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Continental Divide: The Direction and Fate of North American Unions*

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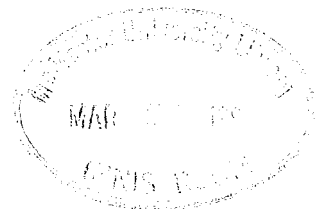
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The merger of the A.F.L. and C.I.O. in 1955 led many "to expect a fresh impetus to organize the increasing numbers of unorganized workers" (Chamberlain, Cullen and Lewin, 1980, p. 116). A similar expectation was created in Canada the following year when the Trades and Labour Congress (T.L.C.) and the Canadian Congress of Labour (C.C.L.) merged to form the Canadian Labour Congress (C.L.C.) (1). By 1980, there was clear evidence that the Canadian labor movement had consistently outperformed its American counterpart in terms of union growth, union density (the proportion of the non-agricultural employment organized by unions) and the certification of new bargaining units. The divergent trends were not the result of market factors, but differences in the legal framework and the incidence and intensity of employer opposition to union organizing in the two countries. It also was recognized that union related variables, e.g. militancy and the desire and ability to organize, might be important determinants of union performance (Rose and Chaison, 1985).

The purpose of this paper is to update our earlier research and to expand the scope of that study. First, we present evidence of the extent of the divergent trends in the United States and Canada. In addition to considering aggregate trends in union membership and union density, cross-sectional data are presented on union membership by sex, education, employment status (part-time and full-time employees), occupation and

industry. Additional data were gathered on union organizing in both countries. In a second section we review studies and analyze data to determine the roles of five explanatory factors: market shifts, public policy, employer resistance, union organizing efforts and public opinion. Conclusions are then reached about the relative importance of these factors and their interaction.

Recent prescriptions for labor law reform (e.g. Weiler, 1983, 1985; Dickens, 1988) have cited differences in Canadian and U.S. certification procedures (viewing the former positively and the latter negatively), and have related these to trends in union growth in the two countries. In our study we go beyond these limited comparisons and examine the relative contributions of four explanatory factors in addition to public policy. There have also been some studies which take the approach of first presenting a "body" or malady in the form of declining union membership, density or organizing ability, and then evaluate "suspects" or likely causes (e.g. Freeman, 1985, 1987; Goldfield, 1987). Our analysis follows a similar pattern, but from a comparative perspective, which we believe will result in a more revealing investigation. As we noted in our earlier article, (Rose and Chaison, 1985, p. 109):

"... a better perspective on the state of American unions requires the simultaneous examination of a labor movement that is significantly different yet that shares enough common elements for meaningful comparison. The Canadian labor movement is the

obvious, though often overlooked, choice for making such a comparison."

I. Divergent Trends

Union Membership

Table 1 presents comparative union membership data for the period 1956 to 1986 and reveals that North America's labor movements are moving in opposite directions. In the United States unions have experienced stagnation and decline. Union membership increased steadily between 1956 and 1975, peaked in the late 1970s and declined in the 1980s. According to the Troy and Sheflin series, the net membership increase was 1,910,000 members (11.6 percent) from 1956 to 1984; the BLS series (with Gifford's updated figures) reports an increase of 2,273,000 members (13 percent) between 1956 and 1982. The CPS survey shows that unions have lost 742,000 members (4.2 percent) from 1983 to 1986. As well, union density has fallen from more than 30 percent in 1956 to below 18 percent in 1986.

Insert Table 1 About Here

In contrast, Canadian unions have experienced robust membership growth. The Labour Canada data reveal that between 1956 and 1986 union membership rose from 1,352,000 to 3,730,000 members (176 percent) and union density increased to 37.7 percent from 33.3 percent. A broadly similar pattern in union growth is reflected in the series collected under the reporting

requirements of the Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act (CALURA). Although Canada also experienced a severe recession in the 1980s, Canadian unions continued to outperform their American counterparts. Since 1980, union membership rose by 333,000 members (or 10 percent) and union density remained relatively stable (i.e., in the 37 to 40 percent range). While union density in 1956 stood at about one-third of the workforce in both countries, in Canada the proportion is now more than double that of the United States.

Part of the difference in the membership figures reflects the virtually complete unionization of the public sector in Canada (Rose, 1984). One reason union penetration in the Canadian public sector is substantially higher than in the United States is the existence of a more supportive public policy in Canada (Feuille and Anderson, 1980). At the same time, important gains have also been made in the private sector. An examination of Canadian membership in American-based international unions (a proxy for private sector unionism) reveals an increase from 947,498 to 1,458,863 members (54 percent) between 1956 and 1986 (2). It is noteworthy that aggregate union growth by international unions in Canada outpaced union growth in the United States by a wide margin in this period. Since 1980, international union membership in Canada has fallen by 112,000 members or by 7 percent. Nevertheless, these losses were substantially smaller than those experienced by American unions generally. Indeed, the Canadian sections of many large international unions continued to grow as a percentage of total

membership in parent organizations between 1980 and 1983 (Table 2). A notable exception is the United Food and Commercial Workers which grew more slowly in Canada than in the United States.

Insert Table 2 About Here

Cross-sectional union membership data reveal further differences between the United States and Canada. Union density figures by sex, part-time/full-time employment status, age, education, occupation and industry are broadly consistent with the aggregate data (3). For most categories, union density in Canada is about twice the level reported in the United States (Table 3). This is even the case for the purportedly "harder to organize" workers and sectors, e.g. women, younger workers, better educated workers, part-time workers and white collar occupations. In the service industry, union density is more than five times greater in Canada. These data suggest that the Canadian unions generally have less difficulty organizing new recruits and/or have more intensely concentrated their organizing drives in the emerging sectors of the economy.

Insert Table 3 About Here

New Union Organizing

As reported in our earlier study, the sagging fortunes of U.S. unions are reflected in their performance in new organizing. Not only has there been a long run decline in union victories in National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) certification elections (from 65.3 percent to 46.0 percent between 1955 and 1978), but the size of the election districts fell from 122 to 57 workers in the same period (Seeber and Cooke, 1983). As well, there was a major decline in the proportion of cases that were consent elections, a large increase in the incidence of unfair labor practice charges and a record backlog of unfair labor practice charges. These factors have contributed to delays in deciding representational issues and thereby reduced the probability of union success.

More recent data indicate virtually no improvement in the election performance of U.S. unions. The victory rate for certification elections increased to 47.9 percent in 1980, fell to 43.7 percent in 1982 and then reached 46.5 percent in 1985. The fact remains that U.S. unions have not won a majority of NLRB elections since 1974. In 1983 there were 28,995 unfair labor practice complaints issued against employers, a decline of 7.3 percent from the 1980 figure. Half of these were for illegal discrimination or discharge of employees. In the same year, the

NLRB ordered reimbursements of over \$32 million to employees who were discharged or discriminated against and obtained 6,029 orders of reinstatement (U.S. National Labor Relations Board, 1986).

Labor board data (1971 to 1985) from the federal jurisdiction and Ontario and British Columbia indicate that Canadian unions are more successful than American unions in new organizing (4). Of the more than 30,000 certification applications disposed of between 1971 and 1985, nearly 70 percent of the applications were granted. Although there is no discernable trend in overall certification outcomes, the percentage of certification applications granted to British Columbia unions declined steadily in recent years, (from 77 percent in 1982 to 56 percent in 1985). Nevertheless, this still represents a higher success rate than U.S. unions are experiencing.

In Canada, union membership cards rather than elections remain the primary method for determining union representation. It is estimated that only about 15 to 20 percent of certification applications resulted in elections. But even when elections were held, unions were victorious 55 percent of the time (5). The election results are even more impressive in British Columbia, where the Labour Code Amendment Act 1984 required representation votes in virtually all applications for certification (6). The British Columbia Labour Relations Board (BCLRB) has adopted streamlined procedures designed to ensure votes are conducted 10 calendar days after the application for certification (British

Columbia Labour Relations Board, 1984). Of the 349 elections conducted in 1984 and 1985, unions achieved 270 victories (a success rate of 77.4 percent).

The success of Canadian unions occurred despite concerns over unfair labor practices. As we previously reported, between 1974 and 1980 there was a threefold increase in the number of unfair labor practices (from 386 to 1,210) and such complaints rose from 6 to 15 percent of the total case load (Rose and Chaison, 1985). The upward trend has moderated in recent years. For example, there were 1,331 complaints in 1984 (up only 10 percent since 1980) and these complaints comprised 16.2 percent of the total caseload. While the incidence of alleged misconduct continues to grow in Canada, it is quite modest when compared to the situation in the United States.

II. Explanatory Factors

Market Shifts

A common explanation for the decline in union membership rates in the United States is the changing structure of product and labor markets. It is frequently claimed that those industrial sectors with the highest unionization rates, notably manufacturing and construction, are experiencing the lowest growth, while the service sector is rapidly expanding and remains relatively unorganized ("Congressional Research Service Report...", 1986; Troy, 1986: AFL-CIO Committee on the Evolution of Work, 1985). Moreover, there has been an increase in the number of better educated, white collar, younger and female workers in the labor force. These groups are said to have a lower propensity to join unions or to vote for unions in certification elections (e.g. Greenhouse, 1985; Edwards and Podgursky, 1986). It is often claimed that union growth has been reversed as employment expansion takes place in those industrial sectors and among those workers where there are no strong traditions of collective bargaining. As Troy (1986, p. 89) summarized the situation:

"...the crisis of American trade unionism now and for the foreseeable future [is that] unions are slipping sharply in declining industries, the historic mainstays of union organization, and have failed to take hold in the growth portions of the labor market".

While these arguments seem quite logical, the importance of

market shifts is not supported by recent empirical evidence. Freeman (1985) found little relationship between the decline in union success in NLRB representation elections and the changing proportions of workers in categories of age, education, sex, occupation and industry. Farber (1985) concluded that structural changes, i.e. the shift toward the South, white collar workers, and female workers, and away from manufacturing, accounted for only about 40 percent (3.9 of the 9.4 percentage points) of the decline in union density between 1956 and 1978. Farber (1987) found that only about one fifth of the decline in unionization from 1977 to 1984 was the result of changes in labor force structure. Doyle (1985) found that less than one quarter of the decline in the collective bargaining agreement coverage of production workers from 1961 to 1984 could be accounted for by employment shifts between industries.

An analysis by Meltz (1985) showed that shifts in employment from the manufacturing to the service sector cannot explain the higher density rate in Canada. Structural shifts are even less useful in explaining the divergence between union density in the United States and Canada. Indeed, Meltz (1985) estimated that if the employment distribution had been the same in both countries in 1980, the union density rate in Canada would have been about 10 percent higher than it was. This was confirmed by our own calculations. Using the CALURA union membership data, we found that the density rate in Canada would have been 11.4 percent higher than it was in 1984.

Lipset (1986) examined the ratio of service/industrial

sector employment for Canada, the United States and selected OECD countries and found that in all of the countries the service sector had become considerably larger than the industrial sector. However, the analysis could not uncover any consistent pattern in the degree and direction of union density in the eleven selected countries. In four countries, including Canada, density increased, while it decreased in three and remained stable in the remainder. There was no apparent relationship between the rankings in the service/manufacturing ratio and union density. It appears that shifts in labor and product markets play only a very limited role in explaining changes in certification election outcomes and union density in the United States and cannot account for the differences in union density in the United States and Canada.

Public Policy

It has become a fairly common practice to link the differences in the degrees of unionization in the United States and Canada to the underlying philosophies and procedures of their respective labor legislation. We did this in our earlier review of the state of the unions in the two countries (Rose and Chaison, 1985) and the public policy differences have been emphasized in the works of Weiler (1983, 1985), Meltz (1985) and Gunderson and Meltz (1986). The apparent links between union membership and public policy in the United States and Canada have been used to justify labor law reform in the United States. For example, the AFL-CIO's Committee on the Evolution of Work (1985,

p. 15) claimed that:

"The Canadian experience is instructive. Canada has roughly the same type of economy, many similar employers and has undergone the same [demographic and industrial] changes that we previously have described with respect to the United States. But, in Canada, unlike the United States, the government has not defaulted in its obligation to protect the right of self organization; rather, Canada's law carefully safeguards that right".

While there are clear differences in the legislation in the two countries, the impact of public policy on union growth is not as simple and direct as implied by the AFL-CIO. The principal area for comparison has been the procedures for safeguarding employee choice in the selection of bargaining agents. Canadian public policy is directed at encouraging employee choice without protracted employer campaigns (Weiler, 1983, 1985; Rose and Chaison, 1985). Union representation is determined by signed membership cards rather than elections in most jurisdictions and, in those where elections are required, there are expedited procedures (e.g. Craig, 1986, pp. 129-134). In the United States, we find a strong reliance on elections and this results in prolonged campaigns, opportunities for employer unfair labor practices and employer challenges of unit composition and employee ballots. As a result, the election procedure is often contentious, protracted and necessitates frequent appeals to the NLRB. Faced with the deluge of cases, the NLRB annual case

backlog has more than doubled from 535 in 1980 to 1,196 in 1985 (Levitan, Carlson and Shapiro, 1986, p. 137).

There is a wealth of data pointing to widespread employer violations of the National Labor Relations Act. Between 1980 and 1983, charges of employer discrimination against union supporters (violations of section 8(a)(3) of the National Labor Relations Act) have averaged 17,036 cases per year. This is almost double the 1970 figure. The number of reinstatement cases during the same period averaged 2,456 per year, or nearly triple the level in 1970 (Cooke, 1985b, p. 426). Compensation for illegally discharged employees also increased dramatically. From 1980 to 1983, the NLRB awarded an annual average of \$32.6 million in backpay to employees who were illegally discriminated against or discharged because of their union activity. The annual average for the preceding four-year period was \$14.7 million (U.S. National Labor Relations Board, 1986). Backpay reached a record high of \$62.2 million in 1985 before declining to \$27.8 million in 1986 ("Labor Board's Caseload Increases.", 1987).

Both employer discrimination and election delays have been shown to have a significant negative impact on the probability of union election victories (Seeber and Cooke, 1983; Weiler, 1983; Cooke, 1985b; Hunt and White, 1985). As a result, unions are no longer able to use certification elections as the principal means for the replenishment of union members. Weiler (1985, pp. E6-E7) observed:

"The stark reality is that private sector unions are now able, through the NLRB procedures, to replace only

one quarter of the members which they lose through the normal attrition process in an economy within which existing plants are constantly being closed or moved, and replaced by new business enterprises."

After calculating the net gains in union membership resulting from the election process, Freeman (1987, p. 17) concluded: "...it is apparent that the legally established mode of organizing labor in the private sector in the U.S. has run dry for unions."

American labor legislation has been harshly criticized by labor leaders for its failure to protect and promote employee free choice, and for lacking corrective power. For example, Lane Kirkland, AFL-CIO President, recently stated that the NLRB

"has become an instrument not just of employers generally, but of those employers who have most aggressively engaged in practices contrary to the spirit of the law to deny working people the right to self-organization, self-representation ."

(Galenson, 1986, p. 99).

Kirkland suggested that unions might be better off if all government regulation of industrial relations was eliminated and labor and management returned to "the law of the jungle" (Weiler, 1985, p. E1; Galenson, 1986, p. 99). The AFL-CIO Executive Council has suggested that affiliates might have to radically alter organizing strategies and, when possible, pursue alternatives to the NLRB procedures (AFL-CIO, 1985). Some unions

have indicated that they would rather bypass the NLRB by filing cases with state agencies with concurrent jurisdictions, as well as by pressuring employers into granting recognition through corporate campaigns and consumer boycotts (Samoff, 1987). For example, John Sweeney, President of the Service Employees, explained why his union was successful in organizing in 1986:

"We got recognition and contracts through a combination of economic and community pressure techniques, and it certainly proved less costly and time consuming than the traditional process." ("SEIU Chalks Up Major Gains...", 1987)

While there seems to be a consensus among union officers and industrial relations scholars about the need for labor law reform in the United States (7), we should recognize that reform alone may only have a limited impact on the extent of unionization. For example, Kochan, Katz and McKersie (1986, p. 252) believe:

"...if rules governing union representation elections were to be reformed - for example, to eliminate delays, stiffen penalties for illegal conduct, and eliminate the problems experienced in achieving initial contracts - unions will increase their organizing success rates with low wage workers in service industries and occupations and in small bargaining units. These changes will not, however, make any significant differences in the unionization rate of large firms or in

the quality of the union-management relationship in existing bargaining units. Thus union membership will continue to decline..."

Analyses of membership data have reached similar conclusions. Dickens and Leonard (1985) found that if unions in the United States had been able to win the representation rights for the same proportion of workers as they did in 1950-1954, union density still would have fallen from 1960 to 1980 by almost as much as it did. Even if unions had won every election they were involved in since 1950, density would have fallen. These results are certainly not encouraging for those who assign the exclusive blame for union membership decline on the policies and procedures of the NLRB and who believe that changes modeled after the Canadian procedures would quickly reverse the trend. On the other hand, they can argue that U.S. labor legislation, by failing to protect employees from the coercive anti-union tactics of employers, has encouraged increased employer resistance to union organizing in particular and the process of collective bargaining in general. In the next section, we examine the forms and intensity of employer resistance in the United States and Canada.

Employer Resistance

There can be little doubt that employer resistance to union organizing efforts has reached its highest level in the United States since the 1920s:

"Not since the twenties has it been as socially and politically acceptable for American management to embrace publicly a 'union free' approach. Many companies now make union avoidance or union containment a very high priority" (Kochan, McKersie and Capelli, 1984, p. 18).

What remains unclear is the relative contribution of the various forms of employer resistance to the recent decline in union membership and to the difference in union density in the United States and Canada.

Most studies of employer resistance have been confined to the conduct surrounding representation election campaigns and the negotiation of the first agreement. As we already noted, concerns have been expressed about the growing number of employer unfair labor practices, the frequent recourse to procedural delays to thwart employee free choice (Weiler, 1983, 1985; Seeber and Cooke, 1983; Lawler and West, 1985; Goldfield, 1987; Dickens, 1988)(8), and the increasing inability of unions to achieve first contracts following certification (Cooke, 1985a, 1985c; Weiler, 1984)(9). Employer opposition is said to occur in about 95 percent of organizing campaigns (AFL-CIO Committee on the Evolution of Work, 1985) and has been shown to be an underlying factor behind the decline in union success rates in certification elections (e.g., Freeman, 1985, 1987; Stephan and Kaufman, 1987; Dickens, 1988). Behind this employer resistance is the "expanding and lucrative occupation of consultants who provide legal advice on how to keep the unions out" (Galenson, 1986, p.

68). It has been estimated that as many as 75 percent of employers in the United States use such consultants at an annual cost of about one hundred million dollars (AFL-CIO Committee on the Evolution of Work, 1985; Raskin, 1986b). As Barkin (1986, p. 10) described the situation:

"Representation elections have become veritable miniature class wars. Employer opposition to unions has converted the election primarily into a contest on worker censure of outsiders and a vote of support for management, departing from its purpose of determining bargaining agents for a specific workplace."

The impact of employer resistance in election campaigns is highlighted when we consider the relatively high rate of unionization in the public sector in the United States. Elected or appointed public employers offer little or no resistance to union organizing efforts because they are much less concerned than private sector employers about being competitive and because they do not want to appear to oppose collective bargaining (de Bernardo, 1986; Freeman, 1986, 1987). As Freeman (1987, p. 27) observed:

"In the public sector...there has been no outburst of anti-union activity by management. Charges of unfair labor practices concern interpretation of state bargaining laws - - whether a particular topic is subject to collective bargaining or is a management prerogative - - not to the existence of unionism per se. Public sector managers rarely hire union preventing

firms to discourage organization by their workers."

Recent studies conducted as part of the Industrial Relations in Transition project at MIT have suggested that union avoidance strategies, rather than employer resistance during election campaigns, may be the major force behind the decline in union membership in the United States. Briefly stated, there has been a major transformation of the labor-management relationship:

"...the emergence of a large non-union sector in the United States since 1960 was a function of a changing environment, deep seated managerial values opposed to unions, and increased opportunities and incentives to avoid unions resulting from competitive and cost — conditions. Management responded by shifting power from its staff experts most deeply committed to working within the union-management relationship. Line and staff managers who were willing and able to introduce innovative new systems of human resource management gained power and were successful in helping to develop and stabilize a new non-union system" (Kochan, Katz and McKersie, 1986, p. 79).

The emerging non-union model placed the greatest emphasis on individual employee concerns and participation, and provided employees with greater discretion through the design of broader jobs. Nonunion and partially unionized employers targeted expansion, new investment and workplace innovations at "greenfield sites", locations where there are lesser possibilities of unionization, and introduced their new human

resource management approach to present and new non-union plants. In effect, the union avoidance strategies developed at the highest levels of corporate decision-making, enabled employers "to control the pre-conditions of the employment relationship so as to prevent unions from establishing a basis for holding representation elections" (Kochan, Katz and McKersie, 1986, p. 232) Employee choice through elections became a moot issue; "...wherever plants were designed and run on the new human resource management model they were essentially immune from unionization..." (Kochan, Katz and McKersie, 1986, p. 64). Certification elections were never even held in the vast majority of the new employment relationships created in the past two decades (10).

Employer resistance during election campaigns and the broader union avoidance strategies are both manifestations of the dramatic increase in employer animosity toward unions in the United States and the strong desire to operate on a non-union or partially unionized basis. There has developed an explosively expanding confrontation sector in the industrial relations system (Kerr, 1986) marked by continued concession bargaining, plant relocation, and employer offensives aimed at the simplification of work rules, the reduction in job classifications and greater flexibility in outsourcing. It is widely believed, particularly among labor leaders, that the confrontation was intensified as employers were emboldened by the Reagan Administration's discharge of the striking air traffic controllers in 1981; "the handling of the air traffic controllers provided a signal to, and

model for, anti-union employers" (AFL-CIO Committee on the Evolution of Work, 1985, p. 11; Molotsky, 1987). We now see a greater tendency for U.S. employers to replace strikers. This has been most evident in the widely publicized disputes at Greyhound, Hormel, Phelps-Dodge and in the airline industry (Raskin, 1987). It was recently estimated that about 40 percent of employers continue operations during strikes ("Prospects...", 1987).

Although there is no supporting data, a consensus seems to have developed that employer resistance to unions in Canada is not as extensive or intense as in the United States. Canadian employers, both private and public, are said to be more receptive to unions (Craig, 1986). Huxley, Ketter and Struthers (1986, p. 116) believe that:

"Canada is conditioned by public economic policies to manage the labor market in the interests of economic growth. Compared to the U.S., however, this management has proceeded more frequently through negotiations at the highest level or through ad hoc interventions that regulate or supersede collective bargaining...rather than a weakening of the competitive position of organized labor within the adversarial system."

"Employers in America are more apt in general to pursue the goal of 'union-free organizations', especially in new and growing sectors, and unions accept limitations imposed by employer resistance. Canadian employers and unions are more willing to

accept one another and commit themselves more directly and [bindingly] to political parties."

Adams' (1981) theoretical framework may help to explain the divergence in employer behavior. He argues that employer attitudes in North America are fundamentally the same, i.e., employers place a high value on the right to manage the enterprise and perceive unions as a threat to managerial control. Employer behavior toward unions will not only be shaped by this value orientation, but also by labor philosophy and strategy and government action. In Canada, the labor movement has experienced large membership gains, become increasingly nationalistic and supported the policies of the social democratic New Democratic Party. A strong labor movement and broad support in Canada for government intervention in the marketplace have profoundly influenced the industrial relations system. Although Canada does not have a highly developed tripartite system by western European standards, in contrast to the United States there has been a movement toward tripartite consensus-building on socio-economic issues. Adams (1985) asserts that economic upheaval has pushed the Canadian and U.S. systems in different directions. In Canada, there has been "more cooperation by labor, management and government in search of consensus and the expansion of workers' participation by right", whereas in the United States, many employers "have abandoned their commitment to unions and collective bargaining" and "rather than being embraced as a social partner, organized labor finds itself to be the object of the most forceful assault on its integrity in more than a half-

century" (Adams, 1985, p. 115).

What appears to be a broader acceptance of unions may also be conditioned by the lack of opportunities to avoid them. Considering that certification is normally based on membership card majorities, there may be less recourse to the use of union avoidance consultants or the dismissal of union supporters. As Weiler (1983) observed, the number of discriminatory discharge complaints per certification campaign is substantially lower in Canada than in the United States (11). Additionally, there are no equivalents of greenfield sites in Canada (Meltz, 1985) and "lacking a non-union hinterland to which they could easily relocate, Canadian employers did not...embrace the 'non-union' alternative to collective bargaining as vigorously as their U.S. counterparts" (Adams, 1985, p. 125).

In summary, while many Canadian employers may face the same competitive and cost pressures as their U.S. counterparts, there is a general belief that they are less likely to resolve their difficulties through union confrontation and union avoidance strategies. Unfortunately, there are no empirical measures of this difference in employer approaches, and consequently it is difficult to determine how much of the difference in union density in the two countries is attributable to employer resistance.

Union Organizing Efforts

There is a substantial body of empirical and anecdotal evidence suggesting that unions in the United States have a diminished motivation and ability to organize. Unions have been repeatedly blamed for devoting too few resources to organizing (e.g. Craft and Extejt, 1983; Voos, 1983; Weiler, 1985) and Freeman (1985) estimated that the reduced union organizing effort in terms of real expenditures per member is responsible for about one third of the decline in union success rates in certification elections. These failings have figured prominently in union self-appraisals such as the AFL-CIO's The Changing Situation of Workers and Their Unions (1985), the Communications Workers' Committee on the Future Report (Communications Workers of America, 1983) and the United Steelworkers' Forging a Future (United Steelworkers of America, 1984). There have been numerous suggestions for broadened jurisdictions, improved training for organizers, and better coordination of organizing campaigns and selection of organizing targets. Unions have been urged to devote greater effort to internal organizing (i.e. recruiting the non-union employees in their bargaining units) and to strengthening the ties with past members who lost or left their jobs. AFL-CIO affiliates also have started to experiment with alternative forms of representation, including associate memberships for unemployed members or union supporters in units where there were election defeats (AFL-CIO Committee on the Evolution of Work, 1985; Reynolds, 1986; "80 Laid-off MCI Workers

Sign as CWA 'Associates'", 1987). There have also been attempts to make union membership more appealing by expanding the array of services that are provided; the AFL-CIO has initiated legal service, life insurance and investment service plans, as well as low interest credit cards for affiliates' members (Kirkland, 1987; McDonald, 1987).

The reduced motivation and ability to organize can be blamed on the destabilizing influence of the severe membership declines during the past recession as well as the unions' intense concerns with the issues of job security and concession bargaining. There is little possibility that unions faced with a threatening environment and reduced resources can substantially increase or even maintain past levels of organizing activity. For some unions, a case may be made that the costs of organizing are outweighed by the monetary benefits to the membership because of the increased bargaining power and collective agreement coverage in their industries (Voos, 1983). But decisions to fund and implement organizing programs are often made on the local union level and within a political as well as economic framework. Officers and members would have to be convinced of a favorable cost/benefit equation before there is sufficient political pressure to allocate funds to recruit new members. This might be very difficult in the presence of scarce financial resources, rising concerns about immediate threats to the members' job security, increasing employer resistance to organizing and the low chances of success, and the small number of members gained through certification elections.

Levitan, Carlson and Shapiro (1986, p. 147) observed:

"With union membership falling, it is increasingly difficult for union leaders to justify ...[organizing] expenditures to a membership preoccupied with stagnating, if not declining, real wages and lack of security. If union leaders are to maintain their own job security, they need to respond to the pressing needs of present members, instead of crafting a future oriented strategy".

In addition, the precipitous membership declines in the past decade may have depleted many unions' treasuries and resulted in cutbacks in the budgets of organizing departments and layoffs among organizing staffs (Rose and Chaison, 1985). Membership levels and dues income may have fallen too low for unions to fully exploit the growth potential of their jurisdictions (Weiler, 1985; Voos, 1987).

The decline in union organizing in the United States is likely to result in some major changes in the structures and relationships within the labor movement. First, large unions with declining memberships, e.g. the Steelworkers, may find that the most efficient way to maintain economies of scale in their operations is by absorbing smaller unions, in effect recruiting members that are already organized. Second, these absorptions as well the increased recruitment among workers in the service industries, may make organizing jurisdictions largely irrelevant and could create conglomerate and general unions (Chaison, 1986). Finally, the AFL-CIO may become considerably more active and

influential in coordinating and financing affiliate organizing and arranging affiliate mergers (Chaison, 1986; Raskin, 1986a). Two steps in this direction was taken in 1986 when the Federation implemented the Procedure for Determining Organizing Responsibilities, which resolves non-raid organizing disputes of affiliates, ("Statements Adopted by the AFL-CIO...", 1986), and adopted guidelines for affiliate mergers (AFL-CIO Committee on the Evolution of Work, 1985).

The extent to which organizing activity has fallen off in the United States is indicated by NLRB certification election data (see Table 4). The number of single union elections petitioned for by unions fell by 56 percent from 1976 to 1985, with major declines in 1978, 1981 and 1982. The last four years of the series could be characterized as a period of severely depressed union organizing.

Insert Table 4 About Here

In contrast to the situation in the United States, there is evidence that Canadian unions have rebounded from the 1981-82 recession. A survey of labor boards in Canada's eleven jurisdictions found the number of certifications granted fell from 3,378 in 1980 to 2,509 in 1983 (a 26 percent decrease) before rebounding in 1984 and 1985 (2,707 and 2,907 certifications, respectively). Of particular significance is the fact that unions acquired new bargaining rights for nearly 100,000 employees in 1985 compared to 67,000 in 1984. The

increase in organizing activity and the recruitment of new members is evident in all regions except western Canada (which has not experienced an economic recovery) (Wood and Kumar, 1984; Kumar, Coates and Arrowsmith, 1986).

In order to compare organizing activity in both countries, we developed a general index of union organizing effort. It consists of determining the number of employees unions attempt to organize through certification procedures and dividing this figure by the total union membership in the previous year (12). Table 5 shows the number of employees unions attempted to organize (in absolute terms and as a percentage of union members) for 1976 to 1985 in the United States and Ontario. Figures are presented for Ontario because it publishes the most comprehensive certification data (13). Although there are some fluctuations in both the Ontario and the United States series, organizing effort is considerably higher in Ontario. Unions in Ontario attempted to increase membership by 3.0 to 4.6 percent through new organizing whereas U.S. unions attempted to increase membership by .9 to 2.3 percent through new organizing. Moreover, the differential in organizing effort increased. In the early years of the series, the ratio of Ontario to United States percentages was around 1.5 to 1; in the later years of the series, it increased to 3 to 1 or greater.

Insert Table 5 About Here

In addition to the levels of organizing activity and the

overall organizing effort, there is the question of labor's willingness to organize in the emerging frontiers of employment growth, e.g. the service industry and white collar workers. These so-called "harder to organize" sectors are essential to the long-run survival of the labor movement. As the union density data in Table 3 suggest, Canadian unions have been more actively recruiting new members in these sectors of the economy than their American counterparts. In 1971, 15.7 percent of the certifications granted in British Columbia and Ontario were in the service industries; in 1985, service industries accounted for 36.4 percent of all certifications. Approximately, 40 percent of the newly certified employees were employed in the service sector. As well, certification success was greater in the service sectors of both provinces than in any other major industry grouping. Evidence of white collar organizing comes from Ontario, where since 1980, 24 percent of the bargaining units certified consisted of white collar workers. This is an increase from 19 percent between 1974 and 1979.

Compared to their Canadian counterparts, American unions are considerably less active in organizing where unions traditionally have been weak. Table 4 shows the decline in election activity in the service sector in the United States from 1976 to 1985. Service sector cases increased as a proportion of total cases but this was largely the result of the overall decline in union election activity; over the ten years the actual number of cases in the service sector fell by 44 percent.

White collar cases fell precipitously in terms of both the

number of elections and the proportion of total cases. The number of cases involving white collar units declined by 83 percent over the ten year period, and in 1985 such cases comprised only 3.8 percent of the certification elections petitioned for by unions.

Professional and technical employees are also considered to be very difficult to organize but critical to future union growth. Table 4 shows fluctuating but small proportions of NLRB certification elections among professional and technical employees. The number of elections among these employees fell in the last four years of the series at an even faster rate than the overall decline in election activity. Over the ten year period the number of cases in professional and technical units fell by 72 percent.

While it may be too strong a statement to characterize union organizing in Canada as booming (e.g. Slotnick, 1986) the data points to a clearly higher level of activity than in the United States. This may be partly the result of the survival needs of the many small Canadian national unions which must grow to retain or achieve economies of scale in operations, as well as the desire of the Canadian sections of internationals to increase their stature and influence in, or independence from their parent unions (Rose and Chaison, 1985). There is also a strong possibility that we are witnessing the impact of the differences in public policy and employer resistance in the two countries. In the United States, union avoidance strategies may have severely restricted the number of potential organizing targets

while employer tactics during organizing campaigns may have reduced both the number of elections and the chances of union success. In Canada, because the potential for employer resistance is lower and certification normally takes place without elections, unions may have been encouraged to devote greater resources and energy to organizing.

Public Opinion and National Values

In a recent study, Lipset argued that the loss of public support for unions is more important than socio-economic and legal structures in explaining the thirty year decline in union density in the United States (Lipset, 1986a). Statistical analysis of opinion polling data revealed first that "as public approval of unions declines, so too do union density and the certification win rate of unions" (Lipset, 1986a, p. 440) and second that public approval measures provided close predictions of union density in any given year. He concludes:

"studies that seek to explain the decline of labor organizations by reference to the factors which differentiate union members from non-members, or environments that are more or less conducive to union strength, clearly cannot solve the conundrum of why American workers are so much less organized than their compeers elsewhere" (Lipset, 1986a, pp. 441-442).

In a comparison of the United States and Canada, Lipset submits that to a major extent, "The effects of structural changes on the

strength of the labor movements are mediated by diverse national values" (Lipset, 1986a, p. 442).

Lipset's analysis is problematic for two reasons. First, it ignores Canadian polling data. Although the Canadian data is not as comprehensive as that gathered in U.S., it is, nevertheless, instructive (see Table 6). For many years the Gallup poll has asked respondents whether they think labor unions are good or bad for Canada. In the period 1950-1958, between 12 and 20 percent responded "bad" and between 60 and 69 percent "good" (the remainder gave qualified responses or expressed no opinion). For the period 1976-1984, between 30 and 41 percent of the respondents answered "bad" and between 42 and 52 percent answered "good" (Labour Canada, 1983). In the intervening years, three polls (asking a slightly different question) recorded a modest increase in public disapproval of unions. Although these data preclude us from unambiguously concluding that there has been a sharp decline in the public acceptance of Canadian unions, it appears most probable that public support for unions declined in both countries. Moreover, public disapproval of unions in Canada and the United States was roughly comparable in the early 1980s. Thus, whereas union density fell as U.S. public opinion became increasingly negative, in Canada unions were not adversely affected by public disapproval of labor unions.

Insert Table 6 About Here

Other polls suggest that the standing of Canadian unions is

weak, perhaps even weaker than in the United States. During the 1980s, Decima reported that only about 9 percent of the public expressed a "great deal" of confidence in Canadian union leaders (see Table 7). Almost 90 percent of the respondents expressed "hardly any" or "only some" confidence in union leaders. According to Riddell (1985, p. 12):

"Canadians consistently expressed less confidence in the leaders of labour unions than those of any other institution when asked to rate their confidence in the leaders of twenty institutions (including banks, schools, provincial governments, oil companies, federal government, multinational corporations, newspapers and the tobacco industry)."

Insert Table 7 About Here

Although public confidence in American unions and their leaders is low, their standing appears to be marginally higher than their Canadian counterparts. Six national surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Corporation between 1975 and 1985 asked respondents to assess the level of trust and confidence they had in fourteen institutions. U.S. unions were among the least esteemed institutions, consistently ranking thirteenth (Lipset, 1986b). Respondents expressing complete trust in unions fell from 22 percent in 1975 to 15 percent in 1985. Public confidence in union leaders is even lower. Thirty surveys conducted by Harris and the National Opinion Research

Center between 1966 and 1985 found a smaller percentage expressing "a great deal of confidence" in trade union leaders than the heads of other institutions. As shown in Table 7, the percentage expressing a great deal of confidence in U.S. trade union leaders has steadily declined, but remains higher than the Canadian average and is almost double the Canadian figure in 1985.

Another measure of public attitudes toward organized labor is the perception of union power (see Table 8). Decima polls asked respondents to choose between the statements "unions in Canada have become too powerful" and "unions are necessary in Canada to protect workers from exploitation" (Johnston, 1985). The average for five polls conducted from 1981 to 1986 reveals 53 percent of the respondents chose "too powerful" and 40 percent chose "necessary" (the remainder expressed "no opinion"). A similar poll was conducted by Gallup from 1968 to 1984. The average for five polls shows that 65 percent of respondents felt unions were too powerful or strong. In the United States, eight National Opinion Research Corporation polls conducted between 1971 and 1985 asked respondents whether unions were "too powerful", "not powerful enough" or "power about right" (Lipset, 1986b). The dominant response in each survey was "too powerful" (ranging from 42 percent in 1974 to 55 percent in 1971). Considering that in Canada union density and strike activity are higher than in the United States and concessionary bargaining has not been as prevalent (Adams, 1985), it is not surprising that a larger percentage of Canadians perceive unions as too powerful.

Insert Table 8 About Here

There are, of course, many inherent problems associated with interpreting public opinion polls. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a comprehensive assessment of these and other polling data, we believe that this brief comparison of polls is revealing. The evidence suggests that in both Canada and the United States, approval of unions has fallen, unions and their leaders are held in low esteem and unions are perceived as too powerful.

A second concern with Lipset's analysis involves the linkage between public acceptance of unions and union density. In the United States, these measures declined in tandem over thirty years. Notwithstanding the impreciseness of public opinion measures in Canada, it seems very probable that union density grew in Canada as public acceptance of unions declined (or alternatively, as unions remained generally unpopular).

As one of the most astute observers of North American culture, Lipset correctly identifies important differences in national values, e.g. an electorally viable social democratic party and public enterprise culture in Canada and the free market and competitive individualism of the United States. Given that there probably has been a long run decline in the public acceptance of unions in both countries, can national values intervene to produce such vast differences in the propensity of workers to join unions, management's pursuit of union-avoidance

strategies and the legal protection afforded by collective bargaining legislation? While some support exists for Lipset's thesis, we remain skeptical about its explanatory power (14).

Despite a large body of scholarly research pointing to management resistance as a major contributor to union decline in the United States (e.g. Freeman, 1985), Lipset is only willing to concede that "the greater use of legal methods to intimidate or otherwise undermine support of labor organization cannot be dismissed..." (Lipset, 1986a, p. 437). More recently he wrote: "There is at best only ambiguous evidence that American employers successfully use intimidating tactics to campaign against unions in representation elections" (Lipset, 1986c, p. 26). This appears at variance with studies revealing that American workers are at far greater risk of discharge for legally protected union organizing activities than their Canadian counterparts (Weiler, 1983). (Indeed, one examination of state level Gallup polls for 1978 to 1981 even concluded that "there exists a strong negative association between the public's approval of labor and management's apparent willingness to break the country's labor law" (Medoff, 1984, p. D22)). Moreover, as we noted earlier, American corporate values and strategies increasingly are emphasizing union avoidance. For example, a recent study found that U.S. firms that placed a high priority on union avoidance were able to substantially reduce union representation and the probability of unionization at new facilities (Kochan, McKersie and Chalykoff, 1986).

While we agree that Canadian and American employers

generally face similar pressures to cut costs (Lipset, 1986a) and are more antagonistic toward unions than their European counterparts (Adams, 1981), American employers are more likely to stress union avoidance. In the context of new organizing, American firms have discovered that the benefits of union avoidance outweigh the costs of non-compliance with the law. One study of Section 8(a)(3) violations of the National Labor Relations Act concluded that the Act did not act as a deterrent "to management violations and may be considered a relatively low cost of doing business" (Kleiner, 1984, p. 241). Greer and Martin (1978) have even been able to develop a calculative decision model which shows that under some circumstances employers can achieve economic gains by committing unfair labor practices and forestalling the unionization of their enterprises.

Union growth will also depend on the ability of unions to influence workers' propensity to join. The decision of individual workers to join unions may be shaped by many factors including organized labor's public image. However, "the relationship between workers' general beliefs or image of the American labor movement and their actual willingness to support unionization on their job is rather weak" (Kochan, 1980, p. 146). Far more important are pragmatic considerations such as workers' job conditions and the perceived instrumentality of unions in altering conditions. In a recent review of survey and polling data, Kochan, Katz and McKersie (1986) report that the preference for unionizing is greatest among workers who are dissatisfied with their pay, job security, on-the-job recognition and

promotional opportunities, and perceive unions as instrumental in improving job conditions. They also point out that one third of the nonunion workforce in the United States sees "unionization as a vehicle for improving specific job conditions and would prefer to have a union represent them, if given the opportunity" (Kochan, Katz and McKersie, 1986, p. 217). To the extent that American employers seek to reduce the need for unions and actively oppose organizing drives, the propensity to unionize can be affected. Wheeler (1985) has observed that while there may be innate human predispositions which ready individuals for aggressive action e.g., union organizing, such behavior may be impeded by fears of employer retaliation.

Although systematic comparative analyses of employer strategy in Canada and the United States do not exist, we believe that the greater hostility of American employers has had a chilling effect on union joining. Moreover, given the greater prevalence of concession bargaining in the United States than in Canada in recent years, the perceived instrumentality of unions may be lower among American workers. Farber (1987) examined data from 1977 and 1984 surveys and uncovered a significant decline in the perceived instrumentality of unions among nonunion workers in the United States. Along with increases in job satisfaction, this change in perceived instrumentality resulted in a decrease (from 38.6 percent to 32.4 percent) in the demand for union representation. It has also been observed:

"Paradoxical as it may seem, collective bargaining is not losing ground in the United States because unions

are less attractive, but unions are less attractive because collective bargaining is losing ground" (Huxley, Ketter and Struthers, 1986, pp. 128-129).

Turning to the more "liberal" collective bargaining laws in Canada, there can be no doubt that the existence of social democratic governments (or strong social democratic opposition parties) have contributed to labor law reforms (15). At the same time, not all provinces have electorally viable social democratic parties or institutional frameworks that can be described as "union user friendly". While national values may impart a "social democratic tinge" to all political parties in Canada this begs the point. To begin with, Canadian labor policy has until recently followed innovations in the United States, e.g., the Wagner Act and extending bargaining rights to federal civil servants. Although Canada adopted a "liberal" approach to public sector collective bargaining, this has not precluded federal and provincial governments from adopting draconian measures to regulate unions, e.g., suspending collective bargaining rights for up to two years, including the right to strike. Indeed, these measures enjoyed broad public support (Swimmer, 1985).

There also is growing evidence that unions are on the defensive in western Canada, where several provinces have embraced privatization and decentralization programs similar to those of the Thatcher government in the United Kingdom. The situation is probably most acute in British Columbia, where, in 1987, the government introduced a controversial bill to overhaul the province's labor code. The changes, which were aimed at

curtailing or undermining union power, prompted the British Columbia Federation of Labour to boycott the law and the new Industrial Relations Council which oversees the law (Cruickshank, 1987). It is noteworthy that notwithstanding the government's fervor for promoting free enterprise and restraining union power, labor policy in British Columbia retains the broad features and basic rights of the Wagner Act model.

Curiously, with all the emphasis put on differences in national values, the fact remains that Canada imported the Wagner Act bargaining model (and some aspects of the Taft-Hartley Act). In the United States, it has been argued that inconsistencies exist between the Wagner and Taft-Hartley Acts, with the earlier law providing strong encouragement for collective bargaining and the latter law elevating free choice and individual rights to a level equal to that of the right to collective bargaining. As described by Gross (1985, pp. 13-14):

"...the concept of government as a neutral guarantor of some equal or reasonably balanced rights of labor and management and as a neutral guarantor of employee free choice between individual or collective action is clearly inconsistent with the Wagner Act's concept of a government partial to the practice of collective bargaining; yet the Taft-Hartley Act contains both conceptions of government. Interweaving assumptions of employee free choice (the right to refrain) and equality of rights between labor and management, for example, lead to conclusions that are unfavorable to

the encouragement of collective bargaining...."

Such "tensions" are not unknown in Canada. For example, it was not until the early 1970s that the neutral preamble of the federal labor code was replaced by a positive commitment to collective bargaining (Task Force, 1968). Ironically, it is the Canadians who have endeavored to maintain a balance of power between employers and employees by ensuring that employees' rights to self-organization are protected.

In summary, what Lipset appears to be suggesting is that the Wagner Act principles are incompatible with contemporary American values. We would simply observe that not only do there appear to be conflicting statutory purposes in the U.S., but it is questionable whether public opinion unambiguously reflects national values. As noted above, polling data are subject to numerous problems of interpretation. To this we would add that polls often reveal different images of unions. For example, whereas "most of the American public has a poor image of unions in general, an equally strong majority agrees that the functions unions traditionally have performed for their members and for the larger society continue to be relevant and needed today" (Kochan, Katz and McKersie, 1986a, p. 216). Our analysis suggests that it is far from certain how public attitudes toward unions will affect the behavior of the actors in the industrial relations system.

III. Conclusions

In an earlier paper (Rose and Chaison, 1985), we indicated the extent of the differences in union growth in Canada and the United States up to 1980 and described some possible causes for the diverging trends. In this paper we examined data up to 1986 and further developed our analysis of possible determinants. As we realized in our earlier attempt, it is far easier to document the growth patterns than it is to isolate and measure determinants.

There is clear evidence of a two to one (or even greater) ratio of Canadian/U.S. union density when measured for various occupational, industrial and membership characteristics. We also found that Canadian unions are more actively organizing, carry out more campaigns among the more difficult to organize types of bargaining units and have enjoyed considerably higher success rates in attaining certification even during the difficult years of the past recession.

Our analysis suggests that the trends in union growth may largely result from the complex interplay between employer resistance, public policy and union organizing efforts. The primary factor appears to be the differences in the public policy in the two countries, with the United States requiring protracted election contests in which employers may fully utilize their union avoidance strategies, while the Canadian jurisdictions rely on card counts or expedited elections to determine the employees' choice quickly and with the least opportunity for employer

coercion or intimidation. These differences in the certification process have important and direct roles in shaping the intensity of both union organizing efforts and employer resistance.

Operating within a public policy framework that they perceive to be generally effective, the Canadian unions are actively pursuing organizing targets, while their American counterparts seem discouraged in their ability to use certification elections to replenish lost membership and make inroads in companies that are practicing the new human resource management. American unions have become wary of the election process and have increasingly resorted to alternative avenues for growth. Among the emerging methods to recruit new members are associate memberships, internal organizing, the absorption of small unions, the affiliation of local independent unions, and the use of corporate campaigns and consumer boycotts to gain employer recognition.

It has long been observed that the certification election procedures in the United States provide employers with an opportunity for action, an arena for the demonstration of legal and illegal resistance to union organizing. We are particularly concerned, along with others (e.g. Weiler, 1983, 1985; Freeman, 1987; Dickens, 1988), that this certification process not only provides an opportunity but also an incentive to resist unionization through intimidation and coercion of employees and procedural delays.

While we have argued that there is a greater acceptance of unions by Canadian employers, we have also suggested that this

acceptance has been conditioned by the movement toward tripartite consensus-building and by fewer opportunities to avoid unions. We could speculate about the level and consequence of employer resistance if the Canadian jurisdictions suddenly adopted the U.S. approach to certification. Faced with such increased opportunity to defeat organizing campaigns, some Canadian employers might show a greater resistance than they would otherwise, and Canadian unions might reduce their organizing efforts if protracted campaigns became too costly and produced lower success rates. Such a legislative reversal, however, would be highly unlikely because it would be alien to the broader employer acceptance of unions in Canada and the general orientation of Canadian legislation to provide choice with minimum opportunity for conflict. It is even more interesting (and realistic) to speculate about the consequences if the United States were to adopt a variant of the Canadian certification procedures. This seems to be the objective of many of the efforts that are encompassed under the term "labor law reform". Employer resistance during union organizing campaigns would probably be reduced, but might resurface during initial negotiations. Additional safeguards, such as first contract arbitration or restrictions on the use of permanent strike replacements, might be needed to strengthen the ability of unions to achieve first collective agreements. Faced with the possibility of faster, less expensive, and more successful campaigns, unions might accelerate their organizing efforts and we could see a spurt in union growth. Would such growth continue

and would it be sufficient to offset normal attrition in union membership? Would the differential in union density in the United States and Canada narrow? The answer to these questions would depend on whether enough unions had the financial resources and staff to launch campaigns among large units and major unorganized employers, the number of potential organizing targets available, and the ability of unions to significantly improve certification success rates.

If there are no changes in the underlying causes, the differences in union growth in Canada and the United States will continue and could lead to two significant trends. First, many Canadian sections of internationals may be growing and placing a high priority on devoting resources and staff for organizing, while their parent unions in the United States may be adopting primarily defensive postures with the major concern for job security for the present membership rather than membership expansion. The appearance of having different priorities and chances for expansion may fuel the arguments for the greater autonomy of Canadian sections. Furthermore, some international unions which are beset with financial difficulties because of declining membership may no longer feel that they can support Canadian sections and might agree to an amicable severance. In summary, the significant difference in the state of the unions in Canada and the United States may accelerate the trend toward autonomy for Canadian sections of international unions (16).

Second, we can expect a renewed interest on the part of American labor leaders (and academics) in the Canadian industrial

relations system. The two labor movements seem to be moving farther apart, with the Canadian showing an ability and desire to expand and having the vibrancy and optimism that is associated with such growth, while the American appears discouraged and pre-occupied in a intense search for solutions. The attempts to reverse the membership declines in the United States have created a new openness to alternative industrial relations systems, particularly public policy approaches, and this will lead to continuing and closer examinations of the situation in Canada.

Table 1a
 Union Membership(a) and Union Density(b)
 in the United States and Canada

United States

Year	Troy and Sheflin		CPS		BLS	
	Membership	Density	Membership	Density	Membership	Density
1956	16,396	31.4%			17,490	33.4%
1960	15,516	28.6%			17,049	31.4%
1965	16,949	30.1%			17,299	28.4%
1970	20,990	29.6%			21,248	30.0%
1975	22,207	28.9%			22,361	28.9%
1976	22,153	27.9%			22,662	28.3%
1977	21,632	26.2%			22,456	27.2%
1978	21,757	25.1%			22,757	26.2%
1979	22,025	24.5%			22,579	25.1%
1980	20,968	23.2%			22,366	24.7%
1981	20,647	22.6%			-	-
1982	19,571	21.9%			19,763	22.1%
1983	18,634	20.7%	17,717	20.4%		
1984	18,306	19.4%	17,340	19.1%		
1985			16,996	18.3%		
1986			16,975	17.8%		

Source: Troy and Sheflin series: Leo Troy and Neil Sheflin, Union Sourcebook: Membership, Structure, Finance, Directory (West Orange, N.J.: Industrial Relations Data and Information Services, 1985), p. 3.10 for 1960, 1970, 1975-1984; George S. Bain and R.J. Price, Profiles of Union Growth (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p. 89 for 1956 and 1965.

Note: The Troy and Sheflin series is a continuation of an earlier series developed for the National Bureau of Economic Research. The data is derived primarily from union financial records and represents annual averages of full-time dues-paying union members.

CPS series: United States Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstracts of the United States, 1987 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), p. 409 for 1983 to 1985; "Union Membership Decline Eases Somewhat in 1986 as Proportion Reaches 17.5 Percent", Daily Labor Report, February 23, 1987, p. B-8 for 1986.

Note: The CPS series is derived from a survey of 60,000 households conducted by the Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. It covers employed wage and salary workers but excludes union members who are retired, self-employed, unemployed or laid-off. Data was not collected for 1982, and the earlier series is not comparable with the post-1982 series because of

differences in data collection and presentation.

BLS Series: Courtney Gifford, Directory of U.S. Labor Organizations, 1984-1985 (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of National Affairs, 1984), p. 1 for 1975-1980, 1982: Bain and Price (1980) p. 89, for 1956, 1960, 1965 and 1970.

Note: The BLS series was derived from a mail survey to union officers conducted biannually by the Bureau of Labor Statistics until it was discontinued in 1980.. The data was periodically published in the BLS Directory of National Unions and Employee Associations. Gifford (1982) updated the series with his own survey in 1982.

(a) Union membership expressed in thousands.

(b) Union membership as a percent of non-agricultural employment

Table 1b

Union Membership(a) and Union Density(b)
in the United States and Canada

Canada

Year	Labour Canada		CALURA	
	Membership	Density	Membership	Density
1956	1,352	33.3%		
1960	1,459	32.3%		
1965	1,589	29.7%	1,761	30.0%
1970	2,173	33.6%	2,268	33.1%
1975	2,884	36.9%	2,736	32.2%
1976	3,042	37.3%	2,779	32.2%
1977	3,149	38.2%	2,822	32.6%
1978	3,278	39.0%	2,908	31.9%
1979	-	-	3,036	29.9%
1980	3,397	37.6%	3,093	31.8%
1981	3,487	37.4%	3,160	32.5%
1982	3,617	39.0%	3,054	33.3%
1983	3,563	40.0%	3,391	35.7%
1984	3,651	39.6%	3,439	35.1%
1985	3,666	39.0%		
1986	3,730	37.7%		

Source: Labour Canada series: J.K. Eaton, "The Growth of the Canadian Labour Movement," Labour Gazette, Vol. 75 (1975), pp. 648-649 for 1956, 1960, 1965 and 1970: Labour Canada, Labour Organizations in Canada, 1986 (Ottawa: Labour Canada, 1986), p. 18 for the 1975 to 1986.

Note: The membership figures in the Labour Canada series are provided by union officers. Data for all years up to and including 1949 are as of December 31. In 1950 the reference date was moved ahead one day to January 1, 1951. The data for subsequent years are as of January 1. Data were not collected in 1979.

CALURA series: Statistics Canada, The Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act Annual Report (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1962-1984).

Note: The figures in the CALURA series are provided by union officers in accordance of the requirements of the Corporations and Labour Unions Returns Act. CALURA membership figures are lower than those reported by Labour Canada because CALURA only includes organizations formed for the purpose of regulating employer-employee relations. Consequently, most teachers' organizations and, in the past, nurses' associations have been excluded. Membership figures are for December 31 of each year

and union density is calculated on December figures for paid workers.

(a) Union members expressed in thousands.

(b) Union membership as a percent of non-agricultural employment.

Table 2
Changes in the Membership of Selected International Unions
1980-1983

Union	Change in Membership		Canadian as a percent of total membership	
	U.S.	Canada	1980	1983
Teamsters	-298,700 (-15.6%)	+1,000 (+1.1%)	4.8%	5.8%
Automobile Workers	-331,400 (-24.4%)	-81,000 (-6.2%)	9.6%	11.9%
Steelworkers	-272,500 (-28.2%)	-1,500 (-.8%)	20.5%	28.4%
Electrical (IBEW)	-70,700 (-7.5%)	+2,300 (+3.3%)	7.3%	8.2%
Machinists	-214,700 (-28.5%)	+1,300 (+2.1%)	8.4%	11.9%
Carpenters	-37,500 (-5.2%)	0 (0%)	12.4%	13.1%
Food and Commercial Workers	+92,800 (+9.5%)	+6,200 (+4.8%)	11.7%	11.2%

Source: Leo Troy and Neil Sheflin. Union Sourcebook: Membership, Structure, Finance, Directory. (West Orange, N.J.: Industrial Relations Data and Information Services, 1985).

Table 3
United States and Canadian Union Membership Profile
1985(a)

Category	Union Members as a Percent in Each Category	
	U.S.	Canadian
Men	22.1%	41.5%
Women	13.2%	31.9%
Age		
16-24 years(b)	7.3%	18.6%
25-34 years	16.7%	39.7%
35-44 years	22.7%	46.1%
45-54 years	25.1%	44.4%
55-64 years	24.8%	44.7%
65 years and over	8.7%	14.1%
Full-time Workers	20.4%	40.9%
Part-time Workers	7.3%	18.8%
Education		
Elementary 8 and Below	19.7%	45.7%
Some High School	17.8%	34.1%
High School Graduate	19.7%	30.2%(c)
Some College	15.2%	41.6%(d)
College Graduate		
4 years	12.1%	
5 years	20.8%	42.6%(e)
6+ years	19.1%	
Occupation		
Managerial and Professional Speciality	15.2%	40.9%
Technical, Sales and Administrative Support	10.8%	24.1%
Service Occupations	14.4%	28.5%
Precision Production, Craft and Repair	28.5%	57.2%
Operators, Fabricators and Laborers	31.8%	46.9%
Farming, Forestry and Fishing	5.5%	28.4%
Industry		
Agriculture, Wage and Salary	2.1%	N/A
Mining	17.3%	32.8%
Construction	22.3%	38.9%
Manufacturing	24.8%	45.0%
Transportation and Public Utilities	37.0%	60.0%

Wholesale and Retail Trade	7.2%	12.5%
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	2.9%	9.2%
Services	6.6%	38.1%
Government Workers	35.8%	66.6%

(a) Canadian Figures are for December 1984.

(b) Canadian figures are for age 15-24 years.

(c) Some post-secondary education

(d) Post-secondary graduate

(e) University degree (level unspecified)

Sources: U.S.: "Union Membership of Employed Wage and Salary Workers, 1985." Monthly Labor Review, vol. 109 (May 1986), p. 45.

Canadian: Statistics Canada. Survey of Union Membership (Conducted as a Supplement to December 1984 Labour Force Survey): Pradeep Kumar, Mary Lou Coates and David Arrowsmith. The Current Industrial Relations Scene in Canada, 1986 (Kingston, Ontario: Industrial Relations Centre, Queen's University, 1986).

Table 4

NLRB Certification Elections(a)

Total Cases and Cases in the Service Sector, White Collar Units
and Professional and Technical Units

1976 - 1985

Year	Total Cases	Service Sector(b)		White Collar(c)		Professional and Technical(d)	
		Cases	Percent of total	Cases	Percent of total	Cases	Percent of Total
1976	7,475	1,322	17.7%	746	10.0%	396	5.3%
1977	7,744	1,325	17.1%	753	9.7%	355	4.6%
1978	6,622	1,077	16.3%	567	8.6%	291	4.4%
1979	6,496	1,111	17.1%	610	9.4%	293	4.5%
1980	6,443	1,305	20.3%	599	9.3%	410	6.4%
1981	5,786	1,224	21.2%	504	8.7%	254	4.4%
1982	3,275	795	24.3%	195	6.0%	196	6.0%
1983	3,067	717	23.4%	141	4.6%	182	5.9%
1984	3,325	806	24.2%	155	4.7%	139	4.2%
1985	3,314	743	22.4%	125	3.8%	110	3.3%

Source: Computer tape provided by the Data Systems Branch of the
National Labor Relations Board.

(a) Single union certification elections petitioned for by
unions.

(b) Service sector consists of SIC 70-89.

(c) White collar units are those categorized by the NLRB as code
"W" - "Office, Clerical and Other White Collar".

(d) Professional and technical units are those categorized by the
NLRB as code "P" - "Professional and/or Technical".

Table 5
 Union Organizing Efforts in the United States and Ontario
 1976-1985

Year(a)	Employees Attempted in Union Organizing			
	Ontario		United States	
	Number of Employees	Percent of Total Union Membership	Number of Employees	Percent of Total Union Membership
1976	34,218	3.4%	477,811	2.2%
1977	38,271	3.8%	519,581	2.3%
1978	35,809	3.4%	457,850	2.1%
1979	44,094	4.1%	494,512	2.3%
1980	45,070	4.0%	463,573	2.1%
1981	50,638	4.6%	377,214	1.8%
1982	33,778	3.0%	213,986	1.0%
1983	33,339	3.0%	181,257	.9%
1984	46,431	3.8%	206,503	1.1%
1985	47,060	3.8%	231,014	1.3%

Source: Computer tape provided by the Data Systems Branch of the National Labor Relations Board and tabulations derived from annual reports of the Ontario Ministry of Labour and the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

(a) U.S. data are for the calendar year. Ontario data are for the fiscal year April 1 to March 31.

Table 6

Public Approval of Labor Unions in the United States and Canada

Year	Percent of Respondents Approving and Disapproving			
	U.S. Surveys(a)		Canadian Surveys(b)	
	Approve	Disapprove	Approve	Disapprove
1936	72%	20%	-	-
1937	72%	20%	-	-
1939	68%	24%	-	-
1940	64%	22%	-	-
1941	61%	30%	-	-
1947	64%	25%	-	-
1949	62%	22%	-	-
1950	-	-	62%	14%
1952	-	-	60%	15%
1953	75%	18%	-	-
1956	-	-	69%	12%
1957-1	76%	14%	-	-
-2	64%	18%	-	-
1958	-	-	62%	20%
1959	68%	19%	-	-
1961-1	70%	18%	66%	23%
-2	63%	22%	-	-
1962	64%	24%	-	-
1963	67%	23%	-	-
1965-1	71%	19%	-	-
-2	70%	19%	-	-
1967	66%	23%	-	-

1970	-	-	54%	30%
1973	59%	26%	-	-
1975	-	-	57%	26%
1976	-	-	42%	36%
1978	59%	31%	46%	41%
1979	55%	33%	50%	35%
1980	-	-	54%	30%
1981	55%	35%	-	-
1982	-	-	48%	32%
1984	-	-	51%	35%
1985	58%	27%	-	-

(a) The U.S. Gallup polls asked: "In general, do you approve or disapprove of labor unions?". Two polls were conducted in 1957, 1961 and 1965.

(b) The Canadian Gallup poll asked: (1961-1975) "In general, do you approve or disapprove of labor unions?"; (1950-1958, 1976-1985) "Generally speaking, do you think that labor unions have been a good thing or a bad thing for Canada?"

Table 7

Confidence in Labor Union Leaders in the United States and Canada

Year(a)	United States(b)		Canada(c)
	Harris Survey	NORC Survey	Decima Survey
1966	22%	-	-
1967	20%	-	-
1971	14%	-	-
1972	15%	-	-
1973-1	20%	16%	-
-2	16%	-	-
1974-1	17%	18%	-
-2	18%	-	-
1975-1	14%	10%	-
-2	18%	-	-
1976	-	12%	-
1977-1	14%	15%	-
-2	15%	-	-
1978	15%	11%	-
1979	10%	-	-
1980-1	14%	15%	13%
-2	-	-	8%
-3	-	-	11%
-4	-	-	10%
1981-1	12%	-	11%
-2	-	-	9%

-3	-	-	10%
-4	-	-	11%
1982-1	8%	12%	10%
-2	-	-	10%
-3	-	-	10%
-4	-	-	7%
1983-1	10%	8%	10%
-2	-	-	8%
1984-1	12%	9%	8%
-2	-	-	9%
1985-1	13%	-	6%
-2	-	-	7%
1986-1	-	-	9%
-2	-	-	10%
1987-1	-	-	10%
-2	-	-	9%
Average	15%	13%	9%

(a) The U.S. polls were conducted annually with the exception of the Harris surveys in 1973 to 1977. The month of the Harris surveys varied from year to year. NORC surveys were conducted in March of each year. Decima polls were conducted on a quarterly basis from 1980 to 1982 and semi-annually since 1983.

(b) The Harris and NORC surveys asked the following question; "As far as the people running (organized labor or other institutions) are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?".

(c) The Decima survey asked the following question: "Now I'm going to name some institutions in this country and I'd like you to consider the people who run these institutions. How about the people who run labor unions? Would you say you have a great deal of confidence in them, only some confidence in them, or hardly any confidence in them?"

Table 8
Attitudes Toward the Power of Unions in
the United States and Canada

Year	Percent of Respondents Who Feel Unions are Too Powerful		
	United States NORC(a)	Canada Decima(b)	Gallup(c)
1968	-	-	62%
1971	55%	-	-
1972	46%	-	-
1974	42%	-	-
1975	50%	-	-
1976	52%	-	-
1977	51%	-	-
1979	-	-	68%
1980	-	-	65%
1981	-	52%	-
1982	48%	61%	67%
1984	-	53%	62%
1985	46%	50%	-
1986	-	50%	-
Average	49%	53%	65%

(a) The question asked was: "Please tell me which one statement best describes the way you feel about labor unions in this country: (1) Labor unions today are not strong enough. I would like to see them grow in power. (2) Labor unions today have grown too powerful. I would like to see their power reduced. (3) The power that labor unions have today is about right. I would like to see it stay the way it is."

(b) The question asked was: "Some people say that unions in Canada have become too powerful. Others say unions are necessary in Canada to protect workers from exploitation. Which of these points of view best reflects your own?".

(c) The question asked prior to 1979 was: "Do you think labor unions are getting too strong in Canada, or not?". The question asked in 1979 and in subsequent years was: "Do you think that labor unions are becoming too powerful, or not powerful enough, or are about right?"

1. The T.L.C. largely consisted of U.S.-based craft unions affiliated with the A.F.L. and the C.C.L. largely consisted of U.S.-based industrial unions affiliated with the C.I.O.
2. Canadian membership in U.S. based unions may underestimate private sector union membership in Canada, particularly in recent years, because of the increasing nationalization of the Canadian labor movement through the creation of Canadian unions and the succession of Canadian sections of international unions in the private sector. For example, see Thompson and Blum (1983).
3. There may be minor discrepancies in the occupational groupings "Processors, production, craft and repair" and "operators, fabricators and laborers" between the two countries. These differences do not distract from the overall findings.
4. Sources include: British Columbia Department of Labour (1970-1973), British Columbia Labour Relations Board (1974-1985), Canada Department of Labour (1970-1973), Canada Labour Relations Board (1973/74-1984/85), Ontario Ministry of Labour (1970/71-1980/81), and Ontario Labour Relations Board (1981/82-1985/86). Union membership in these jurisdictions is approximately 50 percent of the Canadian total.
5. Election results were only available for British Columbia and Ontario.
6. The exception is the construction industry.
7. While the American labor movement has recently regained its influence in Congress, there are indications that its legislative agenda will not focus on labor law reform. The major emphasis will be on proposals that help both union and non-union workers, e.g. plant closure notification, job hazard notification, minimum wage increases, minimum health insurance and provisions for parental leave (Hughey, 1987).
8. Contrary to these studies, Cooper (1984) found that election delay did not reduce union election success. A critique of Cooper's methodology is found in the appendix to Dickens (1988).
9. In the United States the union success rate in obtaining first contracts after certification has declined from 86 percent in 1960 to 78 percent in 1970 and 63 percent in 1980. This is largely attributed to increased employer resistance as evidenced in the greater employer tendency to commit unfair labor practices during the organizing campaign and initial bargaining sessions (Weiler, 1984, pp. 354-355). Although Canadian data are sketchy, in British Columbia unions

consistently negotiated first collective agreements (within 18 months of certification) in 75 to 85 percent of the newly certified bargaining units (1974-1985). There has been a modest drop in the percentage of first agreements achieved in the past two years, but nothing comparable to the trend in the United States. However, direct comparisons are difficult because in British Columbia the labor relations board can impose first contracts and construction unions often conclude agreements prior to certification (British Columbia Labour Relations Board, 1986).

10. Kochan, Katz and McKersie (1986, p. 64) "found that firms that implemented the average amount of these innovations [in work organization, design and practices] (compared to those not using any of the innovations) reduced the probability that a new plant will be organized by approximately 17 percentage points."
11. Complaints per certification campaign were 25 times higher in the U.S. than in British Columbia and 6 times higher than in Ontario (Weiler, 1983).
12. While not perfectly compatible, there are some important similarities in the coverage of the U.S. and Ontario certification data. The U.S. figures are based on membership gains through NLRB elections and provide a conservative estimate because they exclude employees covered by federal and state public sector legislation as well as the Railway Labor Act. The Ontario figures include some public employees (e.g. municipal workers) but exclude public employees covered by provincial and federal public sector labor legislation. The Ontario data also excludes the industries in the federal jurisdiction, e.g. airlines, shipping and railroads.
13. In Ontario, the number of employees attempted was estimated by multiplying the average size of the bargaining units certified by the number of units certified and adding the average size of bargaining units not certified (applications withdrawn, dismissed or elections lost) multiplied by the number of unsuccessful certification applications. The average size of the bargaining units not certified was based on average unit size in union election defeats (the only available data on unit size).
14. Another reason for skepticism is that within the United States it is possible to contrast union membership trends between the private and public sector (Freeman, 1987; Burton and Thomason, 1988).
15. As well, Canada has gone further with government substitution for union services. Statutory procedures, including binding arbitration, exist for protecting nonunion employees against

unjust dismissal and for resolving disputes involving occupational health and safety, mass layoffs and redundancies (Adams, 1985).

16. For example, in January 1987 the delegates to the convention of the International Woodworkers of America voted to split the union into Canadian and U.S. units. It was reported:

"The number one reason for breaking up the international, most leaders agreed, was the unwillingness to fund an international office, due largely to a drop in membership during the 1980s. It cost twice as much today on a per capita basis to maintain the international structure compared with the late 1970s when membership was well over 100,000..."

"Membership in the international has declined more steeply in the U.S. than in Canada." ("IWA Splits...", 1987, p. A2).

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