

Labor Unions - Attitudes of members.

C.4

Union Member Attitude Survey,

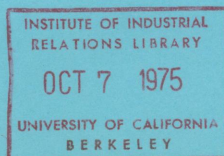
Local 14,

Western Graphic Arts Union,

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November, 1974



Introduction

A survey was conducted among the members of Local 14 of the Western Graphic Arts Union during the spring and summer of 1974. The survey, requested by the officers of the local, had as its purpose the depiction of printing pressmen's attitudes on various union-related issues. A questionnaire was mailed to every member of the local; after three separate mailings, fifty-five percent (55%) of the membership had returned a completed questionnaire.

We feel confident that our sample of pressmen is a representative one. This is important to remember when evaluating the great range in attitudes described herein. Oftentimes, surveys based on mailed questionnaires fail to get an adequate response rate. This was the case with a similar union member attitude survey conducted by the Institute of Industrial Relations in 1964. As a consequence, such results may contain a bias; they may be over-representative of pro-union attitudes (getting responses from those most active in union affairs) or of anti-union attitudes (those with an ax to grind). We feel, however, that this current sample is representative, and the conclusions contained within may be generalized beyond the sample to the entire local.

However, because it is likely that our group is representative of the entire membership, we discovered that responses often clustered around some intermediate range. Whether this means that the membership judges many of the local's achievements to be somewhat mediocre, or rather, an averaging of the more extreme views has taken place, is difficult to determine at this

time. Further analysis of the data could lead to a more accurate assessment of where the various sentiments emerge.

The report is divided into four sections. The first provides an overall description of the pressmen represented in this survey. Section II focuses on the issue of changing technology in the printing industry and its effects on security of pressmen employment. In the third section (III), we discuss some dimensions of local union life, including membership satisfaction, the problem of communication within the local, and the amount of pressmen participation in union activities. Part four (IV) is devoted to an examination of the collective bargaining priorities of the members of Local 14.

I. To Be A Pressman

We begin our report with a brief description of some of the distinguishing characteristics of Local 14's membership.

Background Variables

Almost ninety-five percent (95%) of the members of Local 14 are male. Forty-eight percent (48%) have completed high school, while an additional thirty-four percent (34%) have educational attainments beyond the 12th grade. The age distribution of the membership is as follows:

(1) Local #14: Age Distribution

Under 25	8.2%
25 - 35	26.6
36 - 45	25.0
46 - 55	22.2
Over 55	18.0

(N= 644)

Printing As An Occupation

Forty-four percent (44%) of the pressmen in Local #14 have worked in the printing industry for over 20 years. The overwhelming majority of these pressmen (74%) are currently classified as journeymen. When asked which equipment they presently operate, the most frequently chosen response was offset press, followed by letter press, pre press, web press and rotogravure.

Printing As A Craft

We asked the pressmen several questions about their work experience as printers. Most consider themselves to be skilled workers, who have interesting and enjoyable jobs, providing them with a deep source of artisan pride.

(2) Do you consider yourself:

A skilled worker	86.2%
A semi-skilled worker	12.1
An unskilled worker	1.7

(N= 651)

(3) How much do you enjoy your work?

A great deal	67.8%
Some	29.1
Not at all	3.1

(N= 652)

(4) How interesting do you find your job?

Interesting most of the time	66.5%
Occasionally interesting . .	27.4
Dull and Monotonous	6.1

(N= 654)

(5) How much pride do you take in your work?

A great deal	88.7%
Some	10.4
None9

(N= 655)

A View From The Bridge

When asked if they would remain in printing for the remainder of their work lives, over seventy percent (70%) of the pressmen said they would. However, when asked if they would choose printing, if they had it to do all over again, about half (49.3%) the pressmen said yes, while the remainder were divided between rejecting the option of printing (26.3%), or not knowing what they would do (24.3%). We also asked whether pressmen considered printing a good occupational choice for a young person today, and close to half (47.2%) thought it was. But when we asked if they would like to see their own children become printers, only thirty percent (29.7%) of the pressmen said yes.

Finally, pressmen were asked whether they considered discrimination against minority members to be a problem currently facing their own local. Almost seventy percent (68.8%) said it was not. When asked what the local might do to increase the numbers of minority persons in its membership, the most frequently chosen response was (1) sending union representatives into high schools to recruit young persons, followed by (2) distributing information on the printing trades to local community organizations, (3) bringing more minority persons into the trade entry program, and (4) instituting an affirmative action program.

II. Printing: Changing Technology and Job Security

In this section we examine selected aspects of the contemporary printing industry which bear on future working conditions of pressmen. We focus on

- (1) what pressmen consider the important changes occurring in production;
- (2) how new technology is affecting pressmen's security of employment; and,
- (3) what role pressmen think their union should perform in relation to these issues.

Changing Structure of Production

The majority of pressmen (64.7%) believe that the number of jobs available now in the printing industry in Northern California has decreased compared to the time when they first began to work. A similar percentage, however, feel that the amount of production has increased over the past five years. When asked what factors accounted for this increase in productivity, the two most often chosen responses were (1) new and more efficient equipment and (2) employees are working harder.

Technology and Job Security

We asked pressmen what effects technological changes in the printing industry, such as the introduction of new equipment, were having on their security of employment. Forty-five percent (45%) said there were no effects, while 20% said this was increasing their security and 21% said it was decreasing it. When asked about job loss due to automation, we received the following response.

- (6) Is job loss due to automation and technological change a problem in your plant?

Yes	17.4%
No	74.9
Don't know	7.7

(N= 633)

Although the majority of pressmen feel that the printing industry is a secure sector of the economy in terms of current employment [Table 7], a sizeable number express some apprehension about the difficulties of finding a new job. [Table 8].

- (7) How secure do you feel the printing industry is as a place of employment for persons like yourself?

Very secure	27.2%
Fairly secure	53.7
Not very secure	19.1

(N= 648)

- (8) If your present job were to be eliminated by a plant closing, or by the introduction of new equipment, how much difficulty do you think you would have finding another job in the printing industry?

None	32.1%
Some	45.9
A great deal	21.9

(N= 647)

The Local Union and Job Security

Over 80% of all pressmen feel that their union should be concerned with the problem of competition within the printing industry. When asked what their union should do to combat the threat of job loss caused by automation and technological changes, a majority of pressmen preferred the options of

a retraining program (60%) and lowering of the retirement age (65%). In addition, 56% of the pressmen rejected the idea of preventing the installation of new equipment as a means of resolving the issues of automation. Finally, we asked pressmen to what extent they would depend on their union to find them employment if they lost their current jobs.

(9) If you lost your job for any reason,
would you depend upon your union to
find you another one?

Yes	48.7%
No	36.4
Don't know	14.9

(N= 651)

Realms for Future Exploration

Future research might analyze the relationship between pressmen's satisfaction with the achievements of their local and the success with which the union has confronted the problems of a changing technology and threats to job security. Another area for investigation could assess the impact that changes in technology have had on pressmen satisfactions with their work. Some preliminary findings indicate that pressmen are discovering new sources of fulfillment in their craft, as a result of the introduction of modern equipment. While such changes sometimes mean a less singular relation to their product, they may also increase the possibilities within which pressmen can create a printed page. What previously may have required many hours of concentrated, painstaking effort, now may require only several minutes; what formerly was outside the range of a pressmen's abilities, now may easily be within reach. Rather than thwarting initiative, innovations in printing may assure pressmen of a continuously challenging work environment.

III. The Local Union

In this section, we discuss the attitudes pressmen have expressed about the overall performance of Local #14. Included here are (1) members' ratings of the accomplishments of their union on several criteria; (2) members' opinions on some aspects of the communications network existing between the officers and the rank-and-file; and (3) members' involvement in the activities of the local.

Satisfaction with Performance of the Local

Most pressmen express satisfaction with Local #14 and the job it is doing. We find, however, that the majority of pressmen generally state their approval of the local's performance somewhere within a range of "good to fair." Whether this indicates some human tendency to avoid calling anything excellent (or poor), or whether it instead points to an underlying source of discontent, is difficult to interpret. Following are the responses of pressmen to several questions in which they were asked to judge the performance of Local #14 in various areas.

(10) Overall, how would you rate your
local union compared to other locals
in the Pressmen's Union?

One of the best	11.5%
Better than most	23.6
About the same	42.8
Not as good as most	22.1

(N= 624)

Two things can be noted here. The first is that the category "about the same" probably should be interpreted as "about average," which may indicate

a higher regard than simply "fair" in an excellent-good-fair-poor scheme. Furthermore, if one combines categories 2 & 3 above, we have over two-thirds of the membership thinking their local is at least as good, if not better, than most.

(11) How satisfied are you with the job your local union is doing in each of the following areas?

	<u>Highly Satisfied</u>	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Highly Dissatisfied</u>
Fringe Benefits (N= 656)	14.0%	55.6	22.3	8.1
Grievances (N= 633)	4.6%	58.9	23.7	12.8
Political Activities (N= 609)	3.3%	66.7	20.0	10.0
Wage Increases (N= 650)	6.5%	44.0	34.0	15.5
Job Security (N= 643)	9.2%	61.0	19.9	10.0
Working Conditions (N= 639)	9.7%	67.9	14.1	8.3
Social & Educational Activities (N= 622)	5.1%	52.7	27.5	14.6

Combining the categories of "satisfied" and "highly satisfied," we see that between 50% and 76% of the membership express satisfaction with the job the local is doing in certain areas. Of course, this means that in such areas as wage increases, the other 50% of the membership is dissatisfied to some extent.

- (12) How good a job does your local union do in defending members who get a 'bad deal' from management?

Excellent	7.8%
Good	35.4
Fair	31.7
Poor	25.1

(N= 625)

Over 43% of the pressmen think that their local is doing a good-to-excellent job in defending members against management. Here again, it is difficult to interpret what the "fair" response indicates. One suspects that it implies "below average," and may indicate some disapproval of the grievance mechanism.

- (13) How would you rate the job which your local officers are doing?

A. President of the Local:

Excellent	8.5%
Good	32.8
Fair	28.4
Poor	15.9
Can't say	14.5

(N= 656)

B. Secretary - Treasurer:

Excellent	9.5%
Good	31.3
Fair	24.3
Poor	17.6
Can't say	17.3

(N= 654)

C. Business Agent

Excellent	11.1%
Good	28.9

Fair	18.7
Poor	19.2
Can't say	19.0

(N= 609)

We also asked members to state what the officers might be doing to be of greater assistance to the membership. This was an open-ended question (without prearranged answer categories), thus permitting members to respond from a more personal framework. It is significant, therefore, that over 1/4 of the membership expressed the very same idea: the officers should come around to the shops more often and make themselves more "visible."

Finally, members were asked to rate how they feel about the way in which the local's meetings are run. Approximately 50% of the members expressed satisfaction with these meetings, while 50% expressed dissatisfaction.

Communication: The Problem of Dialogue

Another dimension along which to explore members' attitudes toward the local concerns the exchange of information and opinion between the rank-and-file and the leadership. First, members rated how knowledgeable they thought officers were about rank-and-file opinions.

(14) How would you rate the amount of knowledge the local union officers have about members' opinions on union affairs?

Excellent	3.5%
Good	26.2
Fair	43.2
Poor	27.1

(N= 650)

Here we see that 70% of the membership thinks that the union officers are not well informed about members' opinions. However, when asked to judge the extent to which their officers utilized members' opinions when reaching a decision, we got the following response.

- (15) Do you think that leaders of your local take the opinions of the members into consideration when making a decision?

All of the time	6.0%
Most of the time	35.0
Some of the time	51.2
Never	7.8

(N= 652)

Over 50% of the pressmen think that their officers consider members' opinions at least some of the time and over 40% think they do this most-to-all of the time. Finally, members were asked how well informed they thought other members were about union activities.

- (16) How would you rate the amount of knowledge most members have about local union affairs?

Excellent8%
Good	13.6
Fair	39.8
Poor	45.8

(N= 640)

We discover that over 85% of the pressmen consider other pressmen to be rather poorly informed about union affairs. While the majority of pressmen feel that their officers consider members' opinions when reaching a decision (at least some of the time), they judge the reciprocity of the

dialogue between the two groups to be rather weak. They rate the officers as fairly uninformed about members' opinions, and rate their fellow members as very uninformed about union affairs. This finding may clarify the impulse behind the response of 1/4 of the pressmen stating they would like more direct communication with their officers.

Membership Participation in Union Activities

When asked about the chances that a member, with leadership ability, would have of being elected to local union office, most pressmen thought the chances would be good. Furthermore, almost one-third of the pressmen stated that they have held union office in the past, or do so at present.

(17) Do you feel that every member with leadership ability has a chance of being elected to local union office if he is willing to make the effort to run?

Yes, a very good chance	24.1%
Yes, a reasonable chance	40.6
Yes, a very slim chance	26.0
No chance at all	9.4

(N= 651)

We asked members to indicate how many of the last six union meetings they attended. Over half the membership had attended none of the meetings.

(18) How many of the last six union meetings have you attended?

None	54.9%
One	11.7
Two	11.1
Three	6.8
Four	5.2
Five	3.8
Six	6.5

(N= 659)

More than half the members make at least one suggestion a year to their officers concerning union affairs. Fifty-six percent (56%) of the pressmen read every issue of the international's newspaper, while seventy-one percent (71%) read every issue of the local bulletin.

The Local Union: Realms for Future Exploration

We have examined three dimensions of the organization of union life which were thought to be the background to the formation of membership attitudes. Future research may wish to explore the extent to which pressmen's feelings of satisfaction about their local are related to the adequacy of communications within the local or their own participation in union activities. There may, in fact, be no relationship between these factors.

Some preliminary investigations that we pursued indicate that certain measures of satisfaction with Local #14's performance were correlated with other such measures. This implies that similar criteria are used in response to such questions. Therefore, a highly satisfied rating on one question would probably be found to go together with a highly satisfied rating on another (with which a correlation was found to exist). Similarly, for dissatisfied ratings. Thus, we found strong correlations between how one rated the job the local was doing [Table 10] with how satisfied one was with grievances, job security and working conditions [Table 11], with how good a job the union did in defending members who got a "bad deal" [Table 12], and with how one rated the job the president was doing [Table 13A]. [Figure 1]

We also found that the rating of the job that the president of the local is doing [Table 13] had a strong association with several other measures. These included the ratings of the secretary-treasurer and business agent

[Table 13B & C], how good a job the union does in defending members who get a "bad deal" [Table 12], and with how satisfied one was with the local's meetings. [Figure 2]

Figure 1:

Correlation between Local Union Rating and other measures of Satisfaction with Local Union

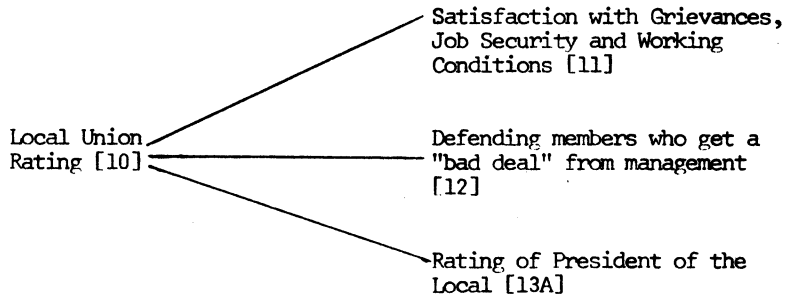
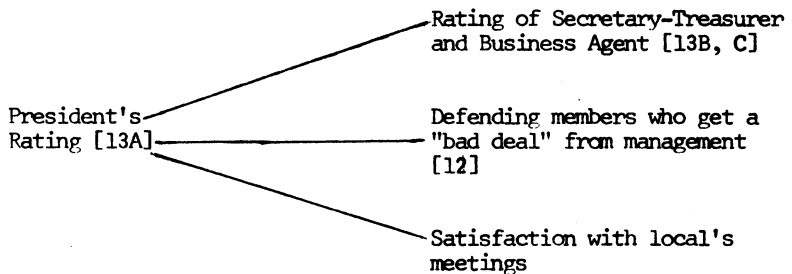


Figure 2:

Correlation between Rating of the Local Union President and other measures of Satisfaction with Local Union



Concerning the issue of communication, we discovered that members' judgment as to the extent to which officers know the opinions of the membership [Table 14] is highly correlated with how often they think officers use these opinions

[Table 15]. Officers' awareness of members' opinions [Table 14] is similarly related to how members judge other pressmen's knowledge on union affairs [Table 16], and with how one rates members' chances for being elected to office [Table 17] [Figure 3].

As to our measures of participation in local union affairs, we found that one's attendance at union meetings [Table 18] is related to whether one has ever held union office and with whether one makes suggestions to the officers. There was little correlation between our measures of communication [Tables 14-16] and our measures of participation. [Figure 4]

Figure 3:

Correlations between Officers' knowledge of Members' Opinions and other measures of Communication within the Local.

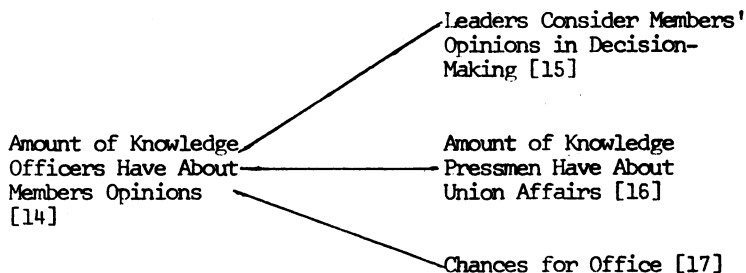
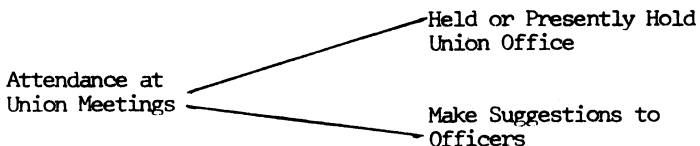


Figure 4:

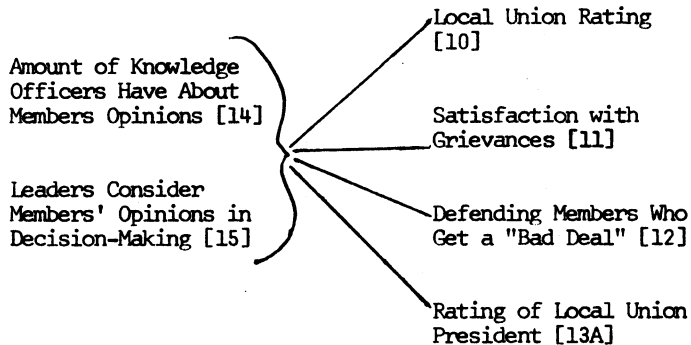
Correlations between Attendance at Union Meetings and other measures of Participation in Union Activities



We also compared some of the dimensions of satisfaction with the local's performance to questions of communication and participation. We learned that officers' knowledge of members' opinions [Table 14] and the extent to which they utilize these opinions [Table 15] are highly correlated with the overall local rating [Table 10], satisfaction with grievances [Table 11], the job that the union does in defending members who get a "bad deal" [Table 12], and the rating of the job of the local union president. [Figure 5]

Figure 5:

Correlations Between Measures of Communication and Measures of Satisfaction



A second direction for future research might be a closer examination of who the most satisfied members of Local #14 are. Our beginning inquiries have pointed to age as an important variable to consider. Though the relationship is not overwhelming, there is a clear association between the age of pressmen and how satisfied they are on the several measures of local union performance. Older members tend to express greater satisfaction than do younger ones.

(19) Breakdown of Question on Rating of Local Union President by Age

<u>Age</u>	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Can't Say</u>
Younger than 25	0%	19.2	26.9	25.0	28.8
26 - 35	4.2%	20.8	33.9	17.3	23.8
36 - 45	8.7%	30.4	32.3	16.1	12.4
46 - 55	14.9%	40.4	22.0	16.3	6.4
Older than 55	8.8%	50.9	22.8	10.5	7.0

We also found an association between income level and satisfaction. This relation was generally weak but did indicate a tendency for those on the lower ends of the income gradient to express less satisfaction with the local's achievements than those on the higher end. It should be remembered that even small differences may be important, especially within one defined group, such as a local union.

(20) Breakdown of Question on Local Union Rating by Weekly Take Home Pay

<u>Weekly Pay</u>	<u>Best</u>	<u>Better</u>	<u>Same</u>	<u>Less</u>
Under \$125	6.7%	13.3	43.3	36.7
126 - 150	6.2%	20.0	47.7	26.2
151 - 175	11.7%	21.3	33.0	34.0
176 - 200	15.5%	18.4	47.1	19.0
201 - 225	10.9%	32.7	42.6	13.9
226 - 250	9.8%	31.1	42.6	16.4
Over 250	6.9%	30.6	40.3	22.2

IV. Collective Bargaining Goals

Order of Priorities

From a list of fifteen collective bargaining goals, the pressmen were asked to select five which they considered to be the most important. Following is a list of the five goals chosen, along with the percentage of the membership which favors them.

(21) Collective Bargaining Priorities

1. Improved retirement program . 74.6%
2. Improved health care benefits 55.5%
3. Protection from job loss
through automation or other
technological advances.
(Training fund) 47.2%
4. A Wage Increase 46.9%
5. Shorter work day or work week 37.4%

Top Priorities By Age Groups

After discovering what the top five priorities for collective bargaining were, we took each goal separately and compared what percentage of each age group preferred that goal. Two of the priorities, an improved retirement program and a wage increase, were clearly related to age. The tendency to favor the retirement program increased with age, while the tendency to choose a wage increase decreased with age.

(22) Percent Choosing "Improved Retirement Program" By Age

Under 25	57%
26 - 35	67%
36 - 45	76%
46 - 55	83%
Over 55	87%

(23) Percent Choosing "A Wage Increase"
By Age

Under 25	62.3%
26 - 35	55.0%
36 - 45	54.7%
46 - 55	44.8%
Over 55	25.9%

The priorities of improved health care benefits, a training fund and a shorter work day or week, were not associated with age. That is, these options were chosen by a similar percentage of each age group, indicating a commonality of concern with those particular goals.

Journeyman Program

We also asked pressmen whether they thought their union should have a program for upgrading journeymen skills. Seventy-four percent (74%) indicated that they thought the union should. In response to the question of what knowledge and skills should be taught in such a program, sixty-five percent (65%) favored learning about new equipment which might be installed in their shops within the next five years, while another forty-seven percent (47%) also favored equipment presently in use in other plants.

Conclusion

One cannot help but be impressed by the extent to which printing pressmen manifest extreme satisfaction and pride about their work. A sense of thoughtful interplay with a product is evoked in watching pressmen at work.

Most of the pressmen in Local 14 do not feel threatened by the introduction of new equipment into the printing process. In fact, there is the possibility that their work becomes more challenging as a result of new capacities gained from technological innovations.

The majority of pressmen seem at least moderately satisfied with the overall performance of their local and its achievements in particular areas. We have looked at satisfaction mainly in terms of how well the local has fulfilled its commitments on certain "bread-and-butter" issues. The salience for the feeling of satisfaction, of such issues as communications within the local or membership participation in union affairs, has not been investigated. We suspect they may be significant for the organization of a union, if only in terms of the texture of its internal life. The choice of collective bargaining priorities seems to support the notion that members are oriented to a more structured sense of employment security.

Finally, we are left with a strong impression that the leadership of Local 14 is concerned with members' attitudes and how best to represent them. We have grown to respect and admire the printing pressmen of Local 14.