if that was the way things worked in their own firm, the responses shifted significantly with only 54% agreeing that their own organisation was like a football team. This suggests that it is important when collecting information, particularly by questionnaire, to distinguish between responses in relation to a theoretical concept such as co-operation or consultation, and responses in relation to the practice of the respondent's own working environment.

In this study, it was emphasised when asking a question

regarding consultation and negotiation, that it was specific relationships within the organisation in question that were being described. Definitions of 'consultation' and 'negotiation' were also given alongside the question so that there would be no misunderstanding or alternative interpretations of the terms being used.

Beaumont (1978) carried out a study which has already been described in some detail, where he elicited the views of managers about the operation of collective bargaining for manual workers in relation to a range of job-related matters of which safety was one.

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which the managers felt trade unions and management were attempting to accomplish the same or conflicting goals. 92% answered that they wished to accomplish rather similar things. 86% felt that collective bargaining was helpful although when asked what they considered to be the 'ideal' means of dealing with various job-related issues, 75% of the managers said that joint consultation was best for safety issues.

One point added by Beaumont is that all the respondents were highly doubtful of the ability of management to maintain a distinction in practice between consultation and negotiation on matters of prime concern to workers and unions such as safety matters. This point reinforces the idea of an artificial dichotomy between the two concepts described above.

A study carried out by Beaumont in 1980 with a sample of safety representatives was described in detail in Chapter Five.

The results showed that the more likely a safety representative was to see an essential similarity of management-trade union aims over health and safety matters, the more likely he was to describe his basic representative function as one of consultation. 73% of the respondents described this function as consultation and 27% described it as negotiation. Beaumont draws the conclusion that the terms 'consultation' and 'negotiation' are defined in terms of the attitude of management towards management rights and the extent to which they will allow trade unions to be involved in decision-making.

In the present study it is hypothesised that factors such as the safety representatives' perception of the degree of senior management commitment will determine which strategy is used by safety representatives and managements. (For details see Table 7.25).

Kochan et al. (1977), in the course of their study on the effectiveness of safety committees suggest that safety is a particularly suitable subject for the use of co-operative problem-solving strategies on the part of management and trade unions. The rationale behind this is that safety issues tend to be ones where unions and employers hold basically similar goals - echoes of Robens.

As previously described, the results of part of Kochan et al.'s study showed that management officials saw a greater potential for trade union-management co-operation on safety and health issues than did union officials. Kochan et al. looked at the operationalisation of those theoretical positions and hypothesised that trade union officials would mix negotiating strategies with the

more co-operative approach of problem-solving in their interactions with management on health and safety issues.

It is appropriate at this stage to clarify the issue of the definition used by Kochan et al. of the strategies of 'problem-solving' and 'negotiating'. Kochan et al. base these concepts on the definitions given by Walton and McKersie (1965, 1966). The problem-solving phase they describe as an attempt by the parties concerned to identify alternatives for the issues under discussion and to define the various joint gains or losses associated with these alternatives. The negotiating phase is where the parties attempt to select one of the alternatives and to determine the precise distribution of the gains.

The behaviour engaged in by the parties can also be described. In problem-solving, the parties openly identify the problems of mutual concern, seek out all information relevant to the issues, maximise the amount of information exchanged and avoid coercive and threatening tactics. In negotiating, the parties limit the amount of information and communication, engage in bluffing, attempt to establish their commitment to given positions and use various forms of coercive behaviour, such as warnings, promises and threats.

I would suggest that the description of problem-solving behaviour above is similar enough to the co-operative, information-sharing, consultative behaviour described as 'consultation' in the present study, to be considered to be an equivalent when making comparisons between the findings of Kochan et al. (1977) and the Local Authority study.

One of the variables identified by Kochan et al. as affecting the strategy used is the degree of management commitment which, if strong, may mean that the unions do not need to use pressure or negotiating strategies in order to induce management to make the necessary changes. It was decided to follow up this area in the present study and the results are described below.

It should be noticed that in testing for the variable describing the degree of senior management commitment to health and safety, when it is the questionnaire to safety representatives that is the source of the data, the original three categories are used, that is 'slightly committed, strongly committed, very strongly committed'. It is only when these results are used in conjunction with data from the supervisor questionnaire that the second and third categories are combined.

The two groups, safety representatives and supervisors were asked the question:

"Do you see your relationship with management mainly as:
a) consultative? b) negotiating? c) a mixture of both?"

The following definitions were given alongside the question to ensure that different interpretations were not made of the concepts 'negotiation' and 'consultation'. These were:

'Consultation is used where the basic aims of trade unions and management are held to be essentially similar'.

'Negotiation is used where there is held to be a fundamental divergence of interests between the two parties'.

The results were:

TABLE 7.24: Perceived Relationship with Management: Safety Representatives and Supervisors

| | <u>Safety Representatives</u> % | <u>Supervisors</u> % | <u>Combined samples</u> % |
|-------------------|--|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Consultative | 45 | 51 | 49 |
| Negotiating | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| A mixture of both | 50 | 44 | 46 |
| | <u>N=62</u> | <u>N=81</u> | <u>N=143</u> |

Once again the results are remarkably similar for the two groups with only 5% reporting a purely negotiating strategy. 51% of supervisors as opposed to 45% of safety representatives see the relationship between management and trade unions as being consultative (roughly equivalent to Kochan et al.'s problem-solving) but in both groups there is a roughly even split between those who see the relationship as consultative and those who see it as a mixture of consultation and negotiation.

It seems to be a definite improvement to include the mixed strategy category suggested by Kochan et al. as opposed to Beaumont's two category split between 73% consultation and 27% negotiation.

This suggests a more pragmatic approach being taken by both groups when interacting - a contingency strategy which is situation-specific and dependent upon several variables of which each can affect the relationship as perceived by both groups. This is indicative of the dilemma mentioned before with regard to classifying interactions between safety representatives and supervisors as either consultation or negotiation.

In the safety representative questionnaire, three individuals fall into the 'negotiating' category and a check was done to see if they gave their main safety representative role as being a 'management pressuriser' however none of the three had mentioned this role.

It was decided that in order to carry out statistical tests on the relationship between trade unions and management, the strategies used could be categorised into:

- a) a strategy with 'no negotiation' - that is 'consultation;
- b) a strategy with 'a negotiating element' - that is 'negotiating' plus 'a mixed strategy'.

It was felt that the most potentially interesting relationship to test is that between the safety representatives' perceived degree of senior management commitment to health and safety, and the relationship between the trade unions and management.

TABLE 7.25 Crosstabulation of Senior Management Commitment by Relationship with Management as Perceived by Safety Representatives

| | | <u>Degree of Senior Management Commitment</u> | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|---|--------------------|-------------------------|
| | | Slightly Committed | Strongly Committed | Very strongly Committed |
| Relationship with Management | No Negotiating | 3 | 13 | 12 |
| | A Negotiating Element | 15 | 15 | 4 |

N = 62 (Safety Representatives)

$\chi^2 = \underline{11.69}$ df = 2 p < 0.005

The Chi-squared value under the null hypothesis of no association between the perceived degree of senior management commitment and a negotiating relationship with management is 11.69 with 2 df which gives a p-value of < 0.005 .

There is a statistically significant difference in the perceived degree of senior management commitment between those safety representatives who see their relationship with management as non-negotiating and those who see their relationship as having a negotiating element. This difference is significant at the 0.5% level. The higher the perceived degree of commitment to health and safety, the more likely is there to be a relationship with no negotiation, that is a more consultative relationship.

A Chi-squared test for trend developed by Armitage was carried out, the χ^2 statistic being 11.67 on 1 df giving a p-value of < 0.005 so there is a highly significant difference in the proportions which is entirely explained by a linear trend across the different 'values' of degree of senior management commitment to health and safety.

So the safety representatives who feel that senior management are strongly committed to health and safety may be more likely to adopt a non-negotiating strategy when interacting with them. This may be because they do not feel the need to put pressure upon them and to negotiate for their rights with regard to improvements in health and safety in the workplace.

On the other hand, those who feel that senior management are only slightly committed to health and safety may be more likely to use pressurising tactics to get management to take an interest

in health and safety and to devote resources in the way of time and money in order to create and maintain a safe working environment.

It was hypothesised that whether or not a safety representative was also a shop steward may affect his perception of his relationship with management, as may whether the safety representative belonged to a safety committee or not.

Perhaps in general safety representatives who are also shop stewards have a more polarised attitude towards management and so may adopt a negotiating stance either through the use of a pure negotiating strategy or through a mixture of negotiation and consultation. Also those safety representatives who were members of safety committees which are chaired or attended by members of senior management, will have some first hand contact with this level of management in addition to their direct superior, and it is hypothesised that this may affect the strategy that they feel is appropriate for trade union representatives to use when interacting with management. The overall climate at the safety committee meetings, that is whether the atmosphere is one of co-operation, or one of either overt or potential conflict, may also affect whether the safety representatives see consultation, negotiation or a mixture of the two as being the most prevalent strategy used by the parties concerned.

The amount of pressure needed to induce management at safety committees to make sure that recommendations are followed up, will also affect those safety representatives, as if they see that items are reappearing on the agenda of meetings without being dealt with, this may encourage them to

have to take up a negotiating stance with management. This point will be discussed again in Chapter Nine.

However, after carrying out Chi-squared tests on each of these variables, that is being a shop steward and belonging to a safety committee, it was found that neither of them had a statistically significant relationship with the type of strategy used in interactions between management and safety representatives. This suggests that the strategy used is contingent upon the situation prevailing at the time of each individual interaction, rather than influenced by variables which may affect the safety representatives outwith these interactions. For example, all such interactions are two-way processes, therefore the strategy used by one party will affect the corresponding strategy used by the other.

When the safety representatives were asked a set of questions regarding the consultation aspects of their relationship with management, the results were as below:

TABLE 7.26 Safety Representatives' Perceptions of being consulted by Management

"Have you ever been consulted by management on:

| | <u>Yes (%)</u> | <u>No (%)</u> |
|--|----------------|---------------|
| a) re-writing of the department safety policy? | 27 | 73 |
| b) devising safe systems of work? | 43 | 57 |
| c) how to motivate the workforce?" | 23 | 77 |

N = 60

It can be seen that the percentage of safety representatives

who had been consulted by management on health and safety issues was only about 25% except in the case of devising safe systems of work where nearly double this percentage had been consulted, possibly because of their knowledge of what actually happens on 'the shop floor'.

It was hypothesised that there would be a difference between those safety representatives who had been consulted by management on a health and safety topic and those who had not been consulted, and their relationship with management. However, when a Chi-squared test was carried out, the difference was not found to be significant. This suggests being consulted by management on the issues mentioned in the questionnaire does not affect the strategy used by safety representatives in interactions with management. There are several possible explanations for this. The strategy used may refer to interactions of a formal nature, for example at safety committees, whereas the safety representatives may be consulted on a specific issue on a more informal basis. Another possible explanation may be that safety representatives may feel that being consulted by management on certain issues is a 'gesture' rather than an indication of a genuine consultative relationship.

7.7 Summary

The Shop Steward/Safety Representative Joint Role

It was found that there were no statistically significant differences between those who hold the joint or the single role.

So the different trade union policies have not been shown by the evidence in the case of this local authority to have significantly different effects upon the role and function of safety representatives. There seem to be no particular advantages or disadvantages in safety representatives having, or not having, the dual role - a flexible approach based on workplace circumstances may be most effective for the trade unions.

The Safety Representative/Supervisor Relationship

A statistically significant difference was found between the two groups as to the amount of management support they felt they received, the safety representatives feeling that they got less support than did the supervisors.

There was also a statistically significant difference in the reported incidence of conflict between the two groups with the safety representatives reporting more conflict with supervisors than the supervisors reported. It may be, among other things, a problem of interpretation of 'conflict', or a reluctance on the part of supervisors to report such incidents. There was also found to be an association between safety representatives having attended a safety training course and experiencing conflict with supervisors. It may be that elements in the training emphasise confrontation with management.

Safety Representative Role and Functions

An attempt was made to use role classification as a technique

by analysing the answers to open-ended questions on the subject. Eight categories were identified which could be further grouped into either industrial relations or technical categories. It was found that these categories did not show statistically significant differences in relation either to the safety representatives' perception of the degree of senior management commitment to health and safety or to the degree of support they received from management.

The roles identified were compared with the roles envisaged in the SRSC Regulations and also to the skills which were found by the respondents to be most useful in safety representative training courses.

Relationship with HSE Inspectorate

Very little contact was in evidence between safety representatives and HSE Inspectors. With regard to complaints to the Inspectorate there was little evidence to suggest that safety representatives are using this channel of communication regarding unsafe conditions in their workplace. This may be because they feel that complaints are satisfactorily dealt with at work or that they would not want management to know of any such complaints to the HSE.

Degree of Management Commitment to Health and Safety

Direct and indirect measures of management commitment were examined, and unlike the results of Kochan et al. (1977), the

results from the two groups, safety representatives and supervisors, were found to be remarkably similar.

One variable which was found to be closely related to the safety representatives' and the supervisors' perceptions of the degree of commitment of management was whether they felt that they received the support of management. Those in both groups who felt they got management support saw management as strongly committed as opposed to slightly committed to health and safety.

Strategies used by Safety Representatives and Management

Again in this study, there was found to be a remarkable similarity in results of safety representatives and supervisors. The main strategies used were consultation alone and a mixture of consultation and negotiation. Only a very small proportion used a purely negotiating strategy. The strategy used by the safety representatives was found to be closely related to the degree of senior management commitment to health and safety which they perceived. No evidence was found however to suggest a difference, with regard to the use of negotiation or consultation between safety representatives who hold the dual role of safety representative/shop steward, and between those who are only safety representatives, and between those who sit on safety committees and those who do not. Having been consulted by management on certain issues was not associated with a preference for either a negotiating or a non-negotiating relationship between safety representatives and management.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE SUPERVISOR

THE SUPERVISOR

8.1 The Supervisor Role - Problems of Definition

Before discussing the important part played by supervisory staff in maintaining a safe and healthy workplace, it is necessary to examine the role of the supervisor in industry. As early as 1911 F W Taylor stated that supervisors' roles should be made specific with clear definitions of responsibilities. He suggested that foremen had too much responsibility, too much freedom, were subject to too little control and that they wasted their efforts in inefficient actions over a broad front.

An ASTMS document on Health and Safety and the Supervisor (1981) suggests that the supervisor role has changed as a result of the centralised control over production which has dictated a centralised control over people. The irony is that although there is less responsibility for supervisors in most areas of their work, they have an increased responsibility for health and safety since the introduction of the HASAWA and their duties have been expanded enormously. However, this increased responsibility has not been accompanied by any real change in authority and executive responsibility resulting in some problems in attempting to enforce safety rules.

Wray (1949) describes the double standards which apply to the supervisor's role. Being held accountable as managers of employees while being excluded from many management decisions, supervisors are 'special victims of the disparity between social norms and social reality.'

With regard to the problem of role definition, Petersen (1978) asks if supervisors know what management want and what their duties are and emphasises the importance of role perception. The perception of the role by the individual himself should closely relate to that of management. However, in their study of the supervisors' role, Child and Partridge (1982) found a disparity between the interpretations of management and of supervisors themselves with regard to what the job entailed. Bell (1974) found that the managers in charge of the foremen he studied showed far less variation in their assessment of priorities in their foremen's jobs than did the foremen themselves. This could be described as a management stereotype of the foreman's job. Fletcher (1969) gives an insight into the conflicts inherent in the role in the following description:

"Industrial supervisors, classically foremen, are men in the middle. Wedged between workers and management they represent both to each other, and neither to themselves. Supervisors are constantly torn by competing demands and loyalties. They have come up from the ranks but are not part of management."

Fletcher goes on to say that supervisors' conflict is contingent upon the degree to which their decisions are bureaucratized. Impersonal procedures and rules will give the supervisor less discretion in decision-making. The concept of the supervisor as a marginal man is particularly relevant in a local authority which is a typical example of a bureaucratic organisation. Fletcher also describes the employment of specialists, for example safety officers, who devise and operate certain procedures, such as safety procedures leaving supervisors to enforce them.

An American review of middle managers' jobs reported by Nealey

and Fiedler (1968) concluded that the largest gap in culture and communication in the industrial hierarchy at that time lay between the first line industrial supervisor and the manager above him.

Child and Partridge (1982) also refer to the gap between management and supervisors when they question where supervisors' social identities lie. They ask if supervisors today retain a working class identification with the group from which they were made up or does becoming a supervisor still represent a qualitative social advance in their eyes.

The gap between management and supervisors has widened according to Child and Partridge because promotion from worker to supervisor now represents a less significant upward move with the decline that has taken place in the authority, standing and differential rewards and privileges that supervisors enjoy. Child and Partridge also postulate an educational barrier between management and supervision which is the result of the fact that since the last War recruitment into management is no longer from supervisory level but from graduates and others with academic qualifications. The foreman's role has changed in some aspects over recent years and Child (1975) suggests that the increase in the establishment of collective bargaining has meant that the foreman has been by-passed in labour negotiations. Shop stewards have tended to take matters straight to the level of works manager or its equivalent where they discern that the real source of power to negotiate lies. So the foreman has begun to find himself held responsible for maintaining good labour relations in his department when he plays no part in the setting of the parameters within which they operate.

Corfield (1981) suggests that something similar may be happening over health and safety at work. The trade unions, through safety representatives are encouraged to use the negotiating machinery to handle safety problems and management's reaction has, in some cases, been to use professional health and safety advisory staff and let higher management cope with the pressure. Corfield states that the result has been that the first line manager feels himself to be out on a limb.

Thurley and Wirdenius (1973) state that the traditional foreman roles have been eroded by the emergence of specialist managerial functions such as work study. Safety officers might be included in this category of specialist.

Foremen may often be paid less than employees over whom they have charge and who are on some kind of bonus scheme, and there has been an increase in recent years in the numbers joining supervisory unions such as ASTMS. The recent unionisation and militancy of foremen may mean that although supervisors are considered to be a part of management with regard to the functions they perform, in their industrial identification they see their role as one which may be strengthened by trade union membership.

Thurley and Wirdenius (1973) describe the spread of white collar unions and the fact that supervisors have become increasingly ready to bargain separately with management for pay and conditions of service.

Child and Partridge (1982) state that in 1979, 40% of supervisors in the United Kingdom were members of a trade union. They suggest that while still identifying with management goals, most

supervisors feel that they cannot rely on management to look after their interests and feel that it is necessary for them to belong to a trade union on pragmatic grounds. Membership of a trade union did not express alienation from management, in the study of supervisors of manual workers carried out by Child and Partridge, but it did indicate a belief that they had lost the protection of management. Supervisors were experiencing a distancing and rejection from management. The supervisor was no longer 'the company's man' - there had been a shift in the supervisor's perception of where his best interests lay. With the erosion of supervisors' differentials and privileges over shopfloor workers and the threat of redundancy supervisors have felt they had a need to defend their standard of living and job security.

Weir and Mills (1973) state that where supervisors see their interests and commitment to be located can affect their attitude to change in the organisation. If they perceive change to threaten a further erosion of their position, they may well generate shopfloor opposition to management's proposals.

The above situation could be particularly relevant in the area of health and safety where supervisors can play the role of a catalyst for change when new rules and procedures are introduced, and where it is important for the supervisor to set a good example for others to emulate.

Supervisors' attitudes towards improvements could, according to Child and Partridge (1982), be either constructive or obstructive and their perceptions could be of a common purpose as opposed to an outlook based on antipathy and conflict.

Child (1975) states that supervision varies considerably with respect to the type of work and technology in question and the kind of employees being supervised. Management practice affecting supervision will also tend to vary according to these situational factors and also according to the size of the organisation as a whole and to the work culture of the industry or region in question.

Thurley and Wirdnius (1973) state that:

"The nature of the supervisor's role, the importance and significance of what he does, all vary with the type of technological situation, the type of workers and managers he is dealing with, the supervisor's perceptions of his boss's expectations and his priorities, the supervisor's own inclinations which probably mirror his strengths, weaknesses and his frame of reference. It will also vary with the structure of the organisation he is working with and his position in that structure."

Woodward (1965) describes the effect of technology on organisational characteristics such as the span of control of first line supervisors. Having studied firms involved in unit production, mass production and process production, she found that the span of control of first line supervisors reached its peak in mass production and then decreased. She found that the attitudes and behaviour of both management and supervisory staff and the industrial relations climate in firms seems to be closely related to their technology. At both ends of the scale of technological complexity, pressures on people from technology seemed to be less than they were in the middle of the scale and the atmosphere was more relaxed.

Child (1975) used a system of classification of foremen in relation to the degree of identification with management. He identified four categories of foreman as follows:

1. The 'time-server'

He has been promoted after many years on the shop floor and does not want further promotion. He identifies strongly with other foremen and poses little threat to management's position, ideologies and procedures as he does not see himself as a professional manager.

2. The 'supercraftsman'

He has long service and technical expertise and may have aspirations for future promotions.

3. The 'frustrated achiever'

He is from a middle class background and was promoted from the shop floor at a young age. He identifies with management and wants further promotion and responsibility and so is frustrated and critical of management policy.

4. The 'cadet'

He has a university education and identifies with management not with other foremen.

It can be seen that Child found considerable differences in the degree to which foremen identify with management and its view of industrial relations, as opposed to expressing sympathy with shop floor workers.

Child suggests that many industrial supervisors experience a

profound alienation in the sense that they find their idealised image of the supervisor's role to be unfulfilled in contemporary practice. This may be especially evident for production supervisors in large bureaucratic organisations. The social norms do not match up to the social reality. The supervisor is a 'boundary role' lodged ambiguously between the two traditionally defined 'sides of industry' at a major watershed in the class system.

The technique of classification used by Child does have some disadvantages. There is always some unavoidable degree of subjectivity when roles are classified, as the classifier has to decide which category is most appropriate in the instances where this is not clear cut and a role may overlap more than one category. There must therefore be some simplification of a complex concept.

In the area of health and safety, it has been claimed that supervision is of crucial importance. For example, The Central Training Council giving evidence to the Robens Committee in 1972 state:

"...They (foremen and supervisors) have the closest contact with the man on the job and may be able to influence for good the conduct and habits of working of young people in their charge. They must not only be alive to the need for safety, but also understand how to train the employees under their supervision and to work safely. Foremen and supervisors must understand too the importance of maintaining works discipline in safety as in other matters. They must never turn a blind eye to malpractices which may one day lead to an accident."

The Robens Committee Report (1972) stated:

"It is the supervisor who is on the spot and is in a

position to know whether or not safety arrangements are working in practice. This influence can be decisive. Both here and abroad, wherever we have seen outstanding safety and health arrangements it has been clear that a key role is played by well-trained supervisors who are held accountable for what happens within their sphere of control. We are not at all satisfied that this key role in safety is sufficiently recognised throughout industry generally or that enough is done to equip supervisors for it."

It may now be useful to relate the main points from the literature reviewed above to some of the important health and safety aspects of the supervisor's role.

Time has been spent on the problem of defining the supervisor's role and describing its changing nature. There is often a gap between the amount of responsibility placed on modern supervisors and the amount of authority they have at their disposal to ensure that they can carry out their responsibilities to the best effect.

It is suggested that in health and safety - which is one area where the supervisor's responsibility has increased over recent years, the respondents to the questionnaire may have identified a lack of authority to carry out their function of enforcing management's rules and procedures and in disciplining workers for breaches of the rules.

If management expect supervisors to motivate the workforce it is important that supervisory staff are aware of the conflicting motives which may exist in the workforce that may mean, for example, that safety and payment by results systems are incompatible.

It is important to examine which group supervisors identify most closely with - management or workforce. Several points have

been highlighted above which suggest that the modern supervisor who holds membership of a trade union may hold attitudes that are closer to those of the workforce than to those held by management. If this is the case, then it is not surprising that there is a close similarity in responses to some questions put to supervisors and to safety representatives, some of which were described in Chapter Seven.

The main question to be pursued in this chapter is the extent to which, and in what ways, the health and safety aspects of the supervisor's role have been affected by him being 'the man in the middle' playing a marginal role.

Because of the importance of the supervisor in health and safety it was decided to send a questionnaire to all supervisory staff in the four departments. Before going on to describe the population to whom these questionnaires were sent, it should be noted that the problem of definition of the roles of supervisor and foreman is one which has been resolved by those researching in this area in various ways. To illustrate this point, four definitions are given below:

1. "A supervisor is a person in constant control of a definite section of a labour force in an undertaking, exercising it either directly or through subordinates and responsible for this to a higher level of management."
(Great Britain: Ministry of Labour 1954)
2. "Throughout the report the word 'foreman' is used to mean the men and women in industry who are in charge of a production or maintenance unit and who are in immediate daily contact with the operatives whose work they direct and control."
(Grabe and Silberger 1956)
3. "The definition of 'supervisor' used in this study is based on the theory that the purpose of management is to control the operatives and the operations on the shop floor."

"This control can be exercised in two ways:

- (a) by administrative methods, that is, at a distance;
- (b) by actual 'overseeing' inspection and direction in the area of operations."

"The supervisor is someone who exercised control by the latter method."

(Thurley and Hamblin 1963)

4. "By foreman we mean an employee who has been appointed by management to see that its plan for any particular organisational unit within a company are carried out by directly leading the labour force of the unit in question."

"The foreman rarely performs work of the same type as his subordinates and only in cases of emergency and for instructional purposes."

(Westerland and Stromberg 1965)

There is a common thread running through these four definitions. This is the element of responsibility for the work of others and daily contact with the group the supervisors control. This day to day contact is particularly important when deciding who to include in the study because safety should be a daily ongoing part of the supervisor's job. Daily safety inspections should be an integral part of his work and would not be possible if he were more remote from the actual work site.

8.2 The Questionnaire

A questionnaire was drawn up which was similar to the one sent to the safety representatives. Some of the questions asked were common to both questionnaires, with some additional questions to elicit information about potential problems facing supervisors such as conflict between safety and production. It was expected that only a small percentage of supervisors would be members of safety committees and so some of the section on safety committees

from the safety representative questionnaire was omitted.

In the questionnaire there were some questions which were similar to those in the safety representative questionnaire. For example, supervisors were asked the converse of the question asked to safety representatives about the management/trade union relationship which was described in Chapter Seven. An attempt was made as in the safety representative questionnaire, to classify the supervisor role by means of two open-ended questions. Differences and similarities between the findings from the safety representative and the supervisor questionnaires will be discussed later. Most of the questions had already been piloted in the safety representative questionnaire so the second questionnaire was sent without piloting to all supervisory staff in the four departments in the study.

The main purposes in using the questionnaire were:

- (1) to examine the vital part played by supervisors in the area of health and safety and their perception of their role;
- (2) to describe and analyse their interactions with safety representatives and their attitudes towards trade unions on the one hand, and senior management on the other in the context of health and safety.

8.3 The Sample

A decision had to be made regarding the sample to be sent the questionnaire. The various departments use different designations or job titles for supervising staff, for example chargehands,

foreman, supervisor or superintendent. Advice was accepted from the safety officers in the four departments who recommended that chargehands should not be included in the population because in the Local Authority it is the foreman or supervisor who has managerial responsibility for his colleagues with regard to health and safety. He also receives reports of accidents from workers and maintains the accident book - that is he is responsible for the paperwork associated with safety as well as for other aspects such as training. It was felt that, having discussed the problem, the safety officers were in the best position to know which gradings were the most relevant for the study. So all (of the population of) supervisory staff, excluding chargehands, were sent the questionnaire. A total of 124 questionnaires were sent out and 88 replies were received - a response rate of 71%.

TABLE 8.1 The Sample of Supervisors

| | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> |
|---|--------------|----------|
| Foreman | 25 | 28 |
| Supervisor | 38 | 43 |
| Superintendent | 18 | 21 |
| Other grading (equivalent to first line management) | 7 | 8 |
| | <u>N= 88</u> | |

The category 'other grading' included, among others, an assistant storekeeper, a chief waste inspector and a technical assistant. For the purpose of describing the results of the questionnaire, all the respondents will be called 'supervisor'.

28% of the supervisors were aged between 20 and 40 years old and 72% were aged 41 years or more.

When the supervisors were asked how long they had held their present job in the department, the results were:

TABLE 8.2 Length of Service of Supervisors

| | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> |
|---------------|-------------|----------|
| 1 - 5 years | 31 | 36 |
| 6 - 10 years | 38 | 44 |
| 11 - 15 years | 11 | 13 |
| 16 - 20 years | 7 | 8 |
| | <u>N=87</u> | |

8.4 The Supervisor's Role and Function in Health and Safety

The use of role classification as a technique in research has been discussed in Chapter Seven and a similar method was used as in the safety representative instance, to collect information to illustrate the perceived role of the supervisors with regard to health and safety.

The supervisors were asked an open-ended question:

"What do you consider to be the most useful contribution to safe working that can be made by supervisory staff?"

The 79 replies to this question were classified into five main roles by the researcher in the same way as with the safety representative sample, keeping in mind the inevitable degree of subjectivity which this involves. The results can be seen in Table 8.3.

TABLE 8.3 Classification of the Supervisor's Role in Health and Safety

| | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> |
|--|-------------|----------|
| 1. Inspector/Monitor | 27 | 34 |
| 2. Educator | 23 | 29 |
| 3. Enforcer | 11 | 14 |
| 4. Good Housekeeper | 8 | 10 |
| 5. Example Setter | 7 | 9 |
| 6. Others, e.g. motivating, protecting the public | 3 | 4 |
| | <u>N=79</u> | |

In order to illustrate what is meant by the various categories some examples are given below:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. Inspector/Monitor: | "Checking safety requirements, tools, equipment" |
| 2. Educator: | "Instructing and informing the workforce" |
| 3. Enforcer: | "Getting fitters to obey safety rules" |
| 4. Good housekeeper: | "Ensuring a clean and tidy workshop" |
| 5. Example setter: | "Maintaining existing standards by means of personal example" |
| 6. Others: | "Keeping in close contact with safety representatives" |

Time spent on issues

The supervisors were asked:

"What health and safety responsibilities take up most of your time?"

The results of this question can be seen below, keeping in mind the fact that multiple answers were possible.

TABLE 8.4 Health and Safety Issues Identified by Supervisors

| | <u>No. of times mentioned</u> |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Conditions of work in general | 30 |
| Inspecting/Monitoring of workplace and equipment | 28 |
| Reading/Writing (of reports, forms, etc.) | 10 |
| Training /Education of workers | 5 |
| Investigating Accidents | 2 |
| None in particular | 5 |

It can be seen that the most time-consuming responsibilities concerned general conditions of work, inspecting and monitoring and reading and writing (of reports, forms, etc.)

There is a similarity between the most time-consuming responsibilities described by supervisors and those described by the safety representatives. The first three categories in the above list, that is conditions of work, inspecting/monitoring, and reading and writing of reports were also on the list given by safety representatives. The main differences were that the supervisors mentioned training and accident investigation, not mentioned by the safety representatives, and some of the safety representatives mentioned attending safety committee meetings, not mentioned by the supervisors.

Table 8.5 shows that there are three perceived health and safety roles common to both safety representatives and supervisors - inspector/monitor, educator and enforcer.

TABLE 8.5 Comparison of Perceived Health and Safety Roles of Supervisors and Safety Representatives

| <u>Roles</u> | <u>Supervisors</u> | <u>Safety Representatives</u> |
|--|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| Inspector/Monitor | X | X |
| Educator | X | X |
| Enforcer | X | X |
| Management pressuriser | | X |
| Good housekeeper | X | |
| Example setter | X | |
| Concerned with general health and safety matters | | X |

X = role related to this group

The role and function of the supervisor in safety has been described in the Industrial Safety Data Sheet 17A (1980) and it may be useful to see how this compares with the perceived role of supervisors themselves in this study.

Table 8.6 lists the supervisor roles and functions from the Industrial Data Sheet and in parentheses are the nearest equivalent roles identified by the supervisors themselves which can be seen in Table 8.3. Where no equivalent role was mentioned by supervisors, this point is noted.

TABLE 8.6 Supervisor Role and Function (Industrial Data Sheet 17A 1980)



continued...



EDUCATOR - 29%

With regard to the role of educator, Corfield (1981) states that the supervisor may be more acceptable than an outside source as a communication agent. The supervisors certainly see their teaching role as an important one, although when they were asked in the questionnaire if they themselves trained workers in the health and safety aspects of their work their answers were:

TABLE 8.7 Safety Training Carried out by Supervisors

| | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> |
|----------------------|---------------|----------|
| (a) Yes, all workers | 32 | 37 |
| (b) Some of them | 15 | 17 |
| (c) No, none of them | 40 | 46 |
| | <u> </u> | |
| | N=87 | |
| | <u> </u> | |

Those supervisors who ticked (a) or (b) were then asked to give details of the training they gave. A few answers mentioned general safety aspects, but all the others described the teaching of correct work methods and procedures. This training was very specific in nature and was related to the men's own work situation. It included the correct use of equipment and the wearing of protective clothing. Induction and apprentice training were given as areas where supervisors were making a contribution. Some of the specialist types of training are listed below:

Correct road signing, trench timbering, pipe laying, gas detection, lifting and slinging, use of harness, use of ladders, stacking, power tools, rope slings, working on manholes, use of gas masks for chlorine, use of fire fighting appliances, use of propane gas, garage safety. These examples show the variety of procedures carried out in the four departments in which the supervisors work.

However, when the supervisors were asked if they had been consulted when training programmes on health and safety were being drawn up, of the 87 who replied only 16% had been consulted. So although supervisors play an important part in on-the-job training, their expertise as the people nearest to the actual work situation does not appear to be used by management when formal safety training

programmes are being drawn up. This may be an important source of information which is not being utilised.

It is important that safety training should involve not only a change in knowledge and skill, but also an element of attitude change in order to be effective. For example, workers may wear protective clothing when the supervisor is nearby indicating some compliance to safety regulations. However, if this behaviour is stopped as soon as the supervisor is out of sight, positive attitudes to the wearing of protective clothing have not been internalised. It is initially a change in behaviour that is required, however if attitudes are also changed, there will not be a need for close supervision, or enforcement backed by discipline. Too close supervision can have the effect of reducing job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1959) and inducing resentment against management among the workforce, therefore a situation where workers can work with more autonomy and less strict supervision could be of benefit to all.

Discussions including the supervisor and a group of employees may be more effective than orders from management in achieving a change in attitude towards protective clothing. Discussion encourages participation and hopefully some commitment to a change in behaviour which has been found to be more effective than being lectured at. What is required is an active rather than a passive role on the part of those whose attitudes are to be changed.

Good housekeeper - 10%

One potential cause of accidents is objects falling on workers' heads or people falling over objects. If goods are stacked

carefully, and equipment and materials are neatly stowed within clearly marked areas leaving clear gangways, then the incidence of these accidents may be reduced. It is an important everyday part of the supervisor's job to oversee good housekeeping practices in the workplace.

De Reamer (1980) states that good housekeeping standards in an organisation have a beneficial effect on employees as they demonstrate management's concern for their employees. Morale will be high and the industrial relations climate will be favourable for the co-operative effort required in health and safety.

In the present study, supervisors were asked to describe an example of a recent investigation they had made and the results were categorised. It was found that a proportion of these accidents were caused by tripping over items such as cables or slipping on wet or oily floors. Good housekeeping practices such as stowing cables away out of gangways, and wiping up spillages immediately they occur, could reduce this type of accident and it is the supervisor on the spot who should instill into those he is responsible for the importance of cleanliness and tidiness at all times.

Inspector/Monitor - 34%

With regard to the role of inspector/monitor also mentioned by the safety representatives, they may see this role in a formalised way, carrying out inspections at regular intervals, for example three monthly, after informing management in writing of their intention. On the other hand, the inspector/monitor role of supervisors is a more continuous, ongoing, daily inspection which supervisors are expected by the Local Authority to carry out. Tools,

equipment and protective clothing must continually be inspected by the supervisor to ensure that they are in good working order. 70% of supervisors said they inspect the workplace and it may be that the 30% who answered that they did not inspect may have meant *formal* inspections carried out with others such as safety representatives.

Although the inspection and monitoring functions of safety representatives and supervisors differ in their frequency and degree of formality, these functions are considered by both groups to play an important part in the self-regulation of health and safety standards. When firms are expected to set their own safety standards and publicise these through their safety policy, it is an important part of the procedure to monitor these standards and to take any necessary steps to ensure that they are maintained. Inspections of the workplace are one way of carrying out the monitoring of conditions and procedures.

Enforcer - 14%

Management support is essential if supervisors are to implement senior management's safety policy. Senior management may try to delegate responsibility for health and safety down the management hierarchy without actually providing any additional means to implement these responsibilities.

De Reamer (1980) states that if management place a guard on a machine they should insist on its use to show that they care about their workers. The National Safety Council in the USA in an Accident Prevention Manual (1978) points out that if the supervisor observes men taking short cuts or otherwise departing from safe

methods, he should correct them at once because if he does not the unsafe method will become standard practice. This then means that there will be few occasions which require 'discipline'.

A common complaint voiced by some supervisors in the present study with regard to the health and safety aspects of their job was their lack of authority to enforce workers to follow safe procedures and to wear protective clothing. They stated that if, as is the case, they carry legal responsibility for the safety of their fellow workers, they ought to have the power to back this up. Some quotes from questionnaires received from supervisors illustrate this:

"I can only suggest not enforce the use of safety equipment".

"Supervisors are held responsible for accidents but have not the means to enforce safety at work".

"I can only advise a worker who is carrying out a dangerous practice".

"It would help if powers were granted to enforce rules or the use of safety equipment was made compulsory".

"All safety gear is provided but the workforce cannot be compelled to wear it - so it is a waste of time".

However in spite of this perceived lack of authority, 14% of the supervisors did mention the enforcement role as being important. It is necessary for management to make clear in its safety policy the importance of adherence to safety rules and also clearly to allocate specific safety duties and responsibilities, with their attendant powers, to supervisors in order to make them effective in accident prevention.

The supervisors were asked how often workers were disciplined for breaches in health and safety practices. The responses given are shown in Table 8.8 alongside the responses given by the safety

representatives to the same question.

TABLE 8.8 The Use of Discipline as Perceived by Supervisors

"Are members of the workforce ever disciplined for breaches of health and safety practices in the workplace?"
(For example, not wearing protective clothing)

| | <u>Supervisors</u> | | <u>Safety Representatives</u> | |
|--------------|--------------------|----------|-------------------------------|----------|
| | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> |
| Often | 7 | 8 | 5 | 8 |
| Occasionally | 49 | 57 | 28 | 47 |
| Never | 30 | 35 | 27 | 45 |
| | <u> </u> | | <u> </u> | |
| | N=86 | | N=60 | |
| | <u> </u> | | <u> </u> | |

The results are similar over the two groups with supervisors seeming to have the impression that there is more disciplining carried out than do the safety representatives.

The main areas highlighted in the ASTMS document (1981) which may cause disciplinary problems for supervisors are where workers remove machine guards and where they refuse to use or to wear protective equipment and clothing. The document suggests that joint management/union agreement on what constitutes disciplinary offences should be negotiated and there should be less conflict and differences of interest in the field of health and safety than in other areas - a similar opinion to that expressed in the Robens Report.

Pirani and Reynolds (1976) carried out a study in two organisations to monitor different methods of persuading employees to wear safety gear. One of the six methods used was disciplinary action

action and there was some success in the short term, but the policy was counter-productive in the long term as it is suggested that in the long term the attitudes of the operatives hardened under this policy and the use of safety gear declined.

Gouldner (1954) describes the vicious circle of supervision in relation to the level of tension in a work group. He states that one consequence of rules is to decrease the visibility of power relations which raises the tension level in the work group.

Pirani and Reynolds also state that a major problem is that disciplinary procedures must be applied equitably - supervisors must not be selective in enforcing the rules, for example, they must not climb down if they feel that a certain individual would cause trouble. The use of discipline as a method of persuasion was, in Pirani and Reynolds' study, found to be unsuccessful and indeed from the supervisor's point of view it may itself cause problems such as an increase in the number of grievances brought before management by workers who feel that disciplinary procedures have been applied inequitably.

Corfield (1981) states that when management decide to tighten up standards, it is supervisors who have to see that instructions are being enforced. They must take the moral responsibility for disciplinary penalties as disciplinary action may be based on their evidence and they may have to be witnesses. Management must depend on supervisors who can stand up for themselves and must have a good grasp of the safety code and of their own and their work group's responsibilities for working safely together.

It may be that positive reinforcement in the form of supervisors showing approval to employees who follow safe procedures is more effective in motivating workers to work safely, than negative reinforcement in the form of punishment which causes resentment, bad feelings, low morale and which, instead of producing a lasting change in attitude and behaviour, only means that workers act safely when management are at hand, and at other times work on ways to beat the system in order to express their resentment. Interviews with senior managers and safety officers indicated that they see discipline as being used as a last resort, and a change in attitude as a preferable strategy to effect a change in behaviour. However, it should be noted that change in attitude by no means guarantees a concomittant change in behaviour. Nor does a change in overt behaviour necessarily mean that there has been a change in attitude. For example, a worker may wear eye protection when the supervisor is nearby, but will remove it as soon as no members of management are around. This is mere compliance with rules, as described by Kelman (1961) and Deutscher (1973) with no real accompanying positive attitude as to the value of wearing eye protection. The relationship between overt behaviour and underlying attitudes is not a straightforward one.

Example setter - 9%

Gardner (1979) says that supervisors must motivate workers by getting them to set safety as one of their goals. This means that the supervisor must be aware of potential conflict between motivations such as working safely and being comfortable at work which is discussed below. One way of motivating employees to wear protective clothing for example is for the supervisor to ensure that he wears it himself. A supervisor cannot expect his subordinates to wear

protective clothing or follow safety rules if he himself does not do the same.

Grimaldi and Simonds (1975) maintain that an indifferent supervisor is soon surrounded by indifferent workers - it is up to him to set an example of how to work safely.

In studying over two thousand industrial accidents, Powell et al. (1971) formed the opinion that supervisors could influence accident rates through leadership. They would be able to set a better example if they were more knowledgeable and better trained than those in some organisations.

De Reamer (1980) states that the safety effort of supervisors can play a constructive part in shaping the emotional attitude of employees towards their bosses and their company. In order to win acceptance, supervisors must really want to operate a safe plant and by the example they set, they must let their people know that they are expected to work safely.

8.5 The Supervisor/Safety Representative Relationship

The duties of the supervisor with regard to health and safety will entail some interaction with safety representatives, therefore it is useful to examine this relationship to see if it is mutually supportive or is characterised by conflict. The relationship was discussed in some detail in Chapter Seven and the difference between the perception of conflict in the relationship between the two groups was described. In addition, supervisors' perceptions as to whether they get the support of management was also mentioned.

Five percent of supervisors felt that they did not get the support of safety representatives while another 5% said that they had experienced conflict with safety representatives.

It was hypothesised that the four individuals who represent 5% of the sample and who mentioned lack of support from safety representatives would be the same four individuals who reported conflict with safety representatives. When this was checked, it was found that this was not the case, so it appears that lack of support and co-operation do not necessarily lead to conflict between the two groups. For example, the more committed and motivated safety representatives are likely to be those who support supervisors over health and safety issues and in order to achieve their aims, and this may mean that on occasion there may be a clash of interests of opinions between these safety representatives and supervisors.

This point is reinforced by a comment from the safety representative questionnaire:

"I feel from my own experience, that supervisors think that safety representatives are a bloody nuisance. This may not be a bad thing where getting something done is concerned."

Those safety representatives who do not support supervisors may be less conscientious about their role and functions and as a result do not experience conflict with supervisors or may have minimum contact with them with regard to health and safety in the workplace. There is therefore no clear relationship between mutual support and reported conflict between supervisors and safety representatives.

91% of supervisors felt that they get the support of safety representatives as opposed to only 70% of safety representatives who felt that they get the support of management. However it may not be valid to make a direct comparison here, because the question to safety representatives contained the word 'management' not specifically supervisory level management.

Two comments from responses given by safety representatives who felt that they did not get the support of management highlight the differences between different levels of management.

"Local management resent the contents of safety inspection forms but head office management are very safety conscious."

"Senior management backs regional policy but local junior management could enforce more safety practices if they desired."

One would expect supervisors to receive strong support from senior management whose safety policy they must put into operation. Although basically safety representatives and management wish to attain the same objectives with regard to health and safety, for example fewer accidents and a safe working environment, they may go about achieving these aims in different ways. This may give rise to a potential for conflict which may or may not become overt.

8.6 Conflicting Motives

It is necessary to motivate the workforce to work safely in order to develop the desired positive attitudes to safety and to ensure that safe work methods will become the norm. It is important that those responsible for motivating others are aware

of the possible existence of conflicting motives in some individuals which may make the procedure of motivating them more complex than it seems.

With regard to the motivation of employees, Petersen (1978) states that the supervisor is a funnel directing information to employees as well as directing or carrying out the majority of training. He sees the motivational role of the supervisor as crucial which necessitates the supervisor himself being motivated to share the company's goal of safe working. Petersen suggests motivating supervisors in three main ways. Firstly, making safety performance an integral and important part of the supervisor's performance. It should be one of his defined production responsibilities which include such things as quality, cost control and methods of improvement.

Petersen's second suggestion is that management should give supervisors a free hand in how they control accidents, retaining accountability for results. This approach might help to overcome the problem identified by supervisors in the present study where they felt that they were accountable for accidents taking place in their area of control, but that they did not have the necessary authority invested in them by management to enable them to enforce safety rules.

The third suggestion entails assigning to supervisors special projects in safety. If supervisors are encouraged to perceive their role in safety as important, and if they have some input, either through projects as suggested by Petersen, or when rules are being drawn up by management, they should feel more committed

to safety. The National Safety Council Accident Prevention Manual (1978) states that "rules that supervisors have had a chance to review are likely to be more effective than those they have had no part in formulating."

Petersen (1978) states that if the supervisor in the area of safety performance considers that the value of a reward which management will give for achieving the goal is great enough, he will expend the necessary effort on safety. The supervisor may decide that his personal goals would be better achieved by expending efforts in other areas and too often he is right. He may question whether safety is really important to management or are other areas more crucial.

This illustrates the importance of senior management commitment to safety as without this positive attitude at the top of the organisation, the supervisory staff will, in turn, be uncommitted and be unlikely to be able to motivate the workforce to take safety seriously.

Grimaldi and Simonds (1975) state that supervisors must see that safety measures will operate to increase the all-round efficiency of their departments rather than constitute an increase in cost and lower production. They need to have safety continually brought to their attention and to have routines set up in such a manner that their part in the total safety programme will be a normal, regular operation.

It is particularly important that the supervisor when trying to motivate his subordinates to work safely should be aware of the fact that each man is a unique individual who is affected by various

motives depending on the circumstances prevailing at that time. Sometimes an individual is motivated by two or more mutually exclusive motives which are in conflict, and usually he will experience some degree of cognitive dissonance which he will strive to reduce. There are various methods to reduce this dissonance one of which is that the motive that is most salient to the individual at that time will take precedence over the other(s). For example, if the need to earn maximum bonus is more important than following safe procedures, an individual may work too fast and take risks in order to produce more.

With regard to the issue of conflicting motives in the workforce, Gardner (1979) gives some interesting examples of these. He states that the supervisor must convince workers that they can prove they are manly without risking injury, for example, by using kinetic lifting techniques instead of brute force. In addition, Gardner talks of job competency, that is a basic ingredient of expertness may be seen by workers to be getting away with hazardous actions by reasons of deftness, timing, precision, etc. Supervisors should appeal to a skilled worker's confidence in mastering the job or in setting a good example to others.

Another possible conflict mentioned ariefly above is that between working safely and maximising earnings although Gardner says that if jobs are properly engineered, good earnings should be attainable with safe job methods.

One of the fundamental assumptions underlying the use of piecework is that there is a co-incidence of interests between employer and worker in keeping production high. If this is the

case, the same pressures will cause a co-incidence of interests in keeping obstacles to production, such as safety practices, to a minimum.

The British Safety Council in written evidence to the Robens Committee stated:

"In hazardous industries there should be no question of payment by result, that is piecework. In such industries, as is now universal in coal mining, the workman should be paid a regular weekly wage which does not depend directly upon his output.

In some occupations, for example mass production lines in the motor car industry, where the work can be seen as safe but monotonous, payment by results is perfectly legitimate as the health and safety of the workers is not directly affected."

In order to further examine the effect of payment by results methods of remuneration on safe working, the questions described below were asked of supervisors and safety representatives in the questionnaires.

In the present study, safety representatives and supervisors were asked the question in Table 8.9. The responses can be seen below:

TABLE 8.9 Safety Representatives' and Supervisors' Views upon the Existence of a Bonus Scheme

"Is there a bonus scheme in operation in your workplace? "

| | <u>Yes(%)</u> | <u>No(%)</u> | <u>N</u> |
|------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------|
| Safety Representatives | 73 | 27 | 64 |
| Supervisors | 98 | 2 | 88 |

It is difficult to find a reason for the above discrepancy between the responses from the two groups. The percentages of those from each group who worked in each of the four departments were not dissimilar enough to suggest that this might affect the results. There is a bonus scheme in each of the four departments in any case so it may be that the two groups have different perceptions of the meaning of the question.

Nearly all the supervisors (98%) answered in the affirmative and they may have been referring to the existence of a bonus scheme in their department in general rather than in terms of whether they personally were paid by this method - no supervisory staff were paid in this way. However, the safety representatives, some of whom are paid on a piecework basis, may have answered according to whether or not they personally were on a bonus payment system. The above discrepancy underlines the problem in postal questionnaires with regard to the interpretation of seemingly straightforward questions.

Respondents were then given the following statement and asked for their reaction.

TABLE 8.10 The Bonus Scheme and Safe Working Methods

"Some people feel that a bonus scheme works against safe working methods. Do you agree?"

| | <u>Yes(%)</u> | <u>No(%)</u> | <u>N</u> |
|------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------|
| Safety representatives | 49 | 51 | 59 |
| Supervisors | 55 | 45 | 87 |

It was hypothesised that there would be a difference in responses from supervisors and safety representatives, because the latter may stand to benefit personally from a bonus scheme, the former are not paid in this way. When a Chi-squared test was carried out on these results there was no statistically significant difference between the responses of the two groups.

One possible reason for the similarity between the responses of the two groups with regard to the bonus scheme and safe working, is that some supervisors bend safety rules and collude with workers in maximising their output in order to reduce potential conflict at work. (This point is discussed more fully below). In the same way some safety representatives who are themselves paid on a bonus system may take short cuts in order to maximise their own earnings. (See for example, Roy 1955).

As can be seen, approximately half of both groups of respondents feel that the bonus system may have a detrimental effect on safe working which lends support to the trade union opposition to wage incentives reported by Wrench (1972). This opposition has frequently been voiced in terms of arguments which emphasise the increase in accidents as a consequence of speeding.

The Congress of Swedish Labour Unions in 1971 stated that the speed of work was raised so much in most industries with piecework systems that dangerous situations were being created. They voted to work against piecework systems in favour of monthly pay.

Although payment by results is traditionally opposed by the

unions, it is sometimes preferred by individual workers because of the satisfaction of more direct individual control over levels of earnings. For the pieceworker the immediate benefits of a high rate of output are a direct calculable certainty. On the otherhand, an accident is not a certainty, only a possibility and probably a remote one.

Those respondents who stated that the bonus scheme does work against safe working methods were asked to describe in what way they considered that the bonus system contributed to unsafe practices or working conditions in their workplace and some examples of these are described below.

The most frequent comments referred to the tendency to cut corners and to rush in order to save some time. Also mentioned was the use of bad work methods, for example not blocking up jacked-up buses, not setting out road signs adequately for the job, not using the proper scaffolding, and the misuse of tools. One supervisor said, "If the squad are held back by unforeseen circumstances, they skip safe working procedures to catch up."

Roy (1952) examined the interaction between piecework and accidents and revealed extensive co-operation between machine operators and other shop floor groups in the submission of formal managerial rules of production. Illegal practices were commonplace in the drive to attain a consistent piecework quote often with the silent collusion of supervisors. This is an illustration that conflicting motives concerning safety affect not only the workforce but also supervisory staff.

In the questionnaire to supervisors, the question below was

asked, regarding feelings of pressure.

TABLE 8.11 Production Pressure Perceived by Supervisors

"Do you feel under pressure to keep up production?"

| | | |
|---------------|----|-------|
| (a) often | 28 | (33%) |
| (b) sometimes | 37 | (44%) |
| (c) never | 19 | (23%) |

—
N=84
—

From this result it can be seen that 77% of supervisors at some time feel under pressure of this kind. This may have the effect of making it difficult to supervisors to enforce safe working procedures to the extent they would feel was appropriate in less stressful circumstances. There may, therefore, be some incompatibility between expectations of the safety role and other work roles of the supervisor.

Two quotes from the supervisor questionnaire illustrate this pressure:

"Supervisors do not have time to pay close attention to health and safety regulations in the workplace."

"The foreman has a lot of work and so may miss out on some safety aspects."

Supervisors may find themselves caught between management and workforce. On the one hand they may be put under pressure by management to keep up production, and on the other hand they may be under pressure from workers through their safety representatives to ensure that the working environment is safe and that management provide the necessary equipment to the work according

to laid down safety procedures.

Child and Partridge (1982) state that supervisors can keep latent the conflict, which results from conflicting expectations of their role, by 'colluding' with the work group. Contingencies which arise within production systems may force supervisors to break or to stretch certain rules regarding, for example, work schedules, line speeds or maintenance procedures so that output will be achieved or employee earnings maintained. Supervisors on occasion may have to order rules and expectations into a priority list and if necessary sacrifice some of these rules or expectations in order to reduce the potential for conflict that exists in their work environment.

Young (1964) commenting upon the conflict between the goals of safety and production states:

"The employer has to choose between a form of payment which tacitly encourages workers to break the law but which brings greater prosperity to the business in higher output, and the danger of accidents which may bring their own financial penalties."

Evidence from a study of over two thousand accidents carried out by Powell et al. (1971) for the National Institute of Industrial Psychology supports the view that conflict between the achievement of safe working practices and other production objectives is endemic. The survey concluded that accidents were structured by and arose out of the continuous pressure for production.

Pressure to keep up production can lead to 'speed accidents' which are described by Wrench (1972) as being caused by speed-induced carelessness on the part of the injured person. Examples

given of this type of accident are when a machine guard has been ignored, when a machine is left in motion for an operation when it should have been stopped, for example for cleaning, or when an operator has started a machine cycle before fully withdrawing his hand. Wrench suggests that it is feasible that pressure towards increased output may, in some circumstances, lead to a neglect of safety measures with or without the knowledge of management.

Nichols and Armstrong (1973) looked at five factory accidents and found that each occurred while men were trying to maintain or restore production after a process failure. The dangerous situations were created to make the resumption of production quicker and easier. At least three of the accidents occurred as a result of 'illegal practices' which were virtually normal and company safety rules were broken. This was partly because of pressures from both foremen and management on the workforce to keep up production. Workmates also put pressure on each other to ensure that their bonus earnings are not jeopardised.

Even the day of the week can affect the safety of pieceworkers. Wrench and Lee (1982) found that towards the end of the week, in the period immediately preceding the point of calculation of the week's output, the pieceworkers are more likely to speed up, cut corners, make less concession to their own fatigue, take more risks and generally be more liable to industrial injuries.

It has to be admitted that it is very difficult to demonstrate any relationship between incentive payments and industrial accidents in a statistically satisfactory way because of methodological problems. There are too many other variables involved

such as the type of supervision and individual differences of the workers concerned. However, it does not follow that there is no relationship or that piecework does not encourage unsafe working behaviour.

The bonus scheme in use in the four departments in the Local Authority was carefully developed - there is a maximum bonus that can be earned, and it is contended that ample time has been allowed for safe working methods to be used. However, there does still seem a conflict between working safely and maximising earnings which are often incompatible.

The main point to be made in this section on conflicting motives is that safety is often compromised in order to attain other goals, and that this conflict of motives affects not only the workforce but also supervisors.

The role of Accident Investigator was not mentioned as a useful contribution of supervisory staff to safe working although 72% of supervisors said that they investigated accidents and dangerous occurrences. However, two individuals did mention this function when asked what health and safety responsibilities took up most of their time.

The roles for supervisors in health and safety from the Industrial Data Sheet described above include 'investigation of all lost time accidents that occur in his section' and it must be assumed, as with the safety representative data, that accidents are fairly infrequent events and so this role is not seen by supervisors in the present study as a useful contribution to safe working.

8.7 Training

79% of the supervisors had been on a training course involving health and safety. Of these 70 individuals, 76% had attended the health and safety courses for supervisors run by the local authority. These last for two days and in some departments attendance on the course is mandatory for supervisors. 18% of the group of 70 had attended specialist training courses, for example National Water Council courses, and 12% of them had attended general safety courses, for example ROSPA, TWI, NEBSS. Only 5% of those who had received safety training had attended trade union safety courses.

This emphasis on the importance in the Local Authority of supervisory safety training may explain the differences found between the percentage of safety representatives (59%) and supervisors (79%) who had attended safety training courses.

TABLE 8.12 Numbers of Supervisors and Safety Representatives who were Trained

"Have you attended a safety training course?"

| | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> |
|------------------------|------------|-----------|
| Safety Representatives | 39 | 27 |
| Supervisors | 69 | 18 |

$$\chi^2 = \underline{7.19}, \text{ df} = 1, \text{ p} < 0.01$$

The Chi-squared value under the null hypothesis of no association between having attended a safety training course and being a supervisor or a safety representative is 7.19 on 1df which gives

a p-value of < 0.01 . This shows an association between the above variables.

This statistically significant result may appear to be surprising in view of the fact that a comment sometimes seen in writings on health and safety at work is that in some aspects of safety in the workplace, safety representatives are more knowledgeable than management because a larger number of them have been trained. The content of the courses is equally as important as the number of individuals who have attended them if one is evaluating their effectiveness. Therefore, although a smaller percentage of safety representatives had attended a course, most of those who have received safety training had been on the ten day TUC course which is longer and more comprehensive than the one to two day courses attended by supervisors. The effect may be that overall trained safety representatives are still more knowledgeable than trained supervisors. However, it is still a sign of management interest that 79% of supervisors have been trained in health and safety. It may be that the comment about fewer supervisors than safety representatives being trained relates more to the private than to the public sector as it is in the private sector that most of the research in health and safety has been carried out.

The main point here is that it is important that supervisors are adequately trained in health and safety when they are interacting with well-informed shopfloor safety representatives so that they can talk on equal terms. Supervisors must be able to match safety representatives' knowledge and awareness of health and safety with their own.

The supervisor should be observing workers for unsafe acts

and taking corrective action at once or else he is seen to give tacit approval to the act. Gardner (1979) suggests that supervisors who accept carelessness as a cause of accidents are admitting to helplessness in controlling unsafe behaviour. On the otherhand, supervisors must consistently show approval to employees who are following safe procedures. The effectiveness of positive reinforcement for desired behaviour has been well established by psychologists attempting to shape behaviour in animals and humans. Safety is one area where this could be a valuable strategy.

In the present study, in the questionnaire to safety representatives, an open-ended question was asked about which aspects of the courses attended had been found to be most useful in the supervisors' work. This question was open-ended because these aspects could vary greatly from course to course and so it was not as appropriate to set out a list for respondents to tick in the way of the safety representative questionnaire. The TUC course for safety representatives which most had attended lends itself to this format as the areas are neatly divided up for teaching purposes.

The results of the supervisors' open-ended question can be seen below.

Training Aspects

The most important aspects were clustered into five main categories as below:

TABLE 8.13 Training Aspects Mentioned by Supervisors

| | <u>Mentioned by % of the 41 individuals</u> |
|---------------------|---|
| Legal aspects | 32 |
| All aspects | 27 |
| Accident Prevention | 20 |
| Specialist Aspects | 17 |
| Education/Training | 5 |

Some explanation of these categories is necessary. 'Legal aspects' includes comments alluding to the supervisor's legal responsibilities. The category described above as 'All aspects' was used when supervisor respondents did not consider any particular aspect to be the most important. 'Accident prevention' includes anticipation, prevention, prediction, hazard spotting and good housekeeping. Items included under 'Specialist aspects' were excavations, report writing and the use of power wagons and hydraulic cranes. The category of 'Education/training' included the training requirements of the HASAWA.

All the above aspects of training are considered to be useful in supervisor safety training. Supervisors are aware of their legal responsibilities which may provide an underlying motive for accident prevention by means of anticipating situations, hazard spotting and good housekeeping, rather than accident investigation which, although potentially a source of useful information, could be considered to be reactive. Accident investigation was only mentioned by two individuals as a responsibility taking up most of their time, although 72% of this sample of supervisors reported that they investigate accidents.

8.8 Summary

In this chapter the difficulties of definition of the supervisor role in an organisation have been described. In different organisations, or even different departments in this case, the job title may vary which further complicates the situation.

Various references were given which describe the supervisor as a marginal man caught on the boundary between management and workforce. Partly because of an increase in the establishment of collective bargaining, the foreman is by-passed in labour negotiations, the shop steward going direct to the level of works manager where he sees the authority to make decisions lies.

Many supervisors belong to white-collar trade unions and as a result of this increased unionisation and some erosion of their authority described above together with a degree of role ambiguity, it may be that they identify more closely with the workforce than with management of whom they are nominally a part. This may be one of a number of possible explanations for the unexpectedly similar perspectives held by the populations of safety representatives and supervisors who replied to the questionnaires.

The areas where this similarity was particularly evident were:

- (a) the perception of safety representatives and supervisors of the degree of management commitment to creating and maintaining safe working conditions in the departments;
- (b) the perception of the relationship between trade unions and management on health and safety issues, that is, the strategies used in interactions between them.

There was a considerable difference between the reported incidence of conflict between the two groups, the safety representatives reporting more conflict than did the supervisors.

Another statistically significant difference was found between the two groups as to the amount of management support they felt they received - the safety representatives feeling that they got less support than did the supervisors.

Supervisor Role in Health and Safety

An attempt was made, in the same way as with the safety representative sample, to classify supervisor roles in health and safety. This was done by analysing the answers to open-ended questions asking supervisors what they considered to be their most useful contribution to safe working and what health and safety responsibilities took up most of their time. Five main categories were identified and these roles were examined in relation to the aspects of safety training courses attended by supervisors that were considered by them to be most important. The roles identified in this way were then compared with the nine roles and functions of the supervisor in health and safety laid out in Industrial Data Sheet 17A.

Conflicting Motives/Pressures

The importance of the awareness in the supervisor of the pressure on the workforce as a result of conflicting motives which may be incompatible, was discussed. One such example is the desire to work safely versus the desire to maximise earnings. If the supervisor is to be effective in persuading those he

supervises to follow safe procedures and adhere to safety rules, he should have an understanding of the fact that some goals are mutually exclusive and he must try in some way to overcome this problem.

The effects of the bonus system on safety were described by supervisors and safety representatives and roughly half of each sample thought that the bonus system was detrimental to safe working.

The effects of pressure on supervisors to keep up 'production' was also mentioned with 77% of supervisors feeling this pressure at some time and also feeling that they may not be able to keep up safety standards.

Training

A larger proportion of supervisors than safety representatives had been trained in health and safety and 54% of supervisors claimed to train the workers they supervise.

Conclusions of the survey of supervisors

1. When supervisors and safety representatives were asked about experiencing conflict with one another, a significantly greater percentage of safety representatives than supervisors reported the existence of conflict - 23% compared with only 5% of supervisors. Possible explanations for this were given in Chapter Seven.
2. There was virtually no difference between supervisors' and

safety representatives' perceptions of the degree of senior management commitment to health and safety. 74% of supervisors and 73% of safety representatives see management as strongly committed to health and safety. This may indicate a similarity of attitudes and perceptions between the two groups, and may reinforce the proposition that a gap has developed between supervisors and higher levels of management.

3. The degree of management support received by supervisors and safety representatives was significantly different. 70% of safety representatives compared with 91% of supervisors felt that they get support. One would expect supervisors to get more support for they are putting into practice the policies devised by management.
4. There was a significant relationship between those supervisors who felt that they did/did not receive management support and their perception of the degree of commitment of management to health and safety. Most of those who felt that they got the support of management in their role saw management as strongly committed to health and safety.
5. When questioned about the trade union/management relationship the responses of safety representatives and supervisors were very similar with only 5% of each group describing the relationship as purely negotiating. The remainder of each group were nearly equally divided between consultation alone and a mixture of consultation and negotiation.
6. The two most often cited roles identified by the supervisors were inspector/monitor (70% make inspections) and educator

(54% train workers) which together account for 63% of the responses. Table 8.5 shows comparisons between the perceived health and safety roles of supervisors and safety representatives. The three roles identified by both groups were: inspector/monitor, educator and enforcer. The other roles identified by safety representatives mostly involved relationships with others such as management pressuriser, representative and consulter. The supervisors identified roles more related to the physical environment such as good housekeeper and example setter.

7. 79% of supervisors who replied to the questionnaire had attended a training course involving health and safety. If this training is effective, it should result in well informed supervisors who are aware of their legal responsibilities towards their subordinates and who can interact with well-trained safety representatives on equal terms with respect to knowledge.
8. 78% of supervisors felt that they get the support of the workers they supervise when trying to maintain a safe workplace. Only 64% of safety representatives stated that they received support from the people they represented.
9. 77% of supervisors felt under pressure to keep up production either 'often' (33%) or 'sometimes' (44%). This ties in with the view of the supervisor as the man caught in the middle of workers and management, and under the influence of competing demands, for example for keeping up production and for maintaining a safe working environment.
10. Respondents to the supervisor questionnaire seemed to have positive attitudes towards safety committees with 99%

agreeing that they provide a genuine opportunity for management and employees to co-operate over health and safety. 93% disagree with the statement that safety committees provide an excuse for management to delay action on health and safety issues.

To sum up some of the points which emerged from the survey, in this Local Authority a large proportion of the supervisors had received some safety training. On the whole, they had positive attitudes towards safety committees and to the degree of commitment to health and safety shown by senior management, and they report few incidents of conflict with safety representatives.

When supervisors were asked to add any further comments they had on their responsibilities with regard to health and safety in the workplace 24 responded. These responses highlighted some of the main problems facing supervisors: lack of time, making men aware of their responsibilities and lack of authority to enforce safety rules and procedures. Some quotes are given below to illustrate these points:

"supervisors do not have time to pay close attention to health and safety regulations in the workplace"

"the foreman has a lot of work so may miss out on some safety aspects"

"we must make men aware of their responsibilities to themselves and others"

"no matter how vigilant a supervisor is, the final responsibility remains with the workforce to maintain safe working conditions when the supervisor is not in attendance"

"supervisors are held responsible for accidents but have not the means to enforce safety at work"

"all the safety gear is provided but the workforce cannot be compelled to wear it so it is a waste of money"

Self-Regulation and the Supervisor

Supervisors should be seen as a valuable human resource in the organisation whose importance to the maintenance of a safe and healthy work environment should be fully recognised by senior management. The supervisor is the 'agent' who helps to put into practice the self-regulation measures identified by senior management in their safety policy.

The supervisor is the man at the 'sharp end' where the accidents actually happen and the hazards exist. He is the person who influences the general work environment by his attitude to the importance of good housekeeping and setting a personal example. The effect that the supervisor can have on the attitudes of those he supervises is perhaps sometimes overlooked.

Training which is carried out by 54% of supervisors is one way in which they can influence their men's attitudes, for example with regard to wearing protective clothing or carrying out work using the correct safety procedures.

Constant vigilance, monitoring and daily inspections are also key aspects of the supervisor's contribution to health and safety although supervisors mentioned a feeling of lack of authority to enforce rules and procedures which gave rise to a feeling of frustration in some of them. However, it may be more effective for the supervisor to use positive reinforcement in the form of praise for 'correct' behaviour, than negative reinforcement in the form of discipline.

The position of the supervisor with regard to health and safety

can be summed up in a passage from the HSE Report of 1980:

"Supervisors are in the front line in matters of health and safety and are particularly vulnerable at a time when some of their other powers are being eroded or taken over by personnel, legal and training departments. They have lost much of their formal authority, but still have an essential job to do in terms of ensuring the health and safety of the workers who operate in their span of control. They need management support and training in the control of health and safety problems of their own place of work so that they can discuss with confidence the issues raised by safety representatives."

There is no doubt about the importance of the supervisor in the setting and maintaining of safety standards in the workplace which is the essence of self-regulation.

CHAPTER NINE

THE SAFETY COMMITTEE

9.1 Introduction

According to the Robens Report (1972), in 1969 there were approximately 10,000 joint safety committees in United Kingdom manufacturing industry covering 70% of the workforce in factories employing more than fifty people.

In the late 1970s a study of establishments in manufacturing industries carried out by the Industrial Relations Research Unit at Warwick University (1977-78) revealed that 69% had safety committees of which 41% were set up prior to 1974 and 59% were set up between 1974 and the time of the study (Brown, 1981).

The Warwick study showed that the incidence of safety committees was greater in larger establishments but they tended to be more recent where workforces were smaller. It was found that safety committees were least likely to exist where trade unions were not recognised, and the conclusion was drawn that, in formal terms, the legislation has had a very substantial impact on the setting up of health and safety committees.

Leopold and Coyle (1981) found that 71% of establishments comparable to those in the Warwick study, had safety committees and that the breakdown was very similar between pre- and post-1974 figures to the Warwick study.

In October 1979 an HSE survey of over 6,500 workplaces revealed that a majority of all workplaces with safety representatives also had a safety committee. This survey also confirmed

that 90% or more of workplaces in parts of the public sector and elsewhere has safety committees and it concluded that the SRSC Regulations had helped to narrow the gap between industries in the provision of safety committees.

HASAWA makes reference to safety committees:

"In such cases as may be prescribed it shall be the duty of every employer if requested by the safety representatives...to establish, in accordance with regulations made by the Secretary of State, a safety committee having the function of keeping under review the measures taken to ensure the health and safety at work of his employees and such other functions as may be prescribed."

In 1977 the Safety Representative and Safety Committee Regulations (SRSC) set out the statutory provisions for safety committees. These are described briefly below.

The request to set up a safety committee must be in writing to the employer from two safety representatives. The employer must then consult with the safety representatives who made the request and with the representatives of recognised trade unions whose members work in any workplace to which it is to relate. The employer must post a notice stating the composition of the committee and the workplace to be covered by it, in a place where it can be easily read by the employees. The safety committee must be established not later than three months after the request for it.

Guidance Notes were published by the Health and Safety Commission which provided background advice but at the same time left sufficient flexibility to allow the safety committee to be tailored to fit the individual circumstances of each workplace.

9.2 The Guidance Notes

The Guidance Notes deal with:

(1) Organisational matters

Account must be taken of the relevant circumstances within which the committee functions. For example, a single committee in a large workplace may be "too large, or if kept small, may become too remote".

(2) Safety committee functions

The SRSC Regulations suggest that the main statutory function is to monitor the precautions for health and safety at work. The Guidance Notes emphasise the need to draw up agreed objectives or terms of reference. The functions of safety committees will be fully discussed later in this chapter.

(3) Membership

The Guidance Notes suggest that membership and structure should be settled in consultation between management and the trade union representatives. The committees should be as compact as possible to aid communication, and the number of management representatives should not exceed the number of employee representatives. The safety officer should be an ex-officio member of the safety committee.

(4) Relationships

There should be flexible relationships between safety committees and higher management, the safety officer, safety representatives and trade unions especially where functions may overlap, for example, in the case of safety committees and safety representatives.

(5) Conduct of meetings

The committee should meet as often as necessary and there should be sufficient time for business to be fully discussed and for the necessary papers to be circulated at least a week before the meeting.

Leopold & Coyle (1981) found that one effect of HASAWA and the SRSC Regulations was that many existing committees were reorganised, and also that small firms (with under 200 employees) had been particularly stimulated to set up safety committees even in firms in low accident rate industries.

They noted, however, that in high and medium accident rate industries the vast majority of firms had safety committees whereas in the low accident rate sectors only just over half the plants had committees.

Before going on to discuss the role and functions of safety committees it will be useful at this point to describe the system of safety committees in the Local Authority under study.

9.3 The System of Safety Committees

The Local Authority ran a pilot study prior to the coming into operation of the SRSC Regulations in 1978. The study was based on the Drainage Department and information resulting from this study was then used to assist other departments to set up their own systems of safety committees.

Meetings were called in the various departments between trade union safety representatives and management representatives where the proposed safety committee structure was discussed with a view to acceptance from both trade unions and management. This included details concerning the membership, office-bearers and the constitution and objectives and functions of the safety committee.

There are some similarities with regard to safety committees between the four departments studied; however, within this framework there has been the opportunity for departments to use their own discretion as to how their safety committees function.

There is a two-tier system in each department with a departmental or 'parent' safety committee on the higher tier and sub-regional or location safety committees based in the individual workplaces within each department. In these lower tier committees there is representation, through the various unions, of all groups of workers.

1. The Highways Department

The departmental safety committee was first set up in November

1978. There were to be eight management representatives including the chairman (the Depute Director) covering the various sections of the department. The safety officer was to be an ex-officio member. An equal number of safety representatives would represent the workforce - one from each of the eight sub-regional safety committees which were also to be set up.

In an interview, the Assistant Director of Highway Maintenance said that the present situation is that the departmental safety committee meets annually but can be called at any time. He stated that this is because few items are put on the agenda because they are dealt with satisfactorily at sub-regional level meetings, that is, the system seemed to him to be 'working well'.

Eight sub - regional safety committees were to be set up, representing the manual, craft and APT and clerical staff in the Region and a specified and variable number of safety representatives and management representatives would sit on these committees. The chairman was to be a senior manager. A draft constitution similar in content to that of the other departments, was discussed and later accepted.

The lower tier committees meet three-monthly. Copies of minutes are sent to all members of safety committees and all safety representatives. All members of the committees can place items on the agenda in time for a meeting. Although the highest level of management does not attend sub-regional meetings, they receive copies of the minutes of meetings so they are kept informed of problems experienced in the various locations.

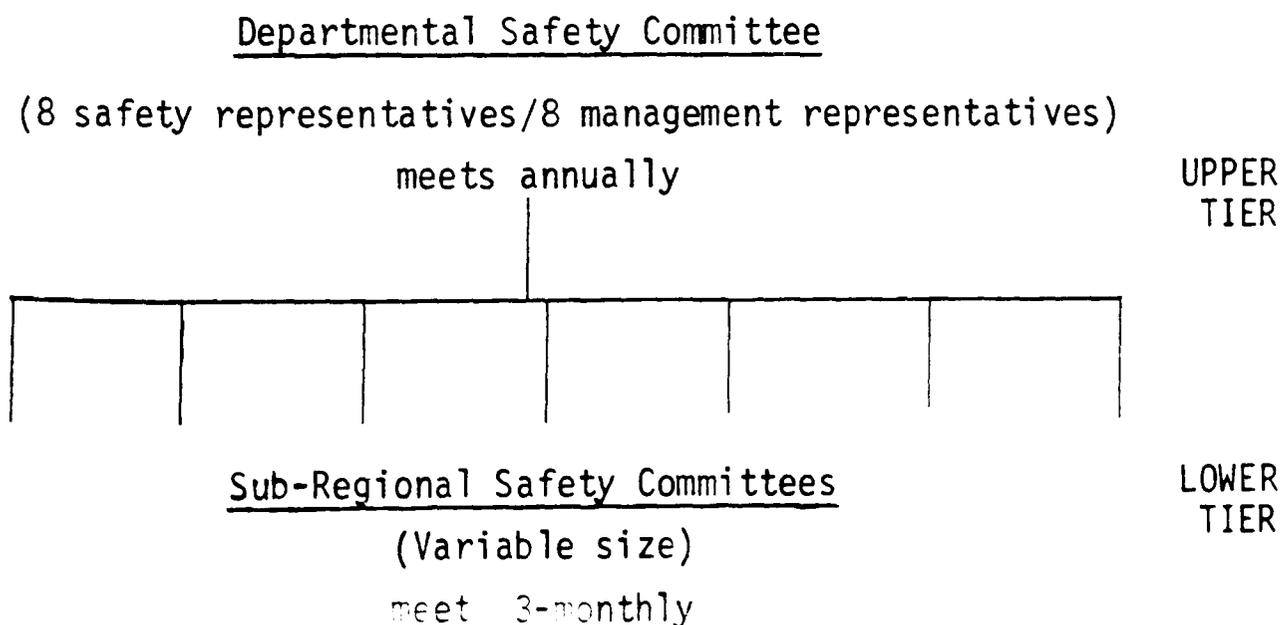
Objectives: The main objectives concern reviewing of measures to

ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees, promoting co-operation between management and employees in instigating, developing and carrying out the above measures, and eliminating or reducing the accident rate in the department to an acceptable level.

Functions: The functions of the safety committees concern:

- (1) The study of accidents and notifiable disease statistics and trends so that reports can be made to management on unsafe and unhealthy conditions and practices and recommendations made for corrective actions.
- (2) Reports from inspectors and safety representatives are studied and a working brief kept on the effectiveness of the safety content of employee training and the adequacy of health and safety communication and publicity in the workplace.
- (3) Assisting in the development of departmental safety rules and safe systems of work.

FIGURE 9.1 The Highways Department - Safety Committee System (1,500 employees)



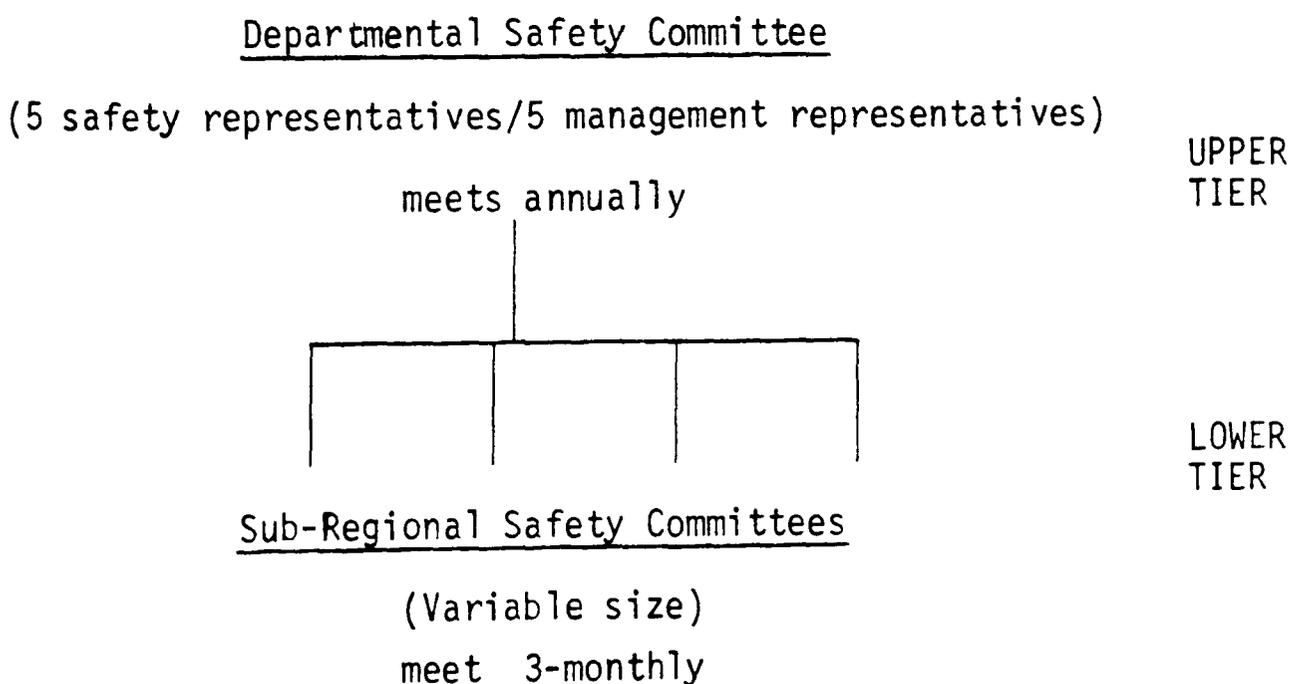
2. The Drainage Department

There is an upper tier departmental safety committee with ten members which originally met twice yearly. Although it can be called at any time if necessary it now meets only once a year as so few issues are referred to it. The committee is chaired by the Depute Director.

There are, in addition, four lower tier sub-regional safety committees chaired by a member of senior management such as a sub-regional engineer. These committees meet 3-monthly and the minutes of each committee are sent to all the others as it is felt that useful information can be circulated and be beneficial to all. These minutes are also posted on notice boards so that employees know what has been discussed.

The objectives and functions of the safety committee are very similar to those of the Highway Department described above.

FIGURE 9.2 The Drainage Department - Safety Committee System (450 employees)



The five safety representatives on the departmental safety committee are: two from NALGO, two from NUPE and one for the T&GWU who between them represent manual workers and craftsmen and APT and clerical staff.

3. The Transport Department

The system is similar to those described above in that there are eight location sub-committees on safety, each consisting of four trade union representatives and three management representatives. The four trade union represented are AUEW, NALGO, NUPE and TGWU.

Each of these committees is chaired by a safety representative who is designated senior safety representative which entitles him to sit on the upper-tier departmental safety committee. These location committees meet quarterly and, unlike other departments, meetings are preceded by a 'walkabout' where hazards are noted and brought to the attention of the committee.

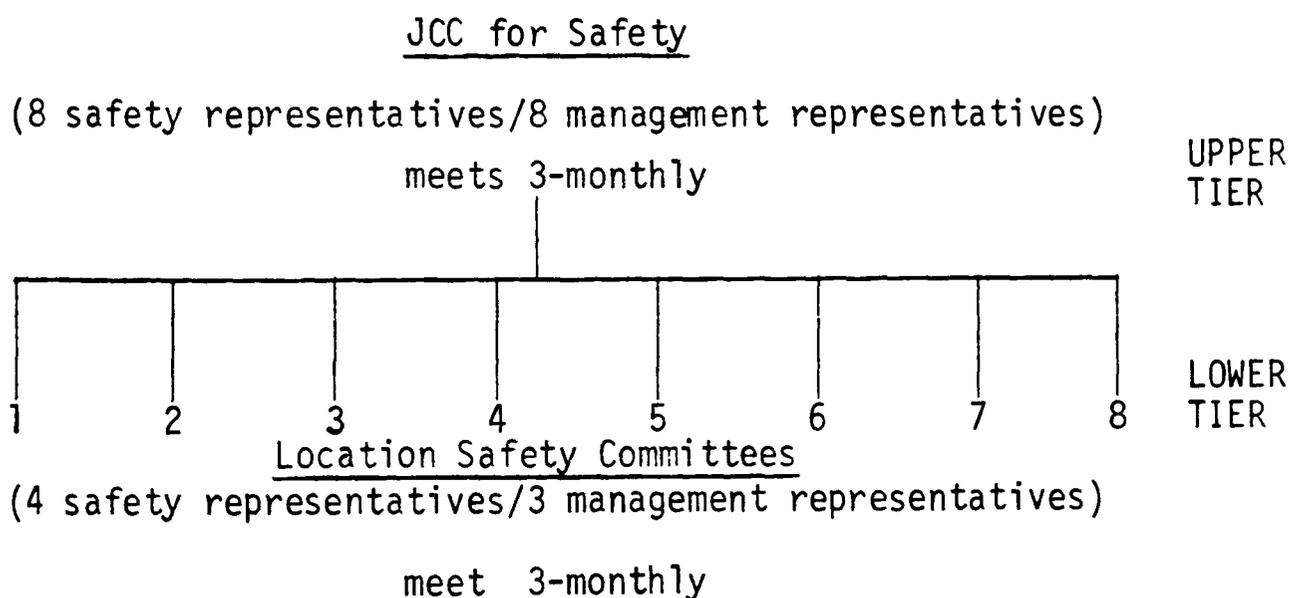
The Chief Engineer receives a written request for permission to carry out these walkabouts and then forms are sent to him stating any points needing attention. Any items outstanding are then discussed at the upper tier meeting.

The safety co-ordinator, who is also personnel officer in the Transport Department, as there is at the time of writing no safety officer, is an ex-officio member of location safety committees who attends in an advisory capacity and does not form part of the

management representation. The objectives and functions of location safety committees are as described above for the other departments.

The upper-tier committee in the Transport Department is a Joint Consultative Committee for Safety (JCC) which meets quarterly and has the Director, or sometimes the General Manager as its chairman. In addition, there are seven other senior management representatives with the Safety Co-ordinator acting as secretary to the committee. The JCC discusses accident statistics, training and any alterations in the workplace, for example, new plant. Plans are shown to safety representatives who are involved in any changes taking place.

FIGURE 9.3 The Transport Department - Safety Committee System (2,500 employees)



4. Water Supply Services

Unlike the other departments, there are no lower-tier safety committees as a result of a Directorate decision to avoid having too many committees. There are sub-regional joint consultative committees which meet two-monthly which were not originally

designed for safety, but safety is a major item discussed. If these items are not satisfactorily dealt with at the sub-regional JCCs they are referred to the departmental JCC where all minutes of sub-regional committees are discussed, resolved and approved.

There is a departmental safety committee which meets quarterly and whose chairman is the Depute Director with the chairman's deputy being a safety representative. There are six management representatives and six trade union safety representatives who represent NALGO, NUPE, EEPTU, TGWU, GMWU, and AUEW. The safety officer is an ex-officio member and attends all meetings to discuss accident statistics and the annual review of statistics as well as giving expert advice if this is needed. Again, the objectives and functions of the safety committee are very similar to those already described.

An interesting development from this departmental safety committee has been the setting up of study groups consisting of a small number of people (perhaps four) representing both trade unions and management. These have studied the following topics:

1. the role and effectiveness of the safety committee;
2. accidents;
3. operation of safety representatives' training requirements, methods of operating and relationship with other members of staff;
4. lifting and handling.

Copies of the reports produced by these study groups are distributed widely throughout the department. It was felt that as the safety committee has no executive power and can only make recommendations, the setting up of study groups is one way in which the committee can play a more active part in maintaining health and safety in the workplace.

FIGURE 9.4 Water Supply Services - Safety Committee System (450 employees)

Departmental Safety Committee

meets 3-monthly

UPPER TIER

No lower
tier S Cs

Safety items discussed at sub-
regional JCCs (meets 2-monthly)

In the present study, data were collected with the intention of providing information with regard to the part played by safety committees in the self-regulation of health and safety in the Local Authority. Some consideration was also made of the determinants of effectiveness of safety committees.

The data sources were:

- (a) questionnaires to safety representatives who were members of safety committees
- (b) interviews with senior management and safety officers
- (c) observations made by the researcher during safety committee meetings
- (d) documentary data, for example minutes of safety committee meetings

Before going on to describe the present study and some other research in the area, six sources of data will be considered as well as the functions and duties of safety committees, so that these may form a theoretical background against which to examine the empirical data. The six sources were selected from many such publications to give a varied range of types. Other existing sources cover much the same ground and a decision had to be made to limit the number of interpretations of the functions

and objectives of safety committees to a manageable number.

9.4 Functions and Duties of Safety Committees from Six Sources

Industrial Data Sheet 17A (1980)



SRSC Regulations (1977)





The Human Element in Systems Safety: A Guide for Modern Management Alan D. Swain

Industrial and Commercial Techniques (London, 1974)





GMWU Safety Representatives' Handbook (1978)





The purpose of listing the perceptions of the functions and objectives of safety committees from such diverse sources is to illustrate the main similarities and differences between them. A degree of interpretation is inevitable with a flexible set of recommendations and guidelines such as exists in this area. Indeed this was the main purpose behind such flexibility - a contingency approach catering for the individual circumstances of the organisation being favoured.

Table 9.1 shows the safety committee functions given by the six sources described above with the seven most mentioned functions

TABLE 9.1 SAFETY COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS



indicated. The following items were mentioned by three or more of the six sources and the number of mentions is shown in brackets after each.

1. The safety committee must have objectives or terms of reference (3)
2. Consideration of safety performance (5)
3. Consideration of causes of accidents (3)
4. Study trends and statistics related to accidents and disease (3)
5. Make recommendations to management on health and safety (4)
6. Promote co-operation between management and employees (4)
7. Help to develop safety rules and safe systems of work (3)

One point made by five out of six sources is that a safety committee must operate within a frame of reference and have objectives. This may seem rather basic but it is a vital point because without these basic functions the workforce could not be expected to take seriously any committee purporting to have as its members individuals who represent their interests.

The main point to emerge from the seven functions described above is that the safety committee should monitor safety performance in the organisation. This can be done in a variety of ways. For example, the safety committee can evaluate the safety policy by examining:

1. the level of accidents during the first six months of each individual's employment - this would indicate the effectiveness of induction procedures among other things;
2. response to safety campaigns;
3. the number of accidents or near misses resulting from failures to carry out procedures or to observe rules;

4. the use of protective clothing and equipment.

Accident trends and statistics can be examined and discussed in an attempt to determine underlying causes. On the basis of discussion, recommendations should be made to management using a co-operative approach.

The other function mentioned by three out of the six sources suggests that the safety committee can play an active rather than a purely reactive role in initiating and helping to develop safety rules and safe systems of work.

It is interesting to look at some of the functions which were mentioned less frequently. Two of these functions concerned liaison with HSE inspectors (two mentions) and consideration of their reports (one mention). It is interesting to note that the SRSC Regulations (1977) mention both the above functions related to the Inspectorate and Williams (1960) mentions liaison with HSE inspectors as a safety committee function. It may be that theoretically these were considered to be useful functions for safety committees - Williams was writing long before the HASAWA, and the SRSC Regulations were issued to introduce the statutory provisions related to safety representatives and safety committees - that is safety committees had only been operating in a limited number of organisations before 1977. However, in practice, there appears, among the remaining four sources, to be little support for this function. The trade union source, GMWU (1978), certainly is dated early after the introduction of the Regulations, but the other three sources are dated 1980, that is safety committees had been in operation for two years even where they had not been in existence before the SRSC Regulations. What was thought to be a

safety committee function in theory does not seem to be the case where the Regulations have been put into action. Perhaps liaison with the HSE is seen as a management function or perhaps the safety committee has problems finding suitable times for its members to get together for meetings without organising further meetings in order to liaise with the HSE inspectorate. The responses to questions about contact with the HSE described in Chapter Seven indicate that safety representatives have little liaison with the Inspectorate and, in similar vein, those who describe safety committee functions may see contact with the HSE Inspectorate and consideration of their reports as infrequent events.

Only two of the six sources mentioned carrying out safety inspections as a safety committee function. Kochan et al. (1977) suggest that safety committees should carry out safety inspections - preferably the day before each meeting. This procedure is carried out in the Transport Department when the location safety committees have walkabouts just before their next meeting. This is not done in other departments, possibly because of problems of time and of getting the safety committee members together especially if they are geographically dispersed as in departments such as the Water Supply Services. When safety representatives were asked why their safety committees do not inspect, they replied that this is a safety representative function with the same answer being given by senior managers in interviews. This may also be the reason why only two sources see inspections as a safety committee function.

Similarly, the functions of showing conviction and setting an example (one mention), arousing interest in health and safety (two mentions) and promoting personal responsibility for health and

safety (two mentions) may be considered by some sources to be management functions especially at supervisory level.

Monitoring the effectiveness of safety training and communication, which is included in the SRSC.Regulations, was only mentioned by the GMWU among the other sources referred to, and although this is a standing item on the agenda at higher tier meetings in the Local Authority, it was usually only briefly mentioned at the meetings attended by the researcher.

Kochan et al. (1977) suggest that trade unions should encourage their members to use safety committees rather than formal grievance procedures as the first forum for dealing with health and safety problems. This increases the importance and status of the committees and also eliminates a source of pressure on the formal grievance procedure.

The GMWU gives advice to its stewards to the effect that the safety committee should be the final internal stage for dealing with complaints on health and safety. This union sees an advantage in having a negotiated complaints procedure as an illustration of the usefulness of the safety committee.

In the present study, safety representatives were asked if the procedures for raising and pursuing health and safety issues at work were the same as for existing grievance procedures and how often this procedure was used for those issues. 68% said that the procedures were the same and 32% said the procedures differed, with most respondents mentioning the involvement of safety representatives, the safety officer and/or the safety committee. At the end of this chapter it will be useful to see if the most frequently mentioned

functions from Table 9.1 are carried out by the safety committees in the Local Authority.

9.5 Previous Research on Safety Committees

There has been very little empirical research carried out on the effectiveness of safety committees and the variables which determine their effectiveness. However, there are two main pieces of work, one based in the United States and one in Britain, which are discussed below in relation to some of the information gathered in the present study. Kochan, Dyer & Lipsey (1977) described the results of a study of safety committees in some districts of a large trade union in the United States. They examined factors which led to the effectiveness of these union-management safety and health committees.

Between 1980 and 1982 a study was carried out at Glasgow University to clarify the nature of an effective health and safety committee and to identify the major characteristics that lead to such effectiveness. In this study, 51 plants in the manufacturing industry sections of the UK economy were visited, representing high, medium and low accident rate sectors and members of safety committees were interviewed.

Both these studies described above involved the private sector of industry and they were exclusively concerned with the effectiveness of safety committees. The present study was based in the public sector - an area which has received less attention from researchers and where, in this instance, the setting up of safety committees has been as a result of the legislation, although joint

consultative committees in other subject areas were well established in the public sector before 1978.

Beaumont et al. (1982) divided the factors which determine effectiveness of safety committees into external and internal ones. External factors are grouped into:

- (a) industry accident rate
- (b) plant size
- (c) overall industrial relations environment

These are all considered to be beyond the immediate control of the committee members and yet play a part in shaping the committee's actions. The internal factors are considered by Beaumont et al. to be more able to be influenced by the members of the committee and the eleven internal factors are discussed below along with the findings of Kochan et al. (1977) and those from the present study.

9.6 Determinants of Effectiveness

1. Size

The SRSC Guidance Notes suggest that the size of a safety committee must depend on the circumstances within which it operates. The problem here is that it is desirable to ensure adequate representation of all interests, that is, agreed trade union representation and in addition representative coverage of various work areas or locations. At the same time, to ensure good communication, it is important that the committee should not be allowed to become too large.

Beaumont et al. found that the average size of safety committees in their sample ranged between six and twelve members and that in larger plants there was a system of tiered committees with one co-ordinating the activities of the lower level committees.

A similar two-tiered system was found in the Local Authority study which has been described above, and this does seem to be the preferred way of providing an optimum balance between size and coverage of representation. This is particularly useful where geographically the sub-committees are widely spread as in the Water Supply Services or the Drainage or Highways Departments - a situation not normally existing in a plant however large. At the same time, the practice of circulating minutes of committee meetings round each of the other committees in the same department seems particularly effective as there must often be the same or similar problems arising and it seems wasteful in terms of effort to duplicate the attempts to deal with these items.

2. Regularity of meetings

Beaumont et al. state that for a safety committee to function effectively, it must meet frequently. They found that over half of their sample had committees which met monthly, 14% met bi-monthly and 14% every three months. However, they stress that regularity is more important than frequency.

In the Local Authority, safety committees meet three-monthly with the exception of the departmental safety committees of the Highways and Drainage Departments which now only meet annually because of a lack of items requiring attention at this level. The researcher observed dates for meetings being fixed and these

were always firmly set at the previous meeting with, in her experience, no deviation from the previously set time between meetings.

The frequency of meetings may depend on such factors as the size of the organisation and the hazards within the workplace. It may be that if meetings are held infrequently and as a result of this they are very long and the agenda is full of items, there is a case for more frequent but less 'enthusiasm-sapping' meetings.

3. Minutes

One purpose of keeping these committee meetings to a set time period is the problem of maintaining continuity highlighted by Kochan et al. One method suggested to ensure this continuity is the use of minutes which can indicate the progress of items from the agenda of previous meetings and proceedings. Have recommendations been followed up and has suitable action been taken within the time period specified?

The minutes of safety committee meetings in the Local Authority play a similar role in providing information to people at all levels in the organisation and also as a permanent record of proceedings of the committee. This aids attempts to follow the progress of items raised and recommendations made at committee meetings.

Each meeting starts with a discussion of matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting which states whether or not each point has been satisfactorily dealt with. In addition, in the Water Supply Services, under each item raised at meetings, a specific person is named who is to take action on that issue - so

the minutes form a record of who was given the responsibility of dealing with an item. There can therefore be no dispute on the grounds of misunderstanding as to who has been delegated which responsibility. One safety representative commented that "formal meetings with minutes are more effective than informal meetings with management."

4. Agenda

Beaumont et al. suggest that the overall effectiveness of a safety committee is related to the nature of the items included on the agenda and how the agenda is set. It is important that the agenda should not be too long as this may result in a loss of interest of committee members who have to sit through long meetings. At the same time it is important that each member of the committee should have equal opportunity to contribute items to the agenda.

In the Local Authority, all safety committee members have the right to place items on the agenda and these must be notified to the Clerk of the Committee not less than ten days before the date of the next committee meeting.

5. Composition of safety committees

(a) Management representation

The SRSC Regulations suggest that there should be equal numbers of management and trade union representatives on the committee and in addition, Beaumont et al. found senior management presence on a safety committee important in providing genuine decision-making authority and in

demonstrating management's commitment to health and safety.

Kochan et al. (1977) also emphasised the importance of delegation of sufficient decision-making authority to a management representative on the committee who can deal with problems that arose.

IRS Health and Safety Bulletin (Nov. 1978) states that if management is represented by someone in the hierarchy who is senior enough to guarantee that the views of the committee are not subject to more senior vetting, the committee will more easily retain the confidence of the workforce as a whole.

In the study of a Local Authority, when observing safety committee meetings, it was clear how important it was that there should be present a member of management senior enough to have the authority to make decisions, deal with problems that arose and to answer enquiries with the required knowledge. The importance was also noted of having an individual on the committee who was either able to allocate financial resources for the rectification or elimination of hazardous situations, or who was in a position to know the financial resources available.

In the case of the Local Authority, the upper tier committees are chaired by either the Director of the department himself or his depute and this means that time can be saved by making unnecessary the step of

communicating to the Director the issues discussed and recommendations made at safety committee meetings.

In the lower tier committees, the chairman may not be in this position, so there may be some delay before certain types of decisions can be made such as those where financial investment is involved.

(b) The role of the safety officer

Beaumont et al. state that the safety officer can play a major role in determining the success of the safety committee through his technical and personal skills, his relationship to the committee and its members, and his advisory role in the organisation.

The SRSC Guidance Notes suggest that the safety officer should be an ex-officio member of the safety committee and Beaumont et al. also make this point. This is the case in the Local Authority where safety officers attend all the lower tier safety committees as well as the upper tier ones and are often asked for advice as well as for a report on accident statistics in their department.

A point was made to the researcher by two of the safety officers in the study with regard to their role in connection with safety committee. They see their role as important but, especially in a department where there are several lower tier committees, it is also very time-consuming. Travelling some miles from

the city is often involved, and this may be one reason why meetings are held three-monthly rather than monthly.

(c) Employee representation

Kochan et al. suggest that representatives should be selected on the basis of technical expertise, they should be highly motivated and they suggest that younger workers may be best to fill this role. However, in the present study, safety representatives were not selected in this way. 41% were shop stewards and as a result of this became safety representatives, 20% were appointed and 18% were elected by their trade union.

Beaumont et al. say that management were initially apprehensive about the use of a single trade union channel of communication although employee representatives emphasised its importance. One quotation that illustrates this management view comes from a senior manager in one department of the Local Authority who thought that safety committees can be "valuable, useful and constructive":

"If safety representatives are genuine and have no axe to grind, all is well, but the occasional safety representative is militant, out to get at management, and raises petty issues."

6. Feedback

Beaumont et al. found that in effective safety committees, in general, representation on the committee operated most smoothly through established trade union channels. In a number of the workplaces they looked at, employee representatives were able to have both informal and formal meetings with their members to build up a two-way flow of communication. However, the main method of telling the workforce about safety committee dealings was posting minutes on notice boards which is one-way and rather passive communication.

Kochan et al. also mention the importance of feedback to members to encourage the involvement of the rank and file in committee actions. Trade union meetings are one possible channel of communication however Kochan et al. make the valid point that only a small minority of the workforce attend these, so they suggest the use of notice boards and perhaps a trade union newspaper in addition.

In the Local Authority the same points apply - only a minority will attend trade union meetings, so minutes posted on notice boards or circulated among and between committees play a vital part in keeping the workforce up-to-date with safety committee activities.

It is suggested that keeping the workforce informed about safety committee interactions is one aspect which, along with other methods, can be instrumental in changing attitudes to health and safety in the workforce and developing positive attitudes partly as a result of seeing that:

1. senior management is involved in safety committees;
2. recommendations are follow up;
3. items are attended to with the minimum of delay.

Feedback to the workforce from the safety committee is important but at the same time so is communication to the safety committee from the workforce. Kochan et al. state that an effective safety committee should receive a high number of suggestions from the workforce in order to maintain its function of joint problem-solving of health and safety issues. They found that the rank and file was relatively active in using its safety representatives and safety committees to channel complaints and problems.

Stevenson (1980) suggests that at each safety committee meeting there should be a review of its performance record as a major item on the agenda. This would concentrate attention on any projects where progress is unsatisfactory and emphasise the fact that the committee should not just report the existence of problems but also have a degree of responsibility for resolving them. Although the committee may have to depend on others actually to implement solutions, it must continue to exercise an influence until these are achieved. This feedback is to some extent covered by the agenda item regarding previous minutes which was described above.

Stevenson states that the safety committee depends on a steady supply of facts, information and ideas about health and safety and maintains that the outcome of its decisions, actions or recommendations must be reported to it as feedback which should stimulate it to greater or better efforts.

In order to be an effective aid to the organisation, the safety committee should be provided with actual experience, be recognised as a 'agent for change' by all employees, encouraged to tackle problems and be supported in the implementation of its solutions by both management and trade unions.

7. Training

Beaumont et al. (1982) found considerable variation in the extent and nature of health and safety training that members of the various safety committees being studied had received. They contrasted the length of health and safety training received by management (one to two days) with that received by safety representatives (ten days).

The HSE Manufacturing and Service Industries report for 1976 makes this point in para. 31:

"...inspectors feel that, in most cases, the trade union representatives could become much better informed about matters of health and safety than their supervisors and middle management."

Leopold (1981) describes the rapid expansion of training of trade union representatives, but states that courses for management tend to be only one or two day affairs and it is senior management who are most likely to attend. A similar point was made by the researcher in the present study in Chapter Seven with regard to the fact that management representatives may be at a disadvantage compared with safety representatives in interactions requiring knowledge of health and safety.

The two day course for supervisors at the Local Authority was attended by the researcher as an observer. A large proportion of time was spent on the legal responsibilities of the supervisor. Although legal aspects are also included in the TUC safety representatives course, other more practical skills are also given a good share of the available time. Examples of these are: hazard spotting skills, technical skills such as sampling the environment, and accident investigation skills. Although supervisors may have less training than safety representatives, this may be more than compensated for by the advantage the supervisors hold because of their authority over subordinates.

The safety policy of each organisation should include a stated intention to provide safety training at all levels in the organisation, and this point has been emphasised by Kochan et al. (1977). They say it is important for management to develop and implement a comprehensive management safety training programme for supervisors and for individual employees which can indicate management's commitment to health and safety. Kochan et al. consider that as well as technical information concerning proper safety practices being given, workers should be motivated to avoid unsafe procedures or careless acts.

In the Local Authority the number of members of safety committees who had received safety training varied, however overall, there seemed to be a favourable attitude towards safety training for all levels of the workforce, and training was a standing item on the agenda of some safety committees.

Having a trained membership should increase the effectiveness

of a safety committee as a fuller appreciation of problems is possible and hopefully better solutions may be found. Training should also have the effect of instilling safety consciousness in trainees and motivating them to put effort into improving the work environment.

8. The importance of commitment

Another important determinant of safety committee effectiveness identified by Beaumont et al. is that all members of the committee must be committed to the objective of improving health and safety in the organisation and must see the committee as contributing to this end. Beaumont et al. suggest that without this commitment to health and safety, the committee could be used by both trade unions and management to pursue ends other than health and safety ones. An indication of this commitment is, according to Beaumont et al. regularity of attendance at meetings. The commitment of senior management is seen as important as it sets the climate for others lower down the organisation.

Kochan et al. in the United States identify the degree of commitment of top management to improved health and safety conditions as a major variable which determines the effectiveness of union-management safety committees. They say that this commitment is needed to set the standard throughout the organisation and to activate the desired behaviour by lower level management personnel, for example first-line supervisors. Because supervisors usually work in close proximity with the workers they supervise, they can set a personal example in working safely.

A committed senior management is important to develop positive

attitudes to working safely and following procedures in the entire workforce. If senior management can be seen to have this commitment, trade unions may be encouraged to engage in problem-solving activity and to avoid having the union to rely on negotiating or other types of pressure strategies.

Management must develop a major organisational commitment to improving health and safety conditions and develop policies which implement this commitment. They must develop a written set of policies and procedures that outline the organisation's approach to safety and reporting and evaluation procedures. These policies should be readily available to all employees. The policy should include the setting of standards and the monitoring and self-regulation of these standards within the organisation.

There must also be some assignment of health and safety responsibility to a specialised management representative who is delegated sufficient decision-making authority to deal with problems that arise.

Kochan et al. (1977) suggest that a joint union-management safety committee is only one component of a broad management programme in this area. External pressures on management and trade unions may provide the stimulus for formulation of a joint safety committee, but the organisational policies of the trade unions and the employers are at least as critical in determining the ultimate effectiveness of these joint efforts. However, the safety committee is one mechanism for joint monitoring by management and employees, through their trade union representatives, of safety performance.

The safety committee is one forum where the commitment of senior management to health and safety can be expressed, both in the course of interactions around the table, and in a concrete way, in their willingness to spend resources, both in time and money, on health and safety issues.

Time is a valuable resource which can be used in the form of managers taking time off to chair safety committees personally, and in the form of allowing other employees time off to attend meetings or to go on necessary training courses or carry out inspections, etc. Examples of financial resources to be spent are the provision of protective clothing and equipment which is not just adequate or to comply with the law, but is the best for the circumstances in question, and also the money needed to make any necessary improvements which may have been highlighted by safety representatives or their constituents.

In the present study, it was hypothesised that there may be a difference between the perceptions of senior management commitment by safety representatives who are members of safety committees and those who are not members. This hypothesis was generated by the suggestion that safety representatives who are members of safety committees, especially those chaired by senior managers, might be impressed by their apparent commitment to health and safety. Those who are members of safety committees also have more first hand experience of management's willingness to spend money on maintaining a safe working environment and to making improvements. Also the time-scale and system of priorities used to attend to issues discussed in the committee may, if regarded as favourable by safety representatives, colour their perception of the degree of senior management commitment to health and safety.

Closer personal contact with senior management through safety committee membership may make enough of an impression on safety representatives to affect those representatives' opinions of the degree of commitment of senior management. That is, the representatives who are members of safety committees have more information on which to base their judgement about management's commitment.

In the survey both safety representatives who belonged to safety committees and those who were not members were asked the question in Table 9.2.

TABLE 9.2 Differences Between the Perceived Degree of Management Commitment to Health and Safety of Members/Non-Members of Safety Committees

"To what extent to you feel that senior management is committed to creating and maintaining safe working conditions in the department?"

| <u>Degree of management commitment to health and safety</u> | <u>Members of Safety Committees</u> | | <u>Non-members of Safety Committees</u> | |
|---|-------------------------------------|-----|---|-----|
| | N | (%) | N | (%) |
| Slightly committed | 14 | 35 | 4 | 17 |
| Strongly committed | 15 | 38 | 14 | 61 |
| Very strongly committed | 11 | 28 | 5 | 22 |
| | <u>N=40</u> | | <u>N=23</u> | |

A Chi-squared test showed no statistically significant difference between the two groups of safety representatives. So, on the basis of this result, there does not appear to be any significant effect on safety representatives' perception of management commitment associated with their membership of a safety committee. Having personal contact with members of senior management through safety committees does not appear to affect representatives'

perceptions of their commitment.

The subject of the perceived degree of senior management commitment to health and safety was fully discussed in the chapter on safety representatives. Results obtained from questionnaires in the Local Authority were discussed and compared with those of Kochan et al. in the USA. An examination was also made of safety representatives' and supervisors' responses to many questions and it was found that these were remarkably similar. (It is not proposed to repeat here the analysis given in Chapter Seven).

9. The ability to get things done

The IRS Health and Safety Bulletin (Nov. 1978) states that the only worthwhile measure for the success of a safety committee is whether it sets things done. There is a link between this capacity and the level of seniority of management who belong to the safety committee - if they have no authority vested in them, the resulting lack of action will result in the failure of the safety committee.

The article continues by saying that safety committees must not have a purely reactive function, only taking action after an accident or dangerous occurrence has taken place. This may lead to the situation in organisations where the safety committee is described as a 'talking shop' which makes no real contribution towards the improvement of safety performance.

The GMWU safety representatives' handbook (1978) also states that the safety committee can be a 'talking shop' where safety

representatives and management may air safety issues but nothing gets done and time is wasted.

Lewis (1977), in describing safety committees, maintains:

"Because many committees lacked real responsibility and authority, they were not as successful as was hoped; as purely consultative bodies they tended to degenerate quickly into mere talking shops."

Beaumont et al. (1982) state that 79% of the respondents in their study judged the aims of the committee in terms of what it was going to do. Some of their respondents replied that the committee should not just react to events but should try to foresee developments and initiate action or policies to deal with them.

In the present study, the Assistant Divisional Officer of NUPE, one of the main trade unions represented in the Local Authority, said that safety committees are used as an excuse for delay and are talking shops. In his opinion, safety representatives and departmental management should settle everyday matters between them, whereas what actually happens is that issues are 'kicked upstairs' to the safety committee and delay occurs. The Directors and the safety officer can say "we will have to go back to the safety committee about that."

The other side or viewpoint of this issue about potential delay came from the Chief Engineer of one department who had favourable attitudes towards safety committees, but said that the problem could be that safety representatives expect things to be done at once. He said that sometimes safety representatives do

not raise the point about work which was recommended by the safety committee not being done until the next departmental safety committee. He said that these complaints about work not being done should be followed up before the next three-monthly meeting. However it appears that in most cases this does happen - it is only occasionally that safety representatives delay until the next upper tier meeting.

The General Manager of one department stated that in his experience safety committees are good and safety representatives are reporting defects which, on the whole, are being put right quicker than they would have been had there been no safety representatives. He said that sometimes it has to be explained to safety representatives that things cannot always be put right at once.

These problems over the progressing of work to be carried out seem to indicate the need to set up an agreed system of priorities and a specific time limit associated with each item for attention.

The Depute Director of another department said that the safety committee is a good thing, encouraging co-operation between trade unions and management, but it can sometimes become a bit of a talking shop as it has no executive authority and so it can only recommend actions. To overcome this tendency, sub-groups or working parties have been set up to examine specific problems and actively to contribute solutions and initiate actions.

A dynamic committee could have a more creative role, for example the initiation of safety rules or the writing of the

safety policy. This would be a creative role rather than the 'policing' role of reviewing and monitoring compliance with a safety policy or set of rules which has been developed by management. The workforce are more likely to accept and conform to rules and practices if their representatives have played some part in their development rather than feeling that they have been imposed on them from above. If both management and trade unions have had an input into setting out safety rules, then neither side's values will be threatened and compliance will result in less cognitive dissonance than if rules were laid down only on the basis of reinforcing management's attitudes and values. This point is made in Chapter Ten in the discussion of the work of Gouldner (1954).

In the present study, with regard to the point about getting things done, respondents to both the safety representative and the supervisor questionnaires were asked to give their reaction to a statement concerning this criticism regarding delay levelled at safety committees.

Note: An important point with regard to these two samples when making any comparison between them is that in the case of the safety representatives, only those who were members of a safety committee were asked this question about delay in taking action, - 44 in all. In the case of the supervisors where very few were members of a safety committee (12 out of 88), the entire sample were asked the question. This means that the safety representatives can use personal experience on which to base their judgement, whereas the supervisors may be responding on a more theoretical basis although personal experience within their own departments with regard to the time taken to make improvements will also be

important. This personal experience of safety committees, or lack of it, may account to some extent for the difference found between safety representatives' and supervisors' perceptions. It was hypothesised that supervisors may be inclined to defend the position of management by disagreeing with the proposition that management use safety committees as a way to delay taking action. Safety representatives may be less inclined to defend management.

TABLE 9.3 Reactions to a Statement Suggesting that Management use Safety Committees as an Excuse to Delay Taking Action

"Can you indicate your reaction to the following statement:

'Safety committees provide an excuse for management to delay action on health and safety issues'."

| | <u>Safety Representatives</u> | | <u>Supervisors</u> | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|-----|--------------------|-----|
| | N | (%) | N | (%) |
| Strongly agree | 2 | 5) | 3 | 5) |
| Agree | 6 | 16) | 1 | 2) |
| Disagree | 21 | 57) | 43 | 69) |
| Strongly disagree | 8 | 22) | 15 | 24) |
| | <u>N=37</u> | | <u>N=62</u> | |

21% }
 79% }
 7% }
 93% }

A Chi-squared test showed no statistically significant difference between the two groups. It can be seen that a large majority of each group, especially in the case of supervisors (93%), disagree with the statement that safety committees give management an excuse to delay action on health and safety issues. A small nucleus of safety representatives (23%) do see safety committees as being used by management to delay taking action, however delay as a criticism

of safety committees is not strongly supported by either safety representatives or supervisors.

When the safety representatives who were members of safety committees were asked in an open-ended question for any further views on the functioning of the committees. There were fourteen replies, six of which concerned delay or lack of action, for example:

"Management say the items are in hand and think this means the work is done."

"It takes too long to carry out recommendations."

"Safety committees are vital but in the case of Government-run industry, action is pathetically slow in being implemented as there are too many departments to go through."

The latter comment describes very well the typical bureaucratic organisation of which a local authority is a good example. Two other comments concerned lack of money to carry out improvements. For example:

"The safety committee deal with some things but cost may mean they are overlooked."

"At nearly all meetings, management say that they have not got enough money."

However, some comments were favourable concerning action being taken.

For example:

"The safety committee helps to bring conditions up-to-date and get management to act on the issues concerned."

10. Following up recommendations

An important function of safety committees is that of making recommendations to management with regard to necessary changes, improvements, maintenance or repairs necessary in the work environment. Other areas may involve training and the policies and practices of the organisation with regard to health and safety.

Although the safety committee exists in an advisory capacity, it will become totally ineffective if the recommendations it makes to management are ignored with items not being progressed and recommendations never carried out. This would seem to be not only a recipe for the creation of apathy at all levels in the organisation, but also a waste of the opportunity for the co-operation and joint problem-solving envisaged by Robens.

The time taken to follow up recommendations made by the safety committee can also indicate the amount of management commitment. Where items continually appear on the agenda of meetings and have not been attended to, it would suggest that management are not as strongly motivated to get things done as they might be.

The question asked of 86 safety representatives who were members of safety committees regarding recommendations made, was discussed very briefly in the chapter on safety representatives and is considered in more detail below.

TABLE 9.4 Follow-up of Recommendations made by Safety Committees

"Do you feel that recommendations and points discussed by the safety committee are follow up?"

| | N | (%) |
|-------------------|------------------|-----|
| (a) always? | 12 | 28 |
| (b) often? | 16 | 36 |
| (c) fairly often? | 16 | 36 |
| (d) never? | - | - |
| | <hr/> N=44 <hr/> | |

Only 28% of the safety representatives felt that points were 'always' followed up with 36% stating that they are 'often followed up'. This leaves more than 1 in 3 safety representatives with the opinion that points are only followed up 'fairly often'.

Each safety committee meeting starts off by discussing matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting so that unresolved issues cannot slip the net because they are discussed until satisfactorily dealt with. This procedure of discussing previous minutes seems to work well as on average, items arose only once or twice before being resolved.

One way of cross-checking how often points are followed up is to examine the results of another question to safety representatives which asked for the last major recommendation made by the safety committee and what action was taken on it. Before looking at the first part of the question, the second part, answered by 23 safety representatives, can be examined to see if it backs up the results already described regarding frequency of follow-up. The question asked what action was taken on the last major recommendation made by

the safety committee and the results were categorised into three classes.

TABEL 9.5 Action Taken on Recommendations Made by Safety Committees

| | % |
|--------------------|----|
| (a) action taken | 86 |
| (b) action pending | 5 |
| (c) no action | 9 |

N = 23

This result indicates a very high level of follow-up on issues discussed and recommendations made at safety committees.

There are two reasons why results may indicate a higher follow-up rate in the question asking for specific recommendations than in the question asking in general terms how often recommendations are followed up. This could be described as the difference between an open-ended question as opposed to a forced-choice question and as a specific rather than a general question.

Being asked to think of an actual incidence, that is the last major recommendation made by the safety committee and how it was acted upon, is more exact than a general impression of the follow-up of items which has to fit into pre-set specific categories, that is 'always, often, fairly often, never'. This general as opposed to specific format may account for the discrepancy between answers to the two questions described above, that is, both could be true.

Another possible reason for this difference is that the more general question concerns only 'recommendations and point discussed by the safety committee' whereas the other question asked 'for the last *major* recommendation made by the safety committee'.

It may be that the major recommendations are indeed the ones which have a high follow-up rate and the more 'minor' issues are the ones which suffer from delay and therefore contribute to the lower percentages of follow-up in the more general question.

11. Type of issues discussed

Beaumont et al. (1982) note the importance of the right sort of issue being discussed at safety committee meetings if the committee is to be effective. They say that the committee should not have to deal with every single health and safety issue that arises on crucial, long-term policy issues. They found that in the vast majority of the plants in their study there was a procedure to deal with day-to-day issues except in low accident rate industries where so few issues arose that the committee could deal with them.

One safety representative in the present study backed up this point:

"Safety committees can be beneficial but should not be the place to have problems resolved as the safety representative had adequate procedures to ensure problems are resolved."

The General Manager of one department said:

"Unfortunately small items tend to be discussed rather than policies and principles of safety."

The Director of another department said that:

"The important issues are not always discussed but the committees do bring hazards to the notice of managers."

Before moving on, it is important to discuss the interpretation of the word 'major' in the question described above. It was deliberate policy not to give examples of what the researcher considered to be 'major' issues, that is, it was thought to be important not to impose the researcher's values on the respondents.

When safety representatives were asked to give an example of the last major recommendation made by the safety committee, the 24 answers were categorised and the results are shown in Table 9.6.

TABLE 9.6 Last Major Recommendation Made by Safety Committees

| <u>Types of Issues</u> | <u>No.</u> | <u>Examples</u> |
|------------------------|------------|---|
| Safety issues | 12 | Lifting of manhole covers. Fire precautions |
| Health issues | 5 | Asbestos on pipes. Dust inhalation at a quarry |
| Protective clothing | 4 | Types of industrial glass tested. Wearing of safety gear at all times |
| Training issues | 2 | Training issues to be set up, e.g. use of STOP/GO boards |
| Administration issues | 1 | Head Office is taking too long to attend to safety matters |

Table 9.6 indicates the range of recommendations considered to be 'major' and it is suggested that as the various respondents carry out different types of work under different circumstances and within different environments, some things will be more salient to them than others.

To continue on this theme of the individual classifications of issues, the safety representatives were asked if the safety committee to which they belonged discussed important issues and/or trivial points. The responses are shown in Table 9.7.

TABLE 9.7 Type of Issues Discussed by Safety Committees

| | N | (%) |
|--------------------------------------|------|-----|
| Important issues | 18 | 45 |
| Trivial issues | 2 | 5 |
| Both important and trivial issues | 20 | 50 |
| | N=40 | |

From these results it can be seen that a mere 5% of respondents considered that the safety committee discusses only trivial points, the remainder being nearly equally divided into those who feel that both important and trivial issues are discussed and those who feel that only important issues are raised.

An attempt was made to cross-check this by examining the minutes of safety committees using the classifications given below and compared with those of the researcher. The results of this can be seen later.

The safety representatives were also asked to give examples of important and trivial issues. The subsequent issues are given in Tables 9.8 and 9.9.

Before receiving replies to the questionnaires, the researcher analysed copies of the minutes of safety committees from the four departments concerned. Items which were discussed at safety committee meetings were classified under two main headings, important and trivial, and the equivalent safety representative examples obtained from the questionnaires are shown alongside them in Tables 9.8 and 9.9.

Issues appearing in the sample of safety committee minutes were categorised by the researcher using the two major categories of 'important issues' and 'trivial issues'. Within each of these categories, items were further classified into four 'important' categories: training, safety policy, safe working procedures and health hazards; and into three 'trivial' categories: protective clothing and equipment, housekeeping items and routine safety items. This classification is admittedly somewhat arbitrary, however on the whole the 'important' issues are those which may be expected to be discussed at higher tier meetings. The 'trivial' issues are everyday items which might be discussed at lower tier meetings. However, it is still useful to use these categories as a comparison with those emerging from the issues identified as important and trivial by the safety representatives, to see if there is some similarity between the interpretations of 'important' and 'trivial' made by the researcher and the safety representatives.

TABLE 9.8 Important Issues as Described by the Researcher and by the Safety Representatives

| <u>Researcher's categories</u> | <u>Safety Representatives' categories</u> |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Training | Training items |
| Safety policy | - |
| Safe working procedures | Procedural items |
| Health hazards | Health items |
| | Safety items |

TABLE 9.9 Trivial Issues as Described by the Researcher and by the Safety Representatives

| <u>Researcher's categories</u> | <u>Safety Representatives' categories</u> |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Protective clothing & equipment | Personal protection |
| Housekeeping items | Facilities |
| Routine safety items | General safety items |
| | Maintenance |

Note: This is not to imply that, for example, the researcher considers the provision and use of protective clothing as trivial or unimportant, merely that it is an item one would expect to be settled either outwith safety committees or at lower tier committees.

The main difference between the two categorisations is the lack of mention by the safety representatives of the safety policy as an issue discussed by the committee although there is mention of it in the minutes. There is also an additional safety representative category of 'maintenance'.

It can be seen that there is a general consensus of opinion between the researcher and the respondents as to what constitute important issues and trivial items. This consensus is important as it indicates that the safety representatives have interpreted the question in the way that the researcher anticipated in spite of the fact that examples were deliberately not given. By not giving examples, but by asking respondents to provide their own, some interesting and useful information can be elicited which can then be compared to the factual evidence of the committee minutes.

As the Drainage and Highways Departmental Safety Committees meet infrequently, it was decided to look at the ratio of important issues to trivial points in the lower tier safety committees in these two departments. A comparison was then made with the same type of analysis carried out on minutes of the upper tier safety committees of the Transport Department and the Water Supply Services. Observation also was used to collect data in these safety committees.

This analysis is based on a sample of safety committee minutes collected over a period of from a year to 18 months depending on the availability to the researcher of the necessary copies of minutes. 1980-81 was the time period concerned.

Note: The results gained from this analysis were used to cross-check the data obtained from the questionnaires, and are not intended to be an authoritative collection of statistical data. Some degree of subjectivity is involved in classifying items into categories, and, although it is hoped that the minutes analysed were representative of the usual format of meetings, this cannot be assured. (See the effect of observer bias and the Hawthorne Effect for example).

The researcher observed at least three safety committee meetings in each of the four departments and checked her notes made during the meetings with the minutes when they were issued. These showed the minutes to be an accurate account of the proceedings.

The original philosophy behind the two-tier system of safety committees in the Local Authority was that different types of items would be discussed on different tiers as described above.

From observation at both higher and lower tier committee meetings it was found that local issues (roughly corresponding to 'trivial' items) were discussed at lower tier meetings, and policy issues (roughly corresponding to 'important' items) at higher tier meetings.

Therefore it was hypothesised before carrying out the analysis that a difference would be found in the ratios of 'important' to 'trivial' items discussed by upper and lower tier safety committees. It was expected that a higher proportion of the items discussed would be included in the 'trivial' category in the lower tier committees of the Highways and Drainage Departments than in the higher tier committees of the Transport and Water Supply Services where most of these items should have been satisfactorily dealt with in lower level sub-regional committees, so leaving more time to deal with issues such as training and safety policies and procedures.

The minutes used for the analysis were carefully read through and the items discussed were classified by the researcher into the 'important' and 'trivial' categories set up by the researcher on

the basis described above. A ratio of important to trivial items was drawn up for each set of minutes and then an overall average found for each department as the number of sets of minutes varied slightly. This average was then reduced further to show how many trivial items were discussed to each important issue. The results can be seen in Table 9.10.

TABLE 9.10 AVERAGE RATIOS - TRIVIAL:IMPORTANT ISSUES IN HIGHER AND LOWER TIER SAFETY COMMITTEES

| <u>Department</u> | <u>Tier (Higher/Lower)</u> | <u>Ratio (Trivial:Important)</u> |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Transport | Higher | 1.8:1 |
| Water Supply Services | Higher | 1.3:1 |
| Highways | Lower | 7:1 |
| Drainage | Lower | 1.4:1 |

These results require some discussion. In the two higher tier committees the number of trivial points discussed at the Water Supply Services is overall not much greater than the number of important issues. The higher ratio in the Transport Department may result from the practice at the upper tier committee of going round the table to allow each safety representative in turn to comment on the situation in his workplace. This is not the case in the Water Supply Services, although if safety representatives wish to contribute they can, and indeed do so. The fact that each safety representative is given a turn to speak may mean that occasionally a point which should have been dealt with at a lower committee is raised. In these cases the Chairman usually makes some comment to this effect. Overall, however, it appeared to the observer that on the whole the practice of encouraging safety representatives to speak in turn was a good one, as the atmosphere

at meetings, although closely controlled by the chairman, was relaxed and safety representatives were not reluctant to make their views heard.

The Highways Department figure does seem higher than anticipated but it may be inappropriate to compare it directly with that of the other lower tier committee in the Drainage Department for reasons that are given below. Another point to bear in mind here is that over a particular period of time, certain problems may be extensively discussed at successive safety committee meetings and then, once resolved, may then be omitted for a while at least. For example, at the sub-regional safety committee meeting observed by the researcher there had been testing of various items of protective clothing, particularly gloves, and the results of these tests were discussed at length. These are the type of items which then increase the balance of the side of 'trivial' points. when protective clothing and equipment is included. However, the higher proportion of 'trivial' items discussed at this lower level safety committee does support the hypothesis stated above that more trivial items would be discussed at lower tier meetings.

The results from the Drainage Department safety committee are interesting (1.4:1) because they reflect some of the unique factors with regard to the hazards to be found in this department. Both the safety representatives who replied to the relevant question and the researcher included health hazards in the list of 'important' issues. The Drainage Department has many of these hazards such as gases in sewers, the risk of diseases such as typhoid, polio and, more rarely, leprospirosis against which certain of their employees

must receive regular inoculations and which make washing facilities even more important than usual. These health issues are often discussed at the sub-regional meetings as the upper tier safety committee meets so rarely. Thus, it can be seen that these health items, which are unique to this department, have had the effect of heavily weighting the ratio in favour of 'important' issues. In this way the lower tier committee in the Drainage Department is in effect being operated as the equivalent to a higher tier one elsewhere. This may mean that the ratio of 7:1 trivial to important issues discussed in meetings in the Highways Department is the 'typical' figure for a lower tier committee and so should not be directly compared with the 'untypical' Drainage Department. The types of issue discussed varies between departments and between committees. As Beaumont et al. (1982) state, the accident rate (or in the case of the Drainage Department the existence or the severity of the potential hazards) have been shown to have an effect on the type of issues discussed. Perhaps the Highways Department, having fewer hazards, has more time for the lower level committees to discuss items such as protective equipment. So the hypothesis about a higher proportion of trivial items being discussed at lower tier committees has been partially supported.

The type of issue discussed can indeed affect the effectiveness of the safety committee, but hard and fast rules cannot always be drawn regarding what should not be discussed. In some cases, what have been classified as trivial items should be discussed as the safety committee (especially if the upper level committees meet infrequently) is an important forum - providing an opportunity for safety representatives to air certain issues. Provided that the major important issues such as policies and procedures and training

are also being regularly discussed, and that the proportion of trivial to important issues is not too high, then a safety committee can be effective if both types of issues are dealt with.

9.7 The Management/Trade Union Relationship - The Effects of Being a Member of a Safety Committee

The safety representatives in the Local Authority study were asked if they had ever been consulted on specific issues and the results were discussed in Chapter Seven.

It was hypothesised that those safety representatives who are members of a consultative style safety committee may perceive themselves as consulted by management more often than those who do not personally come into contact with the more senior levels of management because they do not belong to safety committees. The safety representatives who answered the question were divided into two groups and the results can be seen in Table 9.11.

TABLE 9.11 Consultation by Management Reported by Safety Representatives

| "Have you even been consulted by management on: | <u>Members of a Safety Committee</u> | | <u>Not members</u> | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|
| | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> |
| (a) re-writing the safety policy? | 10 | 29 | 6 | 15 |
| (b) devising safe systems of work? | 18 | 21 | 8 | 13 |
| (c) motivating the workforce?" | 7 | 32 | 7 | 14 |
| | N= <u>39</u> | | N= <u>21</u> | |

However, when the safety representative respondents were divided into two groups in this way and Chi-squared tests carried

out to test for differences, there were found to be no statistically significant differences between the two groups. Belonging to a safety committee did not make it any more likely that these safety representatives would report that management had consulted them on the issues identified above.

Observation at safety committee meetings showed that draft safety policy documents were circulated to members for comment but it was always announced that they would be sent to *all* safety representatives - this meant that there would be no different treatment accorded to those who did or who did not belong to safety committees when management were consulting with safety representatives. Safety representatives were asked to read the material that was distributed and encouraged to make suggestions for improvements or alterations.

When later checking with safety officers or the safety adviser to whom replies were to be sent, the researcher was told that only in a few exceptional cases was any feedback given on these documents. If safety representatives were not using this opportunity to provide input into the writing of the safety policy, management may be less inclined to consult them on other issues. This may account for the relatively low percentage of safety representatives who reported being consulted by management (described in Chapter Seven) which are again illustrated in Table 9.12.

TABLE 9.12 Consultation by Management Reported by Safety Representatives (Whole Group)

| "Have you ever been consulted by management on: | <u>Yes (%)</u> | <u>No (%)</u> |
|---|----------------|---------------|
| (a) re-writing of the departmental safety policy? | 27 | 73 |
| (b) devising safe systems of work? | 43 | 57 |
| (c) how to motivate the workforce?" | 23 | 77 |
| | <u>N=60</u> | |

According to the Robens Report and the SRSC Regulations the safety committee's main function is a co-operative one with consultation emphasised rather than negotiation, which may take place elsewhere. As a result, it is hypothesised that safety representatives who belong to safety committees are more likely to see their relationship with management as consultative.

In the safety representative questionnaire, respondents were asked if they saw their relationship with management as consultative, negotiating or a mixture of both. Definitions were given (see Chapter Seven for details).

TABLE 9.13 Cross-tabulation of Relationship with Management by Safety Committee Membership

| <u>Relationship with management</u> | <u>Members of Safety Committees</u> | <u>Non-members</u> |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Consultative | 17 | 11 |
| Negotiating | 3 | 0 |
| A mixture of consultative and negotiating | 20 | 11 |
| | — | — |
| | N=40 | N=22 |
| | — | — |

No statistically significant difference was found between the two groups so it would seem that being a member of a safety committee does not give a safety representative a different perspective from one who is not a member of a committee on his relationship with management.

Another method of eliciting the views of safety representatives who are members of safety committees and of supervisors with regard to the co-operative opportunities of safety committees, was to ask for their reactions to a statement which along with the results can be seen in Table 9.14.

TABLE 9.14 Reactions of Safety Representatives and Supervisors to the Statement that:

"Safety committees provide a genuine opportunity for management and employees to co-operate over health and safety."

| | <u>Safety Representatives</u> | | <u>Supervisors</u> | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|
| | <u>N</u> | <u>(%)</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>(%)</u> |
| Strongly agree | 15 | 38 | 34 | 40 |
| Agree | 24 | 60 | 50 | 59 |
| Disagree | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Strongly disagree | - | - | - | - |
| | <u>N=40</u> | | <u>N=85</u> | |

A Chi-squared test showed there was no statistically significant difference between these two groups with regard to their reaction to the above statement. The results are remarkably similar over the two groups, showing a strong agreement that safety committees can provide a situation where there is an opportunity for co-operation and suggesting that a consultative relationship or strategy would be used. Again the point must be made that the safety representative's sample were all members of safety committees

whereas few of the supervisors were members.

In Chapter Seven it was reported that approximately half of both the safety representatives and the supervisors saw the management/trade union relationship as consultative and half saw the relationship as a mixture of consultation and negotiation. However those respondents who saw the management/trade union relationship as a mixture of consultation and negotiation would not necessarily disagree with the statement in Table 9.14 as the consultation element of the relationship suggests co-operation.

One point to be noted here is that the statement about safety committees providing a genuine opportunity for co-operation, is a general one and does not refer to the specific situation existing in their own workplaces. It has to be admitted however that the safety committee in their place of work is almost bound to be used as a reference point when the respondents are giving a reaction to a statement so their perception of the actual situation in their organisation will affect their replies.

The responses of the safety representatives to the statement about co-operation were cross-tabulated against the safety representatives' responses regarding their perception of the degree of management commitment to health and safety. The sample consisted of those safety representatives who are safety committee members. It was hypothesised that there would be an association between safety representatives expressing strong agreement with the statement in Table 9.14 and perceiving senior management as being very strongly committed to health and safety.

In this case the data were grouped so that those safety

representatives who *strongly* agreed with the statement were in one category and those who had less strong reactions were in the second category. The one individual who answered 'disagree' was omitted from the analysis. The results on which a Chi-squared test was carried out and a test for trend developed by Armitage can be seen in Table 9.15.

TABLE 9.15 Reaction to 'Safety Committees Provide a Genuine Opportunity for Management and Employees to Co-operate over Health and Safety' Related to Perceived Degree of Senior Management Commitment (Safety Representatives who are Safety Committee Members)

| <u>Degree of Senior Management Commitment to Health and Safety</u> | <u>Strong Reaction (strongly agree)</u> | <u>Less Strong Reaction (agree)</u> |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| Slightly committed | 0 | 13 |
| Strongly committed | 5 | 9 |
| Very strongly committed | 9 | 2 |
| | — | — |
| | N=14 | N=24 |
| | — | — |

$$\chi^2 = \underline{17.83} \quad df = 1 \quad p < 0.005$$

There is a highly significant linear trend which explains virtually all the variations in the proportions.

There is a strong relationship between safety representatives feeling *strongly* that safety committees can be used for co-operation and perceiving senior management as *very strongly committed* to health and safety. The inverse relationship can also be seen where those who do not have particularly strong views or feelings about the statement about safety committees who see management as *less strongly committed* or only *slightly committed* to health and safety. The safety representatives' perception of how much senior management care about health and safety and how much they are willing to do to

ensure a safe environment may be associated with their perception of the potential for co-operation between those who interact on safety committees. However, whether or not the potential for co-operation is perceived by respondents will depend on many variables and it is too simple to suggest a causal relationship between the factors isolated above.

9.8 Consultation, Negotiation and the Safety Committee

There has already been a discussion of the industrial relations background with regard to the subject area of health and safety in Chapter Six. Management/trade union relationships in health and safety were examined with particular emphasis on whether this relationship was characterised by consensus or conflict.

Fox's unitary and pluralist perspectives were described and put forward as potential frames of reference within which to interpret interactions between, for example, safety representatives and supervisors.

Lewis's models of the consensus view and the conflict view of the control of work hazards was shown in diagrammatic form and the differences described.

Critics of the consensus view put forward by the Robens Committee include Nichols and Armstrong (1973) and Grayson and Goddard (1975) and their views were discussed, in particular stressing the inevitable conflict between the many competing calls on scarce resources such as money. Improvements in safety standards is one of many areas which management must consider when

resources are allocated.

Further discussion as to the usefulness or otherwise of a distinction between consultation and negotiation can be found in the chapter on safety representatives (Chapter Seven). It may be that a distinction between consultation and negotiation is neither useful, accurate nor desirable. This problem - the difference between consultation and negotiation - can be illustrated by the three passages below.

The first was written in 1974 before the SRSC Regulations of 1977 and refers to early safety committees:

"Safety committees with trade union representatives are quite common. Their role is often merely advisory, so that they become a special form of joint consultation. Unions now want these committees to be strengthened either by transforming them into negotiating bodies, or by giving workers' safety representatives statutory authority to make inspections and to order safety measures to be implemented."

(T. Topham *The Organised Worker* Arrow 1974, p84)

The Confederation of British Industry (1970) note the tendency for consultation of a purely advisory nature to merge into negotiation. The CBI in this context, define consultation as "an exchange of information and views before action is taken by management." Negotiation is defined as involving "either joint agreement or exhaustion of procedure before action is taken."

The Bullock Committee (1977) note that:

".....it has been customary to draw a distinction between consultation on the one hand and negotiation or collective bargaining on the other, but in practice the distinction is blurred and there has been a gradual trend in recent

years towards the fusion of consultative and negotiating machinery."

(Dept. of Trade, *Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Industrial Democracy*, London, HMSO, Cmnd 6706, 1977)

A strict dichotomy between the concepts of consultation and negotiation may therefore be a false one, and we should perhaps be inclined to think of them as points on a continuum of decision-making between parties rather than as two discrete entities. There will then be a good deal of shading in the centre of the continuum where some overlap is inevitable and a mixed strategy (such as that described by Kochan et al. (1977) and in the present study) will be used. There may be a theoretical distinction between the two concepts, but in the case of practical application, for example in discussions between safety representatives and supervisors this distinction may no longer exist.

Three further sources show the difficulty of making the distinction between consultation and negotiation.

The Industrial Relations Code of Practice (1972) regarded consultation and negotiation as "closely related but distinct processes" although some, for example Daniel and McIntosh (1972), are now of the opinion that many of the distinctions are inadequate for normal operations.

The CIR 14th Report (1971) recognised that the distinction between joint consultation and negotiation was largely meaningless in principle and self-defeating in practice.

The CBI (1966) have found it impossible to differentiate between what they describe as "channels of communication". Joint

consultation includes elements of communication, consultation and negotiation.

Having discussed the difficulties in defining "consultation" and "negotiation", in this chapter it is proposed to relate these concepts to the operation of safety committees.

It is impossible to separate out health and safety in the organisation and the industrial relations climate which prevails there. The individuals interviewed by Beaumont et al. (1982) felt that an effective health and safety committee could best operate where the overall industrial relations environment is essentially a co-operative one. Most people interviewed in Beaumont's study felt that a co-operative, problem-solving health and safety committee could contribute towards improving overall relationships in the plant.

Beaumont et al. found that both management and trade union representatives felt that safety committees provided an opportunity for discussion with management which might otherwise be impossible. The contact made between the two groups and information exchanged led to an increase in the level of trust and understanding between them, which in turn led to improved interpersonal relationships which spilled over into other areas and could be used to advantage on other issues. They had reported that one fifth of the respondents felt that improved relationships was one objective of their safety committee so it appears that in many cases, this objective is attained.

One criticism of safety committees described in the GMWU Safety Representatives Handbook states that there is a danger that

safety committees may deflect safety representatives from representing their members on health and safety issues through the collective bargaining structures and, if they are purely consultative, then management may use safety committees to try to shift responsibility for health and safety matters from management alone to management and safety representatives jointly resulting in a diffusion of responsibility.

The findings of Kochan et al. (1977) in the USA with regard to the use of negotiating or problem-solving strategies used by trade unions and employees have been described in some detail in Chapter Seven.

Some of the senior managers who were interviewed in the Local Authority study expressed views describing safety committees as consultative bodies where both management and trade unions can co-operate to tackle health and safety problems. As Kochan et al. suggest, this co-operative viewpoint could be the result of the legislation which encourages active co-operation and consultation. Although it is the United States legislation they refer to, the British situation may be similar. The other determinant described above is the degree of senior management commitment to health and safety which in this study is considerable, judged by factors described earlier and which may discourage negotiating strategies, that is negotiation is made unnecessary as safety representatives do not need to put much pressure on management to get things done. As Kochan et al. note, when senior management are committed to health and safety and devise policies to back up this commitment, it is not as necessary for trade unions to act assertively to get action. Pressure strategies are not as necessary where there is a committed management, so it is important for management to buffer

safety committees from the collective bargaining process or they could become a forum for polarised viewpoints to be aired which may result in a fear on the part of management of union harassment.

Stevens (1979) points out that the HASAWA and SRSC Regulations which followed the Robens Report contain provisions for safety representatives to consult, but no provision to negotiate or fall-back mechanisms to operate where negotiation does not take place.

Clegg (1979) in discussing employee participation in health and safety states:

"General conditions, safety and health are perhaps the most obvious issues for co-operation between managers and employees in undertakings of all kinds and seem to provide much of the staple business of Joint Consultative Committees where these exist. A number of firms have separate joint safety committees to emphasise the common concern in avoiding accidents."

This statement indicates once again the predominantly unitary perspective on health and safety to be found in the Robens Report.

However the TUC and individual trade unions have redefined the role of safety representatives so that bargaining is an integral part of their activities. Stevens cites the example of British Steel which, in a national agreement, set out a clear trade union emphasis on negotiating on health and safety issues at both local and national levels. The trade union movement has supported this redefinition with training, information and advice aimed at negotiating rather than consulting with employers. Individual trade unions also provide a specialised service of information on specific risks which strengthens the safety representative role.

Stevens states that despite differences between trade unions, their policies on shop stewards as safety representatives and the place of health and safety issues in negotiating and disputes procedures emphasise the negotiation above the consultative function of safety representatives.

The GMWU Safety Representatives Handbook advises safety representatives that they do not need a safety committee, as their negotiating authority stems from being a shop steward or a safety representative tied into the shop steward bargaining structure. However safety committees are useful for long-term consultation on such areas as the study of accidents and diseases, statistical trends, safety audits, amendments to the safety policy, the contents of health and safety training and communication on health and safety matters in the workplace.

Other trade unions are more positive about safety committees although they tend to retain the viewpoint that safety committees are necessarily primarily a joint consultative exercise useful for monitoring health and safety practice and policies without affecting the negotiating position of safety representatives outside the committee. In Table 9.1, one trade union source (GMWU) did not give the promotion of co-operation between management and employees as a safety committee function although it was mentioned by four of the other sources.

Lewis (1974) suggests that safety committees should, as far as possible, be geared to the existing negotiating and consulting machinery, for example as a sub-committee of a plant or works committee and their constitutions should allow disputes to be processed through the normal grievance channels. Lewis also

states that managers should accelerate the merger of negotiation and consultation machinery because they must realise that it is more important to get the right decisions taken, accepted and implemented than to exercise their prerogative. The trade union movement should insist that safety like any other subject is a fit one for negotiation. Collective bargaining not only raises the status of safety, but may also constitute a more effective form of participation than any of the schemes formally given that name.

The TGWU Safety Representatives' Handbook states that the more important day-to-day handling of health and safety issues will best be done by safety representatives using their functions. Safety committees are best used to consider long term issues and carrying out work such as monitoring the overall health and safety statistics and finance programme that an individual safety representative would find difficult to do effectively.

Stevens points out that substantial commitment of the trade union movement to the safety representative system and their adoption of a negotiating role (not Robens-style co-operation via consultation) indicates the movement's determination to make local/plant level bargaining on health and safety issues of primary importance.

It appears that there may be scope for both consultation and negotiation on health and safety issues at workplace level through joint safety agreements. Issues to be included can be discussed and some compromise may be needed before the agreement is drawn up. Then issues discussed at the safety committee can be dealt with within a framework of procedures which have been negotiated, leaving the safety committee free to consult upon problems arising in the workplace.

Lewis states that legislation can only prescribe a minimum standard if it is to apply to most of the establishments it covers. Agreements between managements and trade unions can help to ensure that statutory requirements are adhered to and can provide facilities above the legal minimum.

Glendon (1977) in an article written before the implementation of the SRSC Regulations (1977) states that a jointly negotiable safety agreement may be useful in establishing procedures for day-to-day-action on health and safety issues. He suggests that the responsibilities and duties of all employees in respect of health and safety can be spelled out in the safety agreement, which could cover matters not dealt with specifically under the Regulations. An example might be whether a safety representative may halt dangerous work.

Glendon and Booth (1982), reviewing worker participation in occupational health and safety in Britain state that a number of trade unions advocate negotiated safety agreements as the way forward to reduce workplace hazards. They describe the types of issues to be included in such a safety agreement as: the appointment and status of safety representatives, defining their constituencies, training in health and safety for safety representatives and other employees, procedures for carrying out safety representative functions, complaints and grievance procedures, safety committee composition and sphere of operation, and promotion of health and safety in the workplace.

Stevenson (1980) gives an example of a possible joint agreement by listing some of the issues for negotiation:

1. Amount and frequency of time off for representatives.
2. Facilities for representatives to consult with members.
3. Access to documents and information.
4. Methods of reporting by representatives to management.
5. Provision of expert advice and assistance to representatives.
6. Procedures in cases of failure to agree.
7. Disciplinary and grievance procedures for health and safety matters.
8. Provision of training for representatives.
9. Arrangements for inspections, examinations and investigations.
10. Creation of safety rules.

At least three major British trade unions, TGWU, ASTMS, GMBAW, suggest to their safety representatives that the HASAWA and the SRSC Regulations and Code of Practice provide some minimum rights which could be improved on by negotiating with management a safety agreement or procedures.

Table 9.16 shows which of the items were most frequently identified by these three trade unions and also the two sources already discussed above (Glendon and Booth, and Stevenson). The table also indicates some differences between trade union and non-trade union sources.

The most frequently identified items concern the appointment of safety representatives, their role and functions, and the facilities to enable them to carry out these functions. The composition of safety committees and their frame of reference were also frequently mentioned. Some items were included by one or more trade unions but not by the non-union sources, for example provision of protective clothing and equipment and the

| | Stevenson (1980) | Glendon & Booth (1982) | TGWU | ASTMS | GMWU | No. of times mentioned |
|---|---------------------|------------------------------|------|-------|------|---------------------------|
| * S.R. appointment | | x | x | x | x | 4 |
| S.R. status | | x | | x | | 2 |
| S.R. constituencies | | x | x | | | 2 |
| * Safety training arrangements | x | x | x | | x | 4 |
| * Procedures for S.R. functions, e.g. inspections | x | x | x | x | x | 5 |
| * Time off for S.R.s | x | | x | x | x | 4 |
| * Access to S.R.s of documents & information | x | | x | x | x | 4 |
| * Complaints/grievances/disciplinary procedures | x | x | x | x | | 4 |
| * S.C. composition | | x | x | x | | 3 |
| * S.C. sphere of operation | | x | x | x | | 3 |
| Promotion of health and safety | | x | | | | 1 |
| Creation of safety rules | x | | x | | | 2 |
| Procedures in case of failure to agree | x | | | | | 1 |
| * Facilities for S.R. to consult with members | x | | x | x | | 3 |
| Methods of S.R. reporting to management | x | | x | | | 2 |
| Provision of expert advice & assistance to S.R.s | x | | | | | 1 |
| The right to stop work | | | x | | x | 2 |
| Procedures for inspectors' visits | | | x | | | 1 |
| Provision for health surveys | | | x | | | 1 |
| Provision for safety equipment & clothing | | | x | | | 1 |
| TOTALS | 10 | 9 | 16 | 9 | 6 | |

* The most frequently identified items (3 or more times)

S.R. Safety representative

S.C. Safety committee

NOTE: Not all of the above sources set out specifically to deal with the contents of safety agreements

right to stop work if circumstances indicate the necessity for this.

Safety issues cannot readily be separated from other industrial relations issues and possible areas for negotiation can be divided into two categories - substantive issues and procedural issues.

Examples of substantive issues are the introduction of new plant, processes, machinery and working methods, and issues of and provision of protective clothing and equipment. Examples of procedural issues are the company safety agreement, grievance and disputes procedures on safety issues and the role and function of safety committees.

In the present study of a Local Authority, when observing safety committee meetings, it was clear that issues that were outwith the framework of the safety committee were quickly rejected by the chairman and the person who raised the point was directed elsewhere.

In the Transport Department, two interesting examples of this occurred when the researcher/observer was present at a higher tier meeting. On one occasion a safety representative raised an item about the inadequacy of the heating in the canteen at one of the garages. He was told by the Traffic Manager that this was an issue for the Canteen Users Committee and was not relevant at the JCC on health and safety.

On another occasion, the lighting in a yard was described by a safety representative as inadequate. The Chief Engineer said

that this had been examined by management and was considered to be perfectly adequate. The Director of the department who has the authority in his role of chairman to speak at the time (without referral later being necessary) said that in his opinion the lighting needed no improvement and therefore the matter must now be referred to a negotiating committee.

Sometime after attending this safety committee meeting, I questioned the Safety Co-ordinator about the transferring of items from the Safety Committee to a negotiating committee, and he stated that to his knowledge this had not happened. Items such as the one described above concerning the canteen are referred to a lower level committee such as the Canteen Users Committee. Issues such as whether safety footwear is to be provided free are discussed at a negotiating committee. The Safety Co-ordinator stated that in this department when safety representatives and management do not agree on the settlement of an item such as the one concerning lighting in the yard, the safety representatives make use of their right to go to the Health and Safety Executive who can make a decision as to whether the situation requires action. This procedure has been used in the department, for example for disagreements over noise levels. It appears that the statement of the safety committee chairman on the use of a negotiating committee for dealing with issues which remain unresolved from the JCC on safety is at variance with the above statement of the safety co-ordinator.

This section has included a discussion on consultation and negotiation and how they relate to the part played by safety committees in the regulation of health and safety in organisation, and this is a good point at which to examine Figure 9.5. This is

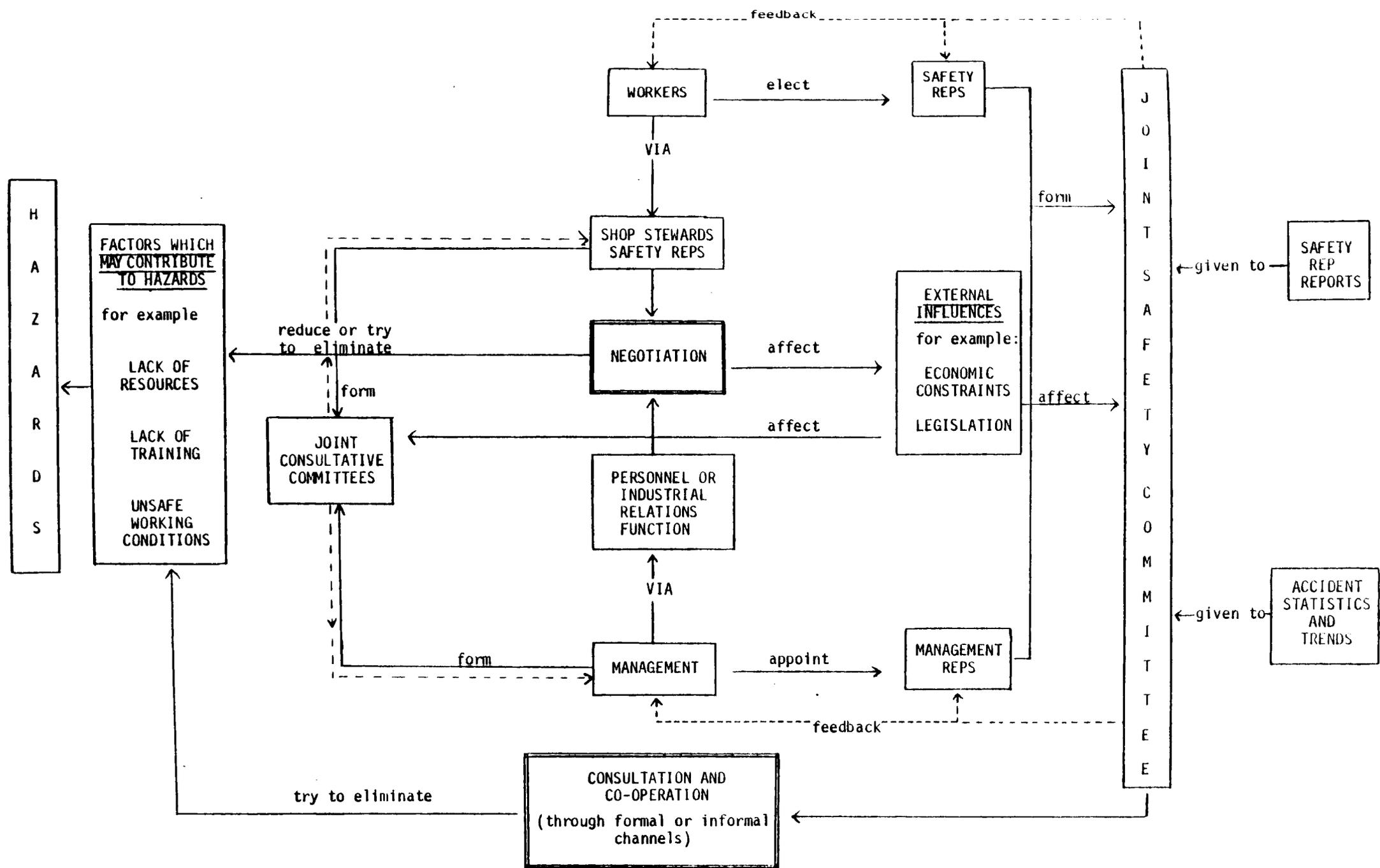


FIGURE 9.5 Adaptation of the Lewis Consensus/Conflict Model (1977) to show the use of both consultation and negotiation in accident prevention

an adaptation of the Lewis consensus/conflict models illustrated in Figures 6.1 and 6.2 and which fits more closely the situation that exists where a mixed strategy is used.

In Figure 9.5 it can be seen that the safety committee is provided with reports from safety representatives and also accident statistics and trends to provide them with information regarding safety performance in the organisation. Both workers and management through their representatives on the safety committee, are affected by the presence of certain external influences such as economic constraints, which may be due to the economic recession and legislation.

Economic constraints may set limits on what improvements can be carried out in the workplace and management is also constrained by what is expected by law. Lewis (1977) makes the point that managers are expected only to institute safer working practices "as far as is reasonably practicable" which he describes as "the lawyer's way of recognising the conflict between cash and safety." However, this flexibility may be thought of as a realistic rather than an idealistic situation in a real world where employers must have some system of priorities as they cannot be expected to satisfy simultaneously all the demands of the various groups in the organisation.

External influences set the parameters within which the two main strategies of consultation and negotiation operate in an attempt to eliminate or reduce certain factors which may contribute to hazards and possibly to incidents or accidents. These two strategies - consultation and co-operation (through safety committee and joint consultative committee interaction) and

negotiation (through collective bargaining) - provide the two main 'routes' shown on the model towards attaining the goal of hazard elimination or reduction. The effects of external influences on the safety committee and JCCs and on collective bargaining bring to the notice of *both* management and trade union representatives the existence of, for example, economic constraints whereas in Lewis's Conflict Model seen in Figure 6.2, economic constraints only influence management. There are feedback loops to workers and management and their representatives in the form of minutes from safety committees and negotiating committees.

The safety representatives and/or shop stewards concerned with these types of committee may or may not be one and the same (this point would have to be tested empirically along with other aspects of the model). There are several factors which singly or combined contribute to hazards in the workplace and some examples are given here which can all be dealt with by means of a consultative and co-operative approach both formally through committees and informally, or by negotiation through collective bargaining which may involve a safety agreement.

The first factor is lack of resources. This is particularly relevant in the present economic recession and is related in the model to the economic constraints which influence both the safety committee and the negotiating committee. Negotiation can be used to try and resolve the problem of limited resources as it is not realistic to expect the problem to be completely eliminated. It may not be possible to do everything that ought to be done and safety representatives and management may have to come to some agreement by setting priorities linked to a time scale. Cutbacks

may mean that there are fewer men to carry out necessary improvements and maintenance, and may also make it more difficult for safety representatives to get the necessary time off to attend to their duties. Standards may have to be compromised to some extent, and rather than look for improvements, safety representatives may have to settle for maintenance of present standards.

Lack of the necessary money may mean that the provision of protective clothing and equipment may have to be negotiated and the quality, and perhaps the acceptability, of clothing and equipment may decline.

Not only do safety representatives have the problem of trying to get as much as possible from management through negotiation towards maintaining a safe working environment, as trade union representatives they must also be aware that by pushing too hard for expensive safety improvements, they could, in the long run, put their constituents' jobs in jeopardy - thus the bargaining power of safety representatives is weakened.

At the time of collecting data for this project, the economic recession had not yet badly affected the local authorities and safety representatives reported little difficulty in getting what they asked for. However, as described in Chapter Eleven, the local authorities are 'catching up' with the private sector with regard to experiencing the effects of a lack of resources.

One point to keep in mind is that safety representatives must be aware that management may use lack of money as an excuse to delay taking action over health and safety issues, and this is where good, accurate, unbiased information regarding the economic

situation in the organisation is essential to safety representatives so that they can assess for themselves if there is a genuine lack of resources available for use on health and safety matters, and negotiate on that basis.

The second factor which may contribute to hazards is lack of training which could apply to all levels of the workforce. It may be necessary for safety representatives to negotiate to get time off to attend safety training courses because manpower shortages may make it difficult for safety representatives to go on a course when they wish to - a point made by a senior manager in the Transport Department. Apart from imparting knowledge and skills, good safety training should instil safety awareness and positive attitudes to health and safety, so safety representatives should negotiate not only for safety training for themselves, but also for others. For example, kinetic handling and lifting techniques may show good returns by a decrease in back injuries and may in addition make trainees more aware of doing things the safe way in other aspects of their work.

Safety representatives and management could come to a realistic agreement, for example regarding a safety training plan related to a time scale showing who has yet to attend a training course and by what date in the future they should have completed such a course. This systematic method of planning training, agreed to by both parties, should be more efficient than haphazard selection of who is to attend a safety training course and when.

As well as being open to negotiation as described above, training should be a standing item for the safety committee which can use a co-operative, problem-solving approach to ensure a

well-trained workforce which hopefully should help to reduce hazards of the type caused by untrained workers at present being discussed in the media with regard to young people on Youth Opportunities Scheme placements - now known as the Youth Training Scheme.

Unsafe working conditions which are the legal responsibility of management, but the moral responsibility of all groups of the workforce, is another example of a factor which may contribute to hazards. The working environment may be unsafe because of, among many factors, lack of money for maintenance and improvements, lack of inspection and monitoring by management and safety representatives, bad supervision and bad work methods, for example bad housekeeping.

Again a co-operative, problem-solving approach and/or negotiation could be used to try to improve working conditions, for example setting up a system of priorities over a specified time so that there is a steady improvement in safety standards.

This adaptation of Lewis's two models is a hypothetical model which is partly based upon some of the findings from the Local Authority study, for example the use of both consultation and negotiation in trying to eliminate or reduce hazards, however further work could be done in order to empirically test the model. Some suggestions as to how this could be done are given in Chapter Twelve.

9.9 Summary

The SRSC Regulations and Guidance Notes were reviewed and the system of safety committees in the Local Authority was described. The systems in the four departments were illustrated. Three of the four departments had a two-tier system, and in these communication is two-way between the safety committees on both tiers.

Safety committee functions and duties

The functions and duties of safety committees were examined from six of the available sources. These sources were selected on the basis that they are diverse and might provide differing interpretations of the SRSC Regulations (1977) which were left flexible so that they can be usefully applied to individual workplaces. The similarities and differences between the sources with regard to safety committee functions were described.

Safety committee effectiveness

Previous research, of which there is very little on safety committees, was described under the heading of safety committee effectiveness and its determinants, Beaumont et al. in the United Kingdom and Kochan et al. in the United States being the main contributors to information on safety committee functioning. Data from the present study were used to illustrate some of the points made, in particular the importance of following up recommendations, discussing the right sort of issues, and the importance of senior management commitment to health and safety.

Effects of safety committee membership

It was hypothesised that certain differences would be found between safety representatives who belong to safety committees and those who are not members. However, in each case no statistically significant differences were found. For example, interactions between safety representatives and senior management at safety committee meetings did not appear to have resulted in those safety representatives seeing senior management as more committed to health and safety than those safety representatives who did not belong to safety committees. Neither were safety representatives who are members of safety committees more likely to see their relationship with management as consultative than were non-members in spite of contact with senior management through safety committees. Also the evidence did not support the hypothesis that being a member of a safety committee would affect safety representatives' perceptions of whether they are consulted by management on certain issues even though the two groups are interacting within the framework of a consultative style safety committee.

The type of issues discussed

It was suggested that a higher proportion of 'trivial' items as opposed to 'important' items would be discussed on lower tier safety committees such as those in the Highways and Drainage Departments. The reverse would be true of the issues discussed in the Transport Department and the Water Supply Services. This was indeed found to be the case with one notable exception - that of the Drainage Department, where the lower tier committee discusses health problems unique to that department and appears to be operating as both an upper tier and a lower tier committee.

So the hypothesis concerning a higher proportion of trivial items being discussed at lower tier safety committees is partially supported.

Consultation and negotiation

The strategies used in the relationship between safety representatives and management were examined and were found, on the whole, to be either consultative or a mixture of consultation and negotiation. This finding supports the results of Kochan et al. in the United States. The introduction of a mixed strategy used by Kochan et al. and in the present study, provided more information than the study of Beaumont (1980) which used only the two categories of negotiation and consultation.

Safety agreements are one example of an area where negotiation can be used to establish a base from which consultation can be the strategy used. Table 9.16 shows that among other items suggested by various sources for inclusion in safety agreements are the composition of a safety committee and the definition of the sphere of operation within which it functions. Once the parameters within which the safety committee will operate have been agreed upon by trade unions and management, the safety committee can then operate mainly in a consultative fashion. Therefore, where safety committees are concerned there is a place for both consultation and negotiation.

An adaptation of the Lewis consensus/conflict model was illustrated in Figure 9.5 which showed that consultation, co-operation and negotiation all have a part to play along with the safety committees in changing the conditions which give rise to

hazards which in turn can cause accidents.

It was hypothesised that there may be a difference in reaction by safety representatives and supervisors, because of differing perspectives of the two groups, to a statement suggesting that, "safety committees provide a genuine opportunity for management and employees to co-operate over health and safety." This hypothesis was not supported by the data. There was however a strong relationship between safety representatives feeling that safety committees can be used for co-operation, and perceiving senior management as being committed to health and safety.

Criticisms of safety committees

Criticisms of safety committees voiced by some trade unions were examined and were found on the whole not to be justified in this Local Authority. For example, the safety committees are not just talking shops because among the members are senior managers with the necessary authority to make decisions and to get things done.

79% of safety representatives and 93% of supervisors disagreed with a statement suggesting that "safety committees provide an excuse for management to delay taking action on health and safety issues." It appears that in the Local Authority, safety committees are not used as an excuse to delay taking action and indeed may bring to the notice of management necessary improvements which might otherwise be overlooked.

Nor do the safety committees diminish the rights of safety

representatives who, in this Local Authority, still seem to have all the rights they are entitled to, and in addition, provide a direct line of communication to senior management.

Safety committees in this Local Authority

The function and duties of safety committees outlined in the sources described in Table 9.1 are followed closely in the case of the safety committees in this Local Authority. The committees work to objectives and have a frame of reference for their activities. Safety performance is considered and monitored with accident and disease statistics and trends studied, and an attempt is made to discover the causes of accidents. As a result of safety committee deliberations, recommendations are made to management on health and safety issues.

The safety committee is given the opportunity to develop safety rules and safe systems at work although in some committees the opportunity of providing an input, for example into the re-writing of the safety policy is not always taken up.

Some of the safety committees carry out safety inspections or walkabouts while others do not, and only two of the six sources in Table 9.1 mention this as a safety committee function.

Similarly only two of the sources mention the monitoring of safety training and it was found that in some of the Local Authority safety committees this was a standing item on the agenda but was usually only briefly referred to.

The safety committees in the Local Authority do, as a result

of their joint efforts to maintain a safe and healthy workplace, promote co-operation between management and employees which is a function mentioned by four out of the six sources.

To sum up, it can be seen that, in the case of this research project, the safety committees that were observed and on which the respondents to the questionnaires served, seem to provide a good example of effective committees and to follow closely the functions and duties outlined in the sources described.

The safety committee can be considered to be an effective agent for self-regulation of safety standards in this Local Authority.

CHAPTER TEN

THE GOULDNER MODEL OF REPRESENTATIVE
BUREAUCRACY AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITY
AS A BUREAUCRACY

THE GOULDNER MODEL OF REPRESENTATIVE BUREAUCRACY

AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITY AS A BUREAUCRACY

In the Nineteenth century, the movement of a large part of the population into the towns and employment there meant that tasks became too large and complicated to be carried out voluntarily by leading local personalities such as J.P.s etc. So paid officials had to be engaged and their work had to be co-ordinated. The type of organisation described by Weber as a bureaucracy emerged, this being characterised by systems of rules, a code of conduct, a hierarchy of offices each with clearly specified functions and a defined field of responsibility, and the whole being controlled from the top.

In our modern society, a bureaucracy is defined as the type of organisation designed to accomplish large scale administrative tasks by systematically co-ordinating the work of individuals.

Local Government is typical of Weber's ideal-type bureaucracy in that people do not work independently but are answerable to a superior. At the top of this pyramid in Local Government is the Council of elected representatives.

Hill (1972) describes a bureaucracy as slow because it pays such careful attention to rules and precedents before taking action, and rigid because individuals tend to evade decision-taking to avoid having responsibility for incorrect or unpopular decisions. The hierarchical structure makes it easy to pass matters up to their superiors for decisions, and it has been said to be the

negation of individual autonomy, freedom, spontaneity, creativity, dignity and independence valued in other sectors of our society. However a bureaucratic organisation may still be the most efficient way of dealing with large scale administration where stable, routine tasks predominate.

Burns and Stalker (1966) describe two ideal-type models, one of which - the mechanistic model - is similar to the bureaucratic type. It is characterised by a clear hierarchy of offices involving strict specialisation, vertical communication and usually one individual at the top of the hierarchy with overall responsibility. The organismic model, on the other hand, has no clearly defined hierarchy with roles constantly being redefined. Communication is lateral and concerns information and advice rather than the giving of orders. Like a bureaucracy, the mechanistic type is more appropriate in relatively stable market conditions, where the technology is unchanging. In contrast, the organismic type is appropriate to an unstable situation in which the organisation is continually experiencing relatively unpredictable new tasks and problems.

The Gouldner Study

The research in question was a case study carried out by Gouldner between 1948 and 1951 based in a gypsum mine, to look at the organisational structure both before and after the arrival of a new manager. He then described the resulting 'succession crisis' which led to the formation and operation of an industrial bureaucracy.

Gouldner described three distinct tendencies which were found to be associated with the process of bureaucracy: the 'mock bureaucratic' pattern characterised by the failure to enforce or obey rules; the 'representative' pattern where rules are both enforced by management and obeyed by workers, and the 'punishment-centred' bureaucracy where management attempts regular enforcement but is resisted by the workers. This study is particularly relevant to the present research project because it examines the handling of safety by management and workforce.

Gouldner used a theoretical framework based on patterns of bureaucracy within which the empirical data he collected by various methods were analysed. He carried out non-directive interviews in order to obtain a picture of the plant as a social system from the perspective of the workers. He asked what problems confronted them, what they thought of their work and about the people they met. He also used observation in walking round the plant talking to the men as they worked. Documents such as memoranda, correspondence, company reports and Government reports were studied. Gouldner described the original informal system of relationships at the gypsum mine including what he calls the indulgency pattern which was a lenient attitude towards discipline with the rules being applied in a flexible way. This indulgency pattern led to a disposition among the workers to react favourably to the plant and to trust their supervisors. It was an important source of job satisfaction, motivating the workforce, expressing a commitment to a set of beliefs as to how the plant should be run, generating loyalties to the plant and to the company, and expressing preferences for certain patterns of social relationships.

A successor to the manager of the plant arrived and as a result of this there was increased bureaucratisation in the form of the revival of formal rules and the establishment of supplementary ones. The atmosphere became impersonal and cold and there was a communication gap between the successor and the rest of the plant. Communication was mainly downwards and supervision became closer. Changes were made in the formal organisation and key personnel were moved about.

Gouldner describes various tensions which led to the proliferation of bureaucratic rules in the organisation and the functions of these rules is given in some detail. As mentioned, three types of bureaucracy are identified and illustrated with reference to the safety organisation in the plant:

1. Mock bureaucracy is where many of the bureaucratic cues were present - inspections, rules, with posters calling for their reinforcement, but in the ordinary day-to-day conduct of work these were ignored and inoperative. Mock bureaucracy was the administrative implementation of the indulgency pattern described above. The rules in the case of mock bureaucracy are neither enforced by management nor obeyed by workers, the actual position does not coincide with the official one. There is usually little conflict between management and workforce and joint violation and evasion of rules is buttressed by the informal sentiments of the participants. For example, the 'no smoking' rule was initiated by the insurance company and if it had been put into effect it would have created status differentials because office workers would still be priviledged to smoke.

2. Punishment-centred bureaucracy concerned the enforcement of rules by either management or workers rather than both, and evaded by the other group. This type entails relatively great tension and conflict which is not helped by the closeness of the supervision. Deviants are thought to be willfully disobedient and are punished rather than educated, that is the rules are enforced with the use of punishment or sanctions. For example, through their union the workers initiated the bidding system which minimised personal favouritism in the distribution of jobs. Supervisors conformed to the system largely because they feared the consequences of deviation.

3. In a representative bureaucracy, rules are both enforced by management and obeyed by workers. Joint support for the rules is buttressed by the mutual participation, initiation and education of workers and management, for example, pressure from both management and workers to develop a safety programme. So, it can be seen that solidarity between management and workers is derived from their mutual acceptance of the safety programme rather than from their joint rejection of it. Solidarity developed through the interaction that arose in the process of securing conformance with, rather than avoidance, of, the rules.

The designation 'representative bureaucracy' is related to the fact that this type of organisation is characterised by the day-to-day participation of the workers in its administration. For example, one of the effects of safety meetings described by Gouldner is to give workers some

measure of control over the initiation and administration of the rules.

Gouldner states that the safety operations were more bureaucratically organised than any other in the plant. Safety rules were more numerous and more complex than any others, some applying to the whole plant, others only to specific divisions of the factory and conformity to these rules were stressed. Paperwork was prolific in particular reports, safety manuals, first aid records, posters and statistics.

In the present chapter it is proposed to examine how many of the characteristics of the representative bureaucracy model are demonstrated in the Local Authority under study. This model is illustrated in Figure 10.1.

Figure 10.1 shows the main factors associated with Gouldner's description of representative bureaucracy. This model will be tested out in this chapter to see how closely the Local Authority in this study fits the described pattern. Figure 10.1 shows the system of safety rules associated with representative bureaucracy. These rules can be seen to be jointly initiated by management and workers and they are enforced by management and obeyed by workers. The relationship between the values of both management and workers and the rules can be seen. Usually both workers and management can legitimate the rules in terms of their own key values. These are shown separately on the diagram and also jointly expressed, for example through the safety committee. The effects of both deviance from and conformity to the safety rules are shown and these effects are similar for both

3



FIGURE 10.1 The Representative Bureaucracy Model of Health and Safety
Gouldner (1954)

superiors and subordinates. Deviance is attributed to ignorance or carelessness rather than deliberate action or status - threatening resistance.

Factors Associated with the Representative Bureaucracy Pattern

1. Who usually initiates the rules?

Gouldner found that *both* groups initiated the rules and viewed them as their own with pressure exerted by unions *and* management to initiate and develop the safety programme.

The rules were enforced by management and obeyed by workers, that is there was joint support which was reinforced by mutual participation in the initiation of safety rules and further backed up by the education of workers and management through for example, meetings, discussions and posters which contributed towards a general safety consciousness in the organisation.

In the Local Authority, trade unions and employees have a potential input via safety representatives. For example, when the departmental safety policy or procedures were being re-written or modified, draft copies were circulated to all safety representatives. But did they ever suggest points or alter others? From evidence collected from discussion with safety officers, it appears that the majority do not use this opportunity to contribute, although some particularly interested individuals do comment on these drafts.

The Manpower Committee of the Local Authority had a standing

provision made for the raising of health and safety issues, however, at the time of writing this had been discontinued as no issues were raised by full-time trade union officials who attend. This means that no input is being made at this level, perhaps because it is at departmental level that input is considered to be more useful.

If both groups view the safety rules as their own as the model suggests, then they should not be felt by the workforce to be imposed. When the safety representatives and supervisors were asked if discipline was often used for breaches of health and safety practices in the workplace, the results showed that this enforcement of the rules by one group on the other occurred only occasionally.

TABLE 10.1 The Use of Discipline Reported by Safety Representatives and Supervisors

"Are members of the workforce ever disciplined for breaches of health and safety practices in the workplace?"

| | <u>Safety Representatives (%)</u> | <u>Supervisors (%)</u> |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Often | 8 | 8 |
| Sometimes | 57 | 47 |
| Never | 35 | 45 |
| | <u>N=60</u> | <u>N=86</u> |

A common complaint from supervisors was that they do not have enough authority to enforce the rules, so it may be senior management policy to use positive reinforcement to encourage workers to do the right thing, rather than negative reinforcement or punishment

in the form of formal disciplinary action to discourage workers from doing the wrong thing.

However, when they consider it necessary, management are willing to enforce rules and workers are willing to obey the safety rules without much resistance. The rules are accepted as necessary for all those who are exposed to hazards, because there has been some employee input, they are adhered to in good faith.

With regard to the question of safety rules being imposed on the workforce, the fact that safety representatives who are trade union representatives, are willing to use their influence on the people they represent in order to ensure that they work according to laid down procedures, and that they make use of protective clothing and equipment, seems to imply that they do not feel that these rules are imposed by one 'side', that is management, upon the other, that is employees.

Another piece of evidence from the Local Authority study relevant to this matter of imposition of rules, is the results of a question to safety representatives which has been discussed previously but for convenience is shown again in Table 10.2.

TABLE 10.2 Consultation by Management of Safety Representatives

"Have you ever been consulted by management on:

| | <u>Yes (%)</u> | <u>No (%)</u> |
|--|----------------|---------------|
| Re-writing the departmental safety policy? | 27 | 73 |
| Devising safe systems of work? | 43 | 57 |
| How to motivate the workforce?" | 23 | 77 |

N=60

It can be seen that safety representatives report some degree of consultation between management and employees particularly in the case of devising safe systems of work, where nearly half of the safety representative respondents reported having been consulted. Therefore as they are employee representatives, it appears that management cannot be said to be unilaterally imposing the rules related to safe systems of work upon their employees.

However, although at first sight the above statement seems valid, there are several reasons why consulting the workforce about aspects of the rules, and imposing these rules on the workforce are not mutually exclusive. It may be that worker representatives are consulted by management on devising safe systems of work in general, but not about the actual rules which emerge. Thus, the rules themselves may not have emerged as a result of consultation.

Another very important point, raised by those who are cynical about the concepts of consultation and participation, is that perhaps consulting the workforce over certain issues is done by management as a public relations exercise and not in a serious way. It may be a gesture of appeasement, to militant trade unionists for example, or a cosmetic exercise to impress outsiders such as the HSE or other firms or organisations. Having consulted safety representatives on devising safe systems of work, how much use is made by management of the information they have obtained? If safety representatives see that their contribution is not being utilised when rules are made, then this may have the effect of hardening their attitudes towards

management, and encouraging a feeling of lack of involvement in the creative aspects of health and safety as opposed to the purely monitoring aspects of rules and procedures devised only by management and possibly having to be imposed on the workforce.

When safety representatives who are members of safety committees, are given draft copies of new regulations, this may mean that they are genuinely being consulted. However, it may be that they are being used as 'managers of discontent' to contain conflict over health and safety by encouraging the workforce to believe that their representatives have a genuine input to safety rules when, in some organisations, little use is made of safety representatives' viewpoints.

The above points illustrate the fact that although 43% of safety representatives have been consulted by management about devising safe systems of work, this does not necessarily imply that the resulting safety rules are not being imposed on the workforce they represent.

One aspect of a bureaucracy is that the rules are given by experts. In the Local Authority, safety officers, who act in an advisory capacity, do have considerable input when the safety policy is being written, rules set out or safety manuals written.

Summary

Who usually initiates the rules?

In the Local Authority there is the potential for input

when safety rules are initiated by both management and workers via their representatives. However there is in fact only a limited input from the workforce whose trade union representatives, on the whole, do not appear to use the available opportunities to contribute to the formulation of safety rules. The rules are enforced to some extent by management though the minimum of coercion or discipline is used, encouragement being the preferred method of reinforcement. Workers willingly obey the safety rules and there is no evidence to suggest that they feel that the rules are imposed on them by management. There is some evidence of safety representatives being consulted by management on some issues, but it is difficult to know how much use management make of the information given to them by the representatives.

2. Whose values legitimate the rules?

Gouldner found that usually *both* workers and management can legitimate the rules in terms of their own key values. It is suggested that if the values of either or both groups could not be upheld then there would be evidence of tension and conflict over the safety rules which, in the case of the Local Authority, is not much in evidence. This will be further discussed in the next section.

There appears to be little resistance on the part of workers to the safety programme because it is, on the whole, in conformity with their expectations and values, some of which are discussed here. So even if workers have not initiated the rules they freely acquiesce to them, that is, there is no need for imposition by

management. The values discussed below consist of some identified by Gouldner and some additions from myself.

Workers' Values

(i) Personal well-being, cleanliness and neatness

There has been in recent years a change over the whole of society as to the expectations of people regarding the quality of life. We expect to live and to work in reasonable conditions with adequate heating, lighting, washing facilities and in well maintained premises. The population has become more health conscious, interested in sport, taking exercise, the type of food they eat and there has been much more information to the general public about certain industrial diseases such as asbestosis. These increased expectations with regard to the surroundings we live in apply equally to the work environment, where their health and safety at work is an important workforce value.

Brown (1980) states that people not only expect a better material standard of living but are also concerned with the quality of their working lives and satisfaction they get from their work. She describes the way in which bad working conditions can be perceived by the workforce to represent the employer's attitudes towards their employees:

".....bad working conditions, if caused by the thoughtlessness of the employer rather than representing an unavoidable challenge to the skill and stamina of the worker, are resented not only as such but as clearly denoting the employer's negative attitude towards the employee and his value."

Eva and Oswald (1981) suggest that the social contract of the mid-1970s, drawn up between the Labour Government and the trade

unions had an effect on the quality of working life. The trade unions agreed to voluntary pay restraint in return for legislation favourable to trade unionism. One example of this legislation was the HASAWA, which contained the vital provision for the appointment of trade union safety representatives which the TUC had requested, and which would draw attention to workers' conditions of work. In fact it was the Employment Protection Act (1975) which repealed Section 2(5) of HASAWA which originally provided for worker representatives to be elected by the workplace whether they were trade union members or not. The appointment of only trade union safety representatives gave the trade unions more control over health and safety matters, particularly where collective bargaining was involved. For a fuller discussion of this issue see Chapter Eleven.

In the Local Authority, when safety representatives were asked what particular health and safety issues take up most of their time, the second most popular reply concerned conditions of work including protective clothing and equipment. For example, raising standards of equipment, heating and lighting.

(ii) Maintenance of income

An important worker value is that of avoiding any loss of earnings due to injury or ill-health. It is therefore in the interests of the workforce that accidents should not happen. When it is brought home to workers that not only would they suffer physically and psychologically as the result of an injury, but also financially, they will feel that their values with regard to maintaining their income will legitimate the safety rules. It is worth following safe procedures to avoid being incapacitated

through injury and suffering the resulting drop in income.

The effects of bonus schemes on safe working is a subject often discussed by trade unions, employees and management as well as by a few researchers such as Wrench and Lee (1982). It could be the case that by adhering to safety rules workers may be unable to earn the maximum bonus. On the other hand, one reason why workers take short cuts and cut corners is acknowledged to be that they are on some sort of payment by results system. There is therefore potential conflict here between the wish to work safely and the wish to maximise earnings. However, the bonus scheme in operation in the Local Authority is claimed by work study experts to have been carefully drawn up leaving ample time for safe procedures to be carried out.

The respondents to the two questionnaires were asked about the effects of the bonus scheme.

TABLE 10.3 Safety Representatives' and Supervisors' Perceptions of the Effects of the Bonus Scheme

"Some people feel that a bonus scheme works against safe working methods. Do you agree?"

| | <u>Safety Representatives (%)</u> | <u>Supervisors (%)</u> |
|-----|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Yes | 49 | 45 |
| No | 51 | 55 |
| | N= <u>64</u> | N= <u>88</u> |

It can be seen from the results that approximately half of both the safety representatives and the supervisors, both of whom work at the actual work site feel that the bonus scheme does conflict with safe working. These are the people who should be

able to make such a judgement rather than those who devise the schemes who are removed from the actual workplace when the schemes are put into action. So this is one area where two important worker values are potentially, for some individuals at least, in conflict.

(iii) Independence and autonomy

One other value which, it must be admitted is not particularly salient for some workers but is for others, is that of maintaining their independence and autonomy. These values can be made to legitimate the safety rules if workers felt that they, through their trade union representatives, have had an input in devising the rules and procedures and have not had these imposed on them - backed up by fierce disciplinary action for any breaches. If workers can identify with the aims of the organisation with regard to health and safety, they will conform to the standards and not feel that their independence and autonomy are in jeopardy. Training, education, information and being consulted by management can all help to develop positive attitudes to safety which would mean that, for example, workers might wear protective clothing because they are convinced of its efficacy and not feel that their independence is threatened by being forced to wear it against their will.

Gouldner states that in his study safety meetings provided some feelings of control over one aspect of their work for some employees. In the Local Authority, the researcher observed safety committees and noted that interactions between management and worker representatives were relaxed and safety representatives were given every opportunity to put forward points raised by workers.

If the workforce have confidence in their representatives and in the democratic procedures of the safety committee, the value of autonomy and control over at least the safety aspects of their work could be enhanced rather than violated.

(iv) Participation

Through safety committees, workers can maintain the value of participation in the instigation and administration of elements of the safety programme.

Management Values

(i) Maximising production

Management must keep up production and may find that this conflicts with safety rules. A bonus scheme is one way for management to ensure that they maintain a satisfactory production level and this may cause employees to take risks as described above.

A senior manager in the Transport Department stated that health and safety is only one area of concern to management. Their first priority must be to keep an efficient, well-maintained fleet of buses on the road.

Supervisors are often 'the men in the middle' and may come under conflicting pressures, that of keeping up production and that of ensuring that the workers they supervise adhere to safe practices.

In the present study, supervisors were asked about production pressure.

TABLE 10.4 Production Pressures Perceived by Supervisors

"Do you feel under pressure to keep up production?"

| | N | % |
|-----------|------|----|
| Often | 28 | 33 |
| Sometimes | 37 | 44 |
| Never | 19 | 23 |
| | — | |
| | N=84 | |
| | — | |

So, 77% of the supervisors felt under at least some pressure from the management value of keeping up production.

One problem which was encountered during the Local Authority study was highlighted when both management and safety representatives mentioned occasional problems with management not letting too many employees away on safety training courses at one time because of the effect on production of a depleted workforce. On the other hand, management should be informed that in the long run time lost to investigate accidents, to assist the injured, and due to absence from work of those injured, can affect production. Sending people to be trained can reduce these accidents thereby reducing lost time and maintaining production levels.

(ii) Maximising profit

This is linked with the above management value, but in addition is related to keeping costs to a minimum. For example, the company insurance premiums may be increased where the accident

rate is high. Management may expect to see a return on any investment they make in safety, for example purchasing new equipment and they have to be persuaded that long-term effects may increase profit because of fewer interruptions due to accidents or incidents and because of a long-term improvement in morale and therefore in industrial relations climate which may lead to increased productivity.

The profit motive may not be as pressing in a local authority as in private industry and from interviews with senior managers it appears that even in times of cut-backs in local authorities, there is a positive attitude from the top with regard to agreeing to the safety budgets requested by the various departments. So the profit value does not conflict with the safety rules.

(iii) Humanitarian values

From the days of the Human Relations School of Management, a paternalistic, humanitarian type of management exists in some organisations where management have responsibility for the welfare of their employees. This does to some extent exist in local government. The UK Government in its role as employer sets an example to industry in general, and therefore it generally provides a standard of facilities for its employees which exceeds the minimum required by law.

Beaumont (1981) asks why the Government should adopt a model or good employer role and gives two main reasons. The first is relative freedom from profit and loss, which means they can take a long-term perspective and can test new practices and arrangements. Another reason for Government being a good employer is that by

following best employment practices, Government can hope to attract and retain a high quality labour force and minimise union-management difficulties and so ensure relatively efficient provision of services.

Humanitarian values would legitimate the safety rules in an organisation because a concern for the welfare of the workforce and the provision of a high standard of facilities would surely include management ensuring a safe working environment and the setting up of safety rules and procedures.

(iv) Legal responsibility

The HASAWA has laid upon management the legal responsibility for ensuring that the work environment reaches the required standards with regard to health and safety. Senior management can be prosecuted for an unsafe act which takes place in the organisation if the HSE can show that the act occurred because of senior management's ultimate negligence.

Management's legal responsibility certainly legitimates the safety rules because as well as defending the workforce from danger and ill-health, the rules, if followed, defend management from legal repercussions.

(v) Good management/workforce relationship

Showing the workforce that management has set out a safety programme in order to protect them and to demonstrate their interest in their welfare, can lead to good management/workforce relationships and raise morale in the organisation. The safety

programme can increase solidarity and minimise conflict in an organisation.

Summary

Whose values legitimate the rules?

Four workers' values were identified and of these, two seemed to legitimate the rules: firstly, participation and secondly personal well-being cleanliness and neatness. The remaining two worker values: firstly, maintenance of income and secondly independence and autonomy, may in some cases legitimate the rules. However, in some situations these values may be subject to some conflict as described above. Therefore, the latter two worker values can be said only to legitimate the safety rules in part.

Five management values were identified, four of which can be considered to legitimate the safety rules - legal responsibility, profit maximisation (not particularly important in a Local Authority) anmanitarian values and a good management/workforce relationship. The remaining management value can be said only partially to legitimate the safety rules because there are circumstances where the value concerned - production maximisation - is in conflict with the safety rules. These circumstances are discussed above.

3. Whose Values are Violated by Enforcement of the Rules?

Gouldner suggests that under representative bureaucracy neither side's values are violated under most conditions. In this section, all the values identified above are examined to see if, in the

opinion of the researcher, they are, or are not, violated by enforcement of the rules in the Local Authority.

Workers' Values

(i) Personal well-being, cleanliness and neatness

This value is likely to be upheld rather than violated if safety rules are enforced and a large number of supervisors considered the maintenance of good housekeeping to be their most useful contribution to safe working. Examples given were:

- a) "ensuring a clean and tidy workshop"
- b) "keeping floors clean and dry and making sure the lighting is good"

Working in an environment which is clean, tidy, and well-organised may raise the status of those who work there and this worker value is not violated by enforcement of rules in the Local Authority.

(ii) Maintenance of income

Maintenance of income may be one worker value under threat if closely enforced safety rules and procedures mean that employees on payment-by-results systems are slowed down, and they cannot earn what they feel they are capable of. There is a conflict between being motivated to earn as much as possible, and being motivated to work safely and conform to safety rules, and the way in which this conflict is resolved will depend on which motive is most salient to the individual at any particular time. Being in need of money may mean that workers will cut corners and take risks in

order to maximise their earnings. For a fuller discussion on the effects of the bonus system on safety see Chapter Eight. However, if workers remain injury-free by not having accidents, they will not lose income by being off work. So in this case the enforcement of safety rules and the workforce conforming to them can uphold the worker value of maintenance of income.

(iii) Independence and autonomy

The main worker value that may be violated by enforcement of the rules, is the need for independence and autonomy that exists in some workers.

For example, these values may be violated in some individuals if they are forced to wear protective clothing when their attitudes towards the value of such protection are not favourable. They may feel that it is unmanly to wear protective clothing or unnecessary if they have done the job without it for the past twenty years. By the same argument as that voiced by those against the compulsory use of seat belts before the introduction of the recent legislation, some individuals feel that their lives are involved and therefore it is their decision as to whether to take precautions or risk an accident. The need for independence, personal freedom and for making decisions about one's life may be stronger than the need to conform and obey rules - another example of conflicting motives.

Argyris (1960) points to the dilemma concerning the relationship of individuals and the organisation within which they are employed. He proposes that there is a lack of congruency between the needs of healthy individuals, for example the need for independence and autonomy, and the demands of the formal organisation, for example

conformity to rules and regulations.

The degree of conflict experienced by an individual will vary according to variables such as personality factors. Where one individual values independence highly, another will find no discomfort in submerging his own needs and, in doing so, losing some degree of control over his working life. Those who do experience conflict may develop one or more defence mechanisms to assist them into coping with the resulting discomfort. These mechanisms may manifest themselves as adaptive reactions to the erosion of independence. Workers may exhibit apathy or resistance to rules such as safety rules. Defiance is one way an individual can try to retain some autonomy and this may be expressed by ignoring or resenting the enforcement of safety rules. On the other hand, there may be an element of compliance with rules when the supervisor is near, but as soon as he is out of sight the rules are ignored again. This indicates a lack of commitment by the workforce to the safety goals of the organisation.

(iv) Participation

The chapter on safety committees indicates that in the Local Authority the committees seem to be effective in providing a means of expressing the joint values of workers and management, and also in providing a forum for interaction between the two groups. Participation, indirectly through their representatives on safety committees, is possible for the workforce when health and safety matters are dealt with in the Local Authority. It is partly up to individuals as to how much advantage they take of this opportunity to have their views expressed. The enforcement of safety rules should not violate

the worker value of participation if workers used the available channels to provide input when rules are being discussed or drawn up.

Management Values

(i) Maximising production

If the safety rules were closely enforced by supervisors, the value of production maximisation may be violated. The reasons for this are as for those concerning the worker value of maintaining income - that if corners are not cut and work carried out speedily the amount of work produced in a given time may decrease. A comment from one safety representative states that:

"...the habits of both management and men that the quickest way is the best way are hard and slow to change."

Gouldner (1954) states that however much safety work was justified in terms of its production consequences these two management values did not always coincide. Management's stake in production was so compelling that they sometimes neglected safety when there was a divergence of interests. For example when the gypsum mine Gouldner studied was short-staffed, new workers were needed immediately and medical examinations were not carried out upon the new workers until after they had begun working in the mine.

Roy (1952) found that line foremen were willing to interfere with formal rules and regulations to ensure that shopfloor workers

reached their piecework targets. However, other groups in management did not participate in such subversive practices.

However, although safety rules may in some circumstances slow down production, a lack of accidents will mean that production can continue smoothly without stoppages to administer first aid, to investigate what occurred, to interview other employees and to get workers who witnessed the accident - and who may be suffering from shock, back to work.

(ii) Maximising profit

The management value of maximisation of profit or profit satisficing may be threatened in the short-term by the implementation of the safety programme and the enforcement of the rules. This can occur as a result of management investing money initially to bring conditions in the workplace up to standard. The improvements and equipment on which the money is spent can be regarded as a long-term investment in safety which, because of a resulting decrease in the number of accidents, may increase profitability over the years. However, if management take a short-term perspective of their expenditure on safety, there may appear to be a detrimental effect on their ability to maximise profit for that period, because of the increased cost of safety.

Ashford (1976) makes the point that it has been widely noted that the most profitable firms in industry are typically also the safest and many firms with clear safety and health problems may be economically marginal. Although there are many factors associated with these situations described above, the point to be made is that profitability and safety are not mutually

exclusive. The workplace can be made safer and healthier partly by means of education and co-operation between management and workforce neither of which requires heavy capital expenditure.

However, in the case of the Local Authority in this study there is no evidence to suggest that management take this view about investment in safety. The public sector tends to be sheltered from the obligation of maximising profit and the four safety officers when interviewed said that they had never had any problems in getting money for safety equipment, etc. Senior managers also said that they got safety budgets granted by the Council without opposition. So in this case, the value of profit maximisation is not violated in the way it might be in the private sector.

(iii) Humanitarian values

These values genuinely pursued by management should not be violated by enforcement of the safety rules in a structured safety programme.

The Government in its role as good employer has already been discussed and, from impressions gained through observations at various workplaces and from interviews, it appears that the Local Authority provides good facilities and equipment for its employees. The wish to treat employees in a humanitarian way should legitimate the enforcement of safety rules if management appreciate that it is shopfloor workers who are nearest to potential hazards, and that one of the main reasons by procedures must be followed is to protect these workers at risk from injury and suffering.

(iv) Legal responsibility

From interviews with senior managers and hearing comments made by them at safety committee meetings, the researcher strongly believes that they are very much aware of their legal responsibilities towards their employees with regard to health and safety. They are aware that they can be prosecuted by the HSE and obviously want to make sure that this does not happen. This is one management value which cannot be said to be violated by enforcement of the safety rules, indeed it may be said to be the main underlying motive behind the instigation and implementation of safety rules.

Abeytunga (1979), in a study of construction site supervisors, found that they imposed limitations and boundaries to the expectations of their safety role in certain ways. One method is to limit their safety activities to complying with legal requirements. This indicates that although these supervisors were restricting their contribution by various means, for example leaving individual workers to cope with some hazards, accepting some hazards as inevitable, and categorising some activities as outside the boundaries of supervisory duties, they were conscious of their legal responsibilities and of the need to fulfil them.

(v) Good management/workforce relations

If management were very strongly to enforce the safety rules with the frequent use of discipline, the result could be a deterioration of management/employee relations which could have lasting results. There is evidence described in Chapter Eight from the Local Authority which suggests that discipline is only used as a last resort, so enforcement may not violate the value of the

fostering of good management/workforce relations. The safety committee may have the effect of increasing solidarity and decreasing conflict by facilitating the free interchange of attitudes and opinions and allowing workforce representatives to express directly to management any points raised by the workforce.

However, there is one aspect of worker/management interaction over health and safety which could effect a deterioration in the relationship between the two groups. After inspections, or as a result of items brought to their attention by those they represent, safety representatives go to management or approach them at safety committees with items of work to be done or improvements to be made. There seem to be differing perspectives from management and safety representatives as to what should happen next with regard to the time taken for work to be carried out. This point was brought out several times in the study done in the Local Authority:

"The problem with safety representatives is that they expect things to be done at once." (Chief Engineer)

"There is a danger that the regulations can be taken too far and may become unrealistic especially where there are financial limitations priorities must be set and everthing cannot be done at once." (Senior manager)

"Sometimes it has to be explained that things cannot always be put right at once." (Senior manager)

"We have a fairly good relationship with management but some delays do occur which may cause frustration for the safety representative." (Safety representative)

"Management say the work is in hand and think that means its been attended to." (Safety representative)

So it can be seen that on the whole good workforce/management relations should not be violated by the rules, although certain differences of opinion about the speed of progressing of necessary work can emerge which can have a detrimental effect on such relationships.

If either group's values *were* being violated by enforcement of the rules, one would expect conflict to result. However, in the Local Authority there was little evidence of overt conflict. Both groups were asked if they had experienced conflict with the other (safety representatives/supervisor) over a health and safety issue. The results are seen in Table 10.5.

TABLE 10.5 Experience of conflict reported by safety representatives and supervisors

"Have you ever experienced conflict with a safety representative/supervisor over a health and safety issue?"

| | <u>Yes (%)</u> | <u>No (%)</u> | <u>N</u> |
|------------------------|----------------|---------------|----------|
| Safety representatives | 23 | 77 | 66 |
| Supervisors | 5 | 95 | 86 |

Again a majority in each group reported experiencing no conflict, which may mean that the values of neither side are being violated in the course of the enforcement of the rules, although it is an over-simplification to say that a lack of reported conflict is enough to indicate that both sides' values are upheld. The difference between the percentages of the two groups who replied that they had experienced conflict has been discussed in the chapter on safety representatives.

When discussing the apparently low level of overt conflict to be found in the Local Authority it may be interesting to put forward some possible reasons for this situation. The Government role as a good employer has been discussed and in addition to this, there is the bureaucratic nature of local government where conflict is 'institutionalised'. A system of rules and procedures, and committees is accepted as part of the operation of a local authority. Decision-making is notoriously slow because of the use of precedent, the number of tiers in the hierarchy which may make communication slow, and the situation where managers may delay making decisions before consulting their superiors. Because of their bureaucratic organisation, local authorities may be slower than private industry to adapt, and employees may have to get used to this - frustrating though it may be. It may be a trade-off situation between this frustration and the security of employment which until now has been afforded to workers in the public sector unlike many of those in the private sector. Trade union membership is encouraged in local government and joint consultation procedures were prevalent earlier than in private industry.

For a fuller discussion of some of these differences between the public and private sectors, see Chapter Seven.

The fact that this Local Authority had not opposed the granting of safety budgets and had been supportive towards safety representatives attending courses probably reduced the need for open conflict. Both negotiating and consultative procedures for health and safety existed and management's reluctance to use disciplinary procedures for breaches of health and safety rules meant that the trade unions did not often find it necessary to be in open conflict with management over health and safety issues.

Summary

Whose values are violated by enforcement of the rules?

Of the four workers' values identified, personal well-being, cleanliness and neatness and also participation are not violated by enforcement of the rules.

Independence and autonomy may be violated in some individuals if, for example, they are forced to wear protective clothing when they are not convinced of its usefulness. The strict enforcement of safety rules may violate the worker value of maintenance of income for those on payment by results systems. However, if workers are not involved in accidents at work because safety rules are enforced, their income is more secure than if they are laid off for some time to recover from injuries sustained in accidents.

Five management values were examined, and it is suggested that humanitarian values and legal responsibilities rather than being violated by enforcement of the rules, are upheld and justified by enforcement of safety rules. Profit maximising or satisficing is not in danger in the public sector if safety rules are enforced as the profit motive is not relevant in a Local Authority. However, the profit motive has been discussed in a theoretical context in this chapter because of its importance in the private sector. The management value of maximising production may be violated by strict enforcement of safety rules where payment by results systems are used and strict adherence to safety rules may slow down workers. However, fewer accidents due to following safe work procedures may also ensure consistent output and so help to ensure maximum production. Good management/workforce relations could be violated

by enforcement of safety rules if they were backed up by frequent disciplinary procedures. However, discipline is rarely used, education being preferred as a means to change behaviour. There is little evidence in the Local Authority of the overt conflict one might expect to find if either sides' values were being violated.

4. What are the standard explanations of deviations from the rules?

Gouldner said that in a Representative Bureaucracy, deviance is attributed to ignorance or well-intentioned carelessness. This is described as the 'utilitarian' conception of deviance.

Accidents are not caused by deliberate actions, but are unintentional. Breaking of the safety rules may be because of a concern for production (see the effect of the bonus system) or may be due to ignorance, for example back injuries due to the lack of information regarding kinetic lifting techniques.

Gouldner found that in his study, safety work was unique because management believed that adherence to the safety programme could be secured by way of 'education' rather than via discipline and punishment. There was an emphasis on reports; accident records were viewed as educational or fact finding.

The Local Authority run safety training courses for supervisors and for senior managers and training the workforce is emphasised as being an important and continuous part of supervisors' responsibilities. The safety officers carry out training in their

department, for example specialist courses such as sewer-walking in the Drainage Department and courses on kinetic lifting and handling in the Water Supply Services.

Bad supervision is another possible reason for deviations from the rules and in the Local Authority safety training for supervisors is seen as important with compulsory training for all supervisors at a course run by the Local Authority itself. Supervisors are in turn expected to train the workers they supervise in correct procedures and in the use of protective clothing and equipment.

The Robens Report emphasised the effect of apathy, lack of interest and lack of motivation upon safe working. Both safety representatives and supervisors in the Local Authority were asked if they got the support of the workforce. The 22% of safety representatives and 33% of supervisors who answered that they did not get the support of the workforce were asked to give reasons why they felt they did not get support. The main reasons given were lack of interest and not caring about safety so there is apparently some apathy in evidence among the workforce in the Local Authority.

However, questions asked in the present study about the use of discipline which were discussed before, do show that management are reluctant to use this method to ensure conformity to the safety rules. The complaints of supervisors about lack of authority to enforce the rules reinforce this lack of the use of punishment by management found by Gouldner.

Summary

What are the standard explanations of deviation from the rules?

In the Local Authority, emphasis is placed on safety training at all levels and management are reluctant to use discipline to ensure conformity to the safety rules and, according to several supervisors, have not invested them with sufficient authority to enforce the rules.

The use of ignorance or lack of sufficient training to explain deviation from the rules is similar to Gouldner's description of Representative Bureaucracy.

5. What effects do the rules have on the status of the participants?

Gouldner says that deviation from the rules impairs the status of superiors and subordinates, while conformance ordinarily permits both groups a measure of status improvement. He cites the example of the safety programme increasing the prestige of workers' jobs by improving the cleanliness of the plant, that is good housekeeping, as well as enabling workers to initiate action through safety meetings. The programme also facilitated management's ability to realise its production obligations and legitimately provided it with extended control over the workforce.

In the Local Authority, conformance to the safety rules can improve status in various ways:

1. Safety meetings can enhance workers' status by allowing them to initiate action by providing an input to the safety

policy and procedures of the organisation.

2. A safe, clean work environment through good housekeeping can increase the prestige of workers' jobs by them being employed by an efficient, well-run organisation with a good accident record and a good reputation.
3. Safety representatives may feel increased status/power from their role as monitors of safety standards.
4. Belonging to a work group which observes the safety rules and is free from accidents may increase the status of workers.
5. An authoritarian management may feel that their status is increased by the conformance of workers to the safety rules, that is, it gives them another legitimate way of controlling the workforce. Supervisors particularly may experience this effect.
6. A paternalistic management may see their 'caring' role as enhanced by the conformance of the workforce to safety rules.
7. Increased productivity due to increased morale resulting from fewer accidents can enhance the status of management on the one hand because they can fulfil their production obligations, and of workers on the other, who can increase their earnings.

Deviance from the safety rules can impair the status of management because their safety programme is seen to be failing which could be due to apathy, resistance from the workforce or lack of education. It can also impair the status of the workforce

through the fact that they work in an organisation with a bad reputation for accidents and where morale is low and workers feel that management do not care about them.

One exception which should be noted here, is that in some cases where workers have negative attitudes to health and safety, their status may be reduced if they have to conform to safety rules, for example wearing protective clothing, because of a loss of individual freedom.

Summary

What effects do the rules have on the status of the participants?

From data collected from employees at all levels of the Local Authority, it appears that all groups wish to see conformance to the safety rules and that this can only be beneficial to all parties. Of the seven ways of improving status described above, most are characteristic of representative bureaucracy with the exception of number five, which concerns authoritarian management and its increased control over the workforce. This is more indicative of a Punishment-centred Bureaucracy.

SUMMARY

Some of the areas which have been discussed in relation to Gouldner's study and how it relates to the present study are:

1. Workers' attitudes towards safety and the degree of support they give to safety representatives and supervisors.

According to Gouldner, they are concerned about injury, death and loss of income. In this study, on the whole there is considerable worker support, for both supervisors and safety representatives over health and safety matters, however, there is evidence of some apathy as described by Robens.

2. The use of education as opposed to punishment by management. There was generally found to be a lack of the use of disciplinary procedures for health and safety, senior management stating that they see this only as a last resort.
3. The role of the supervisors was discussed and their complaint that they lack the authority to enforce the rules was discussed.
4. The interdependence of safety and production and the effects of the bonus scheme on safe working were discussed, and the views on this subject of safety representatives, supervisors and senior management were compared.
5. The reported effects on productivity of a safe working environment were described.
6. The opinion of senior management with regard to health and safety was ascertained from interviews and seemed positive as shown in various ways already described when discussing the degree of senior management commitment to health and safety.
7. Safety meetings can be used to provide an opportunity for input via workers' representatives to the safety programme and also to help provide a forum for discussion of safety issues between trade unions and management. Safety meetings

can act as a safety valve by facilitating the expression by representatives of the workforce of issues which, if not openly discussed with management, may in the long-term have a detrimental effect on industrial relations in the organisation.

Having looked at some of the characteristics seen as central to representative bureaucracy by Gouldner, an attempt was made to test out this model with regard to the Local Authority in the present study. It was found that with a few exceptions the Gouldner model is a close fit. A diagram can now be drawn to illustrate this Imperfect Representative Bureaucracy Model to show in which areas the original model and the imperfect model differ.

It can be seen that the main differences are:

1. There is only a limited input by the workforce when safety rules are being initiated.
2. The rules are to some extent enforced by management. However discipline is not much used to back up this enforcement. Complaints about a lack of authority to enforce the rules were reported from supervisors. There is therefore a minimum of enforcement of the rules.
3. Some management values and some worker values *may* be violated by enforcement of the safety rules. These include the management values of maximising production and the development of good management/workforce relations. The workforce values which may be violated are maintenance of income and independence and autonomy.

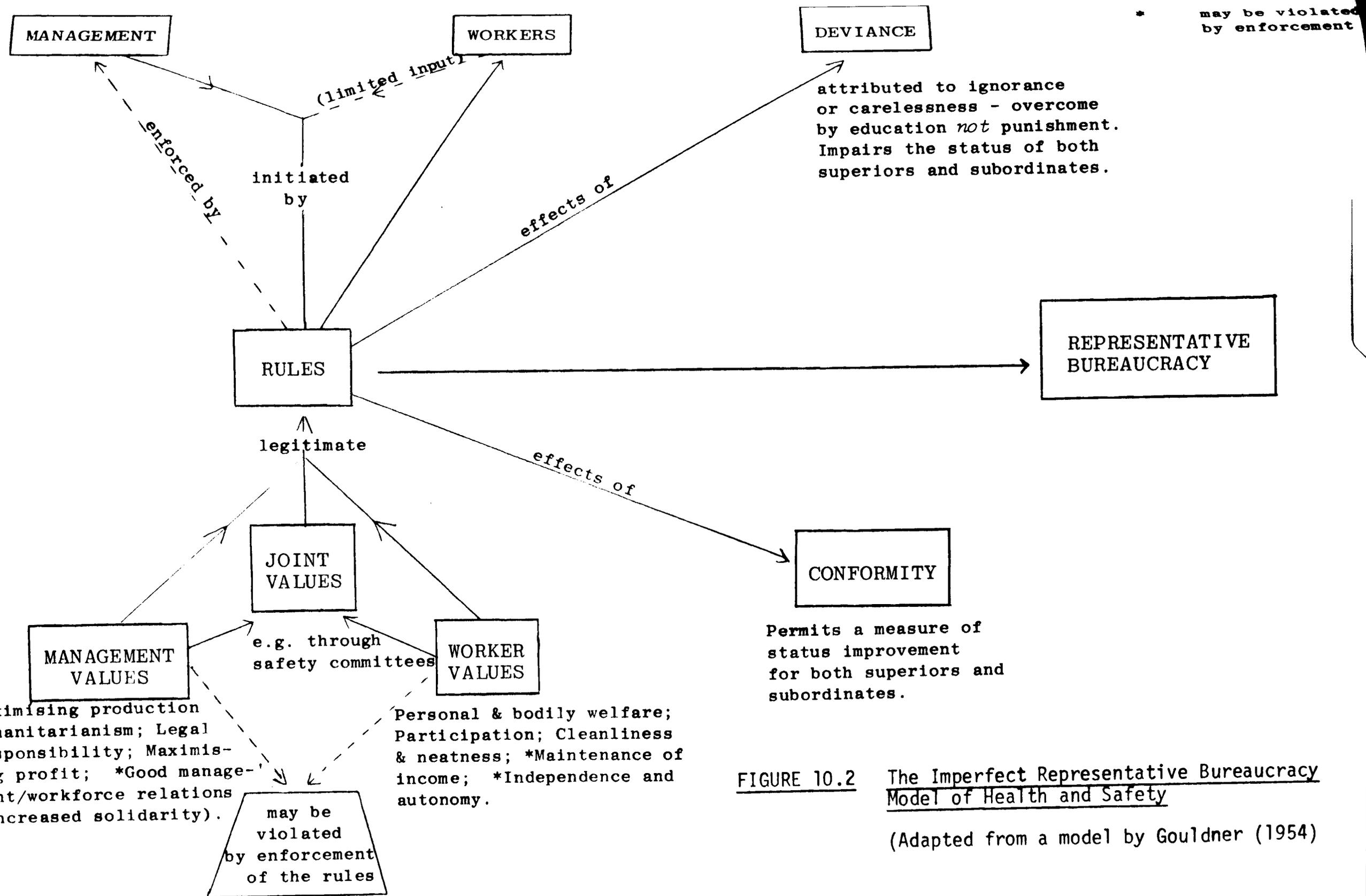


FIGURE 10.2 The Imperfect Representative Bureaucracy Model of Health and Safety

(Adapted from a model by Gouldner (1954))

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SELF-REGULATION

11.1 Introduction

In this chapter self-regulation refers to self-regulation of health and safety at work. There are other examples of self-regulation in industry and, where relevant, these will be specifically mentioned.

In Chapter Three, self-regulation was defined and described in terms of the Report of the Robens Committee (1972) and the present chapter starts by examining the background to this Report.

Employment legislation which exemplifies self-regulation in industry will be discussed in relation to the move from voluntarism which has occurred over the last ten to fifteen years. The increase in industrial democracy and worker participation as a means of or as one aspect of self-regulation in recent years is examined and applications of worker participation in health and safety at work are described. Finally, an assessment will be made of the effects of the present economic recession on the effectiveness of self-regulation and tentative predictions made as to the future of self-regulation.

11.2 The background to and the development of self-regulation

The Committee on Safety and Health at Work which was chaired by Lord Robens was appointed in May 1970 by Barbara Castle, then Secretary of State for Employment and Productivity in the Labour Government, as a Committee of Inquiry with the following terms of reference:

'To review the provision made for the safety and health of persons in the course of their employment (other than transport workers while directly engaged on transport operations and who are covered by other provisions) and to consider whether any changes are needed in:

- 1. the scope or nature of the major relevant enactments, or,*
- 2. the nature and extent of voluntary action concerned with these matters, and*

to consider whether any further steps are required to safeguard members of the public from hazards, other than general environmental pollution, arising in connection with activities in industrial and commercial premises and construction sites, and to make recommendations.'

The Robens Report was submitted in June 1972 to Maurice MacMillan, the Secretary of State for Employment in the Conservative Government.

In the early stages of the Inquiry a memorandum which posed a number of questions was issued by the Committee reviewing the field of inquiry. Some of these questions came under the heading of 'voluntary effort and self-help' which is particularly relevant to this research. Examples of some of the questions then asked are: 'What contributions to the prevention of accidents and ill-health at work are or can be made by non-statutory bodies, professional organisations, insurance companies, trade unions and employers?' 'How can such contributions be made more effective?' 'Is the form of consultation on the establishment of standards satisfactory?' 'What scope is there for collective arrangements and agreements between employers and workers?' 'How far could this replace legislation?'

It is suggested that although these questions are a useful guide for those giving evidence, they may affect the emphasis of

the statements given.

Copies of the memorandum were sent to the CBI, the TUC, government departments and to a wide range of other organisations along with a formal invitation to submit evidence. A general invitation was also issued through the press. Written submissions were received from 183 organisations and individuals and 38 parties also gave oral evidence. Individual and group visits were made in Britain and abroad and informal discussions carried out with various officials including some from the inspectorates concerned with safety and health at work. The Committee also commissioned a number of background papers to enable them to form some view of research approaches to the subject of health and safety at work. One of the headings provided as a guidance to those giving evidence to the Robens Committee was 'voluntary effort and self-help' and one of the questions posed was how far this could replace legislation. Some of the submissions to Robens providing information on this topic are discussed below with a view to examining how similar or different are their reactions to the value of self-help in health and safety. Most of those submitting evidence stated that legislation cannot be replaced by voluntary agreements but that a statutory framework can incorporate collective agreements between trade unions and employers. This would 'secure the provision of good facilities and working conditions above the minima prescribed' (Department of Trade and Industry, Evidence to the Robens Committee 1972).

Several submissions, such as those of the Association of Municipal Corporations and the Association of Public Health Inspectors suggested that trade unions should actively participate by means of safety representatives or joint safety committees so

that 'trade unions could encourage employees to adhere to safety procedures without the need to resort to financial incentives.'

The British Chemical Industry Safety Council of the Chemical Industries Association considered that workers should have the opportunity to have their say on safety matters possibly through a formal joint safety committee with representatives from management and each section/plant of a works, and safety as a regular item on the agenda of existing JCCs. They made the point that these safety committees should be given a meaningful programme of work to undertake as what was needed was more effective safety committees not merely an increase in their number. This point was also brought out in the evidence from RoSPA, who considered that safety committees as voluntary bodies using joint consultation and participation should be encouraged and supported. They were not in favour of legislation to make joint safety committees compulsory as this would increase the number but would not necessarily guarantee their quality or effectiveness.

The Forestry Commission saw scope for collective agreements between trade unions and employers through safety committees especially in the field of the provision and use of protective clothing and the adoption of safe and efficient working methods. Employers and trade unions would have a collective responsibility for ensuring that agreements were followed by the employees concerned.

The Department of Employment saw the development of collective agreements on standards of health and safety at work as limited but most useful in relation to joint consultation and self-inspection at plant level. However, agreements must be underpinned

with a statutory framework of specific health and safety precautions: 'The main incentive to good performance must be based on systematic self-inspection and the enforcement of the law'.

The CBI stated that legislation can only provide the base upon which voluntary activities must be built and that in the sphere of positive co-operation between management and trade unions the initiative must come from management.

According to the British Safety Council, a background of legislation is necessary, but the greatest contribution comes from voluntary effort or self-help as seen in the National Coal Board and other nationalised industries. They state that 'the initiation and operation of safety procedures must be jointly with the trade unions who have as great an interest in their members' safety and welfare as an employer has in his employees.'

In direct contrast to this is the evidence from the Institute of Professional Civil Servants who stated that in the past too much reliance had been placed on self-help which can never be wholly effective. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food expressed the view that it was difficult to see how safety could be maintained without the ultimate sanction of legislation.

On the whole, these various sources agreed upon the necessity for a statutory framework within which there was considerable scope for voluntary effort and self-help to improve upon the minimum standards - mostly through safety committees and safety agreements. It can be seen that a mainly positive attitude towards the potential value of self-help from a wide range of parties laid the foundations for the recommendations

of the Robens Report for a more co-operative approach and an increase in self-regulation instead of enforcement of health and safety standards from outside agencies. At this point it is useful to look at what is meant by self-regulation of health and safety at work.

In general terms, each individual, group, organisation or industry is required to measure discrepancies in its performance against some set criteria and to feed back the resulting assessment to its policy and decision-making function in order to modify the way the system operates in the future - that is, to monitor its effectiveness.

The HSE (1980) state that self-regulation is not the self-enforcement of standards imposed from outside the organisation (the situation existing in the United States) but involves 'the purposeful creation and maintenance of standards of health and safety and the according of priorities commensurate with the risks generated by the activities of the organisation'. The discretionary element in self-regulation must be exercised within a framework of legislation, and health and safety objectives must be set as high as is reasonably practicable and should be seen by management as having equal importance with the other primary objectives of the organisation.

The Robens Report expressed the view that the primary responsibility for doing something about the existing levels of occupational accidents and diseases lay with those who create the risks and those who work with them. Because individuals who work in each area of an organisation have a unique knowledge of the processes carried out there, implicit in the Robens viewpoint

is a need for consultation and co-operation with employees at all levels in order to establish safety arrangements and safe systems of work.

This consultative approach was made explicit in the Robens Report:

"There is no legitimate scope for 'bargaining' on safety and health issues, but much scope for constructive discussion, joint inspection, and participation in working out solutions." (p21)

According to Barrett (1977) even the TUC were initially content with the advocated consultative relationship as were the CBI and the Department of Employment.

The underlying philosophy of the Robens Committee is the unitary perspective (Fox 1974). This assumes that there will be no dissention as to how to achieve a safer and healthier workplace because both management and workforce have much to gain and nothing to lose. The unitary perspective on health and safety has been criticised by, among others, Ashford (1976) and Lewis (1977) as being too simple, naive, and idealistic rather than realistic. These criticisms were discussed in Chapter Six.

With regard to case law and accident prevention, the Committee's study of the evidence indicated that the interests of safety are not always served by the results of the application, interpretation and development of legal rules through the process of judicial precedent. Where fault has to be proved by the claimant in a civil case, it has to be considered if liability is absolute or not absolute. The provisions of the statute may

qualify the duties in question by the use of such phrases as 'as far as is reasonably practicable'. Even where the duty is absolute, concepts such as foreseeability may be used to soften the impact as in the fencing provisions of Section 14(1) of the Factories Act 1961.

The Committee recommended that new legislation should be more enabling in character than the existing Acts so as to provide a more flexible instrument for dealing with the problems of rapid technological change. The main findings of the Robens Report which laid the foundations for the subsequent legislation on health and safety were described in Chapter Two, but the main points made in relation to self-regulation are reviewed below.

The Report stated that the traditional systems of enforcement had placed too much emphasis on state regulation and too little on personal responsibility and voluntary, self-generating effort. Employees must be able to participate in the working and monitoring of arrangements for safety and health in their workplaces because safety should not be a management prerogative where systems were set up and monitored without reference to the workforce.

"...if the new inspection approaches...are to work, increasing reliance will have to be placed on the contribution that workpeople themselves can make towards safety monitoring." (p19)

Worker involvement would mean communication between management and workers and a co-operative, consultative approach to solving problems. This would be put into operation through constructive discussion, inspection and participation. The resulting legislation (HASAWA) does in most aspects reflect the recommendations of the Robens Report, however, the SRSC Regulations which came into

operation four years later acknowledge a pluralistic framework in existence in this country and the possible use of a bargaining approach to health and safety issues.

11.3 Employment legislation and the move from voluntarism

It is important now to describe the underlying concept of voluntarism in industrial relations which was prevalent until the 1960s.

Jackson (1977) makes the point that if a 'voluntary' system of industrial relations means that the State plays no part at all in industrial relations, then the British system has never been truly 'voluntary'. The State has played a restricted role and has tried to keep industrial relations and trade unions away from the courts. This can not be described as a situation where there is no State intervention at all.

Voluntarism is described by White (1978) as a form of 'industrial self-government' where the State's role is limited to underpinning the collective agencies and to buttressing freedom in industry. According to White, under voluntarism employers are free to enter into collective bargaining and to recognise or not to recognise trade unions as legitimate representors of employees. Employees are free to form trade unions and are free to join them or not. They are also free to enter into collective bargaining arrangements.

The results of collective bargaining in the form of negotiated terms and conditions must be adhered to by employers

on moral grounds and they must accord any agreed rights to employees who in turn must be morally bound by the conditions laid down.

However, collective bargaining was not traditionally based upon legislation; collective agreements were not legally binding, and there was no system of compulsory arbitration. One exception existed when for two to three years as a result of the Industrial Relations Act (1971) the parties to an agreement had to state that it was not legally binding if that was their wish.

Voluntarism has been commented upon in relation to industrial relations systems in other countries:

"There is perhaps no major country in the world in which the law has played a less significant role in the shaping of industrial relations than in Britain and in which today the law and the legal profession has less to do with labour relations."
(Kahn Freund, 1953)

"When British industrial relations are compared with those of the other democracies they stand out because they are so little regulated by law."
(Phelps Brown, 1959)

According to Farnham and Pimlott (1979) there are certain implications of the voluntary principle in industrial relations:

- 1) a preference for free collective bargaining as a method of fixing pay and working conditions;
- 2) the belief that a non-legal system of industrial relations should allow only those matters beyond the competence of trade unions to be determined by law;
- 3) the desire for the complete autonomy of the bargaining partners in industry.

These objectives appear to be at variance with the proliferation of industrial relations legislation in recent years and the succession of incomes policies restricting collective bargaining since 1964. This trend is described by Lewis (1976):

"It would seem that the one indubitably fundamental and irreversible trend is the ever-increasing extent of the legal resolution of the British system of industrial relations."

To return to the point that there had been some state intervention before the 1960s, Government intervention was mainly in the field of wage regulation, for example through the wages councils and in legislation such as the Terms and Conditions of Employment Act (1959).

Kahn-Freund (1968) draws a distinction between legislation designed to support the collective bargaining process - auxiliary legislation - and legislation designed directly to regulate terms and conditions of service. Therefore not all legislation restricts collective bargaining. This point is also made by Wedderburn (1971) who states that a statutory floor of rights and legislation supplementary to industrial relations on for example, safety and training, do not 'conflict' with State non-intervention in collective bargaining. They supplement and support the voluntary system.

State intervention has often been with the support of both trade unions and employers and has served to improve working conditions. This point is also made by Farnham and Pimlott (1979) who suggest that the voluntarist tradition of collective laissez-faire implies that legislation favouring the trade unions is

acceptable to them, while that which is unfavourable to their interests is rejected. This rejection by trade unions of legal intervention has been applied inconsistently, for example they may oppose unwanted legislation on collective bargaining and on the legal status of trade unions, while welcoming law useful to union purposes. Some examples are the improvement of workplace safety, equal pay for women and a state redundancy payments scheme.

Lewis (1974) comments upon the apparent sudden transformation of the attitudes of the trade unions regarding the extension of statutory provision which occurred during the evolution of the Social Contract. Even as late as the 1960s the trade unions were not enthusiastic about such an extension. Lewis suggests that perhaps the trade union movement underestimated the degree of legal intervention in the new laws, and has accidentally jeopardised the abstentionist tradition in a sudden eagerness to win statutory victories.

The 1960s were described by Lewis (1976) as a 'watershed decade' in the role of the State in industrial relations in Britain. This resulted in a new series of statutory protections for the individual worker and witnessed a renewed attack on the right to strike. Two examples of State intervention through legislation concern the termination of employment (Contract of Employment Act 1963) and industrial training through the Industrial Training Act (1964).

Another example of increased State intervention mentioned above relates to strikes and disputes. The Donovan Report (1968) suggested that there were too many unofficial strikes and this led to Government intervention in bargaining and disputes on the assump-

tion that a reduction in the extent of strike action would lead to improved economic performance.

Many politicians justified greater State intervention in industrial relations in the late 1960s and early 1970s on the basis that it would lead to economic benefits, for example intervention through a series of incomes policies to try to reduce the rate of inflation. However, according to Jackson (1977), there was also a political appeal which was based on evidence (from opinion polls for example) to show that trade unions were "too powerful" and "were a threat to individual freedom". Therefore, moves to curb trade union power promised to pay electoral dividends, especially if they could be given some kind of explicit economic justification. It was argued that this imbalance of power had resulted from the State having refrained from intervention in industrial relations for so long and that the only way to redress the balance was the introduction of a new interventionist framework of law.

The above is an interesting point illustrating an underlying concern regarding the balance of power reflected in some of the employment legislation of the time. This point will be dealt with more fully later.

The Industrial Relations Act (1971) introduced by the Conservative Government was drafted on the assumption that work-groups and trade unions had too much power. Its main emphasis was upon restructuring trade union activities and making both paid and lay trade union officials responsible in law for the actions of union members.

In 1974 a Labour Government was returned to power which had already drawn up a 'Social Contract' with the TUC whereby workers would moderate their claims for higher money wages if their 'social wage' was improved. The very high level of inflation was cited as one of the underlying issues contributing to this alleged need for moderation. However, it is important to note that high wage claims are only one suggested 'cause' of inflation.

Legislation in 1974 and 1975 was based on the converse assumption to that of 1971, that is that trade unions did not have enough power.

Current emphasis is on the role of the law in extending the scope of joint decision-making in industry and in improving the status and rights of the individual employee.

The balance of the legal framework between 1974 and 1976 when he is writing is described by Anderman (1976):

"....the new legal rights are given to employees and trade unions whilst the legal restrictions and liabilities are applied to employees and employing organisations."

One concession to the trade unions was the repeal of the Industrial Relations Act (1971) which was replaced by the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act (1974) (TULRA) which basically reaffirmed the tradition of legal abstentionism in the area of strike law and collective bargaining. The Industrial Relations Act (1971) had stated that, as in the USA structure, collective agreements were presumed to be legally binding unless otherwise stated - a situation which was resisted by the British trade union movement. TULRA changed the position introduced by the Industrial

Relations Act by stating that such agreements were not considered to be legally binding unless specific provisions stated that this was the case. This legislation reverted to the encouragement of the development of traditionally British voluntary collective bargaining. TULRA also reversed the closed-shop provisions of the Industrial Relations Act in making the closed-shop legal again.

In 1972, the Robens Committee proposed that employers should have a general duty to consult in the way that existed in legislation prescribing the functions and duties of the nationalised corporations, for example the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act (1946), the Electricity Act (1947), the Gas Act (1948) and the Iron and Steel Acts (1949 and 1967). The resulting legislation (HASAWA, 1974) did put this provision into operation.

Barrett (1977) states that the HASAWA (1974) departed radically from earlier legislation in the extent to which it made provision for employee involvement. For example, the general duty of the employer included the dissemination of such information as was necessary to ensure the health and safety at work of all his employees. The Inspectorate had to provide factual information to employees' representatives about the premises where they worked and any action to be taken concerning the workplace.

The most important departure of the new Act from the philosophy of previous occupational health and safety laws was, according to Barrett, the inclusion of the provisions concerning the appointment of safety representatives and the establishment of safety committees to keep under review the measures taken to

ensure the health and safety at work of employees.

The Employment Protection Act (EPA) (1975) introduced some important measures affecting the relationships of employers and trade unions. Firstly, a procedure was designed to help trade unions obtain recognition from employers who were reluctant to enter into collective bargaining arrangements. Secondly, employers were obliged to disclose information to representatives of recognised trade unions if this was requested, for example information might be needed to facilitate collective bargaining. An employer was expected to observe terms and conditions of employment, settled through collective bargaining, which were equally favourable as those to be found in comparable employment in the same trade or industry.

Employers were required to consult with trade union representatives at the earliest opportunity when redundancies were proposed. They had to give the same notice to trade unions that they had to give to the Department of Employment regarding the reasons for the proposed redundancies, the numbers whom it was proposed to dismiss, and how these individuals would be selected and the proposed method of dismissal. According to White (1983) managerial autonomy was heavily circumscribed and there was potential for negotiations to occur over redundancy proposals. This enforced consultation period can be used in different ways by employers and trade unions as described by White. Employers may treat it as an opportunity to discuss the best ways of implementing redundancies and may see consultation as nothing more than a means of explaining to workers the basis for the discussion. On the other hand, trade unions may use the consultation period as a means of trying forcibly to prevent any redundancies.

Hickson and Mallory (1981) state that empirical findings show that trade unions exercise no influence over major decision-making although they might influence the implementation of the effects of such decision-making, for example on redundancies.

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) was set up and given a statutory basis under the EPA (1975). It was designed to assist in the smooth working of industrial relations through the extension of the traditional mechanisms of collective bargaining. It is an independent body playing a neutral role and it was not intended to interfere with existing procedures for negotiation and for the resolution of disputes. For example, it is not called in to enforce or to advocate the successive incomes policies by Governments in power.

Another important aspect of EPA (1975) is that it repealed Section 2(5) of HASAWA which had allowed the election of safety representatives from the workforce. This change confined the role of safety representative to those appointed by recognised trade unions. This repeal was in accordance with the objectives of EPA by encouraging collective bargaining by recognised trade unions.

Barrett (1977) considers that EPA advanced the concept of worker involvement in management far beyond the cautious provisions relating to consultation which are contained in HASAWA. She makes the very important point that the provisions of HASAWA concerning worker involvement were not devised with the objective of improving industrial relations, they were devised with the objective of overcoming the apathy in which unsafe working conditions tend to flourish. It may be that this apathy is

greatest in non-unionised establishments where employees have no right to consult, through their representatives, with management. Barrett considers that it would be most unfortunate if the philosophy of satisfactory industrial relations were allowed to conflict with the philosophy of safety at the workplace.

However, although the main objective of HASAWA was an improvement in safety standards, its effect upon the larger context of industrial relations must be considerable. The two philosophies of satisfactory industrial relations and safety in the workplace should be complementary and should reinforce each other rather than produce conflict.

The State has played a positive part in extending collective bargaining not only through legislation but also by recognising the right of its own employees to belong to trade unions and by negotiating collectively with them.

White (1978) asks if voluntarism is in decline in Britain and comes to the conclusion that much of the legislation since 1974 may be said to have reinforced voluntarism for example, through the increase in collective bargaining advocated in EPA. In White's opinion, voluntarism has continued in Britain because there has been a broad consensus between employers and employed about their fitness to handle their relations more satisfactorily than could the State or the law courts. In addition economic conditions in Britain have generally favoured the continuation of voluntarism. He sums up the situation by stating that "...freedom from legislation is quite compatible with freedom secured through legislation."

However, Hawkins (1978) considers that managers will have to reconcile themselves to the fact that their freedom to manage will be circumscribed not simply by the countervailing powers of trade unions and workgroups but by an increasingly complex body of legal rules.

It should be noted that it is not the function of this section to describe and discuss the HASAWA and other legislation fully, but rather to fit these Acts into a chronological framework and to highlight only those aspects of the law that are relevant to the discussion of voluntarism and increased worker participation. It can be seen that the increase in employment legislation since the early 1970s has not restricted the potential contribution of the workforce, but on the contrary has encouraged collective bargaining and extended the range of topics which can be handled by means of negotiation between employer and employees.

Legislation has served to increase worker involvement by requiring management to provide necessary information to worker representatives and to consult with them in certain circumstances for example with regard to redundancies and health and safety in the workplace.

11.4 The increase in worker participation and industrial democracy as a means of self-regulation

Control of organisations can be of three types which may merge into a continuum: unilateral regulation by employer, unilateral regulation by employees and joint regulation or collective bargaining. It is the last of these types which is to be discussed

here. The bargaining relationship between key negotiators is a power relationship which produces agreements which are pro tem not permanent and are mostly unwritten agreements or conventions.

In parts of Europe and in Japan, bargaining is often between employers' associations and trade unions making industry-wide agreements. In the USA employers' associations are not as important and in Britain there has been a move over the last twenty years towards the USA model of single employer bargaining - for example the Government in its role of employer. The Government had encouraged trade unionism among its employees but in the 1960s was faced with inflation and the emergence of public sector militancy (Roberts, Loveridge & Gennard - 'Reluctant militants', 1972). Although reluctant to get involved with industrial relations legislation, the Government had to try to stop strikes in the public sector. To this end, the Donovan Commission was set up and their report was published in 1968. In the view of the Donovan Commission (1968):

"Properly conducted collective bargaining is the most effective means of giving workers the right to representation in decisions affecting their working lives, a right which is or should be the prerogative of every worker in a democratic society."

Collective bargaining conducted 'properly' should include all those issues of substance which workers and their organisations regard as important and should be regulated by formal, written procedures.

In 1975 the Government appointed the Bullock Committee to look at the question of worker participation and industrial democracy in Britain. The Report of the Committee (1977)

stated that social changes over the last decade had resulted in a desire among employees to control the working environment and to have a say in decisions which affect their working lives. They were less prepared to accept unquestioningly unilateral decisions made by management. Traditional management prerogatives had therefore come under attack and the modern manager had had to develop a style of participative management which had recognised the necessity and the benefits of involving employees in decision-making rather than imposing decisions upon them without consultation.

Similarly, Lewis (1976) outlines four reasons for the increase in worker participation in the workplace over recent years which are based on empirical data. Firstly, for moral reasons, workers have a right to participate in decisions which affect them in their place of work, that is participation is part of an extension of democratic rights to the place. Secondly, participation can be seen as an exercise in power-sharing, a pragmatic recognition by employers of the collective power of employees in the workplace. Thirdly trade union activity is seen as having been responsible for 'pushing' managers into adopting some form of participation. Lastly, major political forces in Britain have advocated participation making it unwise for managers not to introduce participation in their organisations.

The Bullock Report stated that in 1977 there was already a great deal of participation through the trade unions particularly at local level in collective bargaining and at national level through discussions between the TUC and the Government and in such tripartite institutions as the National Economic Development Council.

Hawkins (1978) considers that since collective bargaining is essentially an integrative process, the wider its scope becomes the more pressure there will be on trade union negotiators to accept wider responsibility for the conduct of the enterprise. Hawkins suggests that as this sense of responsibility grows there will be pressure for more participation at board level. This extension of participation should be allowed to evolve out of the growing pressures of technological and organisational change, aided by an appropriate legal framework, and should be consistent with the traditions of British industrial relations.

Both HASAWA (1974) and EPA (1975) gave legislative backing to specific extensions of collective bargaining. The provisions of HASAWA providing for safety representatives and safety committees have inevitably brought a whole range of issues associated with health and safety into the sphere of joint regulation. EPA provides for the extension of joint regulation into areas that were previously managerial prerogatives and contains important provisions on the disclosure of information and advance consultation on redundancy. (Throughout this chapter the above act is referred to as the EPA (1975) however it should be noted that this was followed by the Employment Protection Consolidation Act (1978)).

By employee participation is meant the active involvement of employees in decision-making in the corporate affairs of industrial and commercial organisations. This may include any method by which subordinate employees exert countervailing pressure against managerial control at work.

Cuthbert and Whitaker (1977) suggest that there is a growing gap between the managerial conception of employee participation

and that of the trade unions. The overall trade union objectives of greater industrial democracy, giving the workforce greater control over their work situation, to some extent run counter to the expectations of management with regard to employee participation as a technique for increasing understanding, involvement and commitment and possibly improving efficiency and profitability. The gap revolves around the focal point of power.

Farnham and Pimlott (1979) describe two approaches to participation which are not necessarily incompatible. The first, employee participation, is essentially task-based, concerned mainly with lower-level executive decision-making and basically integrative in its purposes. According to Farnham and Pimlott one of the aims of worker participation is to minimise the impact of power changes within the industrial infrastructure by concentrating on task-centred means of worker involvement. This could be described as a negative viewpoint where the aim of worker participation is to reduce divisiveness and tensions between management and employees rather than to make a direct comparison to the overall effectiveness of the organisation.

On the other hand, a more positive approach would acknowledge the potential contribution to increased efficiency in the creation of wealth by enhancing the employee's sense of involvement in helping to shape decisions.

Interest groups which advocate employee participation are the British Institute of Management and to a lesser extent the Confederation of British Industry. The methods used in task-based employee participation involve the use of more participative management styles, more job autonomy and more consultation and communication

with subordinate employees.

The second approach described by Farnham and Pimlott is indirect or power-based participation. Participation is viewed as representative in nature, distributive in its purposes, and the process by which trade union representatives become increasingly involved in 'legislative' or policy-level decision-making in their organisations. The main methods used are more collective bargaining and more representative machinery in industry. The main aim of this type of participation is to institutionalise the power shift towards the trade unions in recent years and to increase union power-sharing with management at all levels of organisational decision-making.

Farnham and Pimlott state that ultimately in Britain worker participation can only be extended through enabling legislation, and indeed it may be that legislation, some of which appears to be about worker protection, can be viewed as the foundations upon or the framework within which a programme for increased worker participation may be set. Examples of this type of legislation are:

- 1) The Code of Practice on disciplinary practice and procedures in employment which states that: *"Management should aim to secure the involvement of employees and all levels of management when formulating new or revising existing rules and procedures..."*;
- 2) the SRSC Regulations which followed the HASAWA provide a framework within which employees and trade unions can agree on arrangements which suit their particular undertakings;
- 3) a Code of Practice on disclosure of information to trade unions for collective bargaining suggests that management should formulate a policy on disclosure which is as open as possible in meeting trade union requirements for collective bargaining purposes, unless there are genuine considered reasons for refusal.

As a 'self-contained' concept, joint consultation generally has failed because many managements have not been prepared genuinely to share some measure of power and control. There has been little support for joint consultation from the TUC who state that increased participation must come from the extension of existing collective bargaining and joint regulation, and by the introduction of parity representation of the trade unionised workforce at board level.

An exception to this lack of support for consultation was the area of health and safety in the early days described above by Barrett (1977). Indeed health and safety is often seen as a 'no conflict' area even by trade unions. For example, Beaumont (1980) found that 73% of his sample of safety representatives described their basic function as one of consultation with management, and of these individuals, 74% regarded union-management aims in the health and safety area to be essentially the same.

The Bullock Committee (1977) considered that the purely consultative system, where decision-making is a management function, was becoming less common. Consultation was developing to the point where the workforce have a de facto power of veto over certain management actions. As a result the Committee doubted the usefulness of the term 'consultative'.

Problems regarding the use of the terms 'consultation' and 'negotiation' were discussed in Chapter Nine, but as the terms are central to this chapter some repetition is unavoidable.

Joint consultation and bargaining can be seen as complementary concepts as described by Daniel and McIntosh (1972).

"The distinction between bargaining and consultation is largely meaningless in practice. The only managerial prerogative is to initiate discussion."

Howells (1974) considers that there are four ways in which some form of joint machinery can be set up to represent the workers' viewpoint in the solution of workplace problems, including safety. These are:

1. Communication - a two-way flow of information.
2. Consultation - an exchange of views used to settle non-contentious safety problems.
3. Negotiation - to bargain about matters in dispute, for example, contentious safety points.
4. Participation - the right to challenge, delay or veto management decisions on safety grounds.

The distinction between consultation and negotiation is obsolete, with consultation being part of a spectrum of worker involvement ranging from bare communication to full participation.

The CBI (1970) also note the tendency for consultation to merge into negotiation and state that action taken by either party is likely to be determined by: the strength of the parties, their relationship and their appraisal of the situation rather than by a nice distinction between consultation and negotiation.

This section has shown that social change over recent years has altered the expectations of the workforce towards their work. They expect to play a greater part in decision-making which affects the conditions under which they work. Legislation has increased worker participation, particularly by encouragement of the extension

of collective bargaining but there is still a place for joint consultation - indeed it may be spurious to try to separate these two concepts. They may simply represent points on a continuum along which most interactions occur within the central 'grey' area.

Worker participation in its various forms is one means of implementing self-regulation in organisations. The next section will deal specifically with worker participation in health and safety.

11.5 The application of worker participation in health and safety

The development of trade union involvement in health and safety

The previous section described in general terms the increase in worker participation in industry and in this section participation in health and safety will be considered.

The historical perspective of the development of trade union involvement in health and safety is described by Grayson and Goddard (1975). During the 1950s and 1960s there was a growing realisation among trade unions that new industrial processes were becoming more hazardous for workers. This led to a new safety awareness which is reflected in motions and debates at TUC conferences over the past twenty years.

An important factor in sharpening trade union responses in the field of safety was the strengthening of the role of local bargaining, and the shop steward in many industries taking on the role of the key lay officer - that is in health and safety terms.

There was also a large increase in public sector manpower accompanied by a corresponding growth in membership of white collar unions such as NALGO and ASTMS (Eaton & Gill 1981). As many areas of the public sector were not covered by safety legislation, the relevant trade unions, for example, in the public sector NUPE, campaigned for legislation to cover their members. This is particularly relevant to local authorities.

The effects of higher expectations regarding the quality of working life and a growing interest in matters related to health among the population in general were described in earlier chapters. All of these points mentioned above have been involved in the growing trade union involvement in health and safety over the past two decades.

The usefulness of legislation in tackling health and safety problems

Hale (1983) describes early legislation related to safety as generally being phrased in terms of the standards to be achieved by a company, with much of the current legislation still being concerned with standards. However, recently there has been an increase in the discretion left to the individual health and safety inspector by the law he administers. Standards are now expressed in more general terms or qualified by such expressions as 'acceptable', 'adequate', 'suitable', 'so far as is reasonably practicable', adding an element of flexibility.

This is in contrast to the health and safety legislation in the United States which is based on standards enforcement. Mendeloff (1979) considers this approach to be rigid and unworkable. He states that in the United States, because the standards

are so detailed, violations are commonplace and local unions can use the threat of inspection to give them bargaining leverage with management in the safety area or in some other area.

The usefulness of legislation is doubted by Abell (1979) as, in his opinion, few health and safety problems can be resolved legalistically because there are many gaps in the provisions of specific regulations, and also because the Inspectorates do not have sufficient members to establish standards in each workplace. He calls this a 'regulative gap' in the control of health and safety at work.

Abell seems to be inferring a standards enforcement role for the HSE Inspectorate who see enforcement of legally set minimum standards as only one strand of their work, the other being advisory.

HSE Inspectorate manpower

The point raised above by Abell regarding shortage of manpower in the HSE Inspectorate has important implications for the participation of the workforce in health and safety which are described below.

The annual report of the Chief Inspector of Factories for 1979 which was published in 1981 states that because of Government economies in public spending the Inspectorate must face a 6% cut in expenditure over 1982-83. The Chief Inspector makes the point that in the face of declining resources, if the Inspectorate are to concentrate on the more potentially hazardous premises and processes, and undertake positive and preventive strategies,

there will not be time or resources to inspect the smallest and least hazardous premises except on a reactive basis.

The HSE Inspectorate's activities have been reinforced when financial cutbacks have caused manpower shortages, by increased joint responsibility of both 'sides' of industry for self-inspection and self-regulation. In particular, this lack of inspectors means that safety representatives can play an important role in monitoring and inspecting with a view to preventing accidents, rather than investigating after they have taken place.

Contribution of the workforce

Lewis (1974) comments on the view that apathy with regard to safety is considered to be due to the feeling that safety is not really the responsibility of the workforce. This is contrary to the experience of worker involvement in some companies, which shows that workers can 'sell' safety where management has failed to do so. Safety representatives and joint committees can set an atmosphere of awareness and can continuously monitor the workforce - functions which could never be performed by the Health and Safety Executive.

The HSE (1980) is in agreement, stating that if properly informed and invited to participate in the setting of standards and maintaining those already agreed, workers can make a specific contribution to their own immediate place of work which is available from no other source.

In outlining five arguments in favour of worker participation in health and safety, Gevers (1983) emphasises the important

contribution to be made by the workforce. The five points are:

Firstly, workers can contribute to the prevention of industrial accidents by looking for potential dangers and imminent dangers and notifying management of these. Secondly, workers in co-operating in the promotion of safety become more safety conscious and more motivated to work safely. Thirdly, workers' ideas, knowledge and experience can provide a useful contribution to the definition and solution of health and safety problems. Fourthly, Gevers considers that the desired co-operation between employer and employees, which is essential to improve working conditions, can only be effective if the relationship is based on equal partnership. The final point Gevers makes is that employees whose 'physical integrity' may be at stake have a right to be associated with decisions affecting them. The importance of the part played by workers themselves is summed up:

"Prevention of accidents and occupational disease and the promotion of worker's 'well-being' cannot be achieved if the workers' own experience and evaluation of the working environment as a whole are not taken into account."

Trade union power

The move in the balance of power towards the trade unions up to 1979 and increased worker participation including the use of joint self-regulation of health and safety are interrelated. The SRSC Regulations in particular are seen by many sources as an important step towards statutory provisions for increased worker involvement through their representatives.

Castle (1978) states that rather than relying on the

negotiating skills of staff and management, Parliament set out basic statutory rights in the SRSC Regulations and in doing so placed the initiative firmly in the hands of the trade unions. He considers that the powers invested in the safety representatives in an attempt towards policing the HASAWA are greater than any powers afoot for industrial democracy, for example access to documents and accident reports.

The passage of the SRSC Regulations is seen by Abell (1979) as a further stage in the formal development of trade union involvement in the control of health and safety at work. This is because of the amendments to the HASAWA at the behest of the TUC which confine the legal rights and privileges of safety representatives to those appointed by recognised independent trade unions.

Beaumont (1983) also sees the SRSC provisions of the HASAWA as possibly having important implications for extending industrial democracy because in the past there had been unilateral management decision-making in health and safety at work, and the framework of law had taken a highly 'paternalistic' attitude towards the issue of employee and trade union involvement.

The SRSC Regulations are also viewed by Stuttard (1979), among others, as the spearhead of the new health and safety legislation and an important extension of industrial democracy. This view maintains that the Regulations provide the basis for a practical form of worker participation which is not simply an extension of collective bargaining or conventional consultation, but a recognisable right to share in workplace affairs.

According to Glendon and Booth (1982) the SRSC Regulations

were radical because they gave a statutory basis to trade union lay officials which runs counter to the voluntaristic tradition of British industrial relations, and also to the recommendations of the Robens Report which laid the basis for the HASAWA. They also made the point that "...the statutory requirements introduced by the SRSC Regulations were designed to encourage self-regulation."

Who is responsible for health and safety?

There appears to have been a change over recent years with regard to the responsibility for safety. In this case rather than a legal responsibility which is laid out in the legislation, it is the overall, moral responsibility that is being considered.

The traditional view of regulation is described by Abell (1979) as the employer being responsible for health and safety, a situation which employers have accepted and indeed they have tried to maintain a prerogative in health and safety matters. The trade unions have also played their part in seeking to ensure that the employer accepts responsibility by paying adequate compensation and introducing preventive measures.

Lewis (1974) considers that the great emphasis placed on alleged common interests and managerial prerogatives has been a serious impediment to establishing a safer working environment. The distinction between consultation and negotiation which was theoretically based on the ultimate location of authority (consultation leaves the final decision to management) is now obsolete. Management must realise that getting the right decision taken, accepted and implemented is far more important than prerogative and so the merger of consultation and negotiation machinery should be accelerated.

Lewis continues that while the initiative must come from management, it is the unions' function to job management (see Chapter Seven regarding the safety representative role of management pressuriser). His view is that not only is effective worker participation essential to raising the status of safety, but that collective bargaining is the only realistic way of achieving this end.

However, health and safety has sometimes been considered to be a subject which is suitable for a joint problem-solving approach by trade unions and management - for consultation rather than negotiation. Beaumont (1983) describes the necessary prerequisites for successful joint problem-solving as mutual trust, friendliness and respect between trade union and management representatives within a supportive industrial relations climate.

The responsibility for dealing with health and safety problems has changed over recent years from being purely a management responsibility to being a joint one. This may take the form of management taking the initiative having been prompted by the trade unions, or a joint problem-solving approach, or of course a mixture of the two.

What type of participation?

There are several factors which will affect the type of participation in an organisation, and the strategies employed to put it into action.

The type of worker participation in health and safety at industry level differs between the public and private sectors, reflecting the extent of joint consultation and bargaining in each.

The public sector has a higher percentage of employees belonging to trade unions, with joint trade union/management machinery of various types for discussing occupational health and safety issues. In the private sector, there is a general absence of formal machinery for joint discussion on health and safety beyond individual plant or company level.

The question of the use of consultation or negotiation between management and trade unions has been discussed in previous chapters. However, a range of views on this question related specifically to health and safety is given below to demonstrate that there is by no means consensus regarding the 'best' strategy to be employed.

Safety committees provide an opportunity for consultation, and before 1977, they fell within the voluntaristic tradition of British industrial relations which was being eroded by increased legislation.

"Despite some trade union antipathy towards safety committees, a large proportion of those participating in their operation see them as useful parts of the consultative process in industry." (Incomes Data Services 1979)

A survey carried out in the private sector by Cressey et al. (1981) indicated that a large number of managers considered consultation to be the most appropriate mechanism for dealing with health and safety issues, but nearly one quarter of employee respondents regarded it as a negotiable issue. However, there was a large measure of agreement between management and employee respondents that a high degree of workforce involvement in health and safety existed.

However, negotiation is seen by many as the most effective strategy in management/trade union interactions. Eva and Oswald (1981) state that it is important that health and safety at work is seen by trade unions as one part of the overall objectives when negotiating with the employer and should be part of the existing negotiating structure. In the same vein, Ruheman (1981) states that, "Health and safety is increasingly an issue for negotiation through the normal industrial relations machinery and less for joint consultation."

When examining the strategy of negotiation we may ask what causes the development of a negotiating relationship. The development of bargaining awareness is described by Brown (1973):

"...employees can gain bargaining awareness on an issue from a number of causes. It may be that management has manifestly failed to protect their interests - for instance, by permitting working conditions to become unbearable."

Abell (1979) relates this situation to health and safety problems, one example being the discovery by employees of the withholding of information about hazardous materials. Lack of trust between employers and employees could lead to the emergence of bargaining awareness.

When discussing the strategies used in self-regulation differences may occur between national level and plant level. Ashford (1976) sees self-regulation at plant level as hinging upon voluntary management-labour interaction and states that although the general duty on the employer to consult with employees has persuasive force, it lacks specification. On the national level, the policy of self-policing is manifested in

a greater reliance on consultation rather than legal coercion in enforcement and in the setting and use of standards. Voluntary standards and Codes of Practice setting out minimum standards will provide flexibility.

Similarly Glendon and Booth (1982) suggest that there is scope for both consultation and negotiation on health and safety issues. Relationships at national level and where there is legislation governing consultative arrangements are likely to be characterised by broad consensus on such issues. However, at workplace level, the different interests of the parties over health and safety issues may result in bargaining relationships.

This section has discussed the application of worker participation in health and safety. The place of legislation in dealing with problems was discussed and also the shortage of HSE Inspectorate manpower which is one of the reasons why the safety representative role of inspector/monitor is particularly important in self-regulation in the organisation. The question of whose moral responsibility safety is was discussed along with the strategies used in self-regulation. The ideal situation exists when there is joint responsibility for setting and maintaining safety standards in the workplace and there seems to be support for the use of both consultation and negotiation by management and trade unions.

Self-regulation and the duty to consult

The HSE (1980) describes self-regulation as part of "a changing philosophy away from enforcement of safety legislation, towards incorporation of the relevant aspects of legislation into the rules

and practices that an organisation derives for its own use." It is the safety policy which is being written about here, and although safety policies are not studied in their own right in the present study, the standards and the arrangements for monitoring them are the central factors for self-regulation in an organisation.

Self-regulation may be better described in the health and safety context as joint self-regulation because the term could equally well mean unilateral self-regulation by management, or indeed trade unions, of issues concerning either or both of them.

The underlying philosophy of self-regulation in health and safety stems from the Robens Report, that is it can be used as a means of dispelling what Robens described as the apathy of the workforce towards safety which they perceived as purely a management responsibility. The co-operation, participation and involvement of the workforce would hopefully lead to changed attitudes with responsibility for maintaining a safe working environment being to some extent "shared" (morally if not legally) between management and workforce. Apathy was not only attributed to the workforce, and it may be that worker involvement would also have the effect of motivating an apathetic management to get things done.

However, as we live in a pluralistic society with various interest groups having to co-exist, it would not, in my opinion, be practicable to expect self-regulation to function without some form of legislative framework within which it can operate.

The legislation puts a duty on employers to consult with trade union safety representatives and to disclose relevant information. There is no duty upon the trade union side to consult

or to co-operate with management. There are several reasons why management must consult with employee representatives and provide them with information.

The first point is that having looked at the political perspective of the emergence of recent health and safety legislation and the increase in worker participation, it can be seen that these aspects were a concession to the trade unions from the Government - part of the improvement of working life given in exchange for wage restraint as part of the Social Contract.

Secondly, it is employers who are in receipt of information needed by employees and who have more power and influence, and one may ask if, without the 'encouragement' of legislation, they would voluntarily share information with safety representatives. The old attitude of 'information means power' may still obtain with some employers who are unwilling to share their power and influence. Therefore when looking at the emergence of self-regulation it is necessary to be aware of the wider social and political trends in Britain. Social change is a slow and sometimes painful process which may require a catalyst to facilitate it. Legislation which regulates the relationship between management and workforce can act as a catalyst in this way. Recent law relating to health and safety can be said to be less punitive, less concerned with enforcement and more concerned with changing attitudes, for example to shared responsibility for health and safety. Legislation can 'modify' voluntarism not replace it by helping to encourage true *joint* self-regulation which then can be left to individual employers and employees to operationalise in ways which are acceptable to both parties, that is consultation, negotiation or most commonly a mixture of the two strategies.

Although health and safety legislation can be seen as part of the trend of increasing worker participation and industrial democracy, it can also be seen in its own right as a step in the advancement of employee participation.

In the light of the historical perspective outlined in the previous sections of this chapter, it is suggested by this researcher that the development of the concept of self-regulation within a legal framework can be described as evolutionary rather than revolutionary.

11.6 Self-regulation in an economic recession and the outlook for the future

Over the past few years in Britain, the economic recession has undoubtedly had an effect upon most aspects of industrial relations and trade union/management relations including health and safety at work. Negotiation between management and trade unions at plant level could lead to formal safety agreements as described in Chapter Nine. However Brown (1983) makes the point that employers did not generally take advantage of the opportunity provided by the Industrial Relations Act (1971) to make collective agreements legally enforceable. He suggests that in the current economic climate, managements are able to force through changes in informal work practices with little or no opposition. Therefore, "formal agreements would appear to make even less sense."

Glendon and Booth (1982) point out that in recent years there has been an increase in worker participation in health and safety,

and advances in technical and research knowledge of workplace hazards. However, it is still the case that economic and business criteria may act as constraints with regard to the degree of participation in health and safety that workers have been able to obtain.

According to Ruhemann (1981), the trade unions are exercising restraint with regard to complaining about safety in a worsening economic climate as it is possible that their members may lose their jobs regardless of the strength of workplace union organisation. It is known that restrictions on Government spending have resulted in a reduction in HSE manpower levels, so an interview was arranged in May 1983 with Stephen Grant, Scottish Director of HSE, to obtain his views on the effects of the recession. He stated that the validity of self-regulation is questionable. In 1974-1979 health and safety was booming and was favourably considered by all political parties. However since 1979 there has been, in Mr Grant's view, a more 'realistic' viewpoint and the health and safety boom is over. The recession has placed economic pressures and constraints on both management and the workforce. The ability of workers to press for safety measures has been blunted as for many of them the first priority is to have a job, leaving high wages and a safe place of work as secondary considerations. People do not want to risk losing their jobs by reporting problems to the HSE. The Inspectorate is also operating with reduced numbers and this inevitably means fewer enforcement visits and an adjustment of inspection priorities.

In an article in 1983 Stephen Grant stated that,

"many managements in the public or local authority sector have not yet faced the devastating self-examination (with regard to accountability for safety) made necessary by the current world recession."

He feels that local authorities are shielded from economic pressure and problems of job security and indeed with regard to health and safety are in the situation of the private sector several years ago before the recession.

There are obviously considerable effects upon self-regulation in health and safety of the present economic recession. Resources are scarce both in terms of money to spend on improving conditions at work and also for Inspectorate manpower. It may be that not only it is impossible to improve standards, but even to maintain present standards. It would be regrettable if, after years of progress, the situation with regard to safety in industry were to deteriorate.

Quality of working life may become a low priority issue in a workforce where maintaining a job is beyond the hopes or aspirations of a proportion of its members. If workers' expectations of work are reduced in this way, the trade unions will not have the whole-hearted support of their members and therefore bargaining over safety will decline. In this way, joint self-regulation may then become the exception with managerial prerogative in health and safety decision-making and problem-solving re-emerging as the norm. The onus would be put on to management to self-regulate. This would not only be a backward step with regard to standards of safety in industry, but also an unfortunate interruption in the progress of worker participation and industrial democracy in Britain. It is also possible, although there is a lack of empirical evidence, that management are using the decrease in trade union bargaining power to increase their control over the workforce. The effects of the economic recession upon management/trade union relationships is more complex and subtle than may at first appear. However,

these effects are still speculative until research has been undertaken to examine the situation.

In order to gather information about the place of self-regulation in the future, the researcher decided to write to Lord Robens asking for an interview. However, no reply was received, which was unfortunate because it would have been particularly interesting to hear directly from Lord Robens if his conception of self-regulation is consistent with the type of joint setting and maintaining of standards to be found in industry today.

Self-regulation as seen by the Robens Committee exemplified a consultative approach based on a unitary perspective of industrial relations, whereas self-regulation in practice, at least in the Local Authority in this study, involved both consultation and negotiation and was based on a pluralistic perspective. In many ways, the pluralistic approach may enhance self-regulation because competing interests are a good spur for progress - management are kept 'on their toes' and trade unions maintain an interest as do the workers they represent.

The previous section indicated that joint self-regulation may have lost much of its impact and effectiveness because of the present economic recession. For this reason it may not be possible to fortell what the future holds in health and safety, in the same way as it is difficult to forecast when, if ever, the economic situation may start to improve. If a recovery does occur, the trade unions may be able to regain at least some of their bargaining power and the employers will not be able to use economic hardship as a reason to cut back on areas such as safety.

11.7 Summary

An attempt has been made in this chapter to examine the philosophy behind the concept of self-regulation not in isolation, but within the context of British industrial relations. The Robens Committee and the selected evidence received by it were discussed in some detail because the resulting Robens Report provides one of the two underlying elements of the philosophy of self-regulation. This was the perceived need to overcome 'apathy' regarding health and safety and to encourage workforce involvement through consultation with management.

In order to examine the historical development of self-regulation within a legislative framework, a section described employment legislation and the move away from voluntarism in British industrial relations in recent years. This showed the HASAWA and the SRSC Regulations as part of a range of employment laws which effected a change with regard to the relationship between the Labour Party which later became the Government of the day and the trade unions. An important factor with regard to this relationship was the Social Contract between the two parties which led to important contributions from each party.

The next section involved the second underlying element of the philosophy of self-regulation or *joint* self-regulation - that is the link between the steady increase in worker participation and industrial democracy in British industry in recent years and self-regulation. The essence of joint self-regulation is participation by the workforce through their representatives, and increasing participation in many areas was described. The use of collective bargaining over a wider range of issues leads to the

second view of self-regulation as a natural development along with increased worker participation, where the parties involved use both consultative and negotiating strategies, which has wider implications for industrial relations in Britain than does the Robens perception of self-regulation.

The application of worker participation in health and safety was described, including the use of consultation and negotiation over health and safety issues.

The effects of the present economic recession on the working of joint self-regulation were described. There are indications that the reduction in bargaining power of the trade unions has, to some extent, reduced the effectiveness of joint regulation of health and safety.

As to the place of self-regulation in the future, it is very difficult to try to anticipate when, if ever, some improvement in the present economic recession may take place, and because of the interrelationship between the economy, current legislation, the level of unemployment, and the bargaining power of the trade unions it is equally difficult to predict the place of self-regulation of health and safety in the future.

CHAPTER TWELVE

OVERVIEW

OVERVIEW

12.1 Summary

This research has focussed upon certain aspects of self-regulation in health and safety in an organisation in the public sector - a Scottish Local Authority. Three agents of self-regulation were described in detail - safety representatives, safety committees and supervisors. It was not possible in this project because of constraints on time to look at the part played in self-regulation of health and safety by among others, middle and senior management, and safety officers.

Various methods were used to collect data in order to examine the part played by each of these agents in an attempt to eliminate or reduce the hazards which can lead to accidents in the workplace.

The research was based in the public sector because this is an area which has long been neglected by researchers in organizational aspects of health and safety in the workplace. Local authorities were not fully covered by legislation until the HASAWA (1974), and therefore it was interesting to see the impact that the Act has had in these areas. However, it should be noted that the effects of the HASAWA on local authorities cannot be systematically measured here as there is no base for comparison due to a lack of data regarding the situation prior to 1974.

There are also other characteristics of local authorities which make them interesting to study, for example the fact that

they are bureaucratic organisations with complex systems of rules and regulations which encourage the institutionalisation of conflict. Management actively encourage trade union membership, and there is a well-developed system of joint consultative committees.

The public sector is sheltered from competition and the profit motive is not the major constraint upon spending that it is in the private sector. Indeed it is only recently that Government cut-backs have begun to affect the finances in local authorities and forced them to set up a system of priorities to deal with work to be done.

The philosophy of self-regulation was discussed in detail in Chapter Eleven and although there are several possible routes towards the reduction or elimination of hazards, for example consultation and co-operation, and negotiation through collective bargaining or a mixture of these, all of them require close contact between safety representatives and management, particularly supervisors. For this reason, a considerable proportion of this thesis is given over to the examination and discussion of the strategies used by the parties concerned.

A behavioural approach has been taken in the study of self-regulation in the Local Authority, for example, there is emphasis on such concepts as the perceptions and attitudes of supervisors, safety representatives and some senior managers towards certain issues. In addition, the strategies used by trade union representatives and management were discussed and the roles played, in health and safety terms, by safety representatives and

supervisors (as perceived by themselves) were described.

Some of the values of workers and management, were studied and were discussed in Chapter Ten. Potential conflicts in motivation were also examined. These may occur when workers, and indeed supervisors, may have to make the choice between working safely and cutting corners in order to maximise earnings when on a bonus system of payment.

The HSE publication "Manufacturing and Services Industries 1980" states that:

"The SRSC Regulations (1977) together with the Code of Practice and HSE Guidance Notes were written to ensure that the safety representative and the safety committee were genuinely part of the process of organising the safety of the workplace from within."

In the present project the SRSC Regulations were used in both Chapters Seven and Nine for comparison purposes. The role and functions of safety representatives and safety committees in the health and safety organisation of the Local Authority were examined and compared with those envisaged in the SRSC Regulations and other sources described in Chapters Seven and Nine. There was found to be a considerable coincidence between the roles and functions conceived on a theoretical level in the SRSC Regulations and the roles and functions of safety representatives as described by themselves in the actual situation existing in the Local Authority.

Safety representatives were not asked directly about how they perceived their role, as this may have led to answers which were based on the roles discussed in the SRSC Regulations. Instead the safety representatives were asked what aspects of their work they saw as being most important, and which health and safety issues

took up most of their time. Their responses, as well as giving interesting detailed information, could then be classified into safety representative roles as perceived by themselves. This then, in my opinion, provided a better basis for comparison with the officially stated roles in the SRSC Regulations.

Data were collected using several methods and from various sources in order to examine the effectiveness of safety committees in the Local Authority and the part they played in self-regulation of health and safety in the workplace. The types of issues discussed at the different tiers of committees were examined as were actions taken on recommendations made by safety committees.

The above issues were among the criteria used to assess the effectiveness of safety committees and it was concluded that in the Local Authority, safety committees are a useful forum for the exchange of views of trade union safety representatives and management representatives. They provide a route to accident prevention via consultation and co-operation in this organisation.

When examining the part played by safety representatives and supervisors in the self-regulation of health and safety in the Local Authority, the relationship between the two parties is particularly important. The responses to questions on various subjects were very similar and the suggestion was made that present day supervisors, because of the marginal nature of their role which was described in Chapter Eight, may no longer fully identify with management goals and ideologies. Modern, unionised supervisors may have attitudes, perceptions and values closer to those of the workforce and their representatives. For example,

they may collude with workers to help them to maximise their earnings at the expense of safe working methods.

There was little reported conflict over health and safety issues between trade union representatives and supervisors. However, of those respondents who did report conflict, a larger proportion were safety representatives than were supervisors. This may be due to supervisors being unwilling to admit to conflict or that they may simply not perceive health and safety to be a conflict area. Safety representatives may feel that they need to 'fight' to improve health and safety conditions and so report more conflict.

When asked about their perceptions of their relationship, in terms of the use of negotiating and consultative strategies, it appeared that little use was being made by either safety representatives or supervisors of a purely negotiating strategy. Approximately half of those in both groups saw their relationship as a consultative one and the other half saw the relationship as a mixture of consultation and negotiation. (Only 5% of both samples reported using a purely negotiating strategy).

The adaptation of the Lewis consensus and conflict models of health and safety which was illustrated in Figure 9.5 shows the use of both consultation and negotiation in accident prevention in the Local Authority and possible ways of empirically testing this model are discussed later in this chapter.

The behavioural aspects of trade union/management interaction over health and safety matters in the form of the strategies used have been found in the study to be related to two other variables,

both of which are perceptions reported by safety representative respondents.

The first of these variables is the safety representatives' perception of the degree of commitment of senior management to creating and maintaining safe working conditions in the department. There was an association between safety representatives seeing management as strongly committed and the use of a purely non-negotiating strategy. This may be because safety representatives feel that they do not need to use pressure in order to make management take notice of and take action on health and safety issues that are raised.

The second variable is the safety representatives' perception of whether they receive support from management when health and safety issues are raised. It was found that there was an association between safety representatives feeling that they got management support, and perceiving management as strongly committed to health and safety. The safety representatives' perceptions of whether or not they get the support of management, and the degree of commitment of management to health and safety, may affect the strategy used when interacting with management. No causal relationship can be shown, only an association. Therefore, it could be that the use of a co-operative, consultative, non-threatening approach to safety representatives by management, for example on safety committees, may convince safety representatives of management's commitment to health and safety. Safety representatives may also be aware that instead of having to negotiate in order to get things done they receive the support of management without resorting to confrontation.

With regard to the perceptions of safety representatives and supervisors of their health and safety roles, there was some similarity in this study between the responses of the two groups. The three most mentioned aspects of their work considered as important by safety representatives concerned general health, safety and welfare and inspecting and monitoring, and educating others. 68% of the safety representative responses fell into at least one of these three categories.

Supervisors were asked what they considered to be the most useful contribution to safe working that could be made by supervisory staff, and 63% of their responses concerned inspecting and monitoring and educating others.

As inspecting and monitoring are essential aspects of self-regulation, it is encouraging that a large number of trade union representatives and management in this study identify these procedures as important components of their health and safety roles.

One major complaint from supervisors was the lack of authority vested in them by the Local Authority in spite of their legal responsibility for health and safety in their workplace. This meant that they could not effectively enforce safety rules, for example with regard to workers wearing protective clothing, and this resulted in feelings of frustration. The lack of authority felt by supervisors is well documented in the literature with regard to areas other than health and safety and the findings of this study reinforce previous findings.

One point that emerged from this project is the reported lack of contact between safety representatives and the HSE

Inspectorate. However, over the last five years, because of financial cutbacks affecting the HSE, there are fewer inspectors available to make inspections and organisations may not receive a visit from an inspector for a considerable time. As a result there may be fewer opportunities for safety representatives to accompany inspectors or to receive copies of reports they may make to management.

Chapter Eleven described some of the effects of the present economic recession upon the part played by safety representatives, safety committees and supervisors in self-regulation in health and safety. Shortage of money for improvements and job insecurity have served to weaken the influence upon management of all three 'agents' of self-regulation, although these effects are only recently beginning to percolate to the public sector, the private sector having been subject to these constraints for some time.

12.2 Conclusions

In the process of attempting to assess the effectiveness of self-regulation and the operation of some of its 'agents', it is too simplistic to look at the organisation being studied as though it existed in a vacuum. One of the main benefits of a case study approach is that there is an opportunity to make a detailed examination of one organisation, which should provide information regarding the context both internal and external in which that organisation functions.

Dunlop (1958) stated that an industrial relations system

could be considered as a sub-system of society. He then showed how interactions between elements of the environmental context affected the working of the various sub-systems.

It is proposed to take a similar approach adapted to the smaller unit of one organisation in trying to clarify the main conclusions in this study. The context within which an organisation functions is complex and it impinges in important ways upon its functioning. The effectiveness of the operationalisation of self-regulation in the Local Authority studied is affected by several factors, some internal and some external to the organisation. Each of these types of factors may interact with one another and they are dynamic over time. For example, between the time of collecting the data on this project and writing up the results, the economic recession has had effects which may have led to different results in some aspects of the study if the data had been collected now.

Figure 12.1 shows some of the internal and external factors which are interrelated and interacting and all may be hypothesised to affect the effectiveness of joint self-regulation of health and safety in the Local Authority.

Gouldner (1954) described the importance of the organisational structure on the operationalisation of safety rules. The Local Authority was considered to closely fit Gouldner's model of Representative Bureaucracy. The Local Authority may also exhibit other forms of bureaucratic functioning, but it was elected to study the Representative Bureaucracy pattern as it was hypothesised that this would provide a closer fit than either Mock Bureaucracy or Punishment-Centred Bureaucracy.

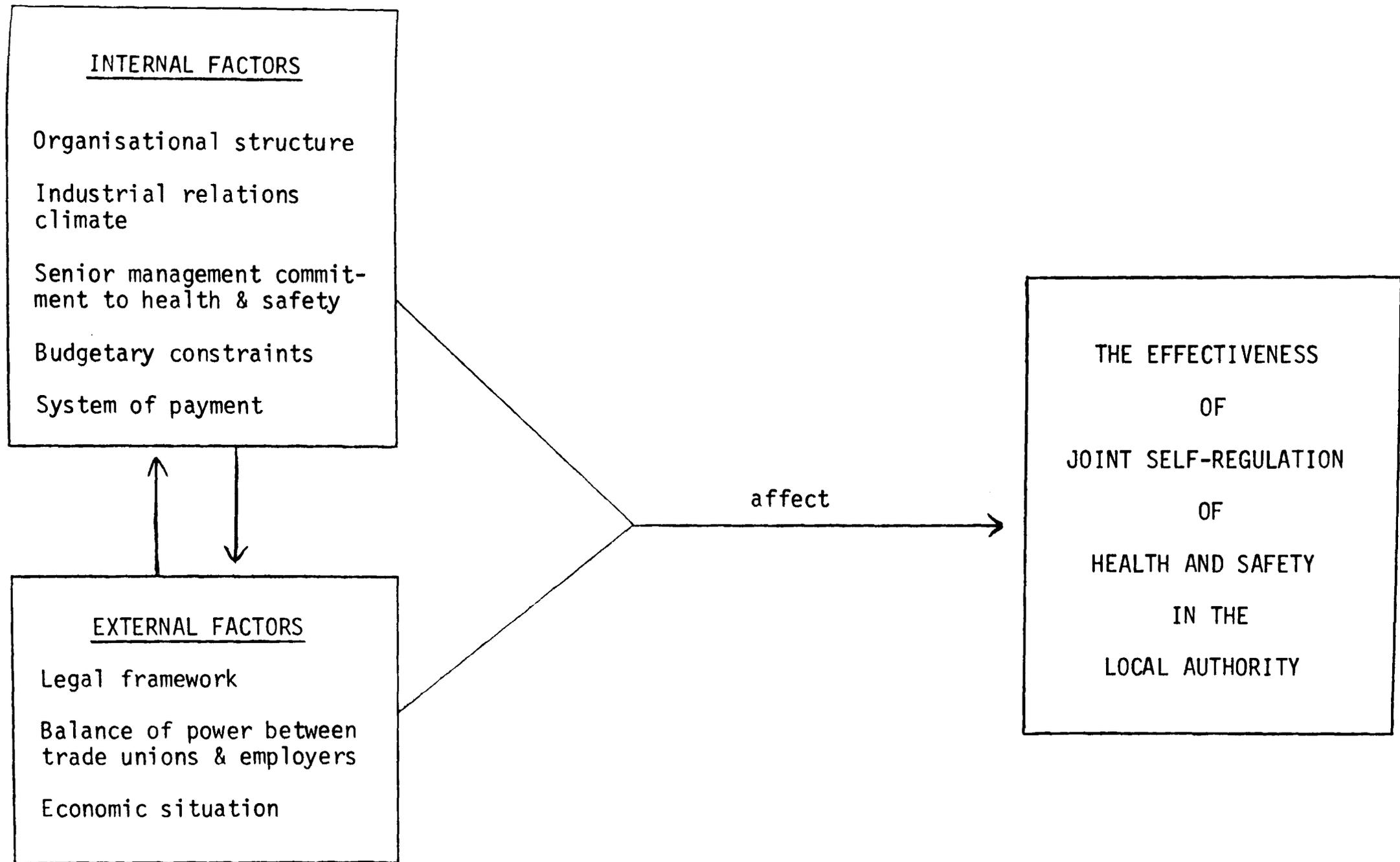


FIGURE 12.1: Interacting Factors (Internal and External) affecting the Effectiveness of Joint Self-Regulation and Health and Safety in the Scottish Local Authority

Violation of the safety rules is seen by management in a Representative Bureaucracy as unintentional and due to carelessness or lack of training, and joint support of these rules is buttressed by mutual participation in initiation of the rules and by the education of workers and management. Day-to-day participation of the workers, for example through safety meetings, gives workers some control over the initiation and administration of the rules.

Solidarity develops between management and workers through their mutual acceptance of the safety programme rather than their joint rejection of it.

The organisational structure of the Local Authority being typical of a bureaucracy, was considered to be one reason for a lack of reported conflict over health and safety. One of the many characteristics of a bureaucracy which were discussed in Chapter Ten is a proliferation of rules and procedures. In a bureaucracy, impersonal rules are substituted for personal contact in cases of conflict between superiors and the subordinates they are trying to control. Sticking to the rules and going through channels may be used as delaying tactics to avoid confronting conflict. In bureaucracies there exists a well-developed committee system, for example joint consultative committees, which meant that the setting up of safety committees was not as much of an innovation as it may have been in the private sector. Lack of overt conflict and a joint consultative approach together with highly structured bargaining procedures all serve to increase the effectiveness of joint self-regulation.

The industrial relations climate is, as mentioned above, reasonably free from overt conflict with few industrial disputes in

evidence. Unionisation is encouraged in the Local Authority and the main strategies used by management and safety representatives appear to be either consultation or a mixture of consultation and negotiation. There is little evidence of the need for safety representatives to use a purely negotiating strategy.

This may be the result of the third internal factor to be examined - the degree of senior management commitment to health and safety. On the whole, both safety representatives and supervisors see management in the Local Authority to be considerably committed to health and safety. Senior management chair safety committees and recommendations put to senior management are usually followed through. A committed senior management can set an example to those lower down the hierarchy in the organisation. When management are seen to have positive attitudes to health and safety, safety representatives do not need to play the role of management pressuriser as often as they otherwise would. It can be seen therefore that senior management commitment facilitates joint self-regulation of health and safety in an organisation.

At the time of collecting data for the present study, budgetary constraints were not considered to have a strong effect upon the effectiveness of self-regulation although the point that there was not enough money to attend to everything at once was made by management. This implied the need for a system of priorities which I did not hear seriously challenged by safety representatives when the point was raised at safety committee meetings. However, over the last two years there have been reductions in the rate support grant to local authorities as part of the cutback in public spending by the Government. At the time of writing, 'rate-capping' is being discussed by Parliament which would further

reduce the autonomy of local government. The departments which were studied in the Local Authority, all received the requested safety budget each year without too much pressure being necessary. However, it is suggested that at the present time this situation may have changed. Budgetary constraints may have a detrimental effect on joint self-regulation as safety representatives become discouraged when points they raise with management are no longer acted upon and they can see that the necessary funds are no longer forthcoming. Once safety representatives become disillusioned or apathetic, joint self-regulation may be replaced by unilateral self-regulation with the onus falling upon management alone.

The four internal factor which has an effect on joint self-regulation is the system of payment which is used in the organisation. In the Local Authority there is a bonus scheme in operation for a large proportion of its employees. Approximately half of both the safety representative respondents and the supervisor respondents felt that a bonus scheme works against safe working. They gave examples where employees take short cuts and rush in order to save time so that they can earn maximum bonus.

There is empirical evidence to support the association between piecework and industrial accidents (Wrench 1972; Wrench and Lee 1982). This situation may mean that some safety representatives are not playing a full part in joint self-regulation of health and safety. They may be under pressure from co-workers not to report to management infringements of safety rules which occur as a result of attempts to maximise earnings. Indeed the safety representative himself may experience considerable conflict when he has financial commitments to meet which necessitate him taking home a certain sum of money each week.

If there is a payment-by-results system in an organisation it is possible that safety representatives may be adversely affecting the effectiveness of joint self-regulation of health and safety if they succumb to pressure from workmates to 'turn a blind eye' to unsafe practices.

With regard to the external factors which affect joint self-regulation of health and safety, only a few of the main factors are mentioned here. The legal framework within which an organisation operates will affect the ways in which joint self-regulation of health and safety is put into action. For example, the HASAWA (1974) and the SRSC Regulations which followed, introduced the innovative new role of safety representative. One of the effects of the EPA (1975) amendment which stated that safety representatives must be trade union-appointed was the encouragement of collective bargaining over health and safety. The Regulations applying to safety committees encouraged consultation and co-operation between trade unions and employers, so it is not surprising that there is evidence in the Local Authority of a 'two-pronged attack' on the elimination of reduction of hazards in the workplace - that is by means of consultation or negotiation or a combination of both. These strategies, which exemplify both the unitary and pluralist perspectives of industrial relations, all have a part to play in self-regulation and between them should increase its effectiveness, rather than the use of only one approach to solving the problems of accident and disease reduction.

The balance of power between trade unions and employers, which is another external factor, will both affect and be affected by the legislation which is passed by Government. Public opinion has a

part to play through the media, for example if fears are expressed that the trade unions are too powerful, the Government of the day may see electoral advantage in curbing that power. Indeed the media have an influence upon the Government in their own right.

During periods of high employment, the trade unions have more power than when unemployment is high. When the Government needed trade union support to try to curb inflation, the Social Contract resulted in legislation, favourable to the trade unions. This legislation, together with increasing influence of trade unions resulted in increased worker participation and was instrumental in helping to make joint self-regulation in health and safety more effective. However, in the last two years, unemployment has risen as the economic recession has produced changes in the industrial base in Britain. Although at the present time, local authorities have not been affected by redundancies, the trade unions have undoubtedly lost some bargaining power and the balance of power is tipping back towards management. Loss of trade union power has had the effect of reducing power-based worker participation and therefore is likely to reduce the effectiveness of joint self-regulation of health and safety. The present economic recession and high levels of unemployment have meant not only that there is less money available for maintenance and replacement of plant and machinery, but also an understandable pre-occupation with job security among the workforce. Workers and their representatives are reluctant to raise health and safety issues if they fear being labelled as 'trouble-makers' and having their jobs put at risk. Safety representatives may be opting out of joint self-regulation and leaving the entire responsibility for setting and monitoring of health and safety standards to management.

The internal factors, some of which are described above, which all interact with each other, have a direct effect on self-regulation in the Local Authority. However, the external factors, which interact with these internal factors, also have an important if more indirect effect upon how successful joint self-regulation of health and safety is in this Local Authority.

12.3 Recommendations for further research

This project has indicated at various points that there are important differences between the public and private sectors of British industry and it is not proposed to describe these again here. However, it would be useful for a comparison to be made of the effectiveness of self-regulation in organisations from a variety of industries in both sectors. The effects of the present economic recession on safety standards could be described and it is hypothesised that there may be significant differences, with the private sector being more adversely affected by lack of resources than the public sector because of the influence of the profit motive on the former. Other factors which may affect safety standards reflect the different industries, the strength of the trade unions involved, and the prevailing traditions in the individual organisations. It would be very difficult to match organisations from both sectors to control for the influence of factors on health and safety. In addition to the factors mentioned above, size and location of the organisations could be matched.

The fieldwork for the present study was initiated within two years of the introduction of the SRSC Regulations and a further study after ten years or so could show whether the initial

enthusiasm and impetus will be maintained. Will safety representatives still be attending either introductory safety training courses or refresher courses? Will they be carrying out inspections and monitoring standards in their workplace and feel that they can report hazards which will then be dealt with by management? Will safety committees still be meeting regularly and making recommendations for improvements which are then implemented? Will senior managers be attending meetings and demonstrating their commitment to health and safety?

It is now a decade since the introduction of the HASAWA and it is possible that in the next decade safety representatives, having made some impact by instigating improvements, may find it difficult to maintain the momentum and may 'sit back' not make efforts for further improvements or even ensure the maintenance of present standards. There is evidence that the trade unions are consolidating present health and safety standards. They are continuing to "develop training, information and propaganda activities even if they are not expanding their health and safety departments." (HSIB March 1983, page 2)

Management may feel that health and safety improvements made in the late 1970s were made on a 'once and for all basis' and that they do not expect to have to continue with an ongoing self-examination of the standards prevailing in their organisation.

The hypothesised model described in Chapter Nine which was adapted from the Lewis consensus and conflict models, was partly based on the findings from this project but is partly speculative. Further work would be required to test it empirically to see if both consultation and negotiation are used as routes in an attempt

to reduce the hazards that lead to accidents.

A model is essentially a series of hypotheses about behaviour within a system and some attempt should be made to test and validate the model. However, if the only acceptable systems models were those which others could not succeed in falsifying, then modelling may become a little used technique. This is because the subject matter of modelling is so complex, and the extent of the knowledge base about human activity systems is less than fully adequate. Therefore the systems model is unlikely to withstand attempts to falsify it.

Although a model that has not been validated has limited usefulness with regard to drawing general conclusions, it can still provide an interesting and instructive view of one case. I would submit that in this project, which is entirely based in one organisation, the model shown in Figure 9.5 is an attempt to illustrate some of the empirical findings from this particular study. The model has not been generated to make predictions about how a system will behave under different circumstances but to communicate ideas about the system during one period in time and to provide insights into how the different elements of the system interact.

There are three approaches to the problem of validation of models which are described below and any rigorous attempt to validate a systems model should include elements of all three.

With the Rationalist Approach, a model is seen as a system of logical deductions from a series of premises whose 'truth' is unquestionable. The basic underlying assumptions must be

identified. Some of the main assumptions are based on the two models by Lewis (1977). For example, that trade unions - through their representatives, and management are both attempting to reduce hazards. Also that the safety committee is given safety representative reports and information on accident statistics and trends. We must ask if the assumptions that factors such as lack of resources, lack of training and unsafe working conditions contribute to hazards is true. The model assumes that external factors such as economic constraints and legislation affect both the safety committee and JCCs, that is the consultative machinery of the organisation, and also the process of negotiation. The model also assumes that negotiation, consultation and a mixture of the two are used to tackle the same problem, that is, the reduction of hazards.

In order to test this model, all of the above underlying assumptions would have to be identified in order to then go on to test them.

In the second approach to validation, the Empiricist Approach, there is a refusal to accept any assumptions however basic unless they can be independently verified and supported by empirical evidence. A priori assumptions underlying the model must be looked at and an attempt made to verify empirically one or more of its basic assumptions.

Empirical data already exist which show the existence of safety committees and JCCs which discuss safety matters. There is also evidence of the use of both consultative and negotiating strategies and a mixture of both by management and trade union representatives. Further investigations could be made however, for example to find

out whether external influences affect both negotiation and consultative machinery and if so, to what extent each is influenced. Do the factors, some of which have already been identified, actually contribute to hazards and if they do, can negotiation and consultation or a mixture of the two strategies help to eliminate or reduce these hazards? Which strategy is seen by the parties to be most effective? It may also be interesting to find out whether the same individuals (shop stewards and safety representatives) are involved with both negotiation and consultative machinery in the workplace, or if different individuals are involved in each case.

The Predictive Approach to validation is concerned with the ability of the model to predict the behaviour of the dependent variables, for example, reduction of hazards, included in the model. Goodness of fit between the predictions of the model and the actual situation should be as close as possible. This type of approach is more relevant to the type of quantitative model produced by economists. However, it may be possible to compare the speculative relationships within the model with the 'real-life' situation existing in the actual organisation.

This project has shown that at the time of collecting data, safety representatives and safety committees appeared to be reasonably effective agents of self-regulation in this Scottish Local Authority. Supervisors were well trained but felt a lack of authority to enforce the rules, and were aware of the conflict they sometimes experienced between insisting on safe working and facilitating the maximum earnings of those workers on bonus system payments.

This is one of the few detailed studies of self-regulation of health and safety in an organisation in the public sector and has, hopefully, highlighted some of the important differences between this sector, and the private sector where most previous research work has been done.

It would be interesting to see similar work done in other areas of the public sector in the future, with a view to comparing the findings with those from this study where the research was conducted over a very interesting period in economic, social and political terms.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

THE LOCAL AUTHORITY STUDIED

The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 was designed to bring the conduct of local affairs into line with present day needs.

In order to make Scottish local government effective, a major reorganisation took place in 1975. This process is often referred to as 'Regionalisation' because the old authorities were abolished and 'the Region' became the new main local authority.

The functions of four cities, 21 large burghs, 176 small burghs, 22 counties and 196 districts were handed over in May 1975 to new councils elected to administer Scotland as nine Regions and 53 Districts with special provision for Orkney, Shetland the Western Isles. There is now a two-tier system of local government in Scotland.

1. Regional Authorities are responsible for large scale services such as Education, Social Work, Fire Brigade, Water Supplies, Public Transport, Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths, Valuation for Rating, Electoral Registration, Drainage and Roads.
2. District Authorities are responsible for those services more efficiently administered at a more local level such as - Housing, Parks, Environmental Health, Public Libraries, Museums and Art Galleries, Licensing and Burial Grounds.

This reorganisation was on an enormous scale and was a formidable task, the results of which have not been without criticism. However, we are now well into the second four-year period of this method of organisation and some of the initial confusion felt by the public has been overcome and some of the problems of the division of tasks and responsibilities between Regions and Districts have been clarified and discussed.

This project is based on a Scottish Regional Authority and this Appendix provides some information about the Region concerned and about the responsibilities of the various departments of the Local Authority. The four departments; in which the implementation of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 will be looked at in detail, will be more fully described later.

The Region concerned covers a population of 754,000 and it occupies an area of 677 square miles which includes industrial areas and also rich farming country. A city is also part of the geographical area served by the Regional Council.

The Regional Council is comprised of 49 elected members - the councillors, whose leader is known as the Convenor, being nominated by the elected members.

Councillors, as the elected representatives of the people, decide on policy. Officers, the paid employees of the local authority, carry into effect the councillors' policy decisions. However, in practice, senior officers are closely involved in giving advice on matters of policy.

Councillors are citizens drawn from the community who are paid allowances for their council work but no regular salary. The councillors are organised on a party basis, and the Council itself is the supreme decision-making body of the Authority. The Council normally meets every three weeks. Its purpose is to discuss and formulate policy and it also permits public debate of issues concerning the services which the Council provides to the community.

Elections to the Regional Council first took place in 1974 and are to be held every four years thereafter. The Council is assisted in its work by a system of committees.

THE COMMITTEES

Policy and Resources Committee - This committee is made up of 15 councillors and its membership reflects the current political power of the ruling party within the Council. It normally meets once every three weeks. Its main functions are:

1. To advise the Council on policy objectives and priorities and the allocation and control of financial, manpower and land resources.
2. To review the effectiveness of the Council's policies and the standards and level of service provided, the organisation and management processes of the Council, the committee and departmental structures and the distribution of functions and responsibilities.
3. To co-ordinate the activities of the other committees.
4. To consider new policies or changes in policy formulated by other committees and the effect of such matters on the policy plan or resources of the Council, and when required, to advise the Council on the necessity for major changes in policy.

Resource Committees

There are three Resource Committees:

1. Finance
2. Manpower
3. Planning and Development.

The Finance Committee is made up of 11 councillors while the Manpower and Planning and Development Committees have 15 councillors. The Resource Committees are each responsible for preparing plans and budgets for the management of the resource for which they are each responsible. The Finance Committee is responsible for finance management, The Manpower Committee for the management of the labour force, and the Planning and Development Committee for the management of land use and industrial development.

Service Committees

There are six service committees, each responsible for a major type of service which the Council provides to the community - Education, Social Work, Leisure Services, Water and Drainage, Transportation, General Purposes. The Service Committees study the needs of the community in respect of each particular service, look at possible ways of meeting these needs, and make their recommendations to the Council. They have delegated power to make decisions concerning their particular service in many instances. Once a particular policy has been agreed by the Council, the appropriate service committee prepares detailed plans for carrying it out, and ensures that these are carried out effectively.

THE MANAGEMENT OF THE REGIONAL COUNCIL

The Regional Council employs over 35,000 people and it is managed on a departmental basis under the leadership of the Chief Executive who is the head of the administration and management of the services provided to the community. He is responsible for the effective implementation of the Council's policies and programmes. In doing so, he must also make sure that the human, physical and financial resources available to the Council are used to maximum effect to meet the political will of the elected Council.

The Chief Executive reports to the Council through the Policy and Resources Committee, advises the Council on matters of policy and makes recommendations for improvements in the administration and management of the Council's services. The Executive Office gives advice and assistance to the Chief Executive in carrying out a wide range of duties and keeps him fully informed of important matters as they arise. The Executive Office comprises the Chief Executive and Directors of Administration, Finance and Policy Planning.

Each major council service or group of related services is administered by a department, each headed by a Chief Officer known as the Director who has a Depute. The Region's management team consists of the Directors of all the Council departments and is headed by the Chief Executive. It is the central point at official level where the Council's services are co-ordinated and controlled and is an example of corporate management. The management team examines plans put forward by the various service Directors for the running of their department so that possible alternatives can be examined and any adjustments or improvements made before they are carried out.

There are two basic types of departments within the Regional Council:

1. Service departments which are each responsible for providing a particular service to the public, such as Public Transport and Education.
2. Central Support Services which are each responsible for providing services to the Service Departments, such as Finance and Public Relations.

The Regional Council had a budget in excess of £250 million in 1979 to provide for its major responsibilities such as providing education, social work, water supplies and a transport service.

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE REGIONAL DEPARTMENTS

Administration Department is based at the Regional Council Headquarters and it provides a wide range of services to councillors and officials. It looks after members' library and information services, while several enquiry offices run by the department provide information to the public on regional services. Keeping minutes of committees and noting their decisions are functions of the committee division, while a printing section supplies agendas and minutes to keep both councillors and officials informed.

A legal division deals with the conveyancing involved in the purchase and sale of land and properties, the legal formalities in Council contracts and it also represents the Council in the Sheriff Court and at Tribunals. The legal division has a part to play in promoting local orders and by-laws.

A personnel section carries out a wide range of tasks relating to Council employees and is divided into four sections. The staff administration section deals with salaries, wages and conditions of service and provides a link between the department and various committees. The Manpower Planning section provides manpower statistics and comments on their implications, develops systems and planning procedures, assists in review of salary grading, manning levels and organisational structures. The Industrial Relations Section is charged with establishing sound industrial relations procedures, developing effective consultative machinery, assisting in labour relations and all aspects of industrial relations legislation. The Training and Staff Development Section is responsible for the development of effective training and staff development programmes both centrally and within the departments of the Council.

The Registrar, via a chain of Registry Offices, is responsible for the registration of births, deaths and marriages and for compiling statistics for transmission to Central Government.

The Department of Administration has overall control of several specialists - the Public Relations Officer, the Medical Adviser and the Public Analyst.

Architectural Services is a department responsible for the quality and control of the Council's buildings and maintenance programme. The Region owns over 3,000 properties, 800 of which are major buildings requiring regular maintenance and repair. The repair budget for Regional establishments is about £6½ million and there is an annual building programme in excess of £20 million.

Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer

The two main responsibilities undertaken by this department are preparation of the valuation roll, showing owners and occupiers of every property, including land in the Region, and the annual preparation of the Register of Electors.

The Children's Panel

The operation of the Children's hearings which took over the work of the old style juvenile courts is a Regional function and is headed by the Reporter. Children who are either alleged to have committed offences or who are in need of protection are referred to the Reporter who will arrange for a hearing by three members of the Panel. This section works closely with the Department of Education and Social Work.

Consumer Protection

This department monitors commercial activity for quantity, quality, price and safety backed by 22 Acts of Parliament commencing with the original Weights and Measures Act of 1879. Consumer protection provides a comprehensive advice service from an Advice Centre and there is a mobile caravan that tours main shopping centres throughout the Region.

The Education Department is the largest department of the Regional Council with a revenue budget of more than £133 million in 1979 and over 20,000 people of whom 10,500 are teachers. The department is responsible for 48 secondary schools, 245 primary schools, 44 nurseries and 28 special schools for the handicapped. These accommodate a total of 140,000 children. Six colleges of Further Education are run by the Department and these provide for about 6,000 full-time and 11,000 day release students on a wide variety of courses. A new concept in education is the school and community complex and the Region has three such facilities. The department also runs 75 committee centres as well as six outdoor education centres outwith the Region geographically.

Estate Surveyor provides a service to the Regional Council regarding the purchase, lease, development, disposal and appropriation of land and property belonging to the Council.

The Finance Department is responsible for the provision of general and specialist services to all departments as well as to councillors. It is responsible for the Regional Council budget which exceeded £250 million in 1979. The Department deals with the payment of all creditors and contractors as well as employees' wages and salaries and pensions. Revenue finance, capital finance and rates collection are handled by this Department which houses a computer which services not only the needs of the Regional Council but also those of other authorities.

The Department of Industrial Development is a small department which plays a key role in the future of the Region and is concerned with the development of existing business and the encouragement of new ones.

Leisure Services

Along with the District Councils, this Department is closely involved in promoting all forms of recreation and leisure activities for residents and tourists. For this purpose the Department is divided into three divisions: culture and international tourism; recreation; nature resources.

The Department of Physical Planning

Strategic planning is now a major Regional function and the Department of Physical Planning is responsible for the production of a framework of proposals for land use, the development and improvement of the environment, and for the management of traffic. The first structure plan, an obligation of the Local Government (Scotland) Act of 1973, concentrates on the pattern of settlement, location of industry and employment, mobility of the population and transport and on the use of the countryside.

Policy Planning is a central service that co-ordinates the forward thinking of all departments on aspects of Council work and advises on priorities. Co-ordination of transport policies and control of urban deprivation programmes are among the other functions of this department.

The Social Work Department is the second largest Department in the Region and in 1979 its expenditure was £36 million and it employs 8,000 people. It is a very complex department and provides a service of social welfare advice, financial support, domiciliary care and residential care. Assistance includes marriage guidance, daycare for children and support of play groups, holidays for children and supervision of children in trouble. The Department also runs a sheltered workshop for blind and severely disabled people and a hostel for recovering alcoholics. A social work team is based at the prison in the area.

Joint Functions

The Fire and Police services are administered jointly between the local authorities concerned through joint boards.

APPENDIX 2

THE FOUR DEPARTMENTS IN THE STUDY

The four departments which were studied in this project are described below in some detail.

The Water Supply Services and the Drainage Department are administered by the Water and Drainage Committee, and the Highways and Transport departments are administered by the Transportation Committee.

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS

The Highways Department employs around 1,500 people and covers a large geographical area. The Department is divided into six sections, namely Highway Maintenance Project, Transportation and Highway Planning, Traffic Management, Administration and Lighting.

Highway Maintenance

All roads in the region, including motorways and trunk roads which extend to 2,000 miles are maintained by this section. Work is carried out by both direct labour and under contract. As well as the building of new roads, schemes for improvements to existing roads are also prepared. The staff are based in four sub-regional offices with co-ordination carried out by a small group from Headquarters.

Within this group there is also an independently organised section under the Works Controller who is responsible for all direct labour working on roads. Planning and control are the responsibility of the Works Controller.

Projects

In this section there is a rolling programme of a variety of highway schemes which includes planning, design and supervision. The programme derives from the Transport Policies and Programme which is prepared annually to the Transportation Planning Section in accordance with the requirements of the Scottish Development Department on trunk roads.

Transportation and Highway Planning

This section is involved with the preparation of reports for the Council to formulate transportation policy, and to translate this policy into practice. As well as the preparation of the Transport Policies and Programme document, this also involves the organisation of surveys and the analysis of statistics employing computer techniques. There is also liaison with Physical Planning in the preparation of highway input to the Development Plan, the Structure Plan and local plans.

Traffic Management

This section is involved with the preparation of traffic signal schemes, some of which are now fully computerised, parking control schemes, but priority schemes, environmental traffic management schemes and various types of Traffic Control Orders in co-operation with the Police and Legal Departments.

Also dealt with are all traffic signs, carriageway markings, siting of islands and bus stops and road safety in general. Pedestrianisation schemes are also being prepared.

Administration

This section carries out the usual administration functions for the department and it is here that the Director, Senior Managers and Safety Officer are based.

Lighting Department

It is fairly unusual for a Highways Department to incorporate lighting as one of its responsibilities. Half of the workforce are employed on the contracting work done to maintain Regional property, for example, re-wiring a school. The other half of the workforce are responsible for the maintenance of street lighting and the flood lighting of public buildings.

There are depots in each of the sub-regions covered by the Department and there are large workshops at the depot within the city. Here a variety of work takes place, for example maintenance of plant belonging to the Department such as diggers and rollers. There is a paint area where road signs are given a luminous surface and park furniture is repaired and painted. In the blacksmith's shop, barriers for pavements are made along with road signs of all sizes - very large ones being needed for the stretch of motorway included in the geographical area concerned. In the joiner's shop, cabins and toilets used by mobile squads of workers are repaired as they are often damaged by vandals. Also at this depot there can be seen large stockpiles of grit and salt ready to load on to gritters which operate in icy weather. A 24-hour radio service is based here which receives weather reports and can quickly get gritters on to the road if bad weather is forecast. There is a large store area containing protective clothing such as fluorescent jackets, boots and overalls as well as several different types of tools. An outside area stores large quantities of items such as pavement slabs.

An old depot has been turned into a training school and a training officer and two instructors have been appointed. A class of sixteen school leavers attend a training course lasting for two years which covers excavation, spreading of materials, road building, kerb laying, fencing and also the safety elements in these jobs. The trainees also go on a day release course to obtain City and Guilds certificates.

The Department has two working quarries from which they obtain stone for construction and road building.

DEPARTMENT OF DRAINAGE

This Department is divided into four sub-regions and it carries out a variety of functions which are described below and which give employment to approximately 450 people.

There are 33 sewage works of varying sizes throughout the area and there is a recently opened sewage disposal scheme which cost £35 million pounds to construct. The works have been built on a site reclaimed from the foreshore and sewage disposal is carried out by dumping at sea from a specially constructed ship. The function of this works is to collect, separate, treat and dispose of the sewage of the area. There is also a Trade Effluent section which regularly carries out checks to ensure that industry is not discharging any harmful substances into the drains.

Other functions of the Department are coastal protection, prevention of flooding which entails the repair of sea walls, and the watching of rivers and streams. The Department is responsible in its area for the control of oil pollution. Small harbours along the coast are also kept in good order and not allowed to silt up. There is a management and operations group which is divided into five sections - including administration.

The Department has similar hazards to others described in this study, such as excavations and lifting and handling. However, there are other dangers which do not exist in other departments such as the danger of coming into contact with untreated sewage which can cause diseases such as typhoid. There is a full programme of immunisation available for workers at risk, and rodent control has lessened the risk of leptospirosis from walking in sewers. Entry into confined spaces is probably the most hazardous procedure in the Department as there can be a build up of sewer gases which could rapidly overcome a man. For this reason full training is given into the use of breathing apparatus and resuscitation methods. The equipment also has to be inspected, serviced and maintained. Rescue techniques are also taught and practiced. The fact that these particular hazards are potentially so dangerous makes workers very aware of them and means that they occur rarely.

In common with the Water Supply Services, the Drainage Department subscribes to the National Water Council and uses some of its training facilities. The Director of the Drainage Department has recently been appointed Chairman of the Scottish Association of Directors of the Water and Sewage Services which has a safety group with safety officers of the relevant departments in Scottish local authorities among its members.

Because of the potential health hazards associated with working with sewage and in sewers, there is more emphasis on medical requirements for employees in this Department where good selection and training are particularly important.

WATER SUPPLY SERVICES

For 300 years there has been a department supplying drinking water to the area. Over the years the population of the area has increased and the area of countryside used for water suppliers has widened.

In 1967, there were a large number of water authorities in Scotland, some of which were very small. In order to rationalise this situation, water boards with considerable financial and technical resources were formed. The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 dissolved the water boards from May 1975 and the supply of water became the responsibility of the new Regional Authority. This is the reverse of the situation in England where there are large water boards. The supply of water in Scotland now came under the corporate management system of local authorities with its attendant rules and regulations and generally bureaucratic structure.

The Water Supply Services pay an annual fee to the National Water Council which has some representatives in Scotland. In return the Department receive assistance with problems and publications. The National Water Council have a training centre at Kilwinning in Ayrshire to which employees of the Water Supply Services go to attend various courses. It is understandable in view of the history of water services described above that there is some feeling of identification with the National Water Council where relevant training can be undertaken and common problems discussed with members of other local authorities.

Nearly 440 people are employed in the Water Supply Services Department to operate and maintain the existing works and distribution system, and to design and provide new works. The Department is grouped into a Headquarter's section and three operational sub-regions.

The Region's water comes from 22 impounding reservoirs, 19 stream intakes and more than 260 springs. It is augmented by nine million gallons a day from the Water Board of another region of Scotland. Apart from the spring supplies which are of very good quality and only require to be chlorinated, all the water passes through one or other of the 14 treatment works operated by Water Supply Services.

The vast majority of the 754,000 people who live in the region have water supplies on tap. Daily consumption in the region amounts to 57 million gallons (which in weight is more than a quarter of a million tons). This is equal to 75.5 gallons for every person every day of the year. About a third of this water goes to commerce and industry. After the water is collected from springs and rivers, it is stored in reservoirs and treated at filter stations and other works to ensure that it is wholesome and then it is finally delivered through hundreds of miles of piping to homes and business premises.

The council has embarked on a multi-million pound scheme which involves the building of a new reservoir to provide an additional 22½ million gallons of water a day.

The water used by domestic consumers is paid for by means of the domestic and public water rate levied on the rateable value of the property. Commercial and industrial consumers have meters fixed to their supply pipes and are charged for the amount of water they use.

There are several specialist sections of the Water Supply Services which are described below:

Scientific

To ensure that water delivered at consumers' taps is wholesome as required by law, the Department has a scientific section which continually samples and monitors the quality of the water before, during and after treatment. The staff also give advice on the operation of treatment plant and other aspects of the water supply - relating for example to chemistry, zoology and biology.

Civil Engineering

This section is responsible for the design of certain new works and for co-ordinating work carried out for the Department by consulting engineers. It investigates future water requirements and supervises the construction of filter stations, covered concrete service reservoirs and pipelines.

Electrical/Mechanical Engineering

Besides repairing and maintaining vehicles and mobile plant at their workshop, this section maintains electrical and mechanical plant at such places as reservoirs and filter stations.

Plumbing Inspectors

These are the experts who ensure that new plumbing installed in houses, factories and other buildings conforms to the 'By-laws for Preventing Waste, Contamination, etc. of Water'. They give advice where necessary to plumbers, architects and builders engaged in new plumbing work.

Waste Detectors

Many of the mains and service pipes for which the Department is responsible are old and regular checking is necessary to ensure that there is no excessive wasting through leaks. This is done through a waste inspection section specialising in the locating of leaks in underground mains, service pipes and the premises of consumers.

Repairs to Mains and Services

Repair squads based in the sub-regions ensure that leaks and bursts in mains and services which are the responsibility of the Department are repaired quickly. Generally, the Department's responsibility ends at the boundary of the street in which the main is laid.

New Main Laying

This section lays some of the new mains required for housing development and to reinforce the existing system.

Administration/Finance

Although some administrative and finance functions are centralised at the Regional Council Headquarters, Water Supply Services has an administrative/finance section responsible for the primary preparation of salaries and wages, operating incentive bonus schemes, costing, accounts and personnel functions.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The Transport Department is a large one with over 2,500 employees whose main responsibility is to provide an efficient public transport system using a modern and well-maintained fleet of 600 buses and 1,000 ancillary vehicles.

As the region is popular with tourists particularly during the summer months, the Transport Department is also responsible for the provision of a comprehensive tour bus service covering city tours and now being extended further into the surrounding areas.

In order to ensure the smooth running of this public service, this large Department is divided into four functional units and into several geographical units. The four functional units are:

The Planning Section

Much planning is needed to co-ordinate public transport in the area. The regional buses, part of the Scottish bus group and also private transport firms all have a part to play in maintaining an efficient system covering not only the city but also the outlying country areas which fall within the Regional Council's boundaries.

One recent innovation within the city from the Planning Section has been the introduction of bus lanes which may not be entered by cars and which have made it easier for buses to keep to their timetables, especially during the morning and evening rush hours.

The Commercial Section

This includes such departments as Finance, Accounts, Revenue and Expenditure and Personnel which includes Welfare and Staff Development.

Traffic Operations

This Section is responsible for bus operations and ensuring that buses run efficiently and to a timetable. There is a radio control centre and all bus drivers keep in touch by radio as do inspectors in their vehicles.

The Engineering Section

There must be sufficient buses on the road to meet the demands of a Region where over the years the bus services are

being used by increasing numbers of people. This may be due to the policy of 'freezing' bus fares for several years so making the use of public transport an attractive alternative for people travelling about the Region.

The Engineering Department carry out repairs to buses (sometimes caused by vandals) and also carry out regular servicing to minimise the chance of breakdown of buses and disruption of timetables.

The Transport Department is divided into eight main locations. The Head Office accommodates most of the administrative staff and the Director and General Manager are based here.

In the main workshops several processes take place and there is a variety of machines. This workshop was classified as a factory before the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act and so could be inspected by the Factory Inspectorate. Some of the processes which take place in these workshops are: metal casting, forging, engine turning, wood-working, upholstering, a paint shop where buses are painted, a bus repair shop where buses are repaired after accidents or are made ready for re-certification. The radio control centre is also housed here and there is an administration block where the Chief Engineer is based. There are also three other workshops for servicing and repairing ancillary vehicles and three garages for routine maintenance and garaging of buses. New workshop premises have recently been purchased which will, among other things, house a Government bus testing station.

Napier College

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Your ref

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Date

RESEARCH PROJECT ON HEALTH AND SAFETY

I am at present engaged on a three year research project to examine how the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) is being implemented in a Scottish Local Authority. In order to do this I am looking at four departments of Lothian Regional Council.

I am particularly interested in the self regulatory aspects of health and safety and the important part that the safety representative plays in this area. I have drawn up a questionnaire which will be sent to all safety representatives in the four departments being studied.

Before this can be done it is necessary to ensure that the questions asked are the right ones, that they make sense to practicing safety representatives and that they are clearly worded.

To do this I am conducting a limited pilot study and it would be greatly appreciated if you could assist in this by completing the attached questionnaire.

Many of the questions require only a tick or a "yes" or "no" answer and the entire questionnaire will not take too much time to complete.

It is not necessary for your name to appear on the questionnaire so you can be assured that any information will be strictly confidential.

Thank you very much for your help.

Anita Levinson.

SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please tick the boxes provided where appropriate.

1. Which department do you work in? _____

2. For how long have you worked in this department? _____

3. To which trade union do you belong? _____

4. Please give your age: ..

| | |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| 20 or under | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21-30 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31-40 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 41-50 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 51-60 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| over 60 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

5. For how long have you been a safety representative? _____

6. How did you become a safety representative? Were you:

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| (a) elected | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) appointed by a trade union | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) both (a) and (b) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (d) if another method, please describe: _____ | |

7. Are you a shop steward as well as a safety representative?

Yes No

If "No", go to Question 10.

8. If "Yes", do you find that the two roles ever conflict?

Yes No

9. If you have experienced this conflict, can you give an example?

10. Have you ever experienced conflict with a supervisor related to Health and Safety matters?

Yes No

11. If "Yes", can you give details about the last occasion this occurred?

12. Are you a member of a safety committee?

Yes No

If "No", go to Question 22.

13. If "Yes", are you a member of:

(a) a sub-regional committee?

(b) a departmental committee of J.C.C. on safety?

(c) both of these?

14. Do you feel that recommendations and points discussed by the safety committee(s) are followed up:

(a) always

(b) often

(c) fairly often

(d) never

15. What was the last major recommendation made by the safety committee, and what action was taken on it?

16. Do the safety committee to which you belong make inspections of the workplace?

Yes No

/17. . . .

17. If "Yes", how frequently are inspections made? _____

18. If "No", why do you think they do not inspect?

19. Do the safety committee(s) you are a member of discuss:

(a) important issues

(give an example):

and/or (b) trivial points

(give an example):

20. Can you indicate your reaction to the following statements by ticking the relevant boxes:

(a) "Safety committees provide a genuine opportunity for management and employees to co-operate over Health and Safety".

strongly agree
agree
disagree
strongly disagree

(b) "Safety committees provide an excuse for management to delay action on Health and Safety issues".

strongly agree
agree
disagree
strongly disagree

21. Can you give any other views you wish to express about the functioning of safety committees?

22. Have you been on a training course for safety representatives?

Yes No

If "No", go to Question 25.

23. If "Yes", please state which courses(s) you have attended:

24. Which aspects of the above course(s) have you found most useful in your workplace? (please tick which ones)

- (a) hazard spotting skills
- (b) legal knowledge
- (c) accident investigation skills
- (d) negotiating skills
- (e) committee procedures
- (f) technical skills (e.g. sampling or monitoring the workplace environment)

| |
|--|
| |
| |
| |
| |
| |
| |

(g) please describe any other skills/knowledge that have proved useful:

or (h) none of the above has proved useful in my workplace

25. Do you personally make safety inspections?

Yes No

If "No", go to Question 27.

26. If "Yes",

(a) How often do you inspect? _____

(b) Who accompanies you? _____

(c) Do you use a checklist?

Yes No

27. If you do not make safety inspections, can you give reasons for this?

28. Do you investigate accidents and dangerous occurrences which occur in the workplace?

Yes No

If "No", go to Question 31.

29. If "Yes", can you give an example of a recent investigation you have made?

30. To whom do you send the report of your investigation? _____

31. Has a Health and Safety Executive inspector ever visited your department?

Yes No Don't know

If "No" or "Don't know", go to Question 33.

/32. . . .

32. If "Yes",

(a) have you ever accompanied an inspector on an inspection?

yes no

(b) has an inspector come to speak to you during his/her visit?

yes no

(c) have you received a copy of an inspector's report after a visit?

yes no

(d) have you received a copy of any Improvement or Prohibition Notices served on your department?

yes no don't know if any
have been served

33. Have you ever reported to the Health and Safety Executive something which is unsafe?

yes no

34. If "Yes", can you please give details:

35. What aspects of a safety representative's work do you see as being most important?

36. What particular Health and Safety issues take up most of your time?

/37. . . .

37. When health and Safety issues are raised do you feel you get the support of:

| Yes | No |
|-----|----|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

- (a) the people you represent?
- (b) management?
- (c) your trade union?
- (d) others (e.g. a local hazard group)?

38. If the answer to any part of Question 37 is "No", could you give some further information.

39. Have you ever been consulted by management on:

| Yes | No |
|-----|----|
| | |
| | |
| | |

- (a) re-writing of the departmental safety policy?
 - (b) devising safe systems of work?
 - (c) how to motivate the workforce?
 - (d) some other subject to do with Health and Safety? (please describe):
-

40. On the last occasion you were approached by management on a Health and Safety issue, what did the issue involve?

41. What was the outcome?

42. Have you ever experienced any problems about:

(a) getting time off to perform safety representative duties?

yes no

If "Yes", please give details:

(b) getting information on Health and Safety?

yes no

If "Yes", please give details:

(c) getting on a training course?

yes no

If "Yes", please give details:

(d) getting protective clothing or equipment for employees?

yes no

If "Yes", please give details:

(e) any other aspects of safety representative functions?

yes no

If "Yes", please give details:

43. Is there a Bonus Scheme in operation in your workplace?

yes no

If "No", go to Question 45.

44. If "Yes", what type of scheme is it?

/45. . . .

45. "Some people feel that the bonus system works against safe working methods". Do you agree with this statement?

Yes No

46. If "Yes", in what way do you find the bonus system contributes to unsafe practices or working conditions?

47. Is the procedure for raising and pursuing Health and Safety issues at work the same as for the existing grievance procedure?

Yes No

If "No", go to Question 49.

48. If "Yes", how often is this procedure used for Health and Safety issues? (please tick one box)

(a) often
 (b) occasionally
 (c) never

49. If "No", how does the procedure differ?

50. Are members of the workforce ever disciplined for breaches of Health and Safety practices in the workplace? (e.g. not wearing protective clothing)

(a) often
 (b) sometimes
 (c) never

51. Do you see your relationship with management mainly as:

(a) consultative?
 (b) negotiative?
 (c) a mixture of both?

CONSULTATION is used where the basic aims of trade unions and management are held to be essentially similar.
NEGOTIATION is used where there is held to be a fundamental divergence of interests between the two parties.

/52. . . .

52. Can you please add any further comments you may have on being a safety representative or on Health and Safety at work in general:

Thank you very much for taking the trouble to complete this questionnaire.

Napier College

OF
COMMERCE & TECHNOLOGY

Please reply to

- Colinton Road, Edinburgh, EH10 5DT 031-447 7070
 Sighthill Court, Edinburgh, EH11 4BN 031-443 6061

Research Project on Health and Safety

I am at present engaged on a three-year research project to examine how the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) is being implemented in a Scottish Local Authority. In order to do this I am looking in detail at four departments of Lothian Regional Council of which your department is one.

It is important to try to get the views of people who supervise others as they play such an important part in maintaining a safe workplace. I have drawn up a questionnaire which will be sent to all those who work in a supervisory capacity in the four departments. A copy is enclosed with this letter and I should be most grateful if you would complete the questionnaire and return it to me in the enclosed stamped, addressed envelope.

Many of the questions require only a tick or a "Yes" or "No" answer and the entire questionnaire will not take too much time to complete.

Each questionnaire is numbered so that I will know which have been completed. However, information from the questionnaires will be kept strictly confidential and individuals' identities will be known only by myself.

I have been given full co-operation from people at all levels in the four departments and also from the trade unions, and I hope that the report which will be produced will be of benefit to all in providing information on how Health and Safety is implemented in a Local Authority. I therefore hope that you will be able to assist in this project by completing and returning your questionnaire. If you should wish to see a short summary of the results of this questionnaire, I should be pleased to send one to you when the work is completed.

Thank you very much for your help.

Anita Levinson

SUPERVISORS' HEALTH AND SAFETY QUESTIONNAIRE

Please tick the boxes provided where appropriate.

1. In which Department do you work? _____

2. Are you:

(a) a chargehand

(b) a foreman

(c) a supervisor

(d) a superintendent

| |
|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |

(e) if some other grading, please state _____

3. For how long have you held this job in the department? _____

4. Please give your age:

20 and under

21-30

31-40

41-50

51-60

61 and over

| |
|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> |

5. Do you make safety inspections?

Yes

No

If "No", go to Question 7.

6. If "Yes",

(a) How often do you make safety inspections? _____

(b) Who accompanies you? _____

/(c) . . .

(c) Do you use a checklist when making safety inspections

| | |
|------------|--------------------------|
| always? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| sometimes? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| never? | <input type="checkbox"/> |

7. If you do not make safety inspections, can you give reasons for this?

8. Do you investigate accidents and dangerous occurrences in the workplace?

| | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|

If "No", go to Question 11.

9. If "Yes", can you give an example of a recent investigation you have made?

10. To whom do you send the report of your investigation? _____

11. Has a Health and Safety Executive inspector ever visited your department?

| | | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|------------|--------------------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> | Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|------------|--------------------------|

12. Have you ever reported to the Health and Safety Executive something which was unsafe?

| | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|

/13. . . .

3. If "Yes", can you give details.
4. What particular Health and Safety responsibilities take up most of your time?
5. What do you consider to be the most useful contribution to safe working that can be made by supervisory staff?
16. Have you ever experienced conflict with a safety representative over a Health and Safety issue?
- Yes No
17. If "Yes", can you give details of the last occasion when this occurred?
18. Is there a bonus scheme in operation in your workplace?
- Yes No
19. "Some people feel that a bonus scheme works against safe working methods." Do you agree?
- Yes No

20. If "Yes", in what way does the bonus system contribute to unsafe practices or working conditions in your workplace?

21. Is the procedure for raising and pursuing Health and Safety issues at work the same as for existing grievance procedure?

Yes No Don't know

If "No", go to Question 23.

22. If "Yes", how often is the procedure used for Health and Safety issues?

(a) often
(b) occasionally
(c) never

23. If "No", how does the procedure differ?

24. Are members of the workforce ever disciplined for breaches of Health and Safety practices in the workplace? (e.g. not wearing protective clothing)

(a) often
(b) sometimes
(c) never

25. To what extent do you feel that senior management is committed to creating and maintaining safe working conditions in the department?

(a) not committed
(b) slightly committed
(c) strongly committed

26. Have you been on a training course involving Health and Safety?

Yes No

If "No", go to Question 29.

27. If "Yes", please state which course(s) you have attended.

28. Which aspects of the above course(s) have you found most useful in your work as a supervisor etc?

29. Are you a member of a safety committee?

Yes

No

30. Can you indicate your reaction to the following statements by ticking the relevant boxes:

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| (a) "Safety committees provide a genuine opportunity for management and employees to co-operate over Health and Safety" | | | | |
| (b) "Safety committees provide an excuse for management to delay action on Health and Safety issues" | | | | |

31. Do you train workers in the Health and Safety aspects of their work?

(a) Yes, all workers

(b) Some of them

(c) No, none of them

32. If you ticked (a) or (b) in Question 31, can you give details of the training that you give?

33. Have you been consulted when training programmes on Health and Safety were being drawn up?

Yes

No

34. Do you feel under pressure to keep up "production"

(a) often?

(b) sometimes?

(c) never?

35. When trying to maintain a safe workplace do you feel that you get the support of:

(a) safety representatives?

(b) the workers you supervise?

(c) senior management?

(d) the safety officer?

| Yes | No |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

please tick either "Yes" or "No" for each of (a) to (d)

36. If the answer to any part of Question 35 is "No", can you give further information?

37. Do you see your relationship with the trade unions on Health and Safety issues as:

(a) consultative?

(b) negotiating?

(c) a mixture of both

CONSULTATION is used where the basic aims of trade unions and management are held to be essentially similar.

NEGOTIATION is used where there is held to be a fundamental divergence of interests between the two parties.

38. Can you please add any further comments you may have on your responsibilities

/as

as a supervisor with regard to Health and Safety in the workplace:

Thank you very much for taking the trouble to complete this questionnaire.
Please return to: Mrs. Anita Levinson,
Napier College of Commerce and Technology,
Redwood House,
16, Spylaw Road,
Edinburgh 10.

in the enclosed reply paid envelope.