Growth Patterns of Public Sector Unions*

by

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Growth Patterns of Public Sector Unions

Introduction

Between 1966 and 1981, trade union membership in Canada doubled, reaching 3,487,231 union members (37.4 percent of non-agricultural paid workers).¹ During this period, there has been a significant structural realignment of the labour movement as the influence of international unions ebbed and the influence of national unions expanded. This change is largely attributable to the emergence of public sector unions and the expansion of collective bargaining to all levels and components of the public sector.²

The purpose of this paper is to examine several aspects of public sector union growth since 1911. Specifically, it will provide an overview of union growth, highlight certain characteristics of public sector unions, e.g., size and female membership, and compare union growth among five components of the public sector – the three levels of government, health care and education. The implications of these growth patterns will be discussed in the final section of the paper. Because of data limitations and the exploratory nature of the study, the paper emphasizes divergent patterns of union growth within the public sector rather than developing and testing a unified model of the growth process. Before turning to the analysis, there will be a discussion of data sources and methodology and a brief review of the union growth literature.

Data Sources and Methodology

Ponak defined the public sector to include:

a) the federal civil service;
b) provincial civil services;
c) municipal employment;
d) health care;
e) education; and
f) government enterprises (for example, Air Canada, Hydro-Québec).³
This definition not only cuts across several industrial classifications, but covers employees who bargain under private as well as public sector labour relations legislation. Unfortunately, union membership data is not organized along the lines of this definition. In an effort to develop a comprehensive estimate of public sector unionism, our attention focused on individual labour organizations rather than the employing agency. Accordingly, unions which operate exclusively (or almost exclusively) in the public sector are included in the study. As a result, public sector unionism does not include government enterprises which are organized by private sector unions, e.g., Air Canada and the Canadian Airline Pilots Association.

Union membership data were collected from two sources: Directory of Labour Organizations in Canada published by Labour Canada and the Annual Report of Labour Union Activities Under the Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act (C.A.L.U.R.A.) published by Statistics Canada. Although there are discrepancies in overall membership statistics between the two sources and each is subject to certain limitations, they represent the best available information on union membership. A major limitation is that the principle criterion for inclusion in Labour Canada's directory is affiliation with a central labour federation. Consequently, some employee organizations which do not bargain collectively are included.

A time series of public sector unionism was developed from individual union membership figures found in the Directory of Labour Organizations in Canada from 1911 to 1981. There are, however, several gaps in the time series. Individual unions were also classified according to the component of the public sector in which they operate. For most unions this was relatively simple since membership is confined to a single sub-sector, e.g., teachers-education. However, some unions are represented in several components of the public sector. Unfortunately, longitudinal membership data by union and sub-
sector are not available. Therefore, the classification scheme only denotes the predominant characteristic of a union's membership, e.g., the Canadian Union of Public Employees (C.U.P.E.) was classified as a municipal union. Classifying C.U.P.E. in this manner produces an overestimate of municipal unionism and understates membership in health care and education (predominantly non-professional employees). Consequently, union growth in health care and education primarily reflect membership in nurses' and teachers' unions. Because of this limitation, union membership in these components of the public sector should be regarded as "broad" estimates.

The C.A.L.U.R.A. data cover the period 1962-1979. This source provides a detailed breakdown of union membership by province, metropolitan area and sex. This information was used to supplement the Labour Canada data and provided a broader profile of public sector union membership.

Additional information was gathered through a questionnaire and interviews. In the United States, "the most common type of union in the public sector, the mixed union, draws the majority of its members from private industry." A short questionnaire was mailed to 59 private sector unions to determine whether they represented workers within the public sector. Of the 49 unions which responded, 23 had a public sector constituency. Interviews were conducted with representatives from Canada's largest public sector unions, including C.U.P.E., the National Union of Provincial Government Employees (N.U.P.G.E.) and the Public Service Alliance of Canada (P.S.A.C.). The purpose of these interviews was to determine what factors influenced union growth and to compare membership expansion among components of the public sector.
Determinants of Union Growth

Aggregate Union Growth Models

Recently, Fiorito and Greer examined the historical-saturationist explanations of union growth and reviewed the extensive literature on the determinants of U.S. unionism. Briefly, the historical school emphasizes the importance of unique factors to union growth, e.g., war and social upheaval, whereas the saturationists stress structural factors such as changes in labour force characteristics. They found some areas of consensus in the literature.

In general the results show some consistent patterns. Among the time-series analyses, it appears that increases in prices, wages and employment, prior downturns, and a favorable political climate enhance union growth, while increases in unemployment rates and saturation effects tend to inhibit growth. In the cross-sectional analyses, nonwhite and male worker characteristics, income, urbanization, concentration ratios, and various dissatisfaction measures are positively associated with unionism, while education, southern region, and "right to work" laws are negatively related.

They also noted that disagreement continues over the influence of some independent variables and further research is needed to enhance our understanding of the dynamics of union growth. Moreover, the suitability of aggregate union growth models to the public sector experience is still questionable.

Similar problems exist with Canadian data. Three recent studies employing regression analysis examined the effect of economic, institutional and public policy variables on the percentage change in union membership. Swidinsky examined the period 1911-1970 and found union growth was explained by economic fluctuations, strike activity and union growth in the United States. Although no statistically significant results were found for the
sub-period 1911-1939, union growth following the Second World War was explained by "employment growth in the unionized sector, the unemployment rate and the prevailing degree of unionization."12

Bain and Elsheikh constructed a simplified model of union growth employing three independent variables: (1) the current rate of change of American union membership; (2) the current rate of change of prices; and (3) the unemployment rate.13 The model was tested for the years 1921-1969 (and two sub-periods) and found to be satisfactory in terms of overall goodness of fit and the significance of the regression coefficients. The model was also structurally stable and had a satisfactory predictive ability. The study found there was a positive and significant relationship between union growth and American union membership and price levels, and a negative and significant relationship with the unemployment rate.

The Bain-Elsheikh model was an important contribution to explaining aggregate union growth in Canada. However, when the model was applied to a component of the labour movement, i.e., national unions, the multiple regression equations and the regression coefficients for the independent variables were not statistically significant. Consequently, Chaison and Rose developed and tested an expanded model of national union growth, but once again the regression results were not statistically significant. The authors concluded that future studies of national union growth must examine component union types, particularly public sector unions, and develop "new and more relevant forms of economic and institutional variables."15

The Public Sector

Empirical research on the determinants of public sector union growth is sparse.16 Burton argues the determinants of union growth in the private sector do not adequately explain public sector developments.17 He discounts the importance of catastrophes (e.g., war and depression), the business cycle
and structural changes in the labour force. Alternatively, he suggests the development of public sector unionism since 1960 is the result of: (1) features of public sector work which predispose employees to unionize (e.g., nature of the employment relationship and the predeliction of public sector employees and professionals to belong to employee associations); (2) prior to 1960, the potential for organization increased as wages and personnel practices in the public sector failed to keep pace with the private sector, public sector employment expanded rapidly and the political climate changed to encourage employee organization; and (3) post-1960 developments, such as public employees' attitudes toward collective bargaining changed, public sector organizations adopted policies to attract members, public policy initiatives supporting collective bargaining and public sector management's encouragement or accommodation of collective bargaining.

Burton goes on to examine union growth at the federal level and in the non-educational and educational sectors of state and local government. While decrying the failure of researchers to develop a comprehensive model of public sector union growth, his analysis yielded some useful results. First, public policy is a complex variable whose impact varies across sectors. Its most direct impact appears to have been in higher education; the impact of Executive Order 10988 on federal government employees is uncertain. He notes that caution must be exercised with regard to this variable because "in some instances the enactment of favorable legislation was as much a result of membership growth as a cause of it." Second, numerous nonbargaining organizations representing state and local noneducational employees were transformed into unions. In the early 1960s, independent public-employee associations relied on "informal recognition" and lobbying to achieve their goals rather than collective bargaining. Subsequently, the convergence of unions and associations gained impetus as employee attitudes toward collective
bargaining and strikes mirrored those of union attitudes. In some cases, former associations were reorganized into unions for the purpose of collective bargaining; others were defeated in elections or merged with other unions. Finally, in the educational sector, there is evidence that public policy, association-union convergence and shifting attitudes contributed to union growth.

Many of the same variables have been identified as determinants of public sector union growth in Canada. Ponak suggested the shift from "association-consultation" to "union-collective bargaining" was as much a function of public policy changes as disillusionment with the consultation process, e.g., its narrow scope and advisory nature. Dissatisfaction led to organizational and leadership changes, as staff associations began to model themselves after unions. Public sector employees were also influenced by the bargaining gains private sector unions secured, as well as the general climate of social change during the sixties. Finally, the process was completed by the removal of legal obstacles to collective bargaining in the sixties and seventies.19

Union penetration in the Canadian public sector is considerably greater than in the U.S. and has been attributed to a more supportive public policy in Canada.20 While there is little disagreement over the importance of public policy generally, its significance may vary among components of the public sector. An examination of disaggregated patterns of union growth should provide us with a better understanding of the importance of public policy and other variables to the growth process.

In the remainder of the paper our attention will focus on the dynamics of union growth. For example, are the determinants of union growth the same throughout the public sector or are there distinct models for each component? Did some unions or components experience more rapid rates of growth? In addition, we will consider the implications of the process and the speed of
union penetration in the public sector.

A PROFILE OF PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS

There are several characteristics of public sector unionism which will be described in this section. These include: union size, geographic distribution and female membership.

Union Size

Prior to the Second World War, public sector unions were relatively small with an average size of less than 4,000 members. Between 1951 and 1971, the average size of public sector unions increased five times, reaching 21,179 members (see Table 1). The emergence of larger unions accounted for most of the increase. In 1951, there were no unions with 10,000 members; by 1971, nearly half of the unions were this large. Average union size rose throughout most of the 1970s before falling below 19,000 in 1981. The decline resulted from an influx of small, occupational unions in health care after 1977. Nevertheless, the average size of public sector unions continued to exceed the overall average for national and international unions.

Union mergers have had a substantial impact on average union size and union concentration. The three largest public sector unions - C.U.P.E., N.U.P.G.E. and P.S.A.C. - where the result of mergers. Today, they rank among Canada's ten largest unions, including the two largest, C.U.P.E. (267,407 members) and N.U.P.G.E. (210,000 members). The combined membership of the three unions is 632,000 or nearly half of the estimated membership in public sector unions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Membership Size of Public Sector Unions and Total National and International Unions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Public Sector Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total National and International Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Public Sector Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total National and International Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Public Sector Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total National and International Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Public Sector Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total National and International Unions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Geographic Distribution**

A comparison of the geographic distribution of public sector and total union membership is presented in Table 2. The provincial and metropolitan membership figures are for the year 1979 and were published in C.A.L.U.R.A. Public sector unionism is centered in urban areas and three-quarters of the union members are located in Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia. The distribution of union membership among provinces and between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas is remarkably similar for both sets of data. The exceptions appear in the provinces of Québec and Ontario. However, the difference is minor and reflects the fact that only one teachers' union is included in the C.A.L.U.R.A. data - the Quebec Teachers Corporation.

**Female Membership**

Female membership in trade unions is also based on data published in C.A.L.U.R.A. The proportion of women in public sector unions increased sharply from 29.4 percent to 49.3 percent between 1962 and 1979. While the proportion of women in other types of unions also increased, the largest gains were in the public sector. As illustrated below, the percentage of women in public sector unions is considerably higher than in international and national unions and about 20 percent higher than the total for all unions. To a considerable extent, these data reflect labour market trends.22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Union Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Sector Unions</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Unions</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Unions</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Unions</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 2
Geographic Distribution of Public Sector and Total Union Membership, 1979

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Proportion of Proportion of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Union Membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.E.I.</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Canada-Wide**

| Metropolitan Area | 66.1% | 70.5% |
| Non-Metropolitan Area | 33.9% | 29.5% |

There are, of course, significant variations among public sector unions. Some occupational organizations are predominantly male (e.g., air traffic controllers, police and firefighters) and others are predominantly female (e.g., nurses and teachers). Differences also exist among unions representing municipal workers, provincial civil servants and federal civil servants. The proportion of women members is 43.6 percent for C.U.P.E., 46.6 percent for N.U.P.G.E and 38.5 percent for P.S.A.C. These three unions account for 52 percent of total female membership in public sector unions.

OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC SECTOR UNION GROWTH

Employee organization in the public sector can be traced back at least as far as 1889 when the Railway Mail Clerks Association was established. Prior to the Second World War, there were relatively few public sector unions and annual membership never exceeded 15,000 or 5 percent of the labour movement (See Table 3). Following the Second World War, public sector unions rose to prominence as membership increased from about 40,000 in 1946 to 1,347,000 in 1981. In 1961, public sector unions accounted for 12.6 percent of total union membership. This figure doubled by 1971 and increased to 38.6 percent in 1981. Public sector unionism is believed to be near its saturation point although there are no precise data on union penetration. This impression is based on survey data indicating over 90 percent of the employees in public administration are covered by collective agreements. Admittedly, there may be few differences between dues-paying membership and contract coverage for some public sector employees, e.g., federal public servants and professionals such as nurses and teachers. Whether these results can be generalized to the entire public sector is uncertain.

Union growth was especially strong between 1969 and 1973, when membership increased from about 430,000 to 883,000 and the number of public sector unions
### TABLE 3

PUBLIC SECTOR AND TOTAL UNION MEMBERSHIP, 1911-1981

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Public Sector Union Membership</th>
<th>Total Union Membership</th>
<th>Public sector as a Percentage of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1,187</td>
<td>133,000</td>
<td>.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>7,370</td>
<td>313,000</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>14,304</td>
<td>311,000</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>13,523</td>
<td>462,000</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>54,244</td>
<td>1,029,000</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>182,887</td>
<td>1,447,000</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>571,834</td>
<td>2,231,000</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>1,347,073</td>
<td>3,487,000</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

increased from 18 to 49. The increase corresponds to the introduction of collective bargaining legislation in the public sector, a factor which will be discussed in greater detail below. Although union growth continued throughout the 1970s, the rate of increase slowed after 1978. Nevertheless, there has been a sharp increase in the number of public sector unions (a net increase of 23 unions since 1977).

These membership figures represent a conservative estimate of public sector unionism. They do not include membership in local independent unions, directly-chartered unions and so-called "mixed unions", e.g., the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the Service Employees International Union. In the absence of more precise public sector data, a questionnaire was sent to 59 private sector unions to determine their membership in the public sector. Twenty-three unions had a combined public sector membership of 163,686. Three-quarters of the union members were employed by public utilities and in health care. If we add this to the 1981 membership figures presented in Table 3, we get a revised membership estimate of 1,510,723 or 43.3 percent of total union membership.

**Patterns of Union Growth**

The rapid expansion of public sector unionism over the past twenty years has led to a redistribution of union membership within the public sector. In this section, we shall review in greater detail the patterns of growth at various levels of government and in health care and education. Figure 1 traces union membership growth in each sub-sector between 1946 and 1981. In addition, we shall examine those factors which have influenced the growth process.

**Federal Government**

Federal employee organization began nearly a century ago "to enhance the well-being of the service as well as that of its employees." From these
FIGURE 1
PUBLIC SECTOR UNION MEMBERSHIP, 1946-1981

EDUCATION
MUNICIPAL
PROVINCIAL
FEDERAL
HEALTH CARE

MEMBERSHIP (in 000's)

YEAR

roots federal unions grew slowly, but steadily through the mid-sixties. Membership doubled in 1967 and recorded a 200 percent increase between 1966 and 1970 (from 57,000 to 173,000 members). From 1970 to 1981, union growth moderated, averaging less than 4 percent per year, with union membership leveling off after 1977.

The increase in union membership between 1967 and 1970 was not simply the result of certifications following the passage of the Public Service Staff Relations Act (P.S.S.R.A.). While it is true that virtually the entire federal public service was certified within three years, only about one-half of the net increase in membership was due to certifications. The remainder was the result of union affiliations with a labour federation. As noted above, uncertified employee organizations which affiliated with the labour movement were counted as unions by Labour Canada, e.g., the postal unions. The formation of P.S.A.C. and its affiliation with the Canadian Labour Congress (C.L.C.) accounted for the entire increase in federal union membership (59,000) in 1967. Thus net union growth can be explained by certification (by unaffiliated employee organizations and new organizing by existing unions) and union affiliation prior to the passage of the P.S.S.R.A.

Regardless of whether unions grew through affiliation or certification, membership in employee organizations had increased significantly prior to the P.S.S.R.A. These organizations benefitted from employment growth during the 1950s and employer encouragement of association-consultation. In particular, the formation of the National Joint Council in 1944 and "the federal government's agreement in 1953 to the voluntary, revocable checkoff of dues strengthened the various employee organizations." For example, the combined membership in the Civil Service Federation of Canada and the Civil Service Association of Canada reached 90,000 by the mid-fifties. Similarly, smaller organizations, like the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada
(P.I.P.S.), reported steady membership growth corresponding to increases in employment.

Employee antipathy to unions and government resistance to collective bargaining changed during the 1960s. Once committed to collective bargaining, unionization was virtually completed in three years.

The degree of existing organization eliminated the need for extensive membership campaigns which are the characteristically difficult first step when a new group seeks certification. The (former) staff associations provided a well established base from which collective bargaining rights could be pursued, explaining the speed with which collective bargaining spread.

While new organizing and certifications continued after 1970, union growth did not keep pace with employment growth in federal government. Indeed, many of the bargaining units were relatively small and a number of certifications resulted from breakaways and raids. A number of the P.I.P.S. bargaining units were lost to P.S.A.C., the Canadian Union of Professional and Technical Employees and the Economists', Sociologists' and Statisticians' Association.

A supportive public policy facilitated the association-union convergence and made certification less contentious than in the private sector. Statutorily-defined bargaining units minimized the likelihood of management opposition to unionization. It is noteworthy that units of federal white collar and professional employees rapidly became certified after the P.S.S.R.A. was enacted. In contrast, private sector firms staunchly oppose unionization by their white-collar employees. This partially accounts for the fact that only 38 percent of the office workers in Canada are covered by collective agreements. By implication, very few private sector office workers are represented by a bargaining agent.
Some insight into new organizing activity can be gained by a closer look at P.S.A.C. Because P.S.A.C. was organized along departmental lines and the P.S.S.R.A. established occupational bargaining units, extensive membership drives were required among some employee groups, e.g., the clerical group. Conversely, air traffic controllers left P.S.A.C. to form their own union. In the early seventies, P.S.A.C.'s jurisdiction spread beyond the federal public service and today it represents 12,000 workers under the Canada Labour Code and various provincial statutes. Membership growth has not been impeded by the mandatory Rand Formula. It is estimated that 88 percent of the 176,000 employees covered by collective agreements are dues-paying members.

Provincial Governments

Union growth was relatively modest at the provincial level until the 1960s, even though civil service associations in western Canada began affiliating with the labour movement as early as 1927. While most staff associations were organized as social and recreational clubs, they eventually became pressure groups seeking improvements in the general welfare and working conditions of their members. Aided by significant increases in employment and, in some cases, by voluntary dues checkoff, employee organization flourished after the Second World War. Membership in nonbargaining associations swelled to over 90,000 by 1966.

Thereafter, association-union convergence and the passage of public service bargaining legislation led to further gains. Bargaining rights were either acquired through certification or, as was the case in six provinces, by statutory recognition of the staff associations with which governments already had informal consultative relationships. Union membership increased steadily after 1964 and doubled between 1969 and 1970 (from 58,000 to 119,000 members) and between 1971 and 1978 (from 127,000 to 241,000 members). Unlike the federal pattern, large gains in provincial membership came later and were
sustained well into the 1970s. Indeed, by 1978 provincial union membership was larger than membership at the federal level.

As might be expected, there is diversity in union growth patterns at the provincial level. Between 1945 and 1969, union growth was centered in western Canada and Quebec. The extension of collective bargaining rights to provincial employees in Saskatchewan (1944) and Quebec (1965) had a significant impact. In Saskatchewan, the staff association reported 2,500 members in 1944. It added another 1,000 members by 1948 and membership increased gradually over the next two decades to 8,400 in 1969. Most provincial union growth during the 1960s took place in Quebec, where the Quebec Government Employees' Union was statutorily designated as the bargaining agent for clerical and blue-collar employees. Between 1965 and 1969, its membership reached 30,000 and accounted for two-thirds of the increase in total provincial union membership. The remainder was spread among other provincial staff associations, including the newly certified New Brunswick Public Employees' Association (N.B.P.E.A.).

By 1970, all of the provincial staff associations (except P.E.I. and Newfoundland) were counted as labour organizations. The addition of the Ontario, Manitoba and Nova Scotia associations accounted for three-quarters of the membership growth in that year (the overall increase was 60,000 members). Although most provincial employee associations were treated as unions by 1970, this was not due to affiliation or certification. It was association-union convergence in the sense that Labour Canada perceived a change in function reflecting traditional trade union objectives.

The rapid spread of supportive public policies among provinces led to sharp increases in union membership. Table 4 shows membership data for individual staff associations for the period 1970 - 1975 and for N.U.P.G.E. (1977 - 1981). The most significant gains occurred between 1973 and 1975,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provincial Union</th>
<th>Membership 1970</th>
<th>Membership 1975</th>
<th>Percentage Increase</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>13,002</td>
<td>27,622</td>
<td>112%</td>
<td>Increase of 56% (1973-1975)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>16,296</td>
<td>26,396</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>Increase of 23% (1971-72) and 18% (1973-5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>8,200</td>
<td>14,158</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>Increase of 58% (1973-75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>7,041</td>
<td>11,666</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>Steady growth; largest increase in 1970-71 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>55,448</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>Large increase in 1970-71 (26%) and 1973-75 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>30,112</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>Membership increased 49% between 1975 and 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>4,587</td>
<td>2,520</td>
<td>-45%</td>
<td>Membership dropped significantly before climbing to 4,409 in 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>5,488</td>
<td>6,899</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>Growth was steady; 4,204 members in 1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.E.I.</td>
<td>2,364</td>
<td>2,674</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Data only available for 1973 and 1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland</td>
<td>1,814</td>
<td>9,259</td>
<td>425%</td>
<td>Between 1973 and 1975, membership increased from 2,250 to 9,529.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.U.P.G.E.  

1977  210,131  1981  210,000  108%

particularly in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Newfoundland. However, strong growth was by no means universal, as evidenced by data for Quebec and the Maritime provinces. The New Brunswick situation is particularly interesting. Union rivalry between C.U.P.E. and the N.B.P.E.A., led to a sharp reduction in the latter's membership. After 1977, the largest membership increases were in Quebec and in N.U.P.G.E. While three-quarters of the N.U.P.G.E. increase came after three provincial associations joined, there was also a sharp jump in membership for one of its constituent members, the British Columbia Government Employees Union (B.C.G.E.U.).

Union growth in the 1970s was aided by employment growth and fewer restrictions on union security provisions than are found at the federal level. There is also evidence of new organizing outside the provincial civil service. For example, the B.C.G.E.U. organized a private hospital, community colleges and clerical staff at a pulp mill. The union also created a separate component for locals certified under the B.C. Labour Code. This component has expanded with the establishment of crown corporations and the removal of employees from the public service bargaining unit. Indeed, the surge in B.C.G.E.U. membership in the latter part of the 1970s was the result of certifications outside of the government service. While diversification presumably occurs in other provinces, its impact on union growth has not been documented.

Municipal Governments

Unlike their federal and provincial counterparts, municipal employees are covered by private sector legislation and have enjoyed the right to organize and bargain collectively for decades. Even though municipal unionism was entrenched earlier, two data limitations affect the analysis of union growth. First, estimates of union membership prior to the early 1950s are too low. Most municipal workers belonged to local independent or directly chartered
local unions for which membership figures were not published. However, in 1952 it was reported that "of 32,867 municipal workers affiliated to one of the three labour congressess 22,022 belonged to directly chartered local unions." Second, C.U.P.E.'s membership (which includes nonmunicipal workers) comprises a disporportionate share of total municipal unionism (90 percent in 1981) Because of these limitations, the membership data presented here should be viewed as a proxy for municipal unionism.

Prior to 1945, union membership was modest and averaged less than 4,000 members in most years. The earliest municipal unions included the International Association of Fire Fighters (1918), the Canadian Electrical Trades Union (1922) and the Provincial Federation of Ontario Fire Fighters (1922). After the Second World War, national unions became a major force in the municipal sub-sector, e.g., the National Union of Public Service Employees (N.U.P.S.E.) and the National Union of Public Employees (N.U.P.E.). In 1963, these unions merged to form C.U.P.E. The rapid expansion in municipal employment in the 1950s (from 54,000 to 127,000) was accompanied by large increases in union membership. By 1960, union membership stood at 84,000. Sustained union growth continued over the next two decades: membership rose to 176,000 in 1970 and 293,000 in 1981. A more realistic estimate of municipal membership in 1981 is about 190,000. This figure was derived from an estimate provided by C.U.P.E. of its membership in the municipal field. While the slope of union growth presented in Figure 1 is too steep, membership did increase steadily between 1960 and 1981.

Like private-sector employees, civic workers mounted organizing campaigns following the Second World War in response to high inflation and the relaxation of wage controls. As a result, unions were well established in the municipal field as early as 1954. According to a survey conducted by the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities (see below), union
penetration was greatest among the larger municipalities. It is estimated that virtually all municipal employees in major urban centers were organized by 1963 and that, by 1973, unionization was entrenched in smaller municipalities.

It has now reached the point where almost all municipal corporations with a total employee force of fifty or more persons now has a collective bargaining relationship with at least one unit of its employees. While precise figures are not available it is a reasonably safe assumption that most municipal governments with a population of ten thousand or more are involved in a collective bargaining relationship. And there are at least two or three hundred municipal corporations in this category. Depending on their location there are some relatively small municipal corporations with populations much less than ten thousand which also are involved in a collective bargaining relationship.

These estimates suggest that union organizing in the last twenty years was centered in smaller municipalities and residual bargaining units.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of Municipality</th>
<th>Number of Municipalities with collective agreements with at least one union</th>
<th>Have no union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceeding 50,000</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000 - 49,000</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 - 19,999</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 9,999</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It appears a major influence on union growth has been the sharp rise in municipal employment and the operation of union security provisions. One estimate reveals municipal employment increased by 142 percent between 1959
and 1971 (127,000 to 306,000), while another indicates it nearly doubled between 1961 and 1981 (140,000 to 280,000). Union membership even appears to be high under the Rand Formula. A 1968 survey of 112 municipal collective agreements found that 42 (37.5 percent) had union shop provisions. A majority of collective agreements for police and fire fighters followed the Rand Formula, but in each case these unions claimed 100 percent memberships. Membership was also high among other municipal workers covered by the Rand Formula.

The unions representing general municipal employees which follow the Rand Formula vary a great deal in the percentage of membership in the union to the actual number of employees eligible to become members. Of those interviewed the range was found to be as low as 68.75% to a high of 95.12% with an average of approximately 84%. Nevertheless, little evidence is apparent for change from the Rand Formula to Union Shop. The author found that unions are more intent on initiating benefits for existing members (e.g., group insurance plans) which the non-members are supporting and which union leaders believe will eventually entice them into becoming members. In this manner the impression is widely held whether factual or illusory, that the union can exercise control over who joins its ranks.

Unfortunately, the survey failed to specify the number of employees covered by these union security arrangements. Consequently, it was impossible to judge the extent of compulsory unionism.

There is some evidence suggesting the union shop is an important source of union growth. Surveys of municipal contracts in Ontario during the 1970s show 50 to 55 percent of the collective agreements (covering two-thirds of the
employees) contain some form of union membership requirement. The union shop was the most common arrangement, covering about 40 percent of the agreements and 58 percent of the employees. This proportion remained steady throughout the period. The remainder of the municipal agreements appear to be governed by the Rand Formula. According to a 1980 survey of 183 municipal contracts in Canada, 70 percent of the collective agreements covering one-half of the employees contain some form of union membership requirement. (The union shop and modified union shop were the most common arrangements, covering 65 percent of the agreements and 48 percent of the employees.) The remainder of the municipal agreements appear to be governed by the Rand Formula. While there are no longitudinal data on employee coverage, the proportion of collective agreements (and employees covered) requiring union membership is higher at the municipal level of government than at the provincial and federal levels.

The significance of union security provisions was reinforced by C.U.P.E. representatives. They indicated the union shop was a major source of membership growth. The decision to join a union under Rand Formula obviously brings other factors into play. It is not entirely clear whether this is a result of peer pressure, occupational cohesiveness, e.g., police and fire fighters, or because dues are compulsory. This is an area where further research needs to be done.

In conclusion, following the Second World War union growth in the municipal sub-sector was heavily influenced by new organizing, employment expansion and union security provisions. It appears union penetration was approaching the saturation point around 1970. Nevertheless, union growth continued during the 1970s. It is difficult to isolate the determinants of union growth in this period because it is impossible to control for C.U.P.E. membership gains in health care and education. We would speculate that municipal union growth in the 1970s was more modest than it appears in Figure
and can be explained by a combination of employment growth and union security arrangements.

**Health Care and Education**

The discussion of union growth in these components of the public sector is primarily confined to nurses and teachers. In the absence of longitudinal and disaggregated membership data for C.U.P.E. and the Service Employees International Union (S.E.I.U.), it is difficult to estimate the size of nonprofessional unionism. While nonprofessional unions are included in the study, e.g., the British Columbia Hospital Employees Union, the nonprofessional component is underrepresented.

Professional associations of nurses and teachers can be traced back to the early 1900s. They were formed for various reasons, including setting standards for performance and qualification and administering entry into the profession. Membership in nurses' and teachers' associations increased rapidly with employment expansion in the 1960s. While association-union convergence was evident in both sub-sectors, the growth process was different. In general, nurses' unions mounted new organizing drives and acquired their bargaining rights through certification. Since many teachers' associations were statutorily recognized as bargaining agents, association-union convergence was virtually automatic.

There are some similarities in union growth patterns in health care and education. The first unions were reported in the 1940s, but growth was modest until the mid-1960s. In health care, union membership reached 28,000 in 1965 and grew to nearly 50,000 by 1970; in education, membership climbed from 19,000 to 31,000 in the same period. The largest gains were made between 1970 and 1981, when union membership rose to 205,000 in health care and 335,000 in education. If estimates of C.U.P.E. and S.E.I.U. membership in 1981 are added, total membership would be about 295,000 in health care and 388,000 in
The adjustment demonstrates that union membership is highest in these components of the public sector.

Increases in health care membership averaged more than 20 percent annually between 1971 and 1975 and rose another 40 percent between 1977 and 1978 before tapering off. Most of the growth was among nurses' unions. For example, nurses accounted for over 80 percent of the growth between 1973 and 1975 (two-thirds came from new organizations listed for the first time). While some nurses in British Columbia certified in the late 1940s, most nurses' organizations did not embrace collective bargaining until the 1970s.

Nurses' attitudes changed during the 1960s as their salaries fell below other professionals and differentials with unionized hospital staff narrowed. With the advent of government-funded health care and the removal of legal constraints on bargaining, nurses turned to their professional associations to represent them. However, the propriety of professional associations acting as bargaining agents was successfully challenged.

In 1973, the Supreme Court of Canada upheld a decision of the Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board in refusing certification to a local affiliate of the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association (SRNA) on the grounds that a majority of the SRNA officers traditionally were management. The Supreme Court decision crystalized the contradictions some associations have experienced in combining traditional professional activities and bargaining.
homes, and among clerical staff. However, these segments have proved difficult to organize because of strong employer opposition.

Union growth in education was phenomenal between 1971 and 1973, when membership went from 32,000 to 218,000. Over the next five years it increased another 50 percent before leveling off. Most of the growth is due to the emergence of teachers' unions rather than the expansion of existing organizations. Unions listed for the first time accounted for 97 percent of the growth in 1972, 85 percent in 1973 and 80 percent between 1973 and 1978.

The convergence to teachers' unions followed the introduction of special collective bargaining legislation in the early to mid-1970s. A notable exception was the B.C. Teachers Federation which has bargained over salaries since 1937. Teachers' organizations experienced their largest increases in membership in the pre-collective bargaining era. The demand for teachers rapidly increased during the 1950s and 1960s and many teachers were required to join professional associations as a condition of employment. Compulsory membership exists in five provinces; elsewhere, membership is automatic (with writeout permitted) and, in some cases, the Rand Formula is employed. 63

The transition from professional associations to unions can be illustrated by comparing teacher union membership (Labour Canada) with teacher association membership (provided by the Canadian Teachers' Federation). During the 1960s membership in teacher associations increased by about 100,000, whereas union membership increased by a mere 15,000. Association-union convergence began in the early 1970s and was completed by 1978.

Summary and Discussion

Employee organization in the public sector has existed since the early part of this century. However, the rise of public sector unionism is a relatively recent phenomenon which corresponded to the expansion of the public sector after the Second World War. In the municipal sub-sector, unions were
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Membership in Teachers' Associations</th>
<th>Teacher Union Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>106,230</td>
<td>11,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>143,549</td>
<td>14,808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>203,915</td>
<td>26,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>313,617</td>
<td>260,616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>321,194</td>
<td>321,194</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Unpublished data provided by the Canadian Teachers' Federation and Labour Canada, *Labour Organizations in Canada*.

firmly established by the mid-1950s and membership increased steadily over the next 25 years. The pattern and process of growth was not unlike that for private sector unions. In other components, membership increased in nonbargaining associations. The move to collective bargaining by staff, occupational and professional associations was gradual, but gained momentum during the 1960s as dissatisfaction with consultative mechanisms spread. Once the commitment to collective bargaining was made and legal barriers were lifted, convergence to unions commenced. In rapid succession federal employees, provincial employees, teachers and nurses organized for collective bargaining and, by 1978, union growth slowed considerably.

Within the general pattern, there were variations among public sector components in terms of the historical development of associations and the legal and organizational aspects of convergence. For example, in the federal sub-sector association-union convergence took place prior to and after the passage of the P.S.S.R.A. (e.g., P.S.A.C.). Growth among provincial employee unions and teachers' unions on the other hand, was concentrated in the periods following entrenchment of collective bargaining. In most components,
association-union convergence was smooth, but for nurses it involved more substantial organizational changes. The acquisition of bargaining rights varied as well. While most unions mounted certification campaigns, others were the beneficiaries of statutory recognition (e.g., teachers' unions and some provincial employee unions). Thus, notwithstanding some similarities in growth patterns, the dynamics of union growth varies within the public sector.

Industrial relations scholars have commented that like other institutions, unions develop in stages. The early stages are characterized by militancy and turbulence as unions struggle for their very existence. This is followed by a period in which unions gain acceptance and security. With continued growth and maturity, unions broaden their objectives and centralize administrative structures. Our analysis suggests the development of public sector unionism differs from this model.

The emergence of public sector unionism differs in two important respects. First, it was not accompanied by the organizational struggles commonplace in the private sector. In most cases, employee organization preceded collective bargaining and association-union convergence did not encounter stiff employer opposition or a hostile legal environment. Indeed, public policy supported the rapid expansion of collective bargaining. Statutory recognition of bargaining agents and designation of bargaining units provided a fait accompli for many established employee organizations. It either eliminated the need for organizing campaigns altogether or reduced the likelihood of contested certifications. Second, the shift to collective bargaining was motivated by defensive as well as offensive reasons, i.e., to achieve their own economic and social goals. Thompson suggested that some professionals began with limited enthusiasm for collective bargaining and organized to avoid inclusion in a bargaining unit or in predominantly nonprofessional union. Defensive or mixed motives may have existed for
other white collar employees as well. Accordingly, public sector unions gained acceptance and institutional security without conflict.

Although little is known about the effects of "instant" union growth, we believe it has important implications for union structure and policy. A future research agenda might include the following questions. What effect did a change in status - from nonbargaining associations to unions - and rapid growth have on organizational structure and union effectiveness? Did the emerging unions make a smooth transition? Or, were they handicapped by inexperience, the lack of a militant past, or structural instability? As union size increased did power and control shift from the locals to the national headquarters? The discussion which follows is speculative and seeks to stimulate further discussion of these issues.

The principle measure of union effectiveness is bargaining effectiveness. While union members are largely concerned with instrumental goals, i.e., substantive bargaining achievements or outcomes, Kochan has identified other dimensions of organizational effectiveness. These include individual and aggregate union growth, internal union democracy, leadership development at all levels of the union and an efficient administrative system for delivering union services.66

A thorough analysis of the linkages between organizational structure and effectiveness is beyond the scope of this paper. We simply wish to note that organizational development may have been affected by the speed and magnitude of public sector union growth. For example, P.S.A.C. continues to cling to an antiquated structure based on "components", i.e., government departments, each of which is responsible for servicing its own membership and monitoring the collective agreement. This structure appears to be incompatible with the occupational bargaining units which cut across government departments.67
It also appears that Canada's largest public sector unions exercise little centralized control over their local unions. This may be linked to the growth process. Many of these unions were formed through mergers which guaranteed autonomy for local affiliates. Both P.S.A.C. and C.U.P.E. have highly decentralized decision making structures. The failure to establish more centralized control has been a hotly debated issue in recent years. For example, the 1981 Ontario hospital strike was not simply a protest against compulsory arbitration, but a dispute between local union leaders (and their members) and C.U.P.E. itself. Deverell pointed out several deficiencies in C.U.P.E. structure.

C.U.P.E.'s obvious weaknesses include: a) a multiplicity of elected positions barren of power, b) powerful staff positions, notably the regional directors, unaccountable to an electorate, c) dues paid to locals and rebated to the central organization, leaving it preoccupied with fiscal survival and debt collection rather than policy and leadership functions, d) in the hospital sector, a national servicing staff stretched very thin, unsupported by any locally paid officers.68

While the dispute was by no means purely structural, it did point up the need for a formal central bargaining agency to represent C.U.P.E. in hospital negotiations. In the aftermath of the strike, a bargaining council was formed.

Decentralized decision making structures can impede union effectiveness. C.U.P.E.'s failure to establish a central organization for hospital labour relations has important implications for the delivery of services - labour education, leadership development and contract enforcement - and the development of a coherent, long-run strategy to challenge the compulsory arbitration.69 Some public sector unions, perhaps because they grew so fast,
appear to be loose confederations with little centralized authority or cohesion. There is the impression that strong leadership exists at the national level, but that local leadership, i.e., those on the firing lines, has not been fully developed. Whether the same can be said for provincial or occupational unions is uncertain, but it merits further study.

Union penetration in the public sector appears to be at or near the saturation point. Optimists might argue there are still areas to grow. These include the privatization of government operations, organizing in the private sector and mergers. However, these are based on numerous assumptions, e.g., private firms will expand, jurisdictional skirmishes can be won or avoided and the complexity and difficulty of mergers overcome. A pessimistic prognosis suggests there will be little or no growth in the 1980s. Government retrenchment is the major theme of the federal and provincial budgets. In the past year, we have witnessed public sector layoffs, hiring freezes, wage controls and even wage rollbacks. From this perspective, public sector unions will have difficulty consolidating their position let alone expanding it. Outside of union growth through mergers, the potential for expansion is slim and the prospects appear dim.

We believe that future organizing and bargaining effectiveness will not only be influenced by environmental factors, but by the dynamics of past union growth. While public employment may not grow (and may even contract) in the 1980s, ample opportunities exist for new organizing in the private sector, e.g., the service and financial sectors. If public sector unions are to expand, they will have to initiate new organizing drives and secure bargaining gains designed to attract new members. One might reasonably ask whether or how "instant" growth will influence the combative potential of public sectors unions? One scenario suggests it may be a sign of future weakness. Given the lack of a militant past, a predominantly female and white collar workforce
and decentralized decision making structures, public sector unions are ill-prepared for the challenges of the 1980s. Alternatively, there is evidence of increased militancy in the public sector.\textsuperscript{72} If this trend continues, unions may aggressively pursue organizing and bargaining goals in the next decade. The magnitude of future union growth is an open question. We believe the diversity of growth patterns within the public sector prior to 1980s will influence future events.
NOTES


5. Other limitations include: (1) C.A.L.U.R.A. includes any organization formed for the purpose of regulating employer-employee relations (it excludes most teacher organizations and, in the past, excluded nurses' organizations) and (2) individual membership figures for independent and directly-chartered locals are generally not available. For further information, see Pradeep Kumar, Canadian Industrial Relations Information: Sources, Technical Notes and Glossary (Kingston: Industrial Relations Centre, Queen's University 1979), pp. 43-46.

6. Membership figures for individual unions were not published for the years 1950, 1974, 1976 and 1979.


8. The sample consisted of international and national unions (except Quebec-based unions) with 5,000 or more members.


10. Ibid., p. 4.


15. Ibid., p. 549.


18. Ibid., p. 15.


26. It is recognized that not all members of public sector unions are employed in that sector. While this is generally the case for nurses, teachers and civil servants it is by no means universal. For example, the B.C. Government Employees Union has extended its jurisdiction to include office workers in pulp mills. However, such forays into the private sector are infrequent and do not represent a significant proportion of membership. See Bruce McLean, *A Union Amongst Government Employees: A History of the B.C. Government Employees' Union 1919-1979* (Vancouver: B.C. Government Employees' Union, 1979), pp. 126-128 and 149-150.

27. The C.A.L.U.R.A. data is only available for broad industrial classifications, e.g., public administration and service. In 1979, union membership in public administration was 508,531 (67.8 percent paid workers unionized) and in the service industry it was 638,840 (22.5 percent paid workers organized). Membership figures for components of the public sector are not available.

30. P.S.A.C. was created by a merger between the Civil Service Federation of Canada and the Civil Service Association of Canada (C.S.A.C.) and had 92,000 members in 1967. Since C.S.A.C. was treated as a union by Labour Canada, there was only a net increase of 59,000 union members.


38. Canada Post accounts for 45 percent of the total. P.S.A.C. represents other government employees in the Territories and employees at the Royal Canadian Mint and National Harbours Boards. Perhaps the most unique group is the staff at the Council of Maritime Premiers, which is covered by the Council of Maritime Premiers Labour Code. This information is based on collective agreement data provided by P.S.A.C.
39. Other unions appear to have benefitted as well. Membership in the Canadian Air Traffic Control Association, Canadian Union of Postal Workers and Letter Carriers' Union of Canada more than doubled between the late sixties and mid-to late seventies. Even P.I.P.S. reported large membership gains (36 percent between 1969 and 1973) as "an attitude developed among many professionals that it would be wise to join a collective bargaining organization, and that it was perhaps more professional to join the Institute than to wait for some competing organization." Kleingartner, (1973).


41. Ibid., pp. 7 and 63-64 and Arthurs (1971), p. 108.

42. Goldenberg (1979), p. 271. Outside Quebec, provisions were subsequently adopted allowing other organizations to replace a designated civil service association if it no longer represented a majority of the employees in the bargaining unit.


44. McLean (1979).

45. Frankel and Pratt (1954), p. 3.


49. Ibid., p. 5.


53. The remaining agreements are listed as having "no provision" but it can be assumed to mean some form of Rand Formula since virtually all of the agreements contain dues checkoff provisions.


55. The percentages for collective agreements and employee coverage are: federal government 0% (0%), provincial government 63% (45%). See Labour Canada, Provisions in Collective Agreements in Canada Covering 200 and More Employees: Non-Manufacturing Industries (Excluding Construction), pp. 1-2.
57. Membership estimates were provided by the unions. If membership in local faculty unions is added, education membership exceeds 400,000.
58. Previously, many nurses' organizations were listed in Part II (Independent Local Organizations) of Directory of Labour Organizations in Canada. Part II does not include membership data.
61. Ibid., p. 388.
63. Letter from Geraldine Gilliss, Director of Research and Information Services, Canadian Teachers Federation, March 10, 1982.
64. Lester (1958), pp. 21-34.
69. Ibid., p. 2.
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