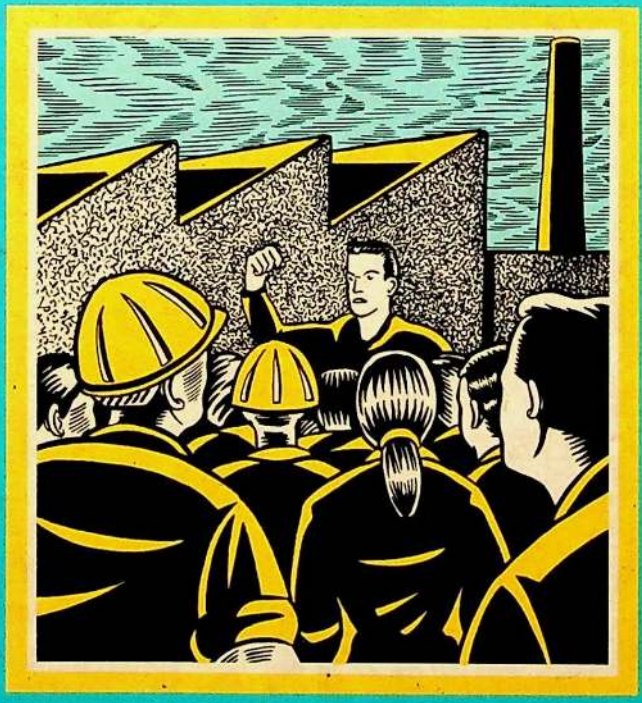
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AUSTRALIAN STUDIES IN LABOUR RELATIONS

UNIONS AT THE WORKPLACE

Shop Steward Leadership and Ideology



John Benson

Industrial relations research in Australia has focused almost exclusively on the major institutions and their role in determining the rules of the workplace. The interactions between workers and management at the local level has been a neglected area of research. What, if any, is the role of the shop steward in a centralised system dominated by unions, employers and tribunals organised on a state and national basis?

This book is the first detailed Australian study of trade union organisation at the workplace. It examines, in detail, the relationships between shop stewards and members, fellow shop stewards, union officials and management. It studies the behaviour of shop stewards in the power industry and offers evidence to suggest that substantial, workplace-based trade union activity exists within our centralised arbitral system and that extensive negotiations take place between shop stewards and managers.

Unions at the Workplace extends considerably our understanding of workplace industrial relations processes and brings new evidence to the debate on industrial relations reform.

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Foreword

This is the second book in the series of monographs titled Australian Studies in Labour Relations. The series consists of books written and edited by staff and associates of the Centre for Industrial Relations and Labour Studies at the University of Melbourne.

In 1946 the University of Melbourne offered the first tertiary-level course in industrial relations within Australia. It is currently a major centre for research and teaching in labour studies, offering a masters degree in industrial relations (which has the largest enrolment of any such course within Australia), a graduate diploma in industrial relations, and an undergraduate specialisation in labour studies. The Centre for Industrial Relations and Labour Studies co-ordinates research and teaching in the labour area at the University. The general philosophy of the Centre is to regard labour studies as a multi-disciplinary area of study which is based on knowledge and methods developed in a number of traditional areas of study, including economics, law, sociology, politics, psychology and history.

This book is the first detailed Australian study of trade union organisation at the workplace. The role of the key trade union representative at this level, the shop steward, is the focus of analysis. Some of the more important findings of the study are that substantial, workplace-based trade union activity exists within our centralised arbitral system, that extensive negotiations over a wide range of issues take place between shop stewards and managers, and that differences in the behaviour of stewards can be, at least in part, attributed to the type of union to which the steward belongs, characteristics associated with their workplace and the steward's role definition in terms of union ideology and leadership style. This book extends considerably our understanding of workplace industrial relations processes and is a major contribution to the current debate on micro-level industrial relations reform.

Gerard Griffin

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Abbreviations

ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ADSTE	Association of Draughting, Supervisory and Technical Employees
AIMPE	Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers
AMWU	Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union
APEA	Association of Professional Engineers, Australia
APSA	Association of Professional Scientists of Australia
ASCJA	Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners of Australia
ASE	Australasian Society of Engineers
ATWU	Australian Timber Workers' Union
AWU	Australian Workers' Union
BLF	Australian Building Construction Employees and Builders Labourers' Federation
BWIU	Building Workers' Industrial Union
ETU	Electrical Trades Union
FEDFA	Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association
FIA	Federated Ironworkers' Association
FLAIEU	Federated Liquor and Allied Industries Employees' Union
FMWU	Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union
FSPU	Federated Storeman and Packers' Union
GTLC	Gippsland Trades and Labour Council
MOA	Municipal Officers' Association (SECV Branch)
OPDUA	Operative Painters and Decorators' Union of Australia
PGEU	Plumbers and Gasfitters Employees' Union
SECV	State Electricity Commission of Victoria
TWU	Transport Workers' Union
VBEF	Vehicle Builders Employees' Federation
VOBS	Victorian Operative Bricklayers' Society

VPS	Victorian Plasterers' Society
VTHC	Victorian Trades Hall Council

Note: Some unions have changed their titles over time. The titles used throughout this book are as at 1985.

Preface

In Australia, industrial relations research has focused almost exclusively on the major industrial relations institutions and their role in the determination of the rules of the workplace. Local workplace industrial relations and the interaction between worker representatives and enterprise management has been a neglected area of research. This study attempts to rectify this situation. By focusing attention on the workplace a number of important questions are addressed that will provide some insight into the role of the shop steward in a centralised arbitral system, the factors that may influence this role and the relationships that develop between shop stewards and their members, management and full-time union officials.

A study of this kind owes a debt to many people. First and foremost I would like to gratefully acknowledge the co-operation I received from the shop stewards in the Latrobe Valley. This book is about these people. Their willingness to answer a seemingly endless number of questions with patience and good humour made this study possible. Equally, I would like to express my appreciation to the full-time union officials, both those located in the Latrobe Valley and those based in Melbourne, who assisted with the research for this study. Their readiness to provide data, answer questions and comment on the research findings was invaluable.

Special thanks must also go to the Committee on Research and Graduate Studies, University of Melbourne, for its financial assistance, and to my academic colleagues Gerard Griffin, Michael Quinlan, Julian Teicher and Peter Fairbrother for the willingness to comment on and discuss various aspects of the study. Thanks are also due to Margaret and Sally who typed successive drafts of this book with efficiency and

patience. My greatest debt of all is to my father, Graham Benson, and to Sam Armstrong, both of whom taught me that with co-operation between working people significant achievements can be made. To them this book is dedicated.

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1 Introduction

On 13 September 1984 the Australian Industrial Relations Commission ordered an increase of one position per shift in the control room of the newly constructed Loy Yang Power Station. This was just one of many such decisions of the various industrial tribunals in 1984 which affected the day-to-day lives of workers at the shop-floor. To commence a book on workplace unionism by examining a decision of an industrial tribunal may appear incongruous. Yet this seemingly unexceptional decision conceals a range of interactions between workers and their stewards, managers, full-time union officials and members of the Commission. To understand the significance and impact of union organisation at the workplace on this decision requires a closer examination of the events that led to this outcome.

The dispute

In 1978 just after the commencement of the Loy Yang A Power Station, the State Electricity Commission of Victoria (SECV) proposed a control room structure that would allow for one unit attendant on each of the four units.[1] This was identical to the staffing structure of the recently completed Yallourn W Power Station. In November 1982 after a series of discussions, the SECV and the union representing unit attendants, the Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association (FEDFA) agreed to an increase of one unit attendant per shift. In March 1983 FEDFA demanded an increase in the proposed manning to two unit attendants per unit plus two others. Further discussions occurred between the SECV and FEDFA resulting in an agreement being reached that specified one unit attendant per unit plus one other for units one and two only. This agreement was, however, reached before any of the units became operational.

In late 1983 unit two of Loy Yang A began trial operations. SECV power station staff, many of whom had been recently appointed to Loy Yang, were now operating the first of the four 500 megawatt units. Dissatisfaction with the heavy work load being experienced led to the unit attendants meeting on 24 January 1984 and resurrecting the March 1983 claim. At this meeting a number of work bans were implemented, to be effective from 25 January 1984, which were subsequently confirmed by the local 'staff' branch of FEDFA in early February 1984. The SECV responded to the bans by agreeing to meet with FEDFA representatives on 6 February 1984. Not unexpectedly, SECV management was not prepared to concede to the claim. In essence the claim represented a doubling of the number of unit attendants, although at this meeting FEDFA shop stewards indicated they were prepared to limit their claim to the staffing requirements of units one and two with the proviso that extra staff would be provided for units three and four unless the SECV could prove to FEDFA that an increase in staff was unnecessary. At this stage the ban on unit one was having minimal effect as the SECV and contract personnel were, by and large, able to circumvent the ban. The fact that the ban proved ineffectual was not unexpected as the stewards argued the action represented the first stage of the campaign. The major aim, at that point, was the speeding up of the negotiation process and the alerting of more senior SECV management to the existence of a dispute.

Pressure was, however, building up at the shop-floor level and, following a further rejection of the claim by the SECV at a meeting held on 8 March 1984, the Loy Yang unit attendants decided that from midnight of that day bans would be placed on all work associated with the auxiliary boiler and on operator standby arrangements. This was in addition to the existing bans on unit one. The SECV responded immediately by notifying the Australian Industrial Relations Commission of the existence of a dispute that was causing a delay in reaching construction deadlines and the final commissioning of units one and two. Later the same day, the unit attendants met again and, in response to what they saw as unnecessary action by the SECV in bringing the Industrial Relations Commission into the dispute, placed further bans on a number of related activities.

At this stage unit two was still functioning, a fact which caused some FEDFA members to accuse the Municipal Officers' Association (MOA) and the Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers (AIMPE) of breaching the ban. The local branch secretary of AIMPE

responded by issuing a memo warning members of the consequences of breaching bans imposed by FEDFA. It was clear that the bans were not fully effective and if they were to become so it would require a complete shutting down of unit two. This action, however, had little support from the local branch executive of FEDFA as an escalation of the dispute would force the Victorian government to intervene via its Industrial Relations Task Force. Essentially this would take the dispute out of the hands of the shop stewards and local officials of the union and would almost certainly lead to a modification of the claim by Melbourne-based FEDFA officials and the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC).

The Industrial Relations Commission responded quickly to the notification of the dispute and on 14 March 1984 held the first hearing at Loy Yang on the FEDFA claim. At this hearing local SECV management outlined the background to the dispute and the design philosophy of the power station. In brief, the SECV claimed that the power station had been designed to be staffed by one unit attendant per unit and that once commissioning had taken place work loads would settle down. The union rejected that proposition, adding that it felt it had 'got its fingers burnt' in agreeing to the staffing levels for the Yallourn W Power Station. The outcome of this hearing was the setting up of a working party to discuss the matter and to subsequently make recommendations to the Industrial Relations Commission. The working party consisted of four SECV management personnel, two FEDFA shop stewards and the honorary secretary of FEDFA's local 'staff' branch. At this stage FEDFA agreed to lift all bans.

The working party met for three days from 19 March to 21 March 1984 and made a number of on-site inspections at Loy Yang. SECV management expressed its concern in terms of staffing structures and costs, whereas the union representatives were concerned with the heavy work loads being experienced by the union's members. The working party agreed on the need to increase the number of unit attendants on day shift by one and to provide some rostering assistance. The union representatives were prepared to sign the agreement, however SECV management were directed by senior management in Melbourne to support but not sign the agreement.

On 22 March the two shop stewards on the working party took the 'agreement' to a meeting of unit attendants employed at Loy Yang. The membership rejected the proposal as it felt it did not resolve the issues that had originally led to the establishment of the working party. At this meeting the unit attendants also decided to reconstitute all previous work bans.

In response to this action by the unit controllers, the Industrial Relations Commission reconvened in Melbourne. The full-time industrial officer for FEDFA argued at this hearing that the extent of the problems facing unit attendants could be best illustrated by a work survey. This was rejected by the unit attendants who called on the Commission to conduct inspections. The Commission agreed to this request and on 29 March inspections were conducted of the Loy Yang Power Station complex. The outcome of these inspections was a recommendation to lift all bans and an agreement to set dates for final submissions by the parties. All parties agreed to abide by the arbitrated decision.

During the inspection the shop stewards were unable to convincingly demonstrate to the Commission the claimed excessive work load of unit attendants. This problem was highlighted when the Commission suggested that the union would do well to conduct a work survey, as suggested earlier by the full-time FEDFA official, prior to the final decision. The survey was agreed to and three unit attendants were asked to document all their work activities for the period 29 March to 6 April 1984. For the duration of the survey the unit attendants also agreed to lift all work bans as a demonstration of good faith. Obviously this action would also allow the survey to illustrate the full extent of the unit attendants' work load.

On 13 April 1984 the SECV presented further evidence on the design philosophy of Loy Yang A and on 8 May 1984 FEDFA stewards presented the results of the survey. Final submissions from both the SECV and FEDFA were presented on 18 July 1984. The inordinate time delay was primarily due to a major dispute, involving FEDFA members, occurring at a neighbouring open-cut mine.

The decision was handed down on 13 September 1984 and provided for an increase of one position per shift during the commissioning period. This position would be subject to review by the working party at the completion of the commissioning process. The new staff levels were not, however, implemented immediately by the SECV and were only achieved after the unit attendants threatened industrial action in December 1984.

This dispute had lasted for just under one year. Although strike action did not eventuate and power supplies were not threatened it does clearly demonstrate the instrumental position of the shop stewards in the complex process of the determination of the rules of the workplace within a centralised arbitral system.

Union organisation at the workplace

Whilst most management and union officials could cite many similar and perhaps more remarkable instances of shop steward organisation at the workplace it remains the case that there is surprisingly little information available on shop stewards and their influence in Australian industry. This lack of knowledge has not prevented employers, politicians and the media from claiming, from time to time, that many of the problems confronting industry today can be directly traced to the increase in the power and influence of the honorary workplace trade union official. Some support for these views has certainly occurred as a direct result of lengthy and disruptive industrial action in such areas as Broken Hill and the Pilbara and in such industries as stevedoring and vehicle building. But even in these instances little attempt has been made to understand the issues and pressures that led to such action.

This book attempts to rectify this gap in our knowledge and understanding of trade union organisation and activity at the workplace. More specifically, the book focuses on the role of the honorary workplace union official, the shop steward. The shop steward has not been the subject of any sustained level of academic research in Australia. This neglect may be due, and in turn have contributed to, the belief that in a centralised arbitral system little industrial relations activity occurs at the workplace. Accordingly, the role of Australian shop stewards is conceived in terms of their formal duties which, in the majority of unions, is primarily restricted to enlisting members, collecting dues and providing a link between the union and the membership. A further explanation for this disinterest is that research focusing on the shop-floor level presents problems of a practical nature that can prove difficult to overcome. These problems—or what Davis (1980b:2) claimed the 'difficulty of discovering very much about shop stewards' —include gaining access to shop stewards and their members and the restrictions placed on the researcher by the employer who does not want disruptions at the workplace and by union officials who wish to maintain control at the central level. The effect has been for industrial relations research to neglect and underestimate the importance of industrial relations activity at the shop-floor and to devalue the industrial relations role of local union representatives and enterprise management.

To focus attention on the workplace level raises a number of important questions which have not been systematically addressed in industrial relations research in Australia. First, is there a role for shop

stewards in a centralised arbitral system, dominated by trade unions, employer associations and industrial tribunals? If so, what is this role? Does it extend beyond the formally defined role for stewards as specified in union rules, awards and agreements? Second, if stewards do have a role beyond that contained in the union rulebook do they define this role differently? If so, what factors explain the variation in role perceptions between stewards? Third, will the diversity in role definition affect shop steward behaviour, and in particular the type of relationships stewards develop with members, fellow shop stewards, full-time union officials and management?

This book will address these questions and identify some of the salient features of trade union organisation at the workplace. The central focus will be the behaviour of shop stewards, their leadership and ideology and the relationship between shop stewards and their trade union, managers, other shop stewards and the union membership. The diversity of these relationships and the difficulties inherent in the stewards' role are succinctly expressed by Brown:

> Members require the favourable settlement of their grievance; full-time officials require him to maintain union organisation and uphold union policy; managers expect him to act 'responsibly' and to go through procedure and to be able to predict their members' reactions to their innovations; other shop stewards expect solidarity and support for agreed policies. (1981:110–11)

It is from these four groups that shop stewards derive the power to act as workplace representatives. The particular union the steward belongs to will provide the basic authority to act as a shop steward, whilst other stewards and management can, by their actions, grant further authority to the role of the steward. It is the membership, however, which in the final analysis can broaden the power of stewards to carry out activities on its behalf. The different needs and focuses of these groups underscore the dilemma facing shop stewards and the essentially contradictory nature of the stewards' position. Accordingly, shop stewards will continually be under pressure to renegotiate their roles and in the process they will place considerable emphasis on the reconciliation of the inherent conflicts between the various groups, without losing the fundamental support of the membership. The approach adopted in this book will, therefore, be premised on the assumption that to understand steward behaviour requires an analysis of power relations at the workplace.

Context of study and research strategy

The aim of the research was to achieve a detailed understanding of trade unions at the workplace with a particular focus on shop stewards and the relationships and interaction between themselves and members, management and full-time union officials. These relationships can be affected by a number of factors. For example, the nature and structure of the industry (type, structure, ownership and product markets), the degree of reliance on industrial tribunals for wage outcomes, the number and types of unions, the individual unions' policy towards shop stewards and shop-floor organisation and how these policies are interpreted by full-time union officials, the background and skills of the work force and management strategy are all factors which will significantly affect the pattern and importance of trade union organisation and industrial relations at the workplace. A general survey of shop stewards was, therefore, not considered. The behaviour of shop stewards in one region, industry or firm could not be compared with the behaviour of shop stewards in another region, industry or firm as the behaviour may be as much a product of the characteristics of the environment as of the nature and characteristics of the shop stewards themselves.

Any attempt to research the behaviour and actions of shop stewards at the workplace must attempt to limit the possibility of 'extraneous' variables becoming alternate, major explanatory factors.[2] Consequently, it was decided to limit the study to a single organisation operating in an identifiable region. The SECV proved to be a convenient organisation, particularly if limited to the Latrobe Valley operations, the source of some 85 per cent of Victoria's electricity production.[3] Variations in the behaviour of shop stewards will thus more likely be attributable to factors such as attitudes, leadership styles and role definition of the actors than to the nature and structure of the organisation. Two caveats must be placed on this contention. First, the particular structural and institutional factors may interact with these factors in such a way as to produce a unique form of shop steward activity and organisation. Second, within the one organisation differences in managerial styles may be evidenced and sectional variations may occur. This may have some effect on the behaviour of shop stewards.

Clearly the selection of shop stewards employed in the SECV's Latrobe Valley operations allows the possibility of furthering our understanding of workplace industrial relations in the context of

strong local union organisation. Traditionally, union members have been militant in the Latrobe Valley and have developed strong workplace organisations. It may not, in this sense, be typical of all Australian industry, although other regional areas such as Broken Hill, Mt Isa and the Pilbara (O'Neil 1969; Sykes 1965 and Frenkel 1978) and other industries such as metals, manufacturing, transport, construction and the waterfront have experienced similar situations (Rimmer 1983; Derber 1977; Charleston 1977; Mason and Muller 1978). Nevertheless two points must be remembered when generalising the research findings. First, the shop stewards under investigation operate within a major statutory authority. Accordingly, it is likely that some of the workplace policies will be influenced by the particular government of the day and the ethos and practice of public employment. One example is the structure and functioning of the working party concept introduced into the SECV in the late 1970s (Benson 1982). Second, as most SECV employees are covered by awards of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (the Commission), the dispute settling process will reflect, at least in part, the procedures of the federal tribunal. These limitations should not be used to restrict generalisations from being made but rather to caution against simply assuming the findings are relevant to other contexts without first taking into account the particular structural features of the situation.

The SECV's coal winning and power generation operations are located in three main areas of the Latrobe Valley. The Yallourn undertaking includes an open cut mine, several older and smaller power stations and the more modern Yallourn W Power Station that has a generating capacity of 1450 megawatts. With close to seventy years of continuous operations at Yallourn, unions are well entrenched and the shop steward network is well developed. The Morwell operations also include an open cut mine, the small Morwell Power Station and the 1600 megawatt Hazelwood Power Station. The third area of the SECV's operations is the recently completed Loy Yang project which includes an open cut mine and the 2000 megawatt Loy Yang A Power Station.

The management of the SECV's Latrobe Valley operations comes under the authority of the Deputy Chief General Manager who has responsibility also for construction and transmission. Terms and conditions of employment in the SECV, at the time of the survey, were determined by some ten federal and six state awards.[4] The major awards for blue-collar employees were the Metal Industry (SECV) Award and

the Engine Drivers and Firemen's (SECV) Award, whilst for white-collar employees the Municipal Officers' Association (SECV) Award dominated. These three awards are federally determined and cover some 88 per cent of all SECV employees in the Latrobe Valley. Industrial relations are the responsibility of the line manager, although managers are assisted by specialist industrial relations officers. On the shop-floor it is the responsibility of supervisors to solve their industrial relations problems (in conjunction with shop stewards) and it is not until a full-time union official is involved that an industrial relations officer is brought in to deal with a matter.

Within the SECV's Latrobe Valley operations, at the time of the research, some twenty-four unions represented the 9000 employees.[5] The major unions, in terms of membership and workplace organisation, include the Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union (AMWU), the Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association (FEDFA), the Municipal Officers' Association (MOA), the Electrical Trades Union (ETU), the Federated Ironworkers' Association (FIA) and the Association of Professional Engineers of Australia (APEA). Union density in the SECV is in excess of 95 per cent with some 90 per cent of all employees belonging to these six unions. This level of unionisation has been achieved by a *de facto* compulsory unionism agreement operating with respect to all blue-collar workers and the majority of staff employees. This agreement essentially places the responsibility on management to make union membership a condition of employment for all new employees. The strength and organisation of unions at the shop-floor ensures that workers remain members once they have been employed. The AMWU, FEDFA, MOA, ETU and the FIA maintain offices in the Latrobe Valley and employ local full-time organisers and all of these unions have local branches. In each case the membership of the local branch committee is dominated by shop stewards employed in the SECV. Twenty of the twenty-four unions had formally designated shop stewards. In March 1985 a total of 346 shop stewards were employed within the SECV. Some 83 per cent of these stewards were members of the above unions. Of these, the MOA and FEDFA accounted for 57 per cent of all shop stewards.[6] Within each of the three work sites not only is there a different number of unions with stewards present (Yallourn 16; Morwell 14; Loy Yang 9) but also a different mix of unions. For example, the AMWU and the MOA are concentrated at Yallourn and Morwell, a number of the manual, construction unions are located at Yallourn and the APEA is primarily concentrated at Morwell and Loy Yang.

The pattern of industrial relations in the SECV's Latrobe Valley operations has been influenced by a number of factors. Of particular importance has been the various policy decisions and actions of the Victorian government. The reliance for many years on a policy of formal reference to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission[7] and the tight control exercised by the Office of Industrial Relations Co-ordination[8] were consequences of governmental attitudes, but these in turn severely affected the industrial relationships at the local level. Other important influences on industrial relations in the Latrobe Valley included the approach adopted by the Industrial Relations Commission, the domination by a single employer, the strategic nature of the power industry, the relatively isolated nature of the community, the social background of the population and the structure of the local union movement (Benson and Hince 1987). These factors have inspired workers to be active and vocal in matters which affect their conditions of employment and the wider issues associated with the quality of life.

The data in this book were collected over a five year period commencing in September 1982. The research strategy involved a number of activities which included an examination of union and SECV documents, formal interviews with union, management and tribunal representatives, attendance at a number of union meetings, including informal gatherings of shop stewards, and a questionnaire survey of shop stewards employed by the SECV in the Latrobe Valley. The questionnaire was mailed to the home addresses of all SECV shop stewards in the period March to May 1985. Some 209 stewards returned their questionnaire, which represented a response rate in excess of 60 per cent. Of these stewards some 60 per cent were from blue-collar unions whilst 44 per cent and 41 per cent were from the Yallourn and Morwell work centres respectively. All unions with shop stewards participated in the survey and completed questionnaires were received from shop stewards representing these unions. Respondents and non-respondents were compared on a number of characteristics (type of union, size of union and place of work). No significant differences were evidenced on this basis.

Structure of book

This first chapter has been concerned with the rationale and method of research used for this book. Chapter 2 reviews the definitions of stewardship and the Australian literature on shop stewards, focusing

on factors which may explain the variation in the shop steward's role and behaviour. Chapter 3 develops a theoretical framework and examines the determinants of steward leadership and orientation to unionism. Chapter 4, after providing a profile of Latrobe Valley shop stewards, uses the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 3 to classify stewards. These chapters set the basis for a detailed analysis of the role and functions of shop stewards. These activities are the subject of the following four chapters which analyse the processing of issues by shop stewards (Chapter 5), union organisation at the workplace (Chapter 6), the relationships stewards have with their members, management personnel and their union (Chapter 7), and the shop steward's role in industrial conflict (Chapter 8). The final chapter reviews the basic argument presented and discusses the implications of the findings of this study for the understanding of trade union strategy, management policy and workplace reform.

Some comments must be made about terminology, methodology and the style of presentation. First, a variety of terms, such as shop steward, job delegate, shop/job representative and contact officer, are used by unions in the Latrobe Valley to describe the voluntary, workplace union official. These terms reflect differences in formally specified roles and functions and also whether the term shop steward is acceptable to a particular union or its membership. In this study the term shop steward encompasses all these titles and designations. Second, the design of the study is primarily based on the perceptions of shop stewards. These stewards present a particular view of industrial relations in the Latrobe Valley, a view which may differ from that of the other major participants. This approach, however, was adopted as the aim of the study was to build up a picture of the role of the shop steward and the factors that influence stewards to behave in particular ways. In this context the stewards' own perspectives assume paramount importance. Third, as the vast majority of the tables presented in this book are based on the data collected from a questionnaire survey only those tables not based on such data will be sourced.

2 Shop stewards' role: some theoretical considerations

Discussion of union organisation and activity at the workplace is inseparable from a consideration of the role of the shop steward. This link between the trade union and individuals within the organisation has been clearly identified by Monaghan (1966), who argued that for most trade union members the shop steward is the union. Yet the role of the shop steward is not clear in the literature, nor with respect to the commonly held views of stewardship. Further, little is known concerning variations in this role and the factors that influence the adoption of a particular role.

This chapter will address these issues. In particular, the chapter will examine various definitions of stewardship and the sources of power, both formal and informal, that give substance to the stewards' position. This discussion is extended by a review of the Australian literature which will primarily focus on the incidence and role of stewards and factors that may explain differences in stewards' behaviour. The chapter argues for a broad definition of stewardship and the need to go beyond structural, institutional and macro-economic factors to explain why stewards adopt a particular role.

Definitions of stewardship

Three distinct views characterise the role of the shop steward in workplace industrial relations. In part, this reflects the evolving nature of the stewards' role as well as a judgement on what their role should be. The first is succinctly expressed by Clegg, Killick and Adams who defined the shop steward as being 'elected by his fellow trade unionists in his shop to represent them to management' (1961:24). In a similar

vein Monaghan suggested that 'as long as workers have been free to join trade unions it is probable that they have deputed one of their members to act as their spokesman or steward' (1966:75). This view of stewardship locates the stewards' role as being representatives of the union membership at the workplace, speaking and acting on its behalf. As Parker concluded, 'the crucial relationship is between the steward and the members he represents' (1973:23). In terms of the perceptions of the members, at least in the early days of unionism in Australia, Hince argued 'these representatives were, in the absence of full-time officers, to all intent and purpose the "union" ' (1969:2).

The notion of shop stewards as representatives of the membership, however, overlooks the official relationship stewards have with their union and the part they play in the wider organised trade union movement. Indeed, the common perception of shop stewards as worker representatives has been disputed by Biggs after an examination of the early shop stewards' movement in Coventry (UK). Biggs claimed 'there was no concept of the collector as a workers' representative or even as a link between the factory floor, the branch and the District Committee' (1969:15). What then was their role? An alternate view maintains shop stewards are 'the trade union lay representatives at the place of work' (McCarthy 1966:4). In this case the emphasis is on the relationship between the union and the shop steward. That is, the focus is on the formal, official role of the steward. The major problem with this definition is that it excludes the stewards' relationship with their members and suggests that their role is limited to that prescribed in official documents such as the union rulebook.

Goodwin (1964) focused on this dual function by posing the question whether shop stewards should be 'representatives of the union' or 'defenders of the workers'. This alludes to the potentially contradictory nature of the stewards' position. As Hince has pointed out, the 'steward and in particular the committees represent alternative centres of power and authority' (1971:199). It is clear that workers will see the shop steward as their representative whilst the union will consider the steward as its agent at the workplace.

A third view of the role of shop stewardship is provided by Lane, who argued that the shop steward 'was simultaneously a rank and file leader, an unpaid personnel manager, and an agent for his union' (1974:195–6). Similarly, Lover suggested 'the shop steward is in a trinity of employee, workers' representative and trade union agent' (1976:30). Both Lane and Lover suggest a wider and more complex definition of shop stewardship. In particular, the concept of an unpaid

'personnel manager' adds a new dimension to the definition. In the Latrobe Valley, for example, shop stewards are increasingly being consulted by management, participating in committees and being involved in the decision making process (Benson 1982). At a more general level the process of successfully resolving a member's grievance is a clear illustration of the stewards' participation in the management of the enterprise.

It is clear, then, that no simple definition of stewardship will adequately describe the role and function of shop stewards. Shop stewards do represent union members to management and the union, they are formal agents of the union, communicating with members and management and they are employees and part of the employer's organisation. Foenander, in an attempt to accommodate the three views expressed above, considered the liaison role the shop steward is often expected to perform. In this context a shop steward is:

> a member of a trade union appointed under its rules whose function broadly speaking, is to act as an intermediary between fellow members of the union employed in a shop or department in an establishment on the one part, and the higher executive authority of the union or employer management on the other. (1965:16–17)

Whilst this definition adequately incorporates the three aspects of a steward's role, Charleston commented it 'imputes an essentially neutral function to the shop steward ... [and] ... such a definition is also unnecessarily restrictive' (1977:6–7). On this latter point, Foenander's definition would view the shop steward as a communicator and perhaps facilitator rather than as a leader or representative who would initiate action, make decisions and negotiate change.

It therefore appears necessary to define stewardship in terms of the relationships inherent in the shop stewards' position and the actual functions the stewards perform. To this end Goodman and Whittingham offered perhaps the most complete definition of stewardship. They argued a shop steward is:

(a) A representative of trade union members at the place of work where he/she is employed.
(b) Someone who is tacitly or explicitly accepted as such by management and the trade union.
(c) Someone who has a *de facto* responsibility for the conduct of the initial stages of negotiations in the workplace.
(d) Someone who is not a recognised full-time official of his/her trade union and whose recognition is not the result of their possibly holding branch office. (1969:2)

This definition recognises the dual role of the shop steward, the need for formal and informal recognition, the distinction between being a branch official and a shop steward and specifies the major function and responsibility of stewardship. However, as Kessler noted, it does assert that negotiation is 'the "only function regarded as essential" to the definition of the shop stewards' role' (1986:419). To overcome this criticism it is necessary to extend this definition to include a range of duties such as grievance handling, recruitment of members, monitoring work practices and providing a point of reference for the union and the membership.

The degree to which shop stewards in Australia meet this definition will depend on the power conferred on them from a variety of formal and informal sources. Formal power in this context will be taken as congruous with authority, namely 'the power which accrues to a person by virtue of his role, his position in an organised social structure' (Katz and Kahn 1966:220). The sources of formal power or authority for the steward include the responsibilities and obligations specified in trade union rulebooks, state and federal awards, collective agreements, shop steward handbooks and the internal regulations of the organisation. However, power can take on a much broader meaning and can stem from a variety of informal sources.[1] The major source of this informal power is the willingness of union members to 'back-up' their steward during times of stress or crisis. This form of power is, in turn, dependent on the stewards' ability to foster a particular ideology amongst the members concerning the stewards' role and behaviour, and the need for collective action.[2] The remainder of this section will consider, in more detail, these various sources of shop steward power.

The first source of authority for shop stewards is found in the rulebooks of their respective unions. Trade union rules are often silent on the recognition, status and functions of shop stewards, presumably preferring to conduct shop-floor activities through the local branch or full-time paid union officials. Where mention is made of shop stewards, functions are usually restricted to recruitment of new members, collection of union dues and maintaining record books.[3] Some rulebooks also specify a commission for shop stewards who perform the collection function.[4] Few rulebooks provide clear guidelines on the election or appointment of shop stewards, the most common rules being 'the union may appoint a responsible delegate' or 'shop stewards may be elected by a ballot of all financial members'. Even fewer provide details on how the appointment of a shop steward may be terminated. Two unions that provide substantial detail on stewardship are the AMWU and the

Building Workers' Industrial Union (BWIU). The AMWU rules allow for the appointment of shop stewards, shop committees and convenors, but the authority of each of these groups is not specified although it can be defined by the State Council with the approval of the Federal Council. It is made clear that 'all disputes shall come immediately under the control of the State Councils' (AMWU, *Rules*, Sydney, 1974, section 27). The BWIU, in addition to specifying much of the detail given above, directs its organisers to 'co-operate with all shop and job stewards' (BWIU, *Rules*, Sydney, 1978, section 33). The recognition and approval of shop committees and the appreciation of the need for full-time officials to co-operate with stewards is important as it removes the two major sources of potential conflict between stewards and their union.

A second source of authority can be found in the awards of both state and federal tribunals. These tend to be vague with respect to the role of the shop steward and concentrate on facilities to be provided, for example, the provision of a place to meet full-time union officials and the right to discuss with the employer matters affecting union members.[5] In terms of negotiations over wages and conditions these institutional arrangements provide little scope for shop-floor involvement. Equally, local negotiated agreements tend to concentrate on facilities (room, telephone) and certain rights including time-off during working hours to carry out the tasks of the shop steward.[6] This latter source of authority tends to be restricted to industries that operate under collective agreements, for example, the building and construction industry.

A third source of authority for shop stewards, and perhaps the most important in understanding union strategy at the workplace, can be found in the handbooks issued to shop stewards by their union. These provide considerably more detail on the functions of a shop steward, their rights and their obligations. For example, the MOA (SECV Branch) provides a 'Charter of Rights and Functions' for shop stewards. Included in the functions of the shop steward are: the recruitment of non-members, the monitoring of changes and developments in the work area, the distribution of union literature, to be the first point of contact for members, to encourage participation in union activities, and the compilation of information and evidence for new claims (*Shop Stewards' Handbook*, Melbourne, n.d.).

A final source of authority is that granted to shop stewards by management. This is often formalised through various documents and regulations. One source within the SECV is the handbook issued

to all supervisors. Apart from a section dealing with the rights of shop stewards the guide makes reference to the need for supervisors to consult with shop stewards over such matters as discipline, grievances, closed-shop policies and dismissals (SECV, 'Supervisors' Guide', Latrobe Valley, 1984). Of course, these sources of authority are not static and change over time. This is particularly the case with shop steward handbooks and management regulations.

As well as the authority vested in shop stewards from a variety of formal, usually written, sources, wider power can be achieved through the willingness of members to support their stewards and the willingness of individual full-time union officials and management personnel to concede a certain amount of their authority. This process underlies all collective industrial activity, but can also become gradually institutionalised as custom and practice. In the case of the SECV's operations in the Latrobe Valley, many of the functions of shop stewards originate from this source. Stewards' participation on various committees and working parties, their involvement in a range of collective negotiations, the recognition by SECV management of the need to consult with shop stewards, and the more general role of the shop stewards in the wider community are indicative of the need to define stewardship in a wider context than that given in the formal documents such as the union rulebook.

Shop-floor organisation in Australia

Foenander argued 'there is certainly nothing in Australian industrial history to compare with the shop steward movement (as it is called) in Great Britain during World War 1 and the years immediately following' (1965:24). This comment followed an earlier study by the then Department of Labour and National Service conducted in the early 1950s which reported that 'there was very poor development of shop organisation in which workers could responsibly participate' (reported in Kuhn 1955:174). As late as 1975 a commissioned study for the Jackson Committee asserted that 'a large number of plants have no shop stewards at all. An active shop steward is a rarity' (Committee to Advise on Policies for Manufacturing Industries 1975:112). Taylor, although more cautious, suspected 'that workplace organisation is not well developed, nor perhaps very widespread in Australia today' (1979:8).

These comments would suggest that workplace union organisation

and shop steward activity is limited in Australia. Yet, a number of other studies give weight to the view that the situation is far from uniform. As Hince commented 'although (shop) committees do exist they are accorded either very limited or no recognition by union rule books, by management or the law . . . [nevertheless] . . . they represent a strong and potent force in industrial relationships' (1969:19). This is particularly true of the meat, rail, power and shipbuilding industries. In each of these industries there has been a long history of workplace trade union organisation. For example, Davis (1980b) cited the role of the shop committee spelt out in the *Butchers' Journal* of 1923; Rimmer (1983) referred to the criticisms of shop stewards made by the 1903 Royal Commission into the Sydney Cockatoo Island Dockyard; Warbuton (1975) outlined the development and formation of shop committees in 1926 in the New South Wales Railways; whilst Rimmer and Sutcliffe (1979) make mention of the formation of the Power Station's Combined Delegates Organisation (NSW) in 1945. Workplace union organisation was not, however, confined to these industries. Rimmer (1983) identified a number of industries where strong shop-floor unionism had developed. In addition to those listed above these included mining, engineering, foundries and shearing. Further, Rimmer (1983:129) argued that following the Second World War strong workplace union organisation developed in the major growth industries of metals, manufacturing and transport. Perhaps the most detailed research into the origins of Australian workshop organisation is provided by Rimmer and Sutcliffe. They concluded that:

> There is a long tradition of shop committee organisation in Australian industry . . . [and] . . . that the establishment of permanent shop committees depended upon their ability to regulate industrial conditions outside the influence of interests of trade unions and the Labor Party, although the support of these parties has usually proved a condition for shop committee success. (1981:216)

It is clear, therefore, that in a number of industries strong shop-floor trade union organisation has prevailed, at least for certain periods. Several studies have also shown that shop stewards play an important role in plant-level industrial relations. Derber's research into the metal-working industry over the period 1969 to 1976 led him to conclude that within this period 'both unions and managements in the metal-working industry have turned increasing attention to plant-level relations' (1977:20). Charleston's (1977) Australia-wide survey of shop stewards confirmed this result. He reported that shop stewards in the manufacturing sector had negotiated with management on a range of

issues which included wages, working conditions, hours of work, discipline and employment matters. However, this level of negotiation was not uniform across all industries considered (public utility, transport, communications and banking), particularly with reference to the setting of wage rates.[7]

More recent studies would confirm the trend noted in Derber's research. Mason and Muller (1978), for example, researched workplace industrial relations in two Brisbane manufacturing plants and found that in both cases a sophisticated system of industrial relations existed at the shop-floor level. Similarly, a study of seven unions by Davis (1980a) confirmed the existence of shop steward organisation in all but one of the unions. Further, stewards representing four of the unions (the Association of Draughting, Supervisory and Technical Employees (ADSTE), the AMWU, the BWIU and the Victorian Printers' Operative Union) had been involved in considerable bargaining at the workplace level.

The present situation of industrial relations practices at the shop-floor level are perhaps best summed up by Lumley, who conducted a series of research projects into workplace industrial relations in Australia in the period 1981 to 1982. He concluded 'the characterisation of workplace level industrial relations in Australia by an absence of developed shop steward organisation and little union involvement in job regulation conceals a diversity of practice'. Indeed to Lumley 'the situations differ in degree rather than kind from what might be found in similar British workplaces' (1983:314, 315).

Whilst the findings of these studies are not sufficient to establish the existence of widespread workplace trade union organisation in Australian industry, they do illustrate that shop-floor union organisation and a centralised industrial relations system based on arbitration can co-exist. This is despite the arbitration systems' discouragement of piece-work rates, the limited recognition given to shop stewards, the existence of preference provisions in awards and the widespread acceptance of a check-off system for union dues, all of which mitigate against shop-floor organisation.

Shop stewards' role in workplace industrial relations

Given the existence of shop stewards and workplace organisations, what are their roles in the industrial relations processes? At the formal level this may involve the collection of dues, negotiation with management over minor grievances and providing a communication

channel between the union and their members, and management and their employees (McCarney 1972:276–7). A number of studies have illustrated that shop stewards often extend this role into developing strong workplace organisations. For example, a study of shop-floor organisation in the vehicle building industry illustrated the role of the steward in prosecuting a victimisation case of a fellow steward (Phelan 1981). This involved organising members, planning and executing industrial action, and mobilising support for their aims within and outside the union. Phelan concluded 'the ability and preparedness of the shop floor organisation to plan and act was the principle reason the Gnatenko sacking didn't stick' (1981:20). Research carried out on the 1973 and 1981 strikes at the Ford Motor Company's Broadmeadows plant in Victoria demonstrated a similar role for the stewards (Murphy 1982; Lever-Tracy 1983).

Studies by Rimbault (1976) and Casey (1978) focused on the development of site committees and the role these collective bodies of shop stewards played in workplace industrial relations. In the construction industry, their role included encouraging workers to express their views, raising finance for strike funds, conducting their own disputes and providing a mechanism for uniting all workers on site. Shop stewards in the Latrobe Valley have adopted a similar role. In the lengthy Latrobe Valley Maintenance Workers' strike stewards extended this role by formulating and serving a log of claims on the SECV independent of their unions and represented members at the subsequent Arbitration Commission hearings (Benson and Goff 1979).

Several shop stewards and former shop stewards have written on the role of the steward and, in general, have confirmed these findings. Baird contended that the shop steward has two leadership roles: 'firstly for the union to which he belongs and secondly in the role as a co-ordinator or participant in the shop committees and site committees which embrace a number of unions' (1971:55). Armstrong, a former AMWU steward in the Latrobe Valley, pointed out that the AMWU actively encourages its stewards to join with other stewards to collectively deal with a range of issues (1980:3). This attitude by the AMWU to its shop stewards was confirmed by research conducted by Davis into the AMWU decision making structure (1977b). A further point to come out of this research was that many full-time officials have served a *de facto* apprenticeship as a shop steward and local branch official (1977a).

What is clear from these studies is that the role of the shop steward

will vary between industries, enterprises and unions. For instance, Lumley found in his study of five work-sites that in some 'there are no negotiated substantive or procedural agreements specific to the workplace, while in others there is considerable workplace bargaining' (1983:308). Where workplace bargaining occurred it involved the use of industrial sanctions (bans, strikes) and presentation of the case by shop stewards to bodies such as boards of reference. In these cases the role of the steward certainly extended beyond that specified in the union rules.

The studies by McBeath (1973) and Charleston (1977) provide some useful quantitative insights into what shop stewards actually do. McBeath, for example, found stewards negotiated with management on a variety of issues (safety, general pay problems, overtime), although the frequency of this activity was not given (1973:113–17). Stewards also received advice and guidance from their union on particular issues, although it was not clear whether this was in the context of carrying out negotiations with management or part of the stewards' role in providing a link between the union and the membership. Charleston, in his survey of shop stewards, asked a number of similar questions to McBeath and confirmed the above findings. Both studies, however, made little attempt to break down the findings by categories such as personal characteristics of stewards, organisation or issues, although McBeath categorised his findings by each of the four unions studied. Further, no attempt was made to discuss the stewards' behaviour in the context of theory.

Two studies that have explored the role of the shop steward in a more theoretical perspective are those by Taylor (1979) and Dufty (1980). The theoretical aspects of both studies will be considered in more detail in Chapter 3. Taylor argued that stewards had three role orientations by which they could be distinguished: an administrative, representative and managerialist orientation (1979:24). Unfortunately, the limited nature of Taylor's research (twenty-two stewards, one union, two plants) and the failure to relate the orientations of stewards to the roles adopted, meant that little insight was gained into the actual behaviour of shop stewards and the part they played in industrial relations. Dufty, on the basis of a more detailed survey of 260 shop stewards in Western Australia, found the role of the steward included provision of leadership to the rank-and-file, representation of the steward's constituency and modification of membership demands. On this last point Dufty found that nearly half of the issues raised by members would be squashed by the steward, with another quarter of the

issues modified. Stewards also felt the need to develop strong shop-floor organisations. Ninety per cent felt that they should be involved in all matters covered by awards and agreements and 92 per cent saw a role in protecting the welfare of the rank-and-file (1980:382–7).

Determinants of the role of the shop steward

It is thus clear that the role of the shop steward in Australian industry varies considerably between unions, workplaces and industries. Five broad factors have been put forward in the literature in an attempt to explain this variation: union rules and attitudes, attitudes of management, the degree of commitment/dependency on industrial tribunals, characteristics of the workplace and the background of the steward.

Union rules and attitudes

Australian unions have generally been reluctant to allow shop stewards a role beyond that specified in the union rules. As discussed earlier in this chapter, this role tends to be one of assisting the union in a range of administrative duties. Hince suggested a major reason for unions restricting the activities of their stewards is the recognition that strong shop committees 'represent alternative centres of allegiance . . .' (1969:19). Other reasons relate to their potential to disrupt arbitral proceedings and associated union activities such as membership meetings. Certainly, when stewards adopt an active role it can cause friction with full-time officials who see the 'developing shop steward movement as challenging their own positions within the union movement' (Murphy 1982:31). Nevertheless, in recent years the stewards' role has become far from uniform.

Derber, noting the changes in the period 1969 to 1976, commented that 'a number of unions, for either tactical or ideological reasons or both, had built up their shop steward organisation, developed steward training programmes, and encouraged greater activity on the part of the steward in the workplace' (1977:6). Perhaps the best documented example of strong union support for the steward is that of the AMWU (Victorian Branch). Davis examined the decision making structures within this union and concluded that whilst 'the Rules give little space to defining the role of the steward . . . the shop steward is viewed by the union as the key agent to the mobilisation of the membership'. Further: 'The Leadership has unceasingly sought to involve the steward in the broad campaigns undertaken by the union, and it has become

usual for the State Council to call for a meeting of the Shop Stewards to discuss pressing industrial and political issues' (1977b:357). This view confirmed the research of McBeath, who pointed out that the Western Australian branch of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (now part of the AMWU) encouraged its shop stewards to take a leading role in shop-level industrial relations. This attitude was not uniform across the unions studied by McBeath. The Australian Society of Engineers (ASE), for example, 'endeavours to keep its stewards in a strictly subordinate position within the union's structure' (1973:209).

This latter view reflects the attitude of the Vehicle Builders Employees' Federation (VBEF) during the 1973 dispute at the Ford Broadmeadows plant. Action emanating from the shop-floor level was considered by the union to be 'unofficial and the work of a few rebel shop stewards'. Shop stewards were seen, by full-time officials, to be 'motivated by a desire to gain union office' (Lever-Tracy 1983:57). In a study of the role of stewards in seven blue- and white-collar unions, Davis (1980b:22–3) noted that the attitude of the union and its full-time officials was crucial to the development of shop stewards and shop-floor organisation. Whereas four of the unions had, to varying degrees, incorporated shop stewards and shop committees into their organisational structure and encouraged stewards to take an active part in workplace bargaining, the remainder had deliberately discouraged shop-floor activity by centralising bargaining, providing few duties for the steward and limiting the designated number of stewards. Even where unions have actively encouraged a key role for their shop stewards it remains problematic as to whether shop-floor organisation will be strong. For example, Frenkel and Coolican (1984) found within the AMWU a wide diversity in the level of shop steward organisation at the workplace.

Attitudes of management

It was suggested earlier in this chapter that one source of authority for shop stewards is that granted by management. However, it is difficult to assess the impact of management attitude on the activities of shop stewards and on the development of their organisations. In general, employers have been reluctant to legitimise the activities of shop stewards (Hince 1971) and there is little evidence to suggest that management is willing to incorporate stewards into the plant-level industrial relations. On this latter point Taylor (1979:36–8) argued that the limited recognition given by management in two Newcastle steel plants to shop stewards of the FIA contributed to the absence of a recognised workshop

organisation. The instrumental position held by the employer is reinforced by the research of Warbuton who claimed, with respect to shop committees within the New South Wales Railways, that 'it is doubtful that the shop committees could have reached this stage of cohesion in their early development without having the recognition of the Railways Commissioners' (1975:256). Equally, Kriegler (1980) found shop-floor organisation poorly developed at the Whyalla shipyards and suggested this was due to management's unwillingness to involve shop stewards in industrial issues.[8] Rimmer and Sutcliffe (1981:238) also considered the role of the employer and suggested that the decline in the shop committee movement, particularly post-1945, could be indirectly traced to the increasing reluctance on the part of the employers to deal with shop committees.

Is management support, therefore, a necessary precondition for the development of a strong shop-floor organisation? There is little evidence available to answer this question. As Davis (1980b:19) correctly pointed out, even where management opposition is observed, other factors may be responsible for a poorly developed shop stewards' organisation. It would seem reasonable, however, to suggest that negative attitudes by both management and union officials would make the development of a strong shop-floor organisation extremely difficult. The events of 1973 and 1981 at the Ford Broadmeadows plant seem to suggest that the attitude of management and union officials in combination may not be sufficient to prevent, at least in isolated cases, the development of strong stewards' organisation (Murphy 1982; Lever-Tracy 1983).

The degree of commitment/dependency on industrial tribunals

The Australian industrial relations system is characterised at the state and federal levels by a commitment to and a dependency on centrally negotiated/determined terms and conditions of employment. The argument can then be advanced that where this commitment/dependency is strongest little activity will take place at the workplace level. Nevertheless, the effects of such policy remain uncertain. This was clearly illustrated during the 1977 Maintenance Workers' strike in the Latrobe Valley. At that time the SECV, under instruction from the Victorian government, had a policy of referring all issues to industrial tribunals for adjudication. This strategy did not prevent the formation of strong shop-floor organisations or the active involvement of shop stewards in all aspects of the dispute (see Benson and Goff 1979). Further, even in those instances where management and/or the unions are committed

to a centralised industrial relations system, the attitudes of the individual tribunal member will be important in determining the level at which negotiations take place. Thus, whilst a centralised arbitral system may limit the areas or scope of negotiations it does not rule out all activity at the shop-floor level. However, given a reliance on centralised determined wages and conditions the development of a strong shop-floor organisation becomes problematic. The research by Davis supports this proposition. In general he found that the weakest workplace organisation occurred where there was 'no scope for any bargaining at a decentralised level' (1980b:20).

Characteristics of the workplace

A number of factors related to the workplace have been suggested to have influence on the development of shop stewards and shop committees. Of particular importance are the size and location of the workplace and the type of industry. Hince, for example, suggested that 'the increasing size, complexity and bureaucratization of industrial organisations' is one argument frequently advanced to explain the re-emergence of strong shop-floor organisation (1969:19). That is, as workers become increasingly alienated from the decision making mechanisms and work processes they respond by forming units at the shop-floor level for their protection and to regain their lost influence. An alternative argument may be that large organisations place greater demands on the shop stewards as representatives of the employees. Lumley (1983:306), for example, conducted his research on the assumption that larger workplaces offered the greatest potential for the development of workplace union organisation.

Davis (1980b:12) pointed out that the role of the steward will vary according to the size of the workplace, with stewards in small workshops acting as a contact point for full-time officials, whereas in larger work sites their role will include handling a range of grievances and being involved in workplace negotiations. Further, a heavy concentration of a union's membership in a limited number of establishments may also serve as a barrier to the development of shop stewards: in these cases the union's full-time officials can service the members adequately. This explanation can, at least partially, explain the small number of stewards in the Victorian Printers' Operative Union. The concentration of members in three establishments appears to have allowed union officials to maintain close contact with their members and handle the day-to-day issues that arise (Davis 1980b:22). This argument can be extended to a consideration of the geographical

location of the plant. A review of the literature on regional industrial relations systems, for example Broken Hill, the Pilbara and the Latrobe Valley, suggested that isolation from the mainstream of industrial life has been instrumental in workers developing their own system of industrial relations, one that centred around shop stewards and shop-floor organisations (Benson and Hince 1987).

It also appears that the nature and type of industry may have some impact on steward organisation. Davis found differences between the various industries he studied, and Rimmer and Sutcliffe argued 'before the 1950s, shop committee organisation was best developed in five industrial sectors' (1981:217). These were the railways, dockyards, electricity generation, private engineering works and meatworks. This may reflect the influence of union policies and structure, historical influences in terms of accepted practices and employee encouragement, and the nature of work within the industry itself.

The background of the steward

Two factors that are often used to explain the growth in shop stewards and workplace union activity are the influence of the British migrant and the influence of the extreme left. Hince, although not advocating either explanation, summed up the debate on the influence of the British migrant:

> the growth of shop committee activity is a direct result of the wave of post World War II immigration from the United Kingdom. The movement to a centralised, arbitral and legalised form of industrial regulation, it is argued, is lost on the new arrival. He is more familiar with power and activity at the shop level and seeks to re-create this situation in the new environment . . . (1969:19)

On the political background of the steward, Hince outlined the argument that: 'the struggle of the extreme left to control the industrial destiny of the nation through the official union hierarchy was resisted and repelled in the 1950s and the movement has shifted ground to the "grass roots" level of the industrial scene' (1969:19). Whilst both of these points may have some validity, they do not explain the growth and development of shop stewards and their committees prior to the Second World War. Further, whilst undoubtedly a number of British-born unionists are shop stewards and the political leanings of stewards would include a number from the left of the political spectrum, no research has found their influence is overall proportionally greater than other groups.

With respect to the influence of the British migrant, Dufty (1980) found no evidence to suggest the British-born stewards were more militant or active than their Australian-born counterparts. The only significant difference reported was that British-born stewards had higher levels of formal education, but had attended fewer trade union training courses. Rimmer and Sutcliffe (1981:233–7) examined the influence of politics on shop committees. Whilst accepting that from the beginning shop-floor organisation had been supported by left-wing political groups, and some industries (for example, the railways) had seen major communist successes at the workplace, overall they maintained that shop committees had developed for a variety of reasons and had acquired a mixed political character.

Summary and conclusion

This chapter reviewed definitions of stewardship proposed in the literature and concluded it was necessary to define the role of the shop steward in a broader context than would generally be recognised within a centrally dominated arbitral system. Failure to do so would result in many of the key day-to-day activities of stewards going undetected. It was recognised that this definition may not be applicable to all shop stewards as the role of the shop steward is ultimately defined by the power, both formal and informal, conferred upon the steward. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that some shop stewards will derive their authority to act from a variety of sources and, as such, these stewards represent the roles that are possible within the Australian context.

The subsequent review of the Australian literature on workplace trade unionism consolidated the decision to consider stewardship within a broad context. The limited number of studies that have explored the actual functions and tasks performed by stewards support a wide and perhaps unrestricted definition of stewardship. Although this literature is limited and in many cases subjective, it is clear that in certain industries a complex role has evolved for stewards. The literature surveyed also indicated that workplace trade union organisation has been well developed, at least in certain industries and during certain periods. From this it can be deduced that the level of influence of shop stewards within Australian industry can be related to a number of factors beyond the level of any one enterprise. The state of the economy, the nature

of the labour markets, the level of technology and a range of historical and geographical factors have combined, at various times, to provide the conditions necessary for strong workplace union organisation.

In explaining variations in the stewards' role the Australian literature has tended to neglect these factors and has concentrated on the attitudes of unions and employers, the degree of dependency on industrial tribunals and a number of characteristics of the workplace and the stewards. The effect of these factors on workplace union organisation and steward behaviour is clearly problematic. The literature does not, individually or collectively, unambiguously explain variations in steward behaviour within the one union or a single enterprise.

In general, the paucity of research into workplace trade union organisation in Australia, the lack of clear theoretical perspectives and the concentration, in the main, on factors external to stewards and their workgroups to explain stewards' behaviour, necessitates focusing on the micro-relationship between stewards and their members and management. Those studies that have examined stewardship and workplace trade union organisation have tended to restrict their investigation to the formal or official aspects of shop-floor organisation and the delegated role of the steward. The challenge of future research, therefore, will be to accommodate both the formal and informal aspects of stewardship in terms of the actual roles stewards perform. This study will address these issues and attempt to explain variations in stewards' roles by focusing on factors related to the individual steward. The importance of structural, institutional and more macro-economic factors in determining this role cannot be overlooked but it will be the stewards' perception of these factors that ultimately dictates how they will behave. Indeed, the following chapter will develop a theoretical framework by which variations in stewards' behaviour can be analysed on this basis.

3 Steward leadership and ideology

In the previous chapter a number of studies were examined in an attempt to explain differences in the behaviour and level of activity of shop stewards. In these studies the main emphasis was on macro-level factors or factors external to the stewards or their workgroups. Yet, as will be argued in this chapter, whilst the stewards' work environment will be an important consideration in understanding steward behaviour it will be the stewards' perception of these factors that will ultimately determine how they will react to and accommodate such factors.

These workplace factors—such as the nature of management and their workplace policies, the level of technology employed, the nature and composition of the work force and the overall level of union activity—are vitally important to an understanding of the relationships between the workplace participants. These relationships will primarily be evidenced in how individual stewards perform their duties with respect to their leadership role. This role, accordingly, will need to accommodate these workplace factors and thus is probably best conceived of in terms of the types of strategies the stewards employ. The focus of this leadership will also need to be considered and thus, the stewards' ideological stance with respect to unionism will need to be incorporated into the model.

The aim of this chapter is, therefore, to develop a theoretical approach that will be based on shop steward leadership and ideology.

Shop steward typologies: the literature

Two American writers were among the first to attempt a classification of union leaders. Gouldner (1947) suggested two extreme types of leaders based on how they defined their role. The first type is the

'business unionist' whose primary objective is to achieve the best price for the labour power of the union's members. Gouldner argued that this type of union leader is subject to much the same pressure as other entrepreneurs and tends to see union office in terms of pecuniary rewards, security and status. The antithesis of this type is the 'progressive unionist' who views trade union office as a calling. This type of unionist is highly committed to union principles, believes leaders should come from within the union and is indifferent to personal status or gains. Chinoy (1950) was more concerned with why unionists took on leadership positions, given the liabilities of union office. From his research on local union leaders he suggested that there are three distinct ways that 'men come to assume positions as leaders' (1950:161). The 'accidental leaders' are those who were persuaded to accept nomination for office but were, in general, reluctant to do so. Over time, these stewards may begin to experience considerable satisfaction in the job and perhaps aim for higher office, or alternatively find stewardship too demanding and consequently stand down from their position. 'Ideological leaders', the second group, are those who accepted office on the basis of their strongly held social and economic beliefs. They hope to actualise those beliefs by their position in the union. The third group are the 'ambitious leaders' who accept office to further their own needs of status and recognition. For this group, local union leadership is the first step in achieving a full-time career with the union. Both Gouldner's and Chinoy's typologies suggest reasons why unionists accept union office but provide little insight into the functions and behaviour of leaders once they have achieved office. Further, in the case of Chinoy's classification the categories may not be mutually exclusive. It may be possible and indeed likely that the ideological leader, for example, may also fall into the ambitious type.

In contrast to the Gouldner and Chinoy classifications, Miller and Form (1963:393–6) suggested three types of steward orientation based on the approach stewards adopt in the performance of their duties.[1] The first type is the 'job or management-oriented steward', who may not choose the position of steward but accepts office under pressure from fellow workers. In many ways this type is similar to Chinoy's 'accidental leader', but this type of steward may also take office to further the prospects with management. The second type is the 'union-oriented steward' who recognises his or her future lies with the union and not with management. This group is similar to Chinoy's 'ambitious leader' type, but the 'union-oriented steward' can also hold strong social beliefs which places the type in Chinoy's 'ideological' classification.

The third type is the 'employee-oriented steward' who has a genuine desire to help fellow workers. These stewards have strong beliefs about the way people should be treated and do not necessarily subscribe to the view that the union is always correct. This tends to reinforce their position amongst fellow workers but will hinder any career aspirations they may have within the union. This approach recognises the relationships shop stewards have with their workgroup, management and the wider union and has some ability to predict whether shop stewards will display initiative and whether they will support the union or management in a crisis or pursue the sectional interests of the shop-floor.

Poole (1974) used a similar approach to that of Miller and Form by asking shop stewards to define their primary duties. The responses yielded four types: a representative of members; a representative of the union; an active negotiator or protector of members; and an active conciliator, peace maker or dispute solver. These all fall within Gouldner's 'progressive unionist' category and parallel Miller and Form's three classifications. Poole found from his study that the majority of stewards fell into the 'representative of members' and the 'active negotiator' categories. The distinguishing feature between these two groups was that the former saw their role as 'spokesman for the men' or 'the mouthpiece of the shop' whilst the latter felt it appropriate to be active leaders in their respective workplaces.

The above typologies provide clear differences between shop stewards in terms of why they seek union office, to whom they may give their allegiance and what are their primary functions. These functions are, in general, consistent with the definition of stewardship provided in Chapter 2. It was not, however, until the study by Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel (1977), that an attempt was made to relate the various types of shop stewards to the way in which stewards led their members and the sorts of goals which they attempted to pursue. In their study, stewards' behaviour was categorised in terms of the emphasis placed on a representative role rather than a delegate role and the degree to which they pursued union principles. Stewards were classified as representatives rather than delegates if they shaped the majority of issues they dealt with, and if they tended to handle issues themselves without reference to more senior stewards. The representative/delegate role dichotomy is similar to the 'representative of members' and 'active negotiators' distinction proposed by Poole, and also to the work of Pedler (1973) who argued it was possible to view union representatives as leaders or delegates. From

his research, however, Pedler concluded that union representatives do not 'have one style of leadership but several depending upon which groups they have to deal with' (1973:56). Further, Pedler found that leadership style could vary depending on the issue. For example, if a steward had the necessary information a leader role tended to be adopted; if the issue is central to the norms of the group the steward may simply be a 'mouthpiece'.

In the pursuit of trade union principles the emphasis was on unity, collectivity and social justice coupled with the norms of steward leadership. Stewards were classified as pursuing union principles if their 'system of argument to all audiences more frequently refers to the norms of steward leadership than members wishes' (1977:35). By combining these two dimensions—a representative versus delegate role and the pursuit of union principles—Batstone *et al.* developed a four-fold typology of shop steward behaviour. The four 'ideal' types are given in Figure 3.1.

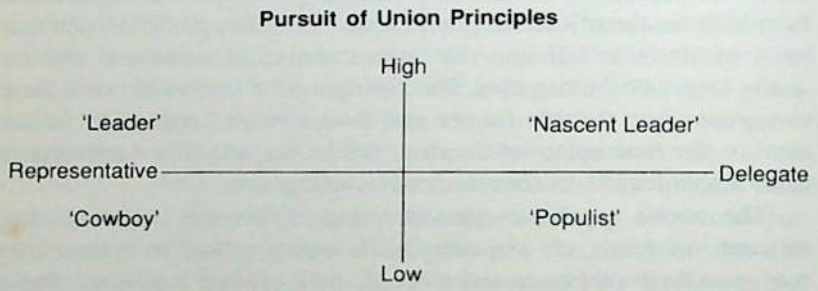


Figure 3.1 Steward Types

In applying their typology, Batstone *et al.* found that the largest single type of shop steward was the 'populist' type, accounting for some 45 per cent of shop-floor stewards and some 78 per cent of clerical staff stewards. The only other significant type were the 'leaders', who accounted for 38 per cent of shop-floor stewards and some 18 per cent of staff stewards. Batstone *et al.* recognised that the small numbers in the 'cowboy' and 'nascent leader' types may not be typical, but suggested that over time the 'nascent leader' who does not get the support of other 'leaders' will revert to a 'populist', whilst the 'cowboy' will be given little support from other stewards, and in the event of failing to make gains for the members will most likely be replaced.

Underpinning this typology are the concepts of power and trade union ideology which are combined to explain the leadership style of

shop stewards in the workplace. Power was defined broadly to include not only manifest decision making, but also the initiation and processing of issues and the instilling and maintenance of organisational priorities. However, the ideology adopted by the steward will 'foster particular views of the workplace and particular patterns of behaviour' (Batstone *et al.* 1977:11) and in this context, will set the limits to the exercise of that power.[2] Thus, representative leaders will attempt to utilise all forms of power and will primarily rely on the broad acceptance of a particular ideology for the control of their members. On the other hand, shop stewards who adopt the delegate role will rely on their formal authority and will defer the broader aspects of power to their constituents.

These more recent approaches have been criticised by Nicholson (1976:18), who argued that human personality and characteristics are too complex to categorise in terms of simple typologies and a more fruitful approach would be to use role theory based on the earlier work of Chinoy (1950). Nicholson, therefore, proposed that the path to accepting a steward's position can be either externally directed or internally directed. The former is broken into 'union occupancy', 'accidental occupancy', 'popular occupancy' and 'nominated occupancy'. In these cases, the forces that impinge on workers to accept stewardship are external to their own wishes or desires. Those who are motivated internally to accept stewardship are broken into 'ideological occupancy', 'ambitious occupancy' and 'task-oriented occupancy'. It is difficult to envisage how Nicholson's classification overcomes the criticisms he made of earlier studies. Although he focused on the forces on workers to become shop stewards he does not relate this to differences in stewards' behaviour. His reliance on role theory has meant that he 'under-estimates and under-values the social dynamics of a steward's position' (Partridge 1977:42).

Partridge adopted a similar approach to Batstone *et al.* but concentrated on the activities of the steward. The major emphasis was on the relationship between stewards and their workgroup, with the steward being seen as the 'linking pin' between the workgroup and its organisational environment. Willman (1980) argued that both this approach and that of Pedler offer the possibility of a more discriminating analysis than that of Batstone *et al.* That is, by viewing leadership in terms of activities rather than individual orientation the complexities inherent in the stewards' role are more likely to be accommodated, and an understanding of why stewards behave differently in different circumstances achieved. Accordingly, he offered an alternative framework which would 'distinguish between shop-floor

organisation in terms of *policy* and in terms of *leadership success* in pursuit of policy' (1980:42). Two types of policy were identified: those which assist in the rationalisation of personnel administration and those which seek to exert worker influence in the bargaining process. Willman suggested that 'management sponsored organisations will overwhelmingly pursue policies of the first type, whereas independent organisations will pursue both types' (1980:45). Marchington and Armstrong argued that Willman's approach for a number of reasons 'appears to offer less analytical value in attempts to categorise stewards than the one offered by Batstone *et alia*' (1983:39). First, they said it would be naïve to assume that management can maintain influence over stewards in management sponsored organisations, and second, they argued that a desire for similar policies by stewards and management does not mean absolute control by management. Willman (1980:41) did, however, concede that the framework of Batstone *et al.* is plausible in practice and may usefully be applied to the study of domestic organisations. Even in this context Batstone *et al.* recognised the usefulness of their model would vary depending on the strength of the local union organisation.

In a detailed examination of the Batstone *et al.* model, taking into account Willman's criticisms, Marchington and Armstrong suggested that the Batstone *et al.* four-fold typology 'offers the most appropriate base upon which to build up our conceptual understanding of the role of the shop steward' (1983:48). Nevertheless, they did identify a number of problems with the approach of Batstone *et al.*

First, as argued by Willman, a typology based on a representative/delegate dichotomy does not recognise the need for stewards to vary their style of leadership to meet prevailing circumstances. Leadership style may, for example, vary from consultation with members to unilateral decision making by the shop steward, but all that the steward may have done is to choose the most appropriate strategy to achieve certain objectives. It does not mean that a steward has abandoned a particular leadership style by adopting different strategies. Indeed, as Marchington and Armstrong concluded, 'the leader steward is distinguishable precisely because he is able to vary his style ...' (1983:36). Marchington and Armstrong point out that a closer reading of the work of Pedler, Partridge, and Batstone *et al.* illustrates this point clearly. Terms such as 'adopts, selects, uses, chooses ...' (1983:36) are used to describe the leader shop steward. Pedler (1973:46), for example, claimed the leader has a 'repertoire of styles to be used in appropriate situations'.

Second, a number of criticisms have been made by various writers concerning the methodology underpinning the model. The most important of these is directed at the criteria used to measure 'pursuit of union principles' and the 'representative/delegate dichotomy'. In the former it is clear that the scale was actually measuring integration into the steward network. This cannot be used as a measure of union principles since not all workplaces will have a strong steward community. In the latter case Batstone *et al.* appeared to be measuring two distinct concepts. On the one hand they measured stewards' willingness to lead their own members, whilst on the other, they measured stewards' willingness to go along with decisions and actions of the steward organisation. As Marchington and Armstrong claimed, 'it is clearly inappropriate to ask questions about the JSSC (Joint Shop Stewards' Committee) when one is trying to correlate factors concerning leading one's own members' (1983:46).

Third, criticism has been levelled at Batstone *et al.* for their neglect of 'cowboys' and 'nascent leaders', the generalisation of their established differences between blue- and white-collar stewards, and their lack of recognition of the effect of management sponsored unionism. With the exception of the question of management sponsorship these problems will need to be addressed in subsequent research. The validity of the conceptual issue of management sponsorship is dismissed by Marchington and Armstrong on the grounds that 'it is naive to assume that merely because management have assisted in the development of steward organisation and individual stewards, that their influence will remain as the stewards become more experienced' (1983:39).

In the main, the importance of a theoretical framework to the study of shop stewards has been overlooked by Australian researchers. To date only two studies have attempted to place the behaviour and actions of shop stewards into an analytical framework. Taylor (1979), on the basis of the research of Batstone *et al.* and Poole, developed a typology that included:

> an administrative orientation where the prime concern was to operate in line with positions defined by either lay or full-time union officials, a representative orientation where the desires of rank-and-file were seen as foremost, and an efficiency/managerialist orientation . . . to take account of those respondents who saw their prime purpose as that of promoting good industrial relations. (1979:24)

In a later study Dufty (1981) developed a typology of shop stewards based on a survey of some 260 shop stewards in Western Australia. Using a questionnaire based partly on the interview schedules of

Batstone *et al.*, Dufty found six distinct groups of stewards which he termed 'time server', 'stirrer', 'committed unionist', 'shop-floor organiser', 'plant militant' and 'good shepherd'. After a review of the literature Dufty concluded that '... Miller and Form's three broad types, oriented towards management, the union and the workgroup, proved a useful way of interpreting the clusters' (1981:70). This is, in effect, a similar classification to that developed by Taylor. Inherent in both models is a rejection of the dichotomy between representative action and pursuing a delegate role. Whilst these classifications may be potentially useful, neither Taylor nor Dufty has applied their model to an analysis of the differences in the behaviour of shop stewards within a particular workplace. Further, the limited nature of the research, twenty-two shop stewards from one union in Taylor's case and primarily blue-collar stewards in Dufty's research, raises doubts about the applicability of these models in a wider context.

A number of writers (Hyman 1979; Edwards and Scullion 1982) have criticised these forms of typologies on the basis that they have treated shop stewards as free agents and, as a consequence, have not related their behaviour to the structural conditions of the workplace. That is, stewards' behaviour will not only be determined by their own particular role orientation and ideology but by a range of factors particular to a given workplace, such as the forms of work organisation, the type of technology employed, management strategies, peer group pressures, the influence of the wider union and the existing patterns of workplace industrial relations. It is clear that these factors are important in shaping shop steward behaviour, but it is not clear whether the theoretical approaches reported above fail to take at least some of these factors into account. For example, Batstone (1984:307) claimed that Edwards and Scullions' (1982) criticism of *Shop Stewards in Action* on the grounds that the book did not take into account structural factors was factually incorrect. It nevertheless remains important to recognise that it is necessary for any analysis which purports to explain shop steward behaviour to take into account the impact of these factors.

A framework for analysis

From the studies reviewed, a number of factors emerged which are important in the development of a theoretical perspective.

First, studies by Miller and Form, Poole, Batstone *et al.*, Marchington and Armstrong, and Taylor have stressed the importance of

stewards' role orientation to an understanding of why unionists seek stewardship and how they approach their duties.

Second, the research of Pedler, Partridge and Batstone *et al.* suggested that the style of leadership, which is inextricably tied up with role orientation and the level of conferred authority and assumed power, is an important element in explaining industrial relations behaviour. With respect to the measurement of leadership, Pedler, Willman, Taylor and Dufty warn of the problems of conceiving leadership in terms of a simple dichotomy between representative and delegate styles. Willman suggested it would be necessary to separate leadership from role orientation and to consider leadership in terms of activities undertaken if a meaningful understanding of stewards' behaviour is to be achieved.

Third, the studies of Batstone *et al.* and Marchington and Armstrong focused on the stewards' pursuit of, or orientation towards, union principles. Those who espouse union principles would 'place greater emphasis upon workers' rights and social justice rather than to express a concern simply with wages and conditions' (Marchington and Armstrong 1983:35). Batstone *et al.* clearly demonstrated the different strategies adopted and resources utilised by stewards whose allegiance was to the workgroup rather than to the wider union movement.

Fourth, the arguments advanced by Hyman, and Edwards and Scullion concerning models of behaviour that do not consider structural conditions must be taken into account. With respect to stewards' behaviour it will be their perceptions of the impact of and constraints imposed by these factors which will be paramount to the understanding of their actions. Thus, the stewards' perceptions of these structural conditions and their reactions to such factors must be accommodated within any model.

It seems clear then that the understanding of differences in internal steward organisation and behaviour at the workplace will be best served by the adoption of an analytical framework which incorporates the concept of role orientation in terms of leadership style and the stewards' beliefs about unionism. The concept of leadership, as suggested by Pedler, must accommodate a variety of styles and strategies which depend upon the issue and the constraints imposed by a variety of structural factors relevant to the workplace. At a more subtle level the steward is gradually able to influence, at least in part, the constraints imposed by some of these factors by the development of a particular bias concerning the role of the steward. Unlike Batstone *et al.* and Marchington and Armstrong, this study will not adopt

the representative/delegate dichotomy, but will consider leadership in terms of the stewards' preparedness to take action independent of the membership by initiating issues themselves or, at times, by modifying or squashing issues raised by their members. In this context this role can be regarded as a measure of the stewards' assessment of the most appropriate strategy to pursue.

The stewards' role orientation must also accommodate the focus of stewards' leadership efforts, and the values concerning unity and collective action the stewards bring to their position. That is, are stewards pursuing the wider principles of unionism or are they limiting their concern to their particular workgroup? Certainly the stewards' level of orientation to unionism will reflect personal values, but recognition must also be given to the ability of the workgroup to modify these values and ultimately, if necessary, replace the steward. Equally, however, the steward can attempt to change the expectations and attitudes of the workgroup and, once again, this raises the question of the exercise of power and influence by the steward. In this process, the stewards' ideology—as defined by their orientation to unionism—will determine the relationship the stewards have with their workgroup and the objectives they are likely to aim for.[3]

To a large degree these concepts, leadership, and ideology within the context of power relations, underpin the model developed by Batstone *et al.* and modified by Marchington and Armstrong. However, acknowledgement must be given to the problems inherent in the representative/delegate dichotomy and the need to develop scales that incorporate strategies, rather than simply classifying behaviour. Based on the literature review and subsequent discussion with shop stewards Figure 3.2 is proposed as a model. Like the models proposed by Batstone *et al.* and Marchington and Armstrong the framework involves two dimensions to create a four-fold typology of ideal types.

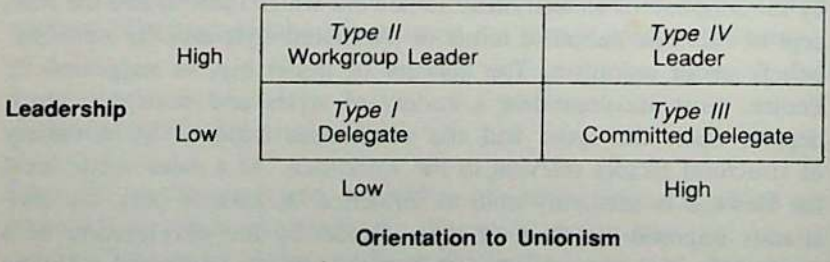


Figure 3.2 Typology of Steward Types

After a consideration of the concepts involved and discussions with a wide range of stewards and full-time union officials, the four steward types were named 'delegate', 'workgroup leader', 'committed delegate' and 'leader'. Type I stewards have been named delegates. These stewards do not demonstrate leadership and are not committed to the broad principles of unionism. It will be recalled that Batstone *et al.* termed this steward a populist. This label does not adequately describe these stewards and leaves the impression that their major aim is to achieve and/or maintain popularity with the workgroup. Yet as Batstone *et al.* demonstrated, the gains they made were of less value than those made by their leader counterparts. Delegates take a narrow view of their position and they prefer to see unionism and stewardship in terms of their immediate constituency. Wider responsibility and combined action are seen as neither desirable nor appropriate. Their legitimacy to act as stewards is therefore limited to that granted by the membership. The delegates will only take up issues when the issues are initiated by members and will only undertake activities that directly benefit their own constituency. This role orientation can lead to their own demise as they constantly react to events and tend only to fight rear-guard actions. As Marchington and Armstrong concluded: 'many of our populists would resign, and quite a few only remained in the job because no-one else would do it' (1983:42).

The direct opposite to the delegate is the leader or type IV steward. These stewards are well integrated into the union movement and provide leadership to the rank-and-file. In particular, their own members' demands must be balanced against the needs of the wider union membership. This is achieved by providing a high level of leadership, where they will raise issues themselves and suppress or modify issues raised by their members if they believe it may not be in the best interests of the wider union. Their legitimacy to act as stewards is, therefore, more broadly based: from the union, stewards and the membership.

In terms of leadership style the workgroup leader or type II steward is similar to the leader steward. The difference between these two types lies in the recipients of this leadership: the stewards' own constituency in the case of the workgroup leader, the wider union movement in the case of the leader. The workgroup leaders are intent on maximising the short-term benefits to their members. This led to Batstone *et al.* labelling these stewards as 'cowboys'. However, as Marchington and Armstrong found, this title could be misleading as these stewards 'were not overtly keen on challenging managerial prerogatives nor committed to the wider orientation of the union, although they were active within

their own constituencies and crucially aware of unity at that level' (1983:43).

The final steward type (type III), those stewards who were committed to the principles of unionism and yet exercised little leadership, was labelled the committed delegate. This group, as suggested by Marchington and Armstrong, was not transient, yet the title of nascent leader or cautious supporter did not describe them adequately. In leadership style they were similar to the delegate, but their ideological perspectives on unionism were far wider. They were committed unionists, believed in collective action and would process issues raised by their members. They were unlikely, however, to raise issues themselves. This may be due to a lack of confidence in their leadership abilities, as suggested by Batstone *et al.*, but may also represent firm beliefs concerning the role of the steward, principles of democracy and the need to be accountable to the membership.

This model does have a number of limitations. First, the model incorporates structural factors insofar as the individual steward perceives them to be important in the development of strategies. This approach, therefore, does not permit the effects of the various structural factors on steward behaviour to be individually isolated and analysed. Clearly, the individual union the steward belongs to, management policy and strategy, the work processes employed, the nature of the stewards' workgroup and the existing industrial relations pattern at the workplace will all influence steward behaviour and will thus need to be considered in conjunction with this model if their individual effects are to be measured. That is, in applying this model some effort will need to be made to locate stewards within their particular environment.

Second, as discussed earlier, this model was developed to explain differences in stewards' behaviour within the one workplace. Accordingly it may not be applicable to research that aims to explain the behaviour of stewards in different enterprises, industries or economies.

Third, this model has been developed within the Victorian Power Industry where identifiable workgroups existed, bargaining occurred within the workplace and shop stewards had, in most cases, daily contact with their constituents and fellow shop stewards. As a consequence this model may not be applicable to workplaces where such conditions do not exist.

Determinants of shop stewards' role definition

On the basis of the analytical model proposed in Figure 3.2, stewards in this study will be classified in terms of one of four roles: the delegate, the workgroup leader, the committed delegate and the leader. The adoption of various roles by stewards implies a deviation from their formal role as provided in the union rulebook, awards, collective agreements and management developed regulations. As Warren (1971) pointed out, the concept of role can involve the stewards' own definition of the situation:

> there is not only a set role, but also a received role, consisting of his perceptions and understanding of what was sent, as well as his own conceptions of his office and a corresponding set of attitudes, developed through a long process of socialization . . . (1971:54)

In addition, the stewards' role can be more complex than many other responsibilities in industry due to the 'pressures which arise out of his position at the crossroads between union members and their union and employees and the management of the firm' (Coyne 1982:63). To understand differences in role definition it is accordingly necessary to consider the personal characteristics of stewards and the environment they operate in, particularly the interaction the stewards have with their members, other stewards, their union and management. This is represented diagramatically in Figure 3.3.

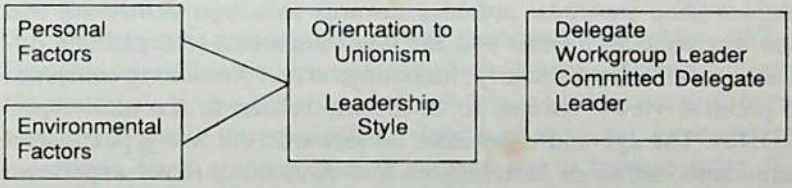


Figure 3.3 Predictors of Shop Stewards' Role Definition

Personal characteristics of stewards

A number of studies have presented a profile of the shop steward. McCarthy and Parker (1968) provided details of stewards' age, experience, gender, education, ambition and outside interests. The latter

two variables are worthy of further comment. Chinoy argued there are those who viewed union leadership as 'a means for satisfying ambitions that had been frustrated or were out of reach' (1950:165). It may well be that a similar attitude is prevalent with shop stewards' involvement in other organisations. That is, stewardship is but one outlet for employees to satisfy their latent ambitions. Others may take up stewardship to enhance their prospects of promotion within the organisation (Poole 1974:63). Yet little attempt has been made to relate these factors to the role shop stewards adopt in carrying out their duties. One exception is Partridge, who pointed out that 'experienced stewards spend proportionately more time in leadership activities . . .' (1977:39). Similar studies to those of McCarthy and Parker were conducted in Australia by McBeath (1973) and Charleston (1977). In both cases no attempt was made to relate personal characteristics of the steward to the type of role adopted.

Lund (1963) examined the origins and attitudes of Danish shop stewards and found that workers from union oriented families were more likely to become shop stewards. Given the model to be used in this study, this factor may be important in distinguishing between those stewards high or low on orientation to unionism. Parker and Bynner (1970) developed a typology of shop stewards based on militancy and activism, the latter measuring the extent of trade union activity. They suggested that factors such as length of union membership and stewardship, length of service with the firm and age may be important influences on the adoption of a specific role. Further, Ursell (1979) examined shop stewards' attitudes towards industrial democracy and found that political interest and age were important in explaining differences in attitudes. Similarly, Marchington and Armstrong concluded that political views 'seemed to be closely related to the ideal types' (1983:46). The age and experience of stewards did not appear useful determinants, although Marchington and Armstrong found experience did have some effect on the distribution of stewards if only the leader-populist dichotomy was considered.

In Australia little research has been conducted into why stewards adopt different roles. Three studies, however, suggest possible directions for research. Johnston (1971) explored the question of why workers become union officials and concluded that British immigrants represented a higher proportion of union officials than their percentage in the workforce. Other factors considered by Johnston included age, years of schooling, the occupational grouping of the official's father and the time spent in carrying out duties. In terms of both manual

and non-manual officials these factors did not appear significant. Sheridan (1975) also suggested that the influence of skilled British migrants, bringing with them traditions of shop-floor activity, was a key factor in the development of shop stewards in the Amalgamated Engineering Union. Dufty (1980), in a detailed study of shop stewards in Western Australia, included age, country of birth, education, skill level and union background as predictor variables in the adoption of various roles. Age, union background and skill level were found to be significant determinants.

From these studies thirteen factors emerged as possible predictors of shop stewards' role definition. These were: age, gender, education, community involvement, fathers' occupation, union background, ambition, length of stewardship, length of union membership, length of employment, political preference, country of birth and skill level. Discussions with shop stewards and management in the Latrobe Valley indicated that the measurement of skill level would be difficult due to the complex and varied nature of the work undertaken. Accordingly, it was decided to exclude this variable from the study. Further, as only five out of 346 shop stewards at the time of the survey were female, gender was excluded as a predictor of stewards' role definition. In addition, there is considerable overlap between some of the variables, particularly with respect to the SECV. The stability of employment in the Latrobe Valley, for example, would tend to yield a high correlation between length of stewardship, union membership and employment. Accordingly it was decided to only include length of stewardship in the model.

Discussions with shop stewards indicated that three additional factors—marital status, income and place of work—should be included in the analysis. Single shop stewards claimed that because they did not have family responsibilities they had the time to attend union functions, trade union education courses and to become more closely involved with their members. As Gouldner (1947:391) commented, family demands may conflict with the demand of union office. Chinoy is more direct: 'The union often becomes a man's second wife, and the first one may object strongly to bigamy' (1950:159). Income was also seen as an important factor, as within the SECV it could be used as a *de facto* measure of the job status and skill level of the employee. In the former sense, it could be that the formal authority conferred upon stewards in their capacity as employees may carry over in terms of the stewardship role. As Nicholson, Ursell and Blyton concluded 'higher [job] status enhances the likelihood

of a white-collar union member not only becoming active in his union, but also advocating and moving into a leadership role within it' (1980:238). This is similar to the findings of Sayles and Strauss) (1953) that high pay and seniority within the firm favour election to union office.

Place of work (Yallourn, Morwell, Loy Yang) was the final variable to be included. It was clear that Yallourn, in particular, had a well developed shop-floor organisation. In contrast, at the time of the survey Loy Yang had been operational for less than three years. Each production centre is self-contained and stewards in one centre are often isolated from stewards in the other centres. As Batstone *et al.* suggested, 'in some strongly organised plants, sections within the manual labour-force, for example , may be so isolated from each other that it is more useful to focus attention upon the various sections than the "organization" as a whole' (1977:3).

Environmental characteristics

In a single industry, comprised of one enterprise in the one region, four main factors influence the internal environment that each steward operates within. These are: the union the shop steward belongs to, other shop stewards, the characteristics of the workgroup the shop steward represents, and the nature of management both at the supervisory level and the more senior policy making level. In each case, with the exception of some of the union characteristics, it will be the shop stewards' perception of each factor that will influence the adoption of a specific role. Other environmental factors such as economic, social, political, geographical and historical influences will, in this case, be more or less constant across all shop stewards employed by the SECV in the Latrobe Valley.

The research undertaken by Batstone *et al.* and Marchington and Armstrong partially explored the relationship between environmental factors and the adoption of a particular role. Both studies limited the environmental factors to characteristics of the union. Batstone *et al.* focused on the size of the stewards' constituency and the type of union. With respect to the stewards' constituency they claimed 'there is an association between constituency size and steward leadership on the shop-floor' (1977:151). They concluded 'shop-floor stewards tend to place a greater emphasis upon the need to adopt a leadership role in relation to their members' (1977:151).

In contrast, Marchington and Armstrong found that there was no difference in the distribution of ideal types between stewards from blue- and white-collar unions (1983:45). With respect to the Batstone *et al.*

finding they stated that their results may 'have been obscuring the influence of another variable such as the degree of steward organisation' (1983:45). This suggestion arose out of the earlier study by Marchington and Armstrong (1982) of white-collar and manual stewards in both the private sector and local authorities. They found that although leaders and populists were distributed randomly, populists tended to be concentrated in organisations where the membership were apathetic and local shop steward organisation weak. The strength or otherwise of local steward organisation will initially, at least, depend on the presence of stewards from the same and/or other unions.

Goodman and Whittingham also considered the constituency size and concluded. 'our sample shows that the white-collar group had the largest constituency . . .' (1969:89). McCarthy and Parker (1968), and McBeath (1973) also reported the constituency size of the steward, with McBeath suggesting that the size of the workplace may explain the variations between unions (1973:121). On this point Brown, Ebsworth and Terry (1978) found that the constituency size was significantly related to the size of the workplace—the larger the workplace the more formal the shop steward organisation. A related factor to constituency size is the contact members have with full-time union officials. Sheridan (1975) suggested that the infrequent contact members had with full-time officials was a partial explanation of the growth of the shop steward organisation in the Amalgamated Engineering Union. It would, therefore, appear that type of union, presence of full-time union officials, constituency size and the presence of stewards from the same and/or other unions may be important determinants of role definition.

Farnham and Pimlott (1979) considered the relationship between the steward and the workgroup. They argued that stewards faced with conflicting choices between the interests of the workgroup or the union will generally side with the workgroup (1979:357). This raises the question of which characteristics of the membership may be important in shaping the stewards' role. Goodman and Whittingham suggested 'a study of primary work groups reveals an important source of pressure on shop stewards' (1973:87). Few studies have attempted to examine the influence of the membership or the workgroup on the stewards' role. Batstone *et al.* claimed 'the extent to which stewards can act as leaders is influenced by their members' (1977:99). Of considerable importance was the members' expectations of stewards. They found that 'one third of shop-floor comments stressed steward leadership, compared with only 8 per cent of those on the staff side' (1977:112).

The relationship between a steward and his membership is not

clearly defined. The role adopted, as pointed out by Warren (1971), may be influenced by a number of factors. First, the steward 'remains accountable to those who have elected him'. This poses the question, do shop stewards adopt different leadership roles if they are not subject to regular re-election by the membership or are appointed by the union? Second, the steward will need to recognise that members will have specific expectations of the steward and may attempt to influence how this expectation is to be achieved. Third, there exists an assumption that the steward 'is the representative of a single, clearly defined group of workers but this may not necessarily be the case' (Warren, 1971:57). The degree of unity of the workgroup may, therefore, be an important determinant of stewards' leadership style.

Member apathy will also influence the role adopted by the shop steward. In Johnston's study, most officials claimed that workers 'showed little interest in Union work . . . this applied mostly to young workers who take conditions for granted being ignorant of the Unions' past struggles' (Johnston, 1971:19). Goodman and Whittingham suggested that 'stewards may have more freedom of manoeuvre, and forceful leadership and demography may well produce the results desired by the leader' (1973:81–82). That is, member apathy may lead stewards to adopt a representative role. One shop steward, describing his role to Johnston, stated 'we go around every month, collect dues and talk to all members. They decide on the issues on hand, but we lead them' (1971:20). Key variables for consideration, accordingly, would appear to be age of membership, degree of workgroup unity, the stewards' frequency of contact with members, members' expectations of their steward and whether the steward is subject to regular re-election.

In discussing the influence of management on the role of the shop steward Warren suggested 'management may, in fact, enhance the scope, power and authority of the stewards' role . . .' (1971:53), a view also shared by Goodman and Whittingham (1973:15–17). Brown, after examining the role of the shop steward in piecework bargaining, is more definite and suggested 'in the long run, management itself is the most important influence in shaping the behaviour of its shop stewards' (1973:157). More recently, Terry suggested that 'managements in many industries pursued quite explicit reform strategies with respect to shop stewards' (1983:80). For example, Terry found, firms with little or no history of shop-floor organisation 'encouraged, or even deliberately fostered, the emergence and development of shop steward organisations' (1983:81). McBeath (1973:154–60) found considerable variation among stewards from five unions to questions concerning perceived

attitudes of management, management obstruction and incidences of victimisation. On this last point, for example, levels of victimisation varied between 10 per cent and 50 per cent (all stewards 22 per cent). McBeath did not, however, relate these findings to the role or behaviour of shop stewards. These results are similar to McCarthy's study of shop stewards in the United Kingdom, although Davis suggested that it is 'possible that Australian managers have, in general, been more hostile to the development of shop stewards than their British counterparts' (1980a:11).

Brown, Ebsworth and Terry also considered the influence of management on shop steward organisation, although they limited their discussion to bargaining levels, management co-operation and joint consultation. On these aspects the results were mixed. For example:

> sophisticated steward organisation can exist where there is no workplace bargaining . . . joint consultative arrangements appear to have a more clear cut effect, stimulating both steward organisational development and inter union conflict . . . (and) management resistance could be a stimulus or a response to powerful steward organisation. (1978:155)

Although not directly related to the roles adopted by individual shop stewards, it is clear these factors may be important influences on the steward. For example, Dufty pointed out that management would prefer 'to deal with strong shop stewards, leaders who can control their members to the extent of ensuring adherence to any agreement reached . . .' (1980:381). Discussion with shop stewards tended to confirm the findings of the literature. Of particular importance were the general age levels of the supervisors and their style of management, and the attitudes of more senior line management.

Models

From the literature reviewed and subsequent discussions with shop stewards some twelve personal factors and eleven environmental factors emerged which may determine the adoption of a particular role by stewards.[4] As the theoretical framework underpinning this research is based on the stewards' orientation to unionism and leadership style, it is necessary to examine the determinants of role definition with respect to these two dimensions. The literature clearly suggested that many of the factors related only to orientation to unionism or to leadership style. Several factors, however, were considered only in the context of a more general discussion of the stewards' role. After discussions with shop stewards it was possible to develop two models that were expected to

explain a significant proportion of variance in stewards' orientation to unionism and leadership style. These are presented in Figure 3.4.

It is not possible to define the expected relationship between these factors and the adoption of a specific role. In many cases the literature was inconclusive. For example, as Warren (1971:57) pointed out, stewards may not be representative of a single, clearly defined workgroup, but she does not suggest in what direction this factor may affect the role adopted by the steward. As a consequence the models will be expressed in terms of their ability to predict significant amounts of variance in the constructs underpinning role definition, namely orientation to unionism and leadership style.

Testing the model

The two models, comprising a number of personal and environmental factors, which have been developed should prove significant determinants of a stewards' orientation to unionism and leadership style.[5] These models will be tested using regression analysis.[6]

Type	Orientation to Unionism	Leadership Style
Personal Characteristics	Age Father's occupation Union background Length of stewardship Political preference Marital status Place of work	Education Community involvement Ambition Length of stewardship Country of birth Income
Union Characteristics	Type of union Presence of full-time official	Type of union Presence of full-time official Constituency size
Steward Characteristics	Presence of stewards—own union Presence of stewards—other unions	Presence of stewards—own union Presence of stewards—other unions
Membership Characteristics	Age levels Degree of workgroup unity Members' expectations	Frequency of contact Subject to regular re-election Frequency of meetings
Management Characteristics	Attitudes of management	Supervisor's age Supervisor's management style

Figure 3.4 Predictors of Orientation to Unionism and Leadership Style

Orientation to unionism

Some fifteen factors were included in the model as likely determinants of a steward's orientation to unionism.[7] These variables were presented in Figure 3.4. To avoid the possibility of confounding the regression analysis with 'independent' variables that are highly correlated, it was decided that such variables would be deleted from the analysis. Correlational analysis indicated two significant correlations existed. First, age and length of stewardship were substantially related. As length of stewardship is often conceived of as a *de facto* measure of union commitment it was decided to delete the age of stewards from the regression analysis. This also meant that lesser, although significant, correlations between the stewards' age, political preference and the age level of constituents would be removed. Second, union background and political preference were also found to be significantly correlated. Union background was deleted from the analysis on the grounds that a higher number of stewards could not recall if their father was active in his union compared to the number of stewards whose political preference was not known (15 per cent and 11 per cent respectively). Accordingly, some thirteen factors (independent variables) were regressed against stewards' orientation to unionism (dependent variable). Details of the analysis are presented in Table 3.1.[8] These factors explained some 17 per cent of the total variance (R^2) in orientation to unionism and collectively were significant at the 0.05 level ($F=2.13$). Thus, the proposed model predicted a significant amount of variance in stewards' orientation to unionism. Only two variables—length of stewardship and the presence of a full-time union official—proved to be individually significant at the 0.05 level. Marital status was, however, significant at the lower level of 0.10. Stewards were, therefore, more likely to be oriented to unionism (as opposed to oriented to the needs of their immediate workgroup) the longer they served as stewards and if a full-time official of their union resided in the Latrobe Valley.

Both formal and informal interviews and discussions with stewards tended to reinforce these findings. Stewards who had extensive experience as workplace representatives tended to gradually develop a wider perspective. The experienced and usually older stewards claimed that during their period of service they had come to realise that unity and collective action are ultimately their only defences against managerial excesses. This attitude is further reinforced by the taking on of extra responsibilities at some stage during their 'lengthy career'. These extra responsibilities have tended to be confined to the branch level. Equally, many of these stewards are seen as 'senior stewards' with

stewards from their own and other unions seeking them out for advice and guidance. The presence of a local, full-time union official provides stewards with an external reference point. Meeting regularly with these officials, often informally, created an awareness that the issue had ramifications beyond the stewards' own workgroup.

Table 3.1 Determinants of Stewards' Orientation to Unionism

Predictor Variable	Regression Coefficient	t Statistic	Level of Significance
Father's occupation	–0.296	–1.194	0.234
Length of stewardship	0.060	2.773	0.006
Political preference	0.303	1.148	0.253
Marital status	0.625	1.878	0.062
Place of work—Yallourn	0.193	0.543	0.588
Place of work—Morwell	–0.227	–0.608	0.544
Type of union	–0.280	–1.131	0.260
Presence of full-time official	0.606	2.002	0.047
Presence of stewards—own union	–0.352	–1.354	0.178
Presence of stewards—other unions	–0.088	–0.308	0.758
Age level of members	–0.246	–1.137	0.257
Degree of workgroup unity	0.092	0.782	0.436
Members' expectations	0.233	0.928	0.355
Attitude of management	–0.086	–0.630	0.530
Constant	5.604	7.359	

R Square:	0.1700
Standard Error:	1.4363
F-Statistic:	2.1312
F Significance:	0.0132

Some 83 per cent of the variance in orientation to unionism remained unexplained. This raised two possibilities: either a small number of significant variables have not been considered or a range of variables, taken collectively, can account for the unexplained variance. The investigation of further determinants remains a task for future research.

Leadership style

Some sixteen factors were included in the model as likely determinants of a steward's leadership style. These variables were presented in

Figure 3.4. As with orientation to unionism, it was necessary to check the correlations between these 'independent variables' to avoid confounding the results of the regression analysis. Two significant relationships were found to exist. First, level of education was highly correlated to community involvement and income. To simplify the regression equation community involvement and income were deleted from the model, on the grounds that level of education was a more relevant variable since shift workers are restricted in their participation in community activities and income can vary considerably depending on the availability of overtime. Second, type of union correlated significantly with education and whether the steward was subject to regular re-election. In this case, given the rationale for retaining the education variable and the perceived importance of stewards being subjected to regular re-election, type of union was deleted. With the deletion of community involvement, income and type of union the remaining thirteen variables were regressed against the dependent variable, stewards' leadership style. Table 3.2 details the results of this analysis. When taken collectively these factors explained 19 per cent of total variance in stewards'

Table 3.2 Determinants of Stewards' Leadership Style

Predictor Variable	Regression Coefficient	t Statistic	Level of Significance
Education	–0.087	–1.523	0.130
Ambition	–0.418	–1.949	0.053
Length of stewardship	0.016	0.889	0.375
Country of birth—Australia	0.040	0.177	0.860
Presence of full-time official	0.573	2.195	0.030
Presence of stewards—own union	0.107	0.473	0.637
Presence of stewards—other unions	0.103	0.422	0.673
Constituency size	–0.002	–0.624	0.534
Frequency of member contact	–0.007	–0.097	0.923
Subject to regular re-election	0.507	2.173	0.031
Frequency of membership meetings	0.078	0.763	0.447
Supervisor's age	–0.001	–0.039	0.969
Supervisor's management style	0.156	1.272	0.205
Constant	5.559	6.410	

R Square:	0.1855
Standard Error:	1.1941
F-Statistic:	2.4880
F Significance:	0.0043

leadership style and were significant at the 0.01 level (F=2.49). The proposed model, therefore, predicted a significant amount of variance in stewards' leadership style. Once again, it is important to keep in mind that a considerable proportion of the total variance in leadership style (81 per cent) remained unexplained. Two variables, presence of a full-time union official and subject to regular re-election, proved significant contributors to the model at the 0.05 level. Ambition was significant at the 0.10 level. Accordingly, in general stewards were more likely to adopt a representative style of leadership if a full-time official was located in the Latrobe Valley and if they were subject to regular re-election.

Discussions with stewards reinforced these findings. It should be recalled that leadership, in this context, refers to the ability of the steward to take action independent of the membership. Given this definition, it is not unexpected that a membership characteristic proved statistically significant. A considerable body of literature relates group properties to leader characteristics[9] and as Pedler stated, 'leaders are always subject to limitation by group norms and role relationships within the Group' (1973:45). Stewards who were subject to regular re-election claimed that they saw their continued re-election as a vote of confidence in the way they handled matters. Clearly, they perceived members as interested in outcomes rather than their style of leadership. Once again the presence of a local full-time union official was an important predictor variable. In this case stewards claimed that meeting regularly with their local official allowed them the opportunity to discuss issues of particular importance to their membership. The success or otherwise of a particular course of action could be debated, and in the final assessment could lead stewards to modify or, in some cases, squash an issue. Also, at these meetings issues were initiated and the stewards took these issues back to the membership for their information and support.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed a number of studies that have developed typologies to assist in the understanding of the behaviour of shop stewards. The model developed by Batstone and his colleagues, based on leadership style and pursuit of union principles, was found to offer the most utility in studying the internal dynamics of shop steward organisation and behaviour. Limitations as to the general

applicability of such a model were pointed out. The chapter also reviewed the literature so as to construct models that could explain significant proportions of variance in stewards' orientation to unionism and leadership style. Limited support for these models was achieved, although a smaller number of variables proved to be significant determinants of stewards' orientation to unionism and leadership style. It was noted that a substantial proportion of variance in both these dimensions was left unexplained.

4 Steward characteristics and role definition

Prior to examining the activities of shop stewards in the Victorian Power Industry it is necessary to identify these stewards and define their stewardship role. This is of particular importance and significance in the case of the Latrobe Valley because of the unique characteristics of the region. These characteristics include long standing traditions of union organisation and militant action, several waves of migration to the Valley corresponding to the cyclical patterns of development, and the overall general stability and integration of the population and labour force.

This chapter will provide a profile of the Latrobe Valley shop stewards. Specifically it will focus on how and why they came to be stewards; on their personal characteristics such as age, nationality, education, political affiliation, class background and income; on their attitudes to industrial action and their satisfaction in the stewards' role; and on their involvement with the broader community. This profile is extended by considering the stewards' orientation to unionism and the leadership style they adopt in relation to their stewardship duties. Stewards will be located on each of these dimensions and classified in terms of the theoretical framework presented in the previous chapter.

The emergence of shop stewards

The reasons why workers join trade unions can range from what Martin termed the vaunted Australian sense of mateship and belief in class solidarity to 'factors which are less altruistic in character and range from the frankly coercive to the presumptively seductive' (1980:59). Latrobe Valley SECV stewards were no exception, although three major reasons were identified to explain why they had joined their particular union. First, some 37 per cent had joined because they

thought it was appropriate in terms of their trade or profession. This was particularly the case with those stewards working at Loy Yang of whom 55 per cent claimed this was their reason for joining a union. In the main, this reflects these steward's views of the value of trade unionism in new, high technology centres. Second, as discussed earlier with respect to the Latrobe Valley operations of the SECV, union membership is essentially compulsory and 32 per cent felt they were compelled, initially at least, to join a union. This feeling tended to be more prevalent amongst Morwell stewards. Interestingly, for this group of union members this feeling of compulsion to join a union did not translate into a rejection of union office. Third, 23 per cent of stewards joined their union because of a belief in the principles of unionism. Yallourn stewards were higher on this dimension which, in part, reflects the long standing traditions of unionism at that centre. Generally, these findings reject pyschological reasons for joining unions such as job dissatisfaction or a rational analysis of the costs and benefits of union membership (Klandermans 1986).

Table 4.1 shows that white-collar stewards were also more likely to join their union due to union principles.[1] When unions were formed to cover SECV 'staff', membership remained voluntary for many years. The decision to join was, therefore, based on other factors such as a belief in the principles of unionism. In recent years this has changed considerably and trade union membership is essentially compulsory for all employees irrespective of the staff/wages dichotomy.[2] This was borne out by the results of the survey where 40 per cent of white-collar stewards over the age of 40 years had joined their union on the basis of trade union principles, compared to 18 per cent of white-collar stewards under 40 years of age.

Table 4.1 Reasons for Joining the Union

Reason	Blue-collar Stewards		White-collar Stewards	
	N	%	N	%
Belief in union principles	24	19.7	24	28.9
Union's performance and policies	11	9.0	1	1.2
Closed shop	37	30.3	28	33.7
Appropriate for trade or profession	46	37.7	30	36.1
Other	4	3.3	—	—
Total	122	100.0	83	100.0

Once having joined the union, the decision to seek or accept union office becomes more problematic. Moore (1980) found that unionists in the UK were primarily motivated to become a shop steward due to their dissatisfaction with the existing leadership or because no one else was willing to do the job. This was also the case with a small number of Latrobe Valley stewards, where some 14 per cent of respondents took on stewardship because no one else was willing to do the job and 13 per cent due to their dissatisfaction with the way matters were being handled. Of more importance to accepting stewardship was a general interest in matters affecting workers (33 per cent) and a belief in union principles (16 per cent). Similar results were found by McBeath (1973) and Charleston (1977). Stewards may, of course, accept office for a combination of reasons. For example, several stewards defined union principles in terms of helping their fellow worker and hence saw little conflict with accepting office on the basis of general interest in matters affecting workers. In a sense, an interest in matters affecting workers was seen as the practical outcome of the desire to help workers. General interest in matters affecting workers was the major reason given by both blue- and white-collar stewards (see Table 4.2) and stewards from each of the work centres. In the case of white-collar stewards this accounted for nearly half the stewards. In contrast, general interest in matters affecting workers was cited by less than one-quarter of blue-collar stewards. For these stewards belief in union principles, dissatisfaction with the way matters were handled, and no one else being willing to take on the position assumed more importance.

Table 4.2 Reasons for Becoming a Steward

Reason	Blue-collar Stewards		White-collar Stewards	
	N	%	N	%
General interest in matters affecting workers	30	24.8	37	44.6
Belief in union principles	23	19.0	10	12.0
No one else	20	16.5	10	12.0
Dissatisfaction with the way matters were being handled	21	17.4	6	7.2
Pressure from co-workers	13	10.7	6	7.2
Other	14	11.6	14	16.8
Total	121	100.0	83	100.0

The majority of stewards (76 per cent) had taken office upon the resignation or defeat of the incumbent. This was less likely to be the situation with white-collar stewards and stewards working at Loy Yang, as the Loy Yang power station and open cut mine have only been operating with SECV employees since 1983. As successive stages of Loy Yang become operational more steward positions will be created. The major reasons for incumbents relinquishing their position included changing sections (21 per cent), leaving the SECV (19 per cent), wanting a break (17 per cent) and being promoted (13 per cent).[3] Only 7 per cent of the stewards surveyed defeated the incumbent at an election. One other way the membership can remove a shop steward is by a vote of no confidence. This occurred in at least three cases. In two further cases the membership had expressed their dissatisfaction in a less formal way. Thus, by their actions the membership removed less than 10 per cent of all previous incumbents—a relatively insignificant figure.

White-collar stewards were more likely to give up their positions due to changing sections (30 per cent) or resignation from the SECV (29 per cent). White-collar employees tend to have more opportunity to change jobs and hence sections. In contrast their blue-collar counterparts more frequently resigned because they had gained promotion (14 per cent) or were dissatisfied in their role as a steward (11 per cent). Those stewards who resigned upon accepting a promotion may, however, re-emerge later as a steward in their new union. This is particularly the case with those workers who subsequently join the MOA. Loy Yang stewards were also more likely to relinquish office due to changing sections (33 per cent) or merely wanting a break (22 per cent).

Three-quarters of all stewards had gained office without having to stand for election. Most of this group, some 63 per cent, had gained office when the previous incumbent resigned. Of the stewards that faced an initial election less than one-fifth had stood against the incumbent. The remaining cases were where the previous steward had resigned (64 per cent) or a new position had been created and a number of potential candidates had sought office (17 per cent). This is similar to the situation in the United Kingdom, reported by McCarthy and Parker (1968), where only 29 per cent of stewards had gained office by an election, and similarly, the majority had gained office upon the resignation of the incumbent. In contrast, Charleston (1977) found that nearly half of the stewards he surveyed had gained office by an election and in the majority of cases this was after the previous steward had resigned.

Table 4.3 reveals that blue-collar unionists were more likely to have faced an election when initially gaining a stewards' position than their white-collar counterparts. This situation is similar for unionists based at the Yallourn work centre. In both cases, given the predominance of blue-collar workers at Yallourn, these figures clearly illustrate the differences in the methods of selecting stewards in blue-collar unions compared to white-collar unions.

Table 4.3 Method of Assuming Shop Steward Office

Method	Blue-collar Stewards N	%	White-collar Stewards N	%
Elected				
Defeated previous steward	9	7.5	1	1.2
Contested election (incumbent resigned)	22	18.3	12	14.5
Contested election (new position)	6	5.0	3	3.6
Sub-total	37	30.8	16	19.3
Appointed				
Without opposition (incumbent resigned)	54	45.0	41	49.4
First shop steward in section	15	12.5	15	18.1
Appointed by union	12	10.0	5	6.0
Sub-total	81	67.5	61	73.5
Other	2	1.7	6	7.2
Total	120	100.0	83	100.0

If stewards faced an initial election, this normally took place in the particular shop or section (85 per cent) and usually by a show of hands (86 per cent). Blue-collar and Loy Yang stewards had a slightly higher percentage of colleagues elected at branch meetings. In the case of blue-collar unions, this reflects the importance attached to branch meetings. At Loy Yang where the steward organisation is still in its developmental stages, new positions are often created at the branch meeting and would normally also be filled, at least initially, at that meeting. Only in 14 per cent of the elections was a secret ballot conducted. This figure is considerably lower than the 30 per cent reported by Charleston (1977). Table 4.4 provides a range of data on steward

election procedures. White-collar stewards were more likely to have gained office via a secret ballot than were blue-collar stewards, although elections were held at less frequent intervals than among blue-collar unions. This illustrates the direct control members have over their stewards in blue-collar unions, and also the reliance on traditional ways of electing stewards. Frequency of elections can also relate to perceptions of democracy. For example, the AMWU clearly states that 'for democracy to be maintained in the workplace, there is a need for shop stewards to be elected annually' (AMWU 1980:3).

Table 4.4 Shop Steward Election Procedure

Procedure	Blue-collar Stewards		White-collar Stewards	
	N	%	N	%
Place				
Shop/section	84	84.0	48	85.7
Branch meeting	13	13.0	5	8.9
Other	3	3.0	3	5.4
Method				
Show of hands	82	89.1	38	79.2
Secret ballot	10	10.9	10	20.8
Frequency				
Annually	36	60.0	4	30.8
Every two years	3	5.0	2	15.4
Every three years	6	10.0	—	—
Irregularly	7	11.7	4	30.8
Other	8	13.3	3	23.1

Only a minority of stewards (30 per cent) were subject to regular re-election. This is in direct contrast to the findings of McBeath (1973) and Charleston (1977) who found some 50 per cent and 63 per cent of stewards had to submit, at least nominally, to the re-election process. A partial explanation of this difference is that those studies focused primarily on blue-collar stewards. In this study some 44 per cent of blue-collar stewards were subject to regular re-elections compared to only 10 per cent for white-collar stewards. Yallourn stewards were also more likely to face regular re-elections (37 per cent) with Morwell stewards the least likely (25 per cent). The Morwell figure, in part, reflects the higher number of white-collar stewards located at that centre.

For those stewards who faced regular re-elections, in 55 per cent of the cases these were held annually. This is slightly lower than Charleston's figure of 64 per cent (1977), although this in turn is lower

than for stewards at Loy Yang (75 per cent). The Loy Yang result is primarily due to the instability of the Loy Yang workforce when contrasted to that at Yallourn or Morwell. Less than 7 per cent of stewards had actually been opposed, a figure which is substantially less than the results of studies conducted by McBeath (1973) in Australia (between 13 and 20 per cent) and Clegg *et al.* (1961) and Goodman and Whittingham (1969) in the UK (23 per cent and 24 per cent respectively). Of the stewards who had been opposed only one-quarter were regularly opposed. This figure is slightly higher than the 15 per cent reported by McCarthy and Parker (1968) in the UK. The small number in this group suggests the likelihood of a steward resigning office if faced with persistent challenges.

In summary, most stewards joined their union because they perceived it as appropriate to their trade or profession or because of a policy of compulsory unionism. Stewards sought office to help their fellow workers and in the majority of cases were appointed to the position. Most stewards were not subject to regular re-elections, although if they were, it would normally take place in the workshop by a simple show of hands. It thus appears that once having joined a union, employees find few impediments to gaining steward office. Interest in the union and willingness to take on responsibilities would appear to be the major criteria for selection and rarely are workplace officials subject to formal sanctions by the members. However, less formal means are applied to force stewards to relinquish their positions.

Characteristics of shop stewards

The average age of the Latrobe Valley shop stewards was 39 years. This is similar to the findings of McBeath (1973) and Charleston (1977) but considerably lower than the average age of 45 years found by McCarthy and Parker (1968) in the UK. Some 58 per cent of the stewards were under the age of 40 years, which is similar to the overall percentage of all SECV employees being under the age of 40 (62 per cent, SECV, *Annual Report*, 1984–85). Within the steward body some significant differences in the age profile existed in terms of union type and work location. More than half the white-collar stewards (53 per cent) were over the age of 40 years compared to only 31 per cent of blue-collar stewards. This is not unexpected, as within the SECV many white-collar positions require years of tertiary training (for example, engineers) or are filled by promotions from blue-collar jobs. Moreover,

at Loy Yang 42 per cent of stewards were under 30 years of age compared to 24 per cent and 19 per cent at Yallourn and Morwell. This, in part, reflects the resistance of the older employees to transfer to and/or apply for promotion to work centres that are technologically advanced.

Most of the stewards were born in Australia (73 per cent) with 17 per cent being born in the UK and Ireland; this figure is considerably higher than the 5 per cent of residents of the Latrobe Valley who were born in the UK and Ireland[4] (Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing*, 1986) although substantially lower than the 36 per cent and 35 per cent reported by McBeath (1973) and Dufty (1980) respectively. Charleston (1973), in his nationwide survey, recorded a figure of 23 per cent. Overseas-born stewards were slightly more highly represented in white-collar unions but significantly more highly represented at Morwell when compared to Yallourn and Loy Yang. This is partly due to post-war migration and the attraction to the newly arrived migrants of the then developing Morwell project.

The education standards of stewards in the Latrobe Valley are considerably higher than those reported by other studies. For example, whilst 69 per cent had completed studies beyond form 4 (Charleston 1977 cited 31 per cent and Dufty 1980 cited 50 per cent beyond form 3) nearly half had continued their studies beyond secondary school. In contrast, Charleston (1977) found only one in ten stewards had continued their studies beyond secondary education. As was to be expected, stewards from white-collar unions had significantly higher levels of education than their blue-collar counterparts. For example, some 28 per cent of white-collar stewards had completed a tertiary level course compared to 6 per cent of blue-collar stewards. When broken down by place of employment, 29 per cent of Loy Yang stewards had completed a tertiary course compared to 9 per cent and 16 per cent of Yallourn and Morwell stewards. This result has some correlation with the age profile in these centres.

Membership of political parties was not a common occurrence. Less than 10 per cent of stewards reported such membership with the majority being members of the Australian Labor Party (ALP). This result is considerably less than that of Charleston (1977) who found 28 per cent of his respondents belonged to a political party (24 per cent to the ALP).[5] This is somewhat surprising given the perceived militancy of SECV shop stewards and the strong support for the ALP in the Latrobe Valley. For example, in four of the five state elections for the electorate of Morwell held between 1976 and 1986, the ALP

recorded in excess of 60 per cent of the primary vote.[6] Significantly less white-collar stewards reported membership of a political party compared to stewards from blue-collar unions. This illustrates the historical links between the ALP and blue-collar unions, and in the case of the Latrobe Valley the role local union activists have played in politics. In terms of work location, Loy Yang had a considerably higher representation on this variable than Yallourn and Morwell. This was unexpected given that only 42 per cent of Loy Yang stewards would normally vote for the ALP compared to the overall average of 62 per cent of stewards indicating support for the ALP. Blue-collar stewards were also more likely to vote for the ALP and were less likely to be influenced by particular issues when voting than were their white-collar counterparts.

The relative low level of formal political involvement is reflected in the small number of shop stewards (23 per cent) who claimed they had been involved in political activities within the workplace. These activities may have included the promotion of a particular political party during elections, processing issues via political channels and involving politicians and their staff in industrial disputes. Those stewards who do become involved in these activities argue that: 'Trade unions are a vital part of community and political and social life and as such it is essential for the views of the membership to be reflected in any and all of the decisions taken by unions in all of the many matters which come before them' (Wragg, 1985:20). Blue-collar stewards were significantly more likely to become involved in political type activities than were their white-collar colleagues (29 per cent and 14 per cent respectively).

The majority of stewards came from a 'working class' background with 63 per cent of stewards reporting their father held a manual job. This was only slightly more so for blue-collar stewards and for Yallourn stewards. Some 70 per cent of the stewards had fathers who were also union members with just under half of these playing an active role within their union.[7] This is higher than that of Dufty's (1980) sample where 59 per cent of respondents had fathers who were union members; slightly more than half of those who were union members were also active within their union. Blue-collar stewards were more likely to have a father who was a union member, although the percentage of fathers who were active in the union was higher for white-collar stewards. This finding is important in understanding why a higher percentage of white-collar stewards had joined their union out of a belief in union principles and why they were more likely to have taken on stewardship

due to general interest in matters affecting workers. Stewards from Yallourn were significantly more likely to have fathers who were union members, but Loy Yang stewards whose fathers were union members were substantially more likely to have been active in that union than their Morwell and Yallourn colleagues.

The average income of the shop stewards in 1985 was approximately $25 800.[8] This is higher than the average total earnings of male employees throughout Australia which was $22 646 per annum as at the June quarter 1985 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Average Weekly Earnings*, 1985). As was to be expected, white-collar shop stewards had a significantly higher income than their blue-collar counterparts ($28 536 compared to $23 546) and Loy Yang stewards had higher incomes than their colleagues elsewhere. For example, some 58 per cent of Loy Yang stewards had incomes in excess of $30 000 compared to 24 per cent and 37 per cent of Yallourn and Morwell stewards. For most shop stewards this represented the total income available, although one-quarter of the stewards had a second source of income in the form of their spouses' earnings.

The stability of the steward population is clearly evident from the statistics relating to length of residence in the Latrobe Valley, years of service with the SECV and length of union membership. The average shop steward had resided in the Latrobe Valley for slightly more than twenty-six years. Given the relatively low average age of the stewards the time spent in the Latrobe Valley represents a significant proportion of their life. Patterns of behaviour of shop stewards are thus more likely to follow the customs and practices developed in the Latrobe Valley than to be imported from elsewhere. Given the age differential that exists between white- and blue-collar stewards, it might have been expected that white-collar stewards would have had longer periods of residency. That they did not can be partially explained by their movement into the Latrobe Valley at an age when they are seeking employment (for example, engineers) or wishing to gain experience and/or promotion before returning to Melbourne.

The average steward had worked for nearly sixteen years with the SECV and had been a member of the present union for just over twelve years. The discrepancy between these two figures is primarily accounted for by the movement of stewards between unions that have similar coverage (for example, FEDFA and the MOA) and the necessity to join a new union on promotion (for example, an AMWU member upon promotion to supervisor would normally join the MOA). It is of interest to note that in McBeath's (1973) study half the stewards had

worked for their present employer for more than five years. The comparable figure for stewards in the Latrobe Valley was 84 per cent. Some differences existed between blue- and white-collar stewards on these measures, with white-collar stewards having worked significantly longer with the SECV and having longer union membership than their blue-collar counterparts. Similarly, Yallourn stewards had longer periods of employment with the SECV, whilst Loy Yang stewards had shorter periods of union membership. Overall, these figures are representative of union membership and employee service of the SECV workforce as a whole.

The typical steward had occupied office for just over five years, although if allowance was made for periods of stewardship in other unions this figure was significantly higher. This is in contrast to figures of less than two years and four years in McBeath's (1973) and Charleston's (1977) studies and reflects the stability in the SECV's Latrobe Valley workforce in general. This result is slightly lower than the six and a half years of service reported by Wanna (1984) for shop stewards in three unions in South Australia[9] and the six years and seven years reported by McCarthy and Parker (1968) and Clegg *et al.* (1961) in the UK. Pedler (1973), however, reported a figure of only slightly more than three years length of stewardship despite the average length of union membership of sixteen years. It thus seems reasonable to suggest that Latrobe Valley stewards are likely to be more experienced than stewards elsewhere in Australia, although slightly less experienced than their UK counterparts. Slightly more white-collar stewards had served for a period of five or more years than had blue-collar stewards, although this would be accounted for by their service in blue-collar unions before entering white-collar unions. As was to be expected, Loy Yang stewards had significantly less years as shop stewards than had those from the other areas.

Stewards' satisfaction and attitudes to industrial action

The substantial majority of stewards (78 per cent) appeared satisfied in their present job with the SECV, with white-collar stewards appearing more satisfied than blue-collar stewards. Yallourn stewards were less satisfied than stewards from the other two centres. Similarly, over two-thirds of the stewards who responded to the questionnaire found the job of being a shop steward satisfying. This is similar to the findings of McBeath's (1973) study where 73 per cent found stewardship

satisfying. Slightly more blue-collar stewards were dissatisfied with stewardship, and substantially more Morwell stewards were satisfied in their role than were Yallourn and Loy Yang stewards.

A complementary approach to assessing satisfaction in the role of stewardship is to ask stewards if they would seek a further term of office. Some 53 per cent of stewards indicated they would actively seek another term, 23 per cent would do so if pressed by members, fellow shop stewards or officials, 12 per cent would be reluctant and the remaining stewards would definitely not accept another term. McBeath (1973) found only 38 per cent of his respondents would actively seek another term, although slightly more than half would reluctantly accept a further term as a shop steward if pressed. Yallourn stewards were more likely to willingly accept another term, perhaps illustrating the traditions of workplace union organisation at that centre and the established patterns of behaviour.

In carrying out their duties, two-thirds of the stewards felt that they were, by acting as a shop steward, helping the SECV solve its problems and improve its efficiency. Stewardship was not seen, therefore, as dealing only with the sectional interests of members. This view was similar across blue- and white-collar stewards and stewards from each of the work centres. Slightly more than one-quarter of stewards reported they had been victimised by management for carrying out their stewardship role, with almost half the stewards reporting the most common form was being denied promotion. Stewards who had been victimised were significantly more likely to be blue-collar stewards and were more likely to work at Loy Yang. Those stewards who had experienced victimisation tended to find the job of being a shop steward more satisfying and were more likely to seek another term as a shop steward when their present term expired. These same stewards claimed they found their employment with the SECV less satisfying. In short, by punishing shop stewards for their activities management tended to reinforce, in the minds of stewards, the value of unionism whilst at the same time providing a climate which was less conducive to improving efficiency and performance.

Stewards were also asked whether they believed that industrial action was justified in a number of circumstances. Table 4.5 shows that overall the majority of stewards strongly supported the use of industrial action, including the withdrawal of labour, to achieve improvements in wages and conditions, to force management to abide by agreements, to speed up negotiations and to prevent management from discharging a member unfairly. In excess of two-thirds of the stewards

also indicated that they would be prepared to take industrial action to demonstrate to industrial tribunals the seriousness of an issue. This finding lends support to the conventional wisdom that a major reason for the occurrence of many short strikes in Australia is the perception, by unions, that this action will demonstrate to the tribunal how seriously they view the issue and will aid in achieving a more acceptable solution. The support for industrial action was not, however, uniform across all issues. For example, most stewards strongly supported the withdrawal of labour in the case of an unfair dismissal, whilst only one-third of all stewards strongly supported strike action over management delays. Blue-collar stewards were significantly more militant than their white-collar counterparts, and in particular, were more likely to agree that workers were justified in withdrawing their labour in support of improved wages and conditions and to speed up negotiations than were their white-collar counterparts. Yallourn stewards were, in total, slightly more militant than Morwell and Loy Yang stewards, although no significant difference was apparent on the individual issues when broken down by place of work.

Table 4.5 Steward Justification for Strike Action

Level of Support	Wages and Conditions %	Broken Agreements %	Speed Up Negotiations %	Unfair Dismissals %
Strongly Agree	41.3	51.4	36.7	68.9
Agree	44.6	42.5	51.1	25.1
Undecided	8.2	4.4	8.3	4.4
Disagree	5.4	1.7	3.3	1.1
Strongly Disagree	0.5	—	0.6	0.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	184	181	180	183

To complete this profile stewards were asked about their community involvement. This provides for steward leadership to be placed in the context of the wider community. Four out of every five stewards belonged to at least one community organisation. This is considerably higher than the general level of community involvement estimated by the Gippsland Institute of Advanced Education (1975). That research found approximately 60 per cent of the population were involved in community organisations.[10] The involvement of a majority of shop

stewards in community organisations is in sharp contrast to the situation in the UK. McCarthy and Parker (1968:14), for example, found some 69 per cent of stewards surveyed did not belong to any community organisations. This comparison supports the contention that the Latrobe Valley is a relatively well integrated society. This involvement was not limited to only one organisation, with some 60 per cent of stewards belonging to two or more organisations. Further, in many cases these organisations were of a diverse nature such as school councils, community medical centres, local councils, sporting organisations, and consumer and credit co-operatives. White-collar stewards were significantly more involved in the community than were blue-collar stewards, as were Loy Yang stewards.

Of those stewards who did belong to community organisations, 84 per cent attended meetings at least once a month. For nearly half of these stewards attendance at three or more meetings every month was the norm. This latter group was more likely to be composed of white-collar stewards from the Yallourn and Loy Yang centres. A substantial number of stewards actually held official positions within these organisations. Nearly half of all stewards surveyed held at least one official position, with white-collar and Loy Yang stewards more likely to assume a leadership role.

In summary, stewards in the Latrobe Valley are relatively young, predominantly of Australian origin and well educated. Membership of political parties is uncommon, although a majority are committed ALP voters. Stewards tend to come from working-class backgrounds; their father is likely to have been a union member, although, only in a minority of cases would he have been active in the union. Average income for these stewards is higher than the national average and stewards have lived in the Latrobe Valley, worked for the SECV and been a member of their union for a considerable period of time. The average length of service as a steward is in excess of five years, although this figure would be higher if stewardship with other unions was taken into consideration. The majority of stewards appear happy in their job and are interested in gaining promotion within the SECV.

Finally, most stewards find the job of a shop steward reasonably satisfying, although a smaller number would actually seek another term of office. Most stewards could be classified as militant, if militancy is defined as a belief in workers' rights to take industrial action in an attempt to improve working conditions or protect fellow members. A high level of community involvement is evidenced, and this extends not only to membership of community organisations but a willingness

to attend meetings and accept office. It thus could be argued that for these unionists stewardship is an extension to the workplace of their community involvement.

Role classification of shop stewards

Orientation to unionism refers to the degree to which stewards see themselves as part of the wider trade union movement and their belief in the principles of unity and collective action. The term leadership relates to the degree to which stewards are prepared to take action independent of the membership. Based on the scores gained on the orientation to unionism and leadership scales, shop stewards were able to be placed into one of four role types.[11] The distribution of SECV stewards in terms of the four types is given in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Role Classification of Latrobe Valley Shop Stewards

Role Type	N	%
Delegate	55	27.2
Workgroup Leader	44	21.8
Committed Delegate	48	23.8
Leader	55	27.2
Total	202	100.0

Delegates and leaders accounted for over half of all shop stewards surveyed. In contrast to the studies of Batstone *et al.* and Marchington and Armstrong, the remaining two role types, the workgroup leader and the committed delegate, also accounted for a significant number of stewards. As a consequence, in this study more attention will be given to understanding how workgroup leaders and committed delegates behave in the workplace. In the Batstone *et al.* (1977) study the small number of stewards who fell into the cowboy or nascent leader role meant that the focus could legitimately be on leaders and populists. The study argued, however, that the concentration of populists and leaders need not be typical of all workplaces. Marchington and Armstrong (1983) found some 45 per cent of stewards in their sample fell into the leader category, although this was partly due to the methods of assessing stewards which led to 58 per cent being classified as representatives and some 69 per cent being classified as high on orientation to unionism, and also because there was an abnormally high number of senior stewards in the sample.

From the regression analysis presented in Chapter 3 three factors were found to be important determinants of orientation to unionism and/or leadership style.[12] Given the statistical significance of these factors, it is possible to tentatively predict the role a particular steward would adopt.[13] The two 'extreme' types are the delegate and the leader steward. Delegates tended to be relatively inexperienced, belong to a union without a local full-time official and not be subjected to regular re-election. For these stewards, stewardship is restricted to the taking up of an issue that the members feel is important. There is little attempt on the part of the delegates to actively encourage and educate their members. These stewards were more likely to take on stewardship out of a general interest in matters affecting workers or due to there being no other member willing to accept the responsibility. More than half of the delegates found stewardship satisfying, although the majority of delegates would not actively seek another term as a shop steward.

In contrast, leader stewards were likely to have served as stewards for a number of years, belong to a union that has a local full-time official and be subject to re-election on a regular basis. To the leader stewards, stewardship tends to be a vocation with the focus on the needs of the wider membership. They will actively seek to promote unionism and will raise issues and involve members when they consider it is necessary. In doing so they are more likely to be perceived as militant and to experience opposition from management than will delegates. These stewards also took on stewardship out of a general interest in matters affecting workers, although a commitment to union principles and a dissatisfaction with the way matters had been handled in the past were also important factors. The vast majority of leaders were satisfied with their position as steward and a majority would actively seek another term.

The two remaining steward types are the workgroup leader and the committed delegate. Workgroup leaders were likely to be inexperienced stewards, but belong to unions that have a local full-time official and be subject to regular re-election. In many ways they are similar to the leader steward. For example, the major reasons for standing as a shop steward were general interest, union principles and dissatisfaction with the way matters had been handled in the past. One major difference was that a significant number of workgroup leaders took on stewardship due to pressure from co-workers. Two-thirds of the workgroup leaders were satisfied in the role of steward although slightly less would actively seek another term as steward.

The committed delegate is the most difficult steward type to characterise. Such stewards are likely to have served as a steward for a

number of years. This tends to reinforce their orientation to the wider union movement. They do not face regular re-election for their position and they tend to belong to a union with a full-time official residing in the Latrobe Valley. In part, this explains their willingness to adopt a delegate type role. For these stewards, their major function is to provide a link between the full-time union officials and the workers on the shop-floor. The committed delegate primarily took on stewardship out of an interest in matters affecting workers or a belief in union principles. Two-thirds of these stewards gained satisfaction from their position as steward and half would actively seek another term.

If length of stewardship is an important determinant of stewards' role definition, does the age profile of stewards vary between the four role types?[14] Batstone *et al.* argued that, with the exception of leaders and populists, the other role classifications were transient, made up of the younger and less experienced stewards, and that cowboys and nascent leaders 'tend to continue as stewards for relatively short periods of time' (1977:35). Marchington and Armstrong rejected the notion that some roles may be transient and suggested, with respect to the workgroup leader, that 'they may have operated in a similar way for a considerable period of time' (1983:43). With respect to cautious supporters, Marchington and Armstrong concluded:

> The young inexperienced steward who was being 'sponsored' and 'brought on' by his more senior colleagues—and particularly convenors—seemed to fit in this section . . . but there were other stewards as well who did not fit the leader mould despite having a high orientation to unionism. Similarly, they were not young and inexperienced . . . (1983:44)

The results of this study would tend to support Marchington and Armstrong. In the under-30 years age group there is an even spread between the four types. In contrast, in the over-50 years age group the committed delegates and leader stewards accounted for the highest percentage of stewards. From these findings the only discernible trend is that those steward types based on a high orientation to unionism (committed delegate and leader) tend to be older. Similar, although statistically significant, results were obtained from the regression analysis where length of stewardship proved a significant determinant of orientation to unionism. From these results it is clear that committed delegates are not inexperienced and that committed delegates and workgroup leaders are similar in age composition to delegates and leaders. The suggestion that these types are transient must, therefore, be rejected.

Of considerable importance in understanding the behaviour of

Latrobe Valley stewards is the finding that the type of union and place of work are not significant determinants of role definition. Batstone *et al.* (1977) found that populists were the major steward type in the staff union and also the major (although much less so) type in the shop-floor union. Nicholson, Ursell and Blyton suggested that 'attitudinally, the white-collar stewards are more similar to blue-collar stewards than to their own members' (1980:238). Similarly, Marchington and Armstrong (1982) concluded, with respect to the stewards' role, that there existed little difference between blue- and white-collar stewards. Further, they argued that 'it cannot be taken for granted that white-collar stewards will be less committed to union principles and the JSSC, or to leadership strategy, than their blue-collar counterparts' (1983:39). The findings of this research would tend to support the conclusions of Nicholson *et al.*, and Marchington and Armstrong. Stewards in both the white- and blue-collar unions are relatively evenly spread over the four role types although delegates are more likely to come from white-collar unions and leader type stewards to come from blue-collar unions. This distribution reflects the emphasis the blue-collar unions place on leadership activities (in particular, the AMWU) and the restricted role placed on stewards of some white-collar unions (for example, the APEA).

A breakdown by place of work also indicated little difference between stewards from the three production centres in terms of their role definition, although considerably more Yallourn stewards had adopted a leadership role. This reflects the traditions that have built up at Yallourn and the presence of a strong and stable shop-floor organisation.

From the regression analysis and the above discussion, it is clear that the adoption of a particular role is unrelated to the age of the steward, to the type of union the steward belongs to or to the place of work. These results are important for three reasons. First, the finding that the four role types are unrelated to the age of stewards would suggest that the role definition is of a more permanent nature than the earlier research of Batstone *et al.* would suggest. Second, type of union cannot be used as a *de facto* measure of role definition. That is, behaviour explained by the adoption of a particular role cannot necessarily be attributed to the different policies and practices of white-collar and blue-collar unions. Third, as there is a relatively even representation of steward types at each of the production centres variations in role definition cannot be attributed to workplace traditions, technology and the strength of shop-floor organisations.

Conclusion

Comparisons made with the results of a number of Australian and UK studies tend to suggest that Latrobe Valley stewards are not unique in terms of their characteristics and attitudes. This supports the view that it is possible to generalise from this research. However, significant differences in the unionists' profile were found when broken down by the type of union the stewards belonged to and their place of employment.

On the basis of the findings of this chapter, three general arguments can be advanced. First, that as stewards were spread relatively evenly between the four role types, attention will also need to be given to the workgroup leader and the committed delegate. Second, differences in the characteristics of stewards could, at least in part, be ascertained from the type of union the stewards belong to and their place of work. Any analysis of steward behaviour must therefore accommodate this finding. Third, the type of union the stewards belong to and their place of work did not prove significant determinants of role type and hence confirm the necessity to consider these aspects separately in subsequent analysis. So, in examining the actual behaviour of stewards within the workplace, it is necessary to disaggregate the data by stewards' role type, the type of union they belong to and their place of work. Observed differences in steward behaviour between the various role types will provide some indication of the influence of leadership style and union orientation. As leadership style incorporates a strategic approach to stewardship, this analysis will also suggest the level of influence on steward behaviour of a combination of a variety of structural factors.

The impact of these factors can be isolated, to some degree, by a consideration of union type and place of work. In particular, the type of union the steward belongs to will provide a measure of the impact on steward behaviour of union rules and regulations, prescribed roles for stewards and the leadership style of full-time union officials. Also, by analysing steward behaviour by place of work, the impact of management style and ideology, prevailing customs and practices and the nature of technology can, at least in part, be ascertained.

5 The initiation and processing of issues

Shop stewards in the Latrobe Valley perform a range of duties in connection with their stewardship. Recruitment of members, monitoring work practices, handling members' complaints and providing a link between the membership and the union are duties that most shop stewards become involved in on a day-to-day basis. A number of Australian studies have shown that the duties undertaken by stewards are considerably broader than these formal duties. Few of these studies have, however, extended the research to a consideration of how issues arise at the workplace and the ways in which stewards process such issues.

This chapter commences with a consideration of how issues are initiated and the likelihood of stewards referring such issues to others for processing. If stewards decide to handle the issue themselves then a variety of means are at their disposal: joint consultation, negotiations with management and the use of procedure. Presumably stewards carry out these activities in the interests of their members. The chapter concludes by examining this proposition.

Initiation and referral of issues

Any examination of the extent to which shop stewards have been involved in processing issues through joint consultation, negotiations and procedure requires an understanding of how the issues arose and the likelihood of stewards referring such issues to their more senior colleagues.

Initiation of issues

Stewards were asked to assess the source of issues that arise at the workplace. As expected, the membership was ranked the highest source

with fellow stewards and management also being substantial sources. Contrary to public opinion, union officials were not perceived to be important initiators of issues. The initiation of issues by stewards (both senior stewards and stewards) deserves further examination. It may well be that these stewards are defining and articulating the issues of concern to their constituents, or they could be pursuing the wider agenda of the union. These aspects will be considered in Chapter 7. Nearly twice as many blue-collar stewards saw the steward as an important source of issues when compared to their white-collar counterparts. This illustrates the key role some blue-collar unions have given to their shop stewards. For example, the AMWU makes it clear that their stewards should adopt a leadership role in terms of raising issues, making decisions and negotiating with management (AMWU 1980).

Leaders and workgroup leaders perceived stewards and senior stewards, union officials and management as more important initiators of industrial issues than did delegates and committed delegates.[1] Delegates perceived the membership as the more frequent source of issues. These perceptions are detailed in Table 5.1. In many respects these results are to be expected given the definition of role type, but two important differences stand out. First, delegate type stewards are more likely to perceive issues arising from their members, stewards or management. That is, for these stewards issues are initiated by the direct participants in industrial relations at the workplace rather than those who are seen to be external to the workgroup. Second, the low figure for the workgroup leader with respect to membership-initiated issues would question whether this group of stewards are as responsive to the needs of their membership as was previously suggested.

Table 5.1 Initiation of Industrial Issues by Role Type

Source	Delegate		Workgroup Leader		Committed Delegate		Leader	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Members	29	75.0	21	55.2	27	62.8	27	69.3
Senior stewards	4	8.9	9	32.1	7	21.3	10	31.3
Stewards	11	27.6	17	48.5	12	29.3	16	48.5
Union officials	4	8.4	6	19.4	5	13.1	7	22.6
Management	14	29.1	14	41.2	9	23.1	15	42.8

From these results it is apparent that leader stewards process issues arising from a number of sources while delegates primarily process issues arising from the membership and do not see senior stewards or full-time union officials as an important source of issues. This finding

illustrates the limited involvement these stewards tend to have with their union or their colleagues. Their focus of attention is primarily on the demands of their constituents; it is clear that many important issues, which involve more than the stewards' immediate workgroup, could go unprocessed.

Referral of issues

Many issues, such as pay inquiries, local grievances and matters pertaining to interpretation of awards or SECV regulations, are handled by the stewards. Issues of major importance may be referred to more senior stewards or full-time officials. To ascertain whether stewards were likely to refer issues to others, they were asked how they would handle issues such as 'something out of the ordinary', 'important issues', 'something involving SEC-wide principles', 'something involving procedures' or 'issues you could not win'. Only two of these matters—'important issues' and 'something involving SEC-wide principles'—would be frequently referred to 'others' by the majority of stewards (71 per cent and 70 per cent respectively). Interestingly, over one-third of the stewards indicated they would be unlikely to refer an issue that they felt they would not win. This may indicate that these stewards, after making such a judgement, would then proceed to squash or modify the issue rather than pass it on to someone else.

Loy Yang stewards were more likely to refer issues to 'others', although they tended to handle 'extraordinary' issues themselves. This reflects the situation to be found in a new works area incorporating the latest in technology. Most issues that arise are 'extraordinary' at least initially, and in many cases other stewards or full-time union officials are not familiar with the complexities of the case. Stewards in these circumstances learn to process the issue themselves. This was particularly the case with the referral of issues to full-time officials. Loy Yang stewards substantially differed from other stewards in that they stated the major problem with working with full-time officials was their unfamiliarity and the lack of understanding of the issues relating to Loy Yang.

It would be expected that delegates would be more likely to refer issues to more senior stewards, local branch officials or full-time union officials than would leaders. This was not the case. As Table 5.2 shows, on four of the five issues considered leader stewards were more likely to refer issues to 'others' than were their delegate counterparts. This finding is in direct contrast to Batstone *et al.* (1977:59) who found 'in general terms, populist stewards indicate a greater readiness to seek

help in the handling of issues than do leaders'. Subsequent discussions with shop stewards provided one explanation. AMWU stewards, of whom nearly three-quarters were leaders, suggested their role was to win issues and that referral of issues to 'others' was part of their strategy (AMWU Stewards' Meeting, Morwell, 25 October 1985). Further, they contended that as their orientation was towards the wider union movement rather than their particular membership, it was important to ensure uniformity in approach and outcome. Thus, as issues arise that bring into conflict stewards' leadership style and their orientation to unionism, it is likely that the interests of the central union will ultimately prevail.

Table 5.2 Referral of Issues to Senior Stewards, Branch Officials and Full-Time Officials by Role Type

Issue	Delegate		Workgroup Leader		Committed Delegate		Leader	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Something out of the ordinary	21	38.9	17	40.5	23	48.9	28	53.8
Important issues	36	65.4	34	77.3	34	72.1	37	69.8
Something involving SEC-wide principles	37	71.2	33	80.5	26	55.3	40	75.5
Something involving procedures	17	30.9	19	45.2	12	25.5	18	34.6
Something I could not win	23	42.6	21	52.5	21	44.6	21	40.4

Yet even where a leader type steward may have a low commitment to unionism the results tend to be the same. For example, with the exception of 'something out of the ordinary', the workgroup leader was the steward type most likely to refer issues to others. That is, the workgroup leaders' strategic approach to leadership overshadows their low orientation to unionism in the hope of achieving their members' goals. Leader stewards were also less likely to refer issues they could not win to others. In these cases they are able to articulate to their members the futility of pursuing such issues and thus cause the issue to be squashed or substantially modified.

Processing issues

Stewards within the SECV undertake a wide range of activities. Possibly the most important of such activities are the processing of

issues via joint consultation, negotiations with management, and procedure. The form and structure of such processes have been clearly articulated by others (Dufty and Fells 1989:184–93). This section will focus on the extent of such practices within the SECV and the value stewards place on such practices. In each of these activities stewards may involve members, fellow shop stewards or full-time officials of their union.

Joint consultation

A substantial majority of SECV stewards have been involved in joint consultation with management (79 per cent). In this context, joint consultation refers to a range of managerial practices that allow for steward and worker involvement in the decision making process. It is viewed as distinct from negotiations in that the major objective is to resolve problems rather than to win a particular claim or concession. This figure confirms the trend towards more consultation within the SECV and is indicative of the widespread nature of the working party concept.[2] Blue-collar stewards were slightly more likely to be involved in joint consultation, as were stewards from Yallourn and Loy Yang. This represents, in part, the emphasis by the SECV management in trying to resolve problems affecting blue-collar employees at these centres by the use of the working party concept. Workgroup leaders and committed delegates had considerably higher participation in joint consultation than had delegates. Essentially it appears that a strategic approach to leadership or a wider union orientation will influence stewards' decision of whether to participate in such activities.

It is important to recognise that this formal type of consultation does not necessarily reflect the level of day-to-day consultation that takes place between stewards and line managers. Some 16 per cent of stewards claimed that management always consulted them, 61 per cent of stewards acknowledged that consultation occurred occasionally, while 23 per cent of stewards reported that they were rarely, if ever, consulted on matters affecting their members. Considerably more blue-collar than white-collar stewards reported that they were always consulted on important issues. Equally, Loy Yang stewards felt they were less likely to be consulted on issues affecting their members.

Leaders were significantly more likely to be consulted by management on the introduction of policies affecting members than were delegates (50 per cent and 27 per cent respectively). This finding provides some support to the claim by Batstone *et al.* that 'managers' attempts to achieve their primary goals lead them to close relations

with those who can have an important impact upon their success' (1977:177). Interestingly, nearly a quarter of committed delegates reported that they were always consulted by management on matters that affected their membership.

In attempting to evaluate the effectiveness of both the formal and informal types of consultation, it is necessary to consider two aspects. First, whether the stewards perceive that by discussing issues with management they are actually helping the SECV to solve its problems and, second, where they are involved in joint consultation over particular problems whether satisfactory solutions are achieved.

One-third of all stewards felt that they were helping the SECV solve its problems and improve efficiency, with another 35 per cent responding that this was sometimes the case. The remaining stewards felt that their involvement was not relevant in this regard. Loy Yang stewards were more likely to value their contribution to solving SECV problems, which probably reflects the large number of issues and problems confronting stewards in any new work-site. Similar results were obtained when stewards were asked to rate the effectiveness of joint consultation with management. Overall, slightly more than two-thirds of stewards rated joint consultation as effective. The remaining stewards were undecided or negative in their assessment.

In the main, those stewards who saw joint consultation as effective felt that the issue was resolved to the satisfaction of all, that it provided an alternative to disputation, that it allowed a variety of views to be considered and that, overall, management was receptive to the views of the steward. Those stewards who felt that joint consultation was ineffective tended to express views opposite to those above. For example, their reasons included that management were uncommitted and used the process to stall for time and that the final results did not reflect the stewards' input. Interview evidence from stewards with respect to their day-to-day consultations tended to confirm these results. In particular, several stewards were critical of those managers who actually consulted them on issues but then 'went their own way'. These stewards were expressing the belief that consultation places responsibilities on management to incorporate alternative views into the final decision.

Leader stewards saw considerably more value in consultations with management than did their delegate counterparts. Three important trends can be discerned. First, substantially more leader stewards perceived that they were making an important contribution to solving the SECV's problems than did the other steward types. Second, leader stewards were more likely to rate joint consultation arrangements as

effective in solving specific problems than were delegates, workgroup leaders and committed delegates. Third, workgroup leaders and committed delegates were more likely to see their contributions as helping the SECV and to believe joint consultation was effective than were their delegate counterparts. On the basis of these findings it would appear that both leadership style and orientation to unionism are positive explanations of stewards' perceptions of the value of joint consultation. This finding is to be expected since a major expectation of the membership, as perceived by these steward types, was for stewards to solve problems. It would thus seem that these stewards will use consultations with management to achieve these objectives.

Negotiations with management

A more traditional way to resolve problems at the workplace is for stewards to enter into negotiations with management. Table 5.3 provides details of Latrobe Valley shop stewards' involvement in

Table 5.3 Issues Negotiated with Management

Issue	Never %	Once or twice %	Often %
Wages			
Wage rates (N=199)	59.3	23.1	17.6
Pay problems/classifications (N=203)	23.2	38.4	38.4
Allowances (N=201)	37.3	39.3	23.4
Working Conditions			
General working conditions (N=203)	16.7	37.4	45.8
Health and safety (N=200)	22.5	38.0	39.5
Shift work (N=203)	49.3	21.7	29.1
Hours of Work			
Standard hours of work (N=199)	71.9	21.1	7.0
Overtime (N=204)	35.8	34.3	29.9
Holidays (N=197)	71.1	18.3	10.7
Employment Issues			
Demarcation (N=202)	46.0	38.1	15.8
Discipline (N=204)	37.3	43.1	19.6
Redundancy (N=201)	77.6	14.9	7.5
Victimisation (N=203)	62.6	30.0	7.4
Apprenticeships (N=201)	73.1	18.4	8.5
Production queries (N=201)	76.1	16.4	7.5
New technology (N=203)	49.3	33.0	17.7
Staffing (N=202)	22.8	31.2	46.0
Workers' compensation (N=201)	64.2	23.9	11.9
Rosters (N=203)	48.8	19.2	32.0

negotiations with management over a range of issues. The most frequently negotiated issues are pay problems and classifications, allowances, general working conditions, health and safety, shift work, overtime, discipline, staffing and rosters. In all these cases more than half of the stewards had negotiated these issues, at least once, with management. With two exceptions, these issues are collective matters, relating to the membership in general. These findings are contrary to the conventional wisdom that in a highly centralised arbitral system, shop stewards would only handle individual grievances and minor administrative duties. Issues such as victimisation and to a lesser extent discipline were not the major topics of negotiations between Latrobe Valley stewards and SECV management.[3] This is in contrast to the research of Charleston (1977), who found stewards were only likely to negotiate over matters of discipline of an individual nature.

The findings of the present study indicate that Latrobe Valley shop stewards' involvement in industrial relations is very similar to the traditional role of the shop steward in the UK. Table 5.4 compares the extent of Latrobe Valley stewards' involvement in collective negotiations with the findings of McCarthy and Parker (1968:83). Although a degree of care has to be taken in making comparisons,[4] the result does illustrate that Latrobe Valley stewards do engage in collective negotiations at a similar level to their UK counterparts. Although Table 5.4 highlights the similarities between UK and SECV stewards with respect to their range of bargaining, important qualitative differences may be concealed. For example, although a similar percentage of stewards claimed they had been involved in bargaining over wages (wage rates, pay problems and allowances) it is likely that SECV stewards' wage bargaining has been confined to some over-award and special payments and matters relating to pay problems.

Table 5.4 Comparison between Latrobe Valley and UK Stewards on Frequency of Bargaining

Issue	Latrobe Valley Stewards %	UK Stewards %
Wages	60.1	56.0
Working conditions	70.5	73.0
Hours of work	40.4	49.0
Employment issues	44.2	43.0

Blue-collar stewards were significantly more involved in negotiations with management than were their white-collar counterparts. The

most substantial variations occurred in negotiations over working conditions, health and safety, shift work, demarcations, discipline, victimisation,[5] workers' compensation and rosters. However, white-collar stewards were more likely to have negotiated more frequently over apprenticeships. Whilst these stewards do not become involved in the technical or practical education of apprentices they do enter discussions about the number of apprentices they have managerial responsibility for. This is particularly the case for MOA stewards who represent supervisors.

Significant variations also occurred in the frequency of negotiations when stewards were classified by place of work. The three issues where significant differences between workplaces were evident included negotiations over working conditions, health and safety, and employment of apprentices. Working conditions and health and safety issues were of less concern to stewards from Loy Yang, probably due to the newness of the plant and rigorous attention given to health and safety issues during its construction. The issue of apprenticeships is more likely to be dealt with by Yallourn stewards as the apprenticeship training school is located at the Yallourn production centre. In general, Loy Yang stewards had not negotiated with management as frequently as had their Morwell and Yallourn counterparts. Once again this is to be expected as Loy Yang stewards have not served as long as Morwell and Yallourn stewards (see Chapter 4). On matters relating to new technology, however, considerably more Loy Yang stewards had negotiated with management, indicating the technologically advanced state of the Loy Yang complex.

Table 5.5 shows the percentage of each steward type that has, at least on one occasion, negotiated with management over various issues. On thirteen of these issues the leader category had the highest number of stewards who had negotiated with management, the workgroup leader category had five issues and the remaining issue was dominated by committed delegates. The variation between role types was statistically significant on thirteen of the nineteen issues considered.

It is not unexpected that leader type stewards are more likely to negotiate a range of issues with management, but it is doubtful whether these stewards, with their strong orientation to unionism and strength of leadership, will achieve superior conditions for their own constituents. Certainly, on individual issues such as discipline and victimisation, these stewards have been able to make considerable gains for their members. On issues that have wider ramifications these stewards would tend to ensure that all members of their union gained the fruits of their

Table 5.5 Issues Negotiated with Management by Role Type

Issue	Delegate %	Workgroup Leader %	Committed Delegate %	Leader %
Wages				
Wage rates (N=192)	26.9	47.7	32.6	56.0
Pay problems/classification (N=196)	63.0	84.1	74.5	90.2
Allowances (N=194)	52.8	70.5	53.2	74.0
Working Conditions				
General working conditions (N=196)	72.7	93.2	83.0	90.0
Health and safety (N=193)	66.0	84.1	80.4	84.0
Shift work (N=196)	33.3	52.3	59.6	60.8
Hours of Work				
Standard hours of work (N=192)	26.9	31.8	19.1	34.7
Overtime (N=197)	50.0	70.5	63.8	75.0
Holidays (N=190)	23.5	29.5	25.5	37.5
Employment Issues				
Demarcation (N=195)	48.1	59.1	51.1	62.0
Discipline (N=197)	47.3	70.5	61.7	76.5
Redundancy (N=194)	14.8	27.9	21.3	28.0
Victimisation (N=196)	33.3	34.1	25.5	56.9
Apprenticeships (N=194)	9.4	27.9	31.9	41.2
Production queries (N=194)	18.5	34.1	19.1	26.5
New technology (N=196)	46.3	56.8	51.1	54.9
Staffing (N=195)	63.3	77.3	87.2	85.7
Workers' compensation (N=194)	22.2	38,6	27.7	55.1
Rosters (N=196)	38.9	63.6	48.9	58.8

labour. This is in direct contrast to the workgroup leaders, who pursue the sectional interests of their members. It is not surprising, therefore, that the issues that were dominated by workgroup leaders were general working conditions, health and safety, production queries, rosters and matters relating to the introduction of new technology. These areas have the potential to maximise sectional gains. Any actions to achieve these gains will be legitimised if the membership also feels strongly about the issue. In these circumstances SECV Management have tended ultimately to concede the claim. The high percentage of committed delegates who have negotiated with management over staffing issues is more difficult to explain. One possible explanation is that this result reflects the higher percentage of committed delegates that belong to the three unions that, in 1984 and 1985, were in dispute with the SECV

over staffing issues. The closure of the Yallourn C Power Station and the dispute over staffing at the Loy Yang Power Station involved the MOA, FEDFA and AIMPE, whilst the changes in the transport of coal at the Yallourn open cut mine involved the FEDFA.[6] The negotiations which subsequently followed these disputes mainly involved local shop stewards.

Use of procedures

Once issues arise at the workplace stewards are faced with a variety of means of resolving them. Direct negotiations with management are a common method of reaching agreement. For many issues these negotiations may take place within the confines of a formal disputes procedure. Yet, a common perception held of shop stewards in the Latrobe Valley is that they are more willing to strike or engage in other forms of industrial action in order to resolve an issue, than to work through procedures (Darroch and Armstrong 1977). This view has two underlying assumptions. First, it assumes that the various forms of industrial action are direct substitutes for procedures, but as Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel (1977:244) have pointed out, 'surveys have suggested that strikes and resort to procedural means are not simple alternatives'. Further, as Marsh (1965:130) suggested, the use of strikes may be designed to accelerate the procedural machinery. Second, this view assumes that there are formal procedures in existence, that shop stewards are aware of such procedures and that the steward has control over the membership to the extent that it will adopt such procedures. This latter assumption necessarily precedes the strategy implications of the use of procedures and must be considered prior to any examination of industrial action. This section focuses on the existence of procedures, whether they are followed and the problems of adhering to such procedures.

Some 58 per cent of stewards claimed there existed a procedure for settling disputes that arise at the local level. Thus, for slightly less than half of the Latrobe Valley stewards procedures are not an alternative to some form of industrial action, negotiation or consultation, nor could strike action be viewed as a mechanism to speed up the formal procedures. There were more likely to be procedures in those workplaces involving blue-collar unions and procedures were more prevalent at the better established Yallourn and Morwell production centres. Slightly more than half of these stewards (53 per cent) claimed that the procedures were a result of negotiations, whilst the remaining stewards suggested the procedures were a result of custom and practice

(16 per cent), SECV regulations (11 per cent), union policy (11 per cent), arbitrated decisions (5 per cent) and other (4 per cent). The negotiated procedures were usually the result of workplace interaction between the supervisor or line manager and the stewards. Rarely did such procedures extend beyond the immediate workplace.[7]

As expected, Loy Yang stewards were significantly lower on procedures that arose out of custom and practice. Stewards who meet frequently with other stewards from their own union reported that these procedures are more likely to be negotiated, whilst those stewards who did not meet regularly indicated that these procedures are more likely to arise out of custom and practice. This, in effect, demonstrates the impact of the collective consciousness of stewards.

If a procedure existed and was known to the stewards, did they follow it? Nearly three-quarters of all stewards claimed they usually followed procedures and less than 2 per cent of stewards indicated they rarely if ever followed procedures. This finding is consistent with the claim of Hyman (1972:53–4) that in most cases resort to procedures provides unions with more concrete results. Considerably more white-collar stewards were likely to follow procedure than their blue-collar counterparts, and this tends to confirm the finding of Batstone *et al.* (1977:245) that resort to procedure is much greater on the staff side.

The type of union the steward belongs to is not the only determinant of a steward's commitment to procedures. Stewards were also more likely to follow procedures that arose out of custom and practice (90 per cent) and negotiation (82 per cent) than those procedures that arose from SECV regulation (67 per cent), union policy (54 per cent) and arbitration (33 per cent). Clearly, procedures are more likely to be used if they are negotiated between stewards and management. In these cases the aspirations and concerns of the participants are taken into account and the final product will recognise the norms of the workplace.

Leaders, workgroup leaders and committed delegates were all more likely to follow procedure than were delegates. This result may be due in part to the small number of delegates who were aware of the existence of a procedure. A more important explanation, in terms of the objectives of this study, is the close relationship many delegates, often white-collar stewards, have with management. Many disputes are solved at an informal level without resort to procedures or industrial action. One white-collar steward claimed in an interview that 'if a problem arises I usually have enough contacts to rectify the issue'. Another explanation is that leaders are more likely to have negotiated the procedure than are their delegate counterparts (52 per cent compared to

30 per cent). In these cases stewards feel some moral obligation to exhaust the procedure prior to embarking on industrial action. A fourth explanation is that if the membership is sceptical of such procedures delegates, in particular, would tend to defer to the membership and, as a consequence, would not adopt such a process.

A further reason why stewards by-pass procedure is that, in the past, they have experienced difficulty or problems with the procedure. Only 16 per cent of stewards who were aware of a disputes procedure saw problems with it, although more than five times the number of blue-collar stewards had complaints compared to their white-collar counterparts. Leader stewards were only marginally more likely to have complaints about procedures than the other three steward types. The more frequent complaints involved procedures that arose out of SECV regulations (33 per cent), union policy (31 per cent) and arbitrated decisions (20 per cent). The smallest number of complaints involved procedures that arose out of negotiations (15 per cent) and custom and practice (5 per cent). This is consistent with the earlier finding that a strong relationship existed between how the procedure was developed and whether a steward would follow such a procedure.

The major complaint for all steward types was that the procedure was slow and cumbersome. Several stewards indicated during interviews that it was often necessary to institute some industrial action, usually in the form of work bans, to speed up the process. This lends support to the comments of Marsh (1965:130) referred to earlier in this section. One problem alluded to by blue-collar and leader stewards was the opposition by supervisors to the procedure. It was claimed some supervisors could make the procedure virtually unworkable. For example, one AMWU leader steward claimed 'when dealing with bosses, whether they are right or wrong they all cover for each other to put you off!' Where problems with procedures were expressed in terms of supervisor opposition, these procedures did not arise from either custom and practice or union policy. The adherence to custom and practice is not unexpected as the supervisor is usually appointed from the workgroup and accepts the customs and practices that have developed as the most appropriate way to proceed. The satisfaction with procedures arising out of union policy is partially explained in terms of the supervisors' own membership of a union (usually the MOA). The difficult position of the supervisors, who are neither part of management nor of the workgroup, means they are unlikely to deliberately alienate themselves from their own union by opposing union-developed procedures.

It is clear from this research that where a procedure exists, stewards are likely to exhaust the procedure before resorting to industrial action. Where problems exist with the functioning of the procedure—slow, cumbersome, supervisor opposition—it is likely that some form of industrial action will be considered. Leader stewards are more likely to exhaust procedures before supporting industrial action. This finding contradicts the popular image of these stewards as irresponsible and 'strike happy'. It should be emphasised that whilst the majority of stewards appear to accept and follow procedure, over 40 per cent normally operate outside a procedural framework.

Stewards' range of arguments to management and members

This section has illustrated that stewards have considerable contact with management personnel and process a wide range of issues via consultation, negotiation and procedure. On the whole, leader stewards were found to be more likely to undertake such activities than were other steward types. Yet in processing issues via these mechanisms it became clear, from discussions with stewards, that a range of arguments can be used in each context. What are the major arguments used by stewards in their dealings with management, and do differences between steward types extend to the type of arguments stewards utilise? Stewards must adopt a range of strategies to sell 'deals' to their members. Failure to do so will ultimately lead to the breakdown of these processes.

The most frequent arguments used by stewards in discussions with management included referring to members' demands (40 per cent of stewards claimed they always used this argument), the current award or agreement (29 per cent), and the desired effect of the issue (20 per cent). The likely outcomes, technical problems and union principles were not major or frequently used arguments. Subsequent interview evidence confirmed this finding. In discussing issues with management, stewards would refer management to the award or local agreements, in the first instance. If this was inappropriate, for example in negotiations for a new claim, the steward would point out what the members wanted whilst attempting to justify the claim, both in terms of productivity and industrial relations, by suggesting the desirable effects for management.

Underlying these arguments will be questions of equity, precedence, and custom and practice.[8] These arguments generally tend to provide the rationale for members and stewards to raise the matter in the first

instance. Stewards in the Latrobe Valley nevertheless realise that on their own these general issues provide less than sufficient arguments.

Blue-collar stewards were more likely to refer to union principles and technical issues than were their white-collar counterparts. This is to be expected given the long-standing traditions of unionism at the shop-floor level and the nature of the technology employed in the SECV. A similar picture emerged when stewards were classified by place of employment. Yallourn stewards were more likely to refer to union principles and, to a lesser degree, to the desired effect and technical issues than were Morwell and Loy Yang stewards. Loy Yang stewards were, however, more likely to use member demands as a key argument than were their colleagues elsewhere. These findings tend to support results reported earlier in this book concerning the traditions of strong union orientation at Yallourn and the development of a newly emerging, self-contained, member-driven centre at Loy Yang.

Leaders in discussions with management tended to use a variety of arguments, unlike delegates who restricted their range of arguments. The most significant difference related to the use of union principles. Whereas a substantial number of leaders would always or frequently make use of union principles this was only the case for a minority of the other steward types. This clearly enhances the leadership role of these stewards as it reduces management's ability to relate the issue back to sections of the work force. Workgroup leaders were equally likely to use a range of arguments and were more likely to refer to the desired effect and likely outcomes than were the other steward types.

It appears therefore that a key factor in the adoption of a range of arguments is the type of leadership displayed by the steward. Where stewards act as leaders (leaders and workgroup leaders) they will probably make reference to awards/agreements, union principles, members' demands and the desired effect of the issue. Delegate type stewards, on the other hand, tend to restrict their arguments to awards/agreements and members' demands. Given the similarities between committed delegates and delegates, it appears that orientation to unionism seems to have little influence on the arguments adopted, even, surprisingly, on the use of union principles.

Of equal importance to issue processing is how stewards react to the pressures imposed on them by the members, and what forms of arguments they present to counter these pressures and perhaps change member expectations. Stewards reported a variety of methods they would adopt to gain the support of their members. The major forms included providing relevant information (47 per cent), presenting a

sound and logical argument (15 per cent), as well as pointing out the benefits of their proposed course of action (8 per cent) and the consequences of not accepting their view (7 per cent). It should be noted that the provision of information may be subjected to conscious or unconscious screening by the steward. As one APEA shop steward stated: 'I present them with all the facts as I know them. This may mean me interpreting management and/or union officials' responses and/or advice'. A small number of stewards would use the threat of resignation if the members did not back them. Some stewards indicated more indirect methods. For example, one FIA steward with only one year's experience indicated his way was to 'shout 'em beers at the pub'. Whilst this may be a more overt form of influence it is clear that a range of social activities can be applied by stewards in an attempt to mobilise member support.

White-collar stewards were more likely to use information as their major form of influence. Although the use of information is a key method of influence, leader stewards were more likely to develop sound arguments and point out the consequences of non-agreement. Delegates were more likely to point out the benefits of adopting their particular view. A substantial percentage of committed delegates, delegates and workgroup leaders reported that they did not attempt to influence their members to gain their support.

In attempting to 'sell a deal' or agree on the most appropriate strategies to pursue to resolve issues, stewards were most likely to present the membership with an assessment of the likely outcome (45 per cent of stewards claimed they always referred to this argument), desired effect of the issue (41 per cent) and the terms of the award or agreement that covered the issue under discussion (32 per cent). Precedence, technical problems and union principles did not assume the same level of importance. That is, the arguments tended to focus on what was possible (under the award or agreement), probable and what were the benefits to members. The major difference between stewards' arguments to members and those to management was that the likely outcome of the issue was the major argument to members whereas the strategy of members' demands was used most frequently to management. That is, stewards would argue to management that they were simply articulating members' demands whilst to members they provided some assessment of the outcome or effect once the issue was resolved. This latter argument serves to mobilise member support which in turn provides the steward with the necessary backing to argue to management that they are only pursuing members' demands.

Blue-collar stewards were less likely to make reference to awards/agreements but were more likely to refer to the desired effect of the issue and the likely outcome than were white-collar stewards. What is probable and desirable is of more importance to blue-collar stewards in presenting their case to members, than the strict 'legal' situation. Yallourn stewards were more likely to refer to awards/agreements, union principles and the desired effect of the issue, whilst, predictably, Loy Yang stewards would not normally refer to precedence.

When discussing issues with members as with management, leaders tended to use a variety of arguments, whereas delegate stewards tended to restrict their arguments to references to awards/agreements, the desired effect and the likely outcomes. Committed delegates used a similar range of arguments to delegates with one exception. Their broad commitment to the principles of unionism meant that they were more likely to use union principles as a key argument. Workgroup leaders, on the other hand, closely resembled leader stewards in their arguments, including the use of union principles. One explanation of this finding is that workgroup leaders, as a strategy, will use those arguments that they believe will achieve some success. Equally, they may be defining union principles in terms of the collective interests of their own particular workgroup.

Leader stewards, by presenting a range of arguments, are able to strengthen their leadership position as this is generally in accord with the expectations the members have of their stewards. It is also in accord with the stewards' own perceptions of their role: 82 per cent of delegates claimed their major role was to follow the wishes of the membership whereas leaders perceived their role jointly in terms of following the wishes of the membership and displaying leadership initiatives.

Steward commitment and responsibility

In the initiation and processing of issues what level of commitment do stewards have and to whom do they feel responsible for their actions? Commitment is a difficult concept to assess and for the purposes of this section the time stewards spend on their stewardship duties was taken as a *de facto* measure.

Time spent on stewardship duties

Shop stewards surveyed spent an average of 5.8 hours per week during work time and 3.8 hours per week during their own time in performing

their duties. Most senior stewards spent considerably more time on union duties and nearly 3 per cent of stewards were effectively full-time stewards.[9] These results were considerably higher than the 0.7 hours and 0.8 hours found by McBeath (1973:119–20) and the 2.3 hours and 3.7 hours found by Charleston (1977:341). Charleston, however, found the hours spent on stewardship duties both on and off the job varied considerably between industries.

The results obtained in this study are similar to the result of research conducted in the UK. For example, Goodman and Whittingham (1969:93) found stewards spent 4.9 hours on their duties during work time and 4.8 hours during their own time; McCarthy and Parker (1968:17) 4 hours and 2 hours respectively with about 1 per cent of the stewards being full-time; Pedler (1973: data supplied by author) 6 hours and 7 hours respectively and Clegg *et al.* (1961:180) 6 hours and 4.5 hours respectively. Partridge (1977:34) also found that stewards spent about 10 hours per week on their duties, usually during working hours. A more recent study by Schuller and Robertson (1983:333), using a diary system, recorded a figure of 2.7 hours spent on stewardship activities during work time. They argued that though this figure is lower than other studies, it probably represents a more accurate picture as stewards were not being asked to estimate the hours spent on their duties. However, the reliance on stewards from only two unions throws into doubt the representativeness of their result.

Substantial differences existed between blue- and white-collar stewards in the Latrobe Valley concerning the time spent on stewardship duties. Nearly half of the blue-collar stewards surveyed spent six or more hours during work time on their duties compared to only 9 per cent of white-collar stewards. A similar pattern emerged in terms of stewardship activities during the stewards' own time. For example, 72 per cent of blue-collar stewards spent two or more hours of their own time on stewardship activities compared to 34 per cent of white-collar stewards. Yallourn stewards were also more likely to spend a higher number of hours during work time on stewardship activities than were stewards from the other centres. Loy Yang stewards were likely to spend more of their own time on activities related to their position. This result primarily reflects the long-standing traditions of trade union organisation at Yallourn. Stewards and management have developed clear understandings over the years as to the rights of stewards to carry out their functions during working hours. Loy Yang, the most recent of the SECV's developments in the Latrobe Valley, with its emphasis on high technology, affords less opportunity for stewards to leave their work stations.

Table 5.6 shows a break-down of average hours spent on stewardship activities by steward type. It is clear from this table that leader stewards spend considerably more time in work time and their own time on their stewardship duties than do delegates. Contrary to expectations, the workgroup leader spent the most time on stewardship duties, averaging over 14 hours per week. This is considerably higher than that spent by leader stewards and partially reflects the commitment this group of stewards has to their membership. It may also illustrate the lack of support given to the workgroup leader by other stewards or full-time union officials. Of this group over 40 per cent spent in excess of 10 hours per week on their stewardship duties. A slightly larger group of workgroup leaders spent less than 5 hours per week on these functions. It appears then that workgroup leaders can be broken into two types. The first type spends only a minimal amount of time on their duties, usually during work time, and only undertakes activities that have some short-term benefit to their constituents. This may include the taking up of an individual grievance, negotiations with management over localised issues, and a range of minor administrative duties for the union. The second type spends considerably more time outside of work, and in addition to the above activities, often undertakes activities that are of a more long-term nature. Involvement in working parties and attendance at local branch meetings are two examples. In these cases the workgroup leaders are fulfilling their leadership ambitions.

Table 5.6 Mean Hours Spent on Stewardship Duties

	Delegate (N=45)	**Workgroup Leader (N=34)**	**Committed Delegate (N=43)**	**Leader (N=42)**
Work time	4.1	8.4	5.6	5.8
Own time	2.7	5.9	2.7	3.9
Total	6.8	14.3	8.3	9.7

Steward responsibility

The initiation and subsequent processing of issues by stewards is presumably in the interests of the membership. Over three-quarters of the stewards felt they were responsible to the membership for their actions with a further 19 per cent nominating their own conscience and 5 per cent their union.[10] Contrary to expectations, no Latrobe Valley stewards indicated that they felt responsibility for their actions to fellow shop stewards either individually or collectively. This provides some indication of the weakness of the local steward organisation in influencing

stewards. This issue will be explored in more detail in Chapter 6. Of equal importance is the finding that nearly one in five stewards felt responsibility to their own conscience. These stewards tended to be older, although not necessarily more experienced in terms of shop steward service, and born overseas. It thus seems that their life experiences lead them to adopt a paternalistic attitude towards their members in the sense that it is their own beliefs and values that guide their actions. Although both blue- and white-collar stewards overwhelmingly felt a responsibility to the membership, there was a significant minority of white-collar stewards (28 per cent) who also felt a responsibility to their own conscience or to their union. Similarly, Yallourn and Loy Yang stewards felt responsible to their members, whereas Morwell stewards, although also feeling responsible to their membership, were more likely to feel responsible to their own conscience. This tends to reflect the influence of white-collar unionism at that centre.

In carrying out their duties all steward types clearly felt that they should be responsible to their members. However, several differences between stewards were discerned. First, less workgroup leaders and committed delegates felt responsibility to their constituents than did delegates or leaders. Second, substantially fewer delegates felt less responsibility to their union than the other stewards and, third, more committed delegates felt they should be responsible only to their own conscience.

These findings indicate important frames of reference for stewards in general and the individual steward types in particular. Clearly all steward types feel responsible to their members for their actions, although this is particularly the case for leaders and delegates. Whilst this may seem contradictory it may well be that leader stewards are referring to the wider union membership whereas the delegate stewards are referring primarily to their immediate constituency. It may also represent the realisation by leader type stewards that without the support of their members their power to lead is severely reduced. Workgroup leaders would, on the other hand, be expected to focus more on their membership and less on the union. That this was not the case is partly due to the fact that, in the absence of an ideological commitment to unionism, these stewards use reference to their own union to justify their leadership activities to their members.

Conclusion

This chapter examined how important issues at the workplace arise and how stewards are likely to process such issues. Stewards were found

to engage in a range of activities in an endeavour to resolve issues. Among these were joint consultation and direct negotiations with management over a range of issues, including matters covered by award provisions. These issues tended to be initiated by the members although stewards themselves and management also frequently raised issues. If the issues raised were extremely important or had wider ramifications than the immediate workgroup, stewards were likely to refer the matter to a more senior steward, local branch official or full-time union official. Latrobe Valley stewards were also likely to process these issues through procedure, if such procedures existed. Finally, in the carrying out of their duties the stewards' focus of responsibility was overwhelmingly to their members, although a significant minority of stewards felt they were only responsible to their own consciences.

These findings challenge the conventional wisdom underpinning the role of the shop steward in Australian industrial relations. It is not possible, at least in the Latrobe Valley, to characterise shop stewards as the passive link between the union and the membership. Further (and again this finding is limited to the Latrobe Valley), the centralised nature of the institutions that set the terms and conditions of employment does not exclude shop stewards from the processes involved in the determination of wages and conditions of work. In the Latrobe Valley a number of the stewards surveyed had negotiated award conditions and had conducted cases and appeared before the Industrial Relations Commission. In processing issues, these stewards were only likely to resort to industrial action once all possible procedures had been exhausted. This would certainly be the case where such procedures had arisen out of negotiations with management.

Major differences between the various steward types exist on how they process issues that arise at the workplace. Leader stewards are more likely to initiate issues and to engage in negotiations with management in an attempt to reach an acceptable solution. In this process they will involve senior stewards, local branch officials and full-time officials of their union if this seems to be the appropriate strategy. When they refer an issue to 'others' they maintain close contact with the proceedings and usually provide some input into the final settlement. For these stewards strike action is usually preceded by the use of the relevant procedures. The ideological role of leader stewards, therefore, needs to be placed into some perspective. In terms of the popular image it is these stewards who are perceived as radical and irresponsible. Yet it is their strategic approach to industrial relations which allows them to see value in referring matters to others or working

through procedures if this is seen as the most appropriate and useful course of action. This is possible due to their strong leadership and the level of member trust they have achieved. Delegates, on the other hand, tend to respond to issues raised by members, are less likely to enter into negotiations with management, and if the issue is referred to 'others' that will tend to mark the end of their involvement. These stewards are also less likely to process issues through procedure. Ultimately, this lack of a strategic approach to stewardship will be reflected in the limited gains made by these stewards.

6 Union organisation at the workplace

There has been little research on formal shop steward organisation in Australia. Studies by Warbuton (1975), and Rimmer and Sutcliffe (1979) outline in some detail the historical formation of shop committees in the railways and the naval dockyards. More contemporary studies, such as those of McBeath (1973) and Charleston (1977), make reference to shop steward co-operation but do not explore this issue in any depth. The importance of shop steward co-operation and organisation has been noted in a number of British studies. For example, Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel (1977) argued that the effectiveness of shop stewards is, to a large degree, dependent upon the co-operation of other stewards. They concluded that 'where they [shop stewards] are united, they invariably achieve their ends' (1977:98). Further support for the importance of steward organisation is provided by Murphy, who concluded that 'the committee becomes a very considerable source of shop steward power' (1981:69). This argument is extended by Brown, who found the more highly integrated the steward body the more likely it was 'to pursue the implicit principles of unity, equity, a good bargaining relationship and the reduction of uncertainty' (1973:145).

The focus of this chapter is on union organisation in the SECV's Latrobe Valley operations. It explores the relationship between stewards at the workplace, both at the formal and informal level, paying particular attention to the interaction between stewards and the level of organised activity both within and between unions. The chapter commences by providing details on shop steward numbers within the SECV and the formal mechanisms that have been established to co-ordinate steward and union activity. A range of mechanisms that allow stewards to meet regularly with other stewards are then outlined and assessed. The value placed by individual shop stewards on their contact with

other shop stewards, and their involvement in the collective body of shop stewards, will in many cases determine the course of action they will take. The steward network can also provide considerable resources to facilitate planned action. These resources include information, interpretation and advice. In some cases the resources could also include support for industrial action. The chapter concludes by examining the level of support provided to stewards by their colleagues and the degree of influence of the steward network on individual stewards.

Union organisation

Twenty of the SECV unions have formally designated shop stewards which, at the time of this research, totalled 346. Table 6.1 shows that the

Table 6.1 Unions and Shop Stewards in the Latrobe Valley SECV Operations, April 1985

Union	Number of Shop Stewards	Estimated Number of Members	Number of Members per Shop Steward
FEDFA	97	2300	24
MOA	106	2100	20
ETU	19	700	37
AMWU	23	1500	65
FIA	16	800	50
APEA	25	300	12
ASE	9	300	33
AIMPE	14	200	14
AWU	6	120	25
FSPU	5	280	56
BLF	6	80	13
TWU	1	50	50
APSA	1	30	30
BWIU	6	56	9
FMWU	4	30	8
VOBS	1	25	25
FLAIEU	2	43	23
OPDUA	2	24	12
PGEU	2	20	10
VBEF	1	22	22
ASCJA	—	12	—
ADSTE	—	10	—
ATWU	—	10	—
VPS	—	10	—
Total	346	9022	26 (Average)

Source: Union documents and interviews with union officials.

ratio of shop stewards to union members varied considerably between these unions, but on average each steward represented some twenty-six members. This finding is somewhat lower than that perceived by the stewards themselves, where the average size of a steward's constituency was reported to be thirty-eight members. This report is consistent with the finding of a Trade Union Training Authority (TUTA) survey that found there existed one job delegate for every forty members (TUTA, 1979–80:4–5). McBeath (1973:120) reported that each steward in his study represented only twenty-three members, a result similar to the average constituency of Latrobe Valley shop stewards when union data is employed. In the main, the difference between actual and perceived constituency size can be attributed to many senior stewards reporting the number of members they felt responsible for (for example, a whole workshop) rather than the size of their own constituency.

In the UK, constituency size varied considerably between 60 (McCarthy and Parker 1968:15) and 327 (Clegg, Killick and Adams 1961:150). Brown, Ebsworth and Terry (1978:141) more recently found a median figure of thirty-nine members to each shop steward. Blue-collar stewards had significantly larger constituencies than their white-collar counterparts. For example, 44 per cent of blue-collar stewards reported responsibility for over forty members in contrast to only 19 per cent of white-collar stewards. Loy Yang stewards reported smaller constituency sizes, with nearly half reporting responsibility for less than twenty members. This result was not unexpected, given the state of the technology employed at Loy Yang and the corresponding smaller workforce.

As with blue-collar stewards, leaders and to a lesser extent committed delegates (forty-five members and thirty-nine members respectively) had larger constituency sizes than that of delegates and workgroup leaders (thirty-four members). Both the leaders and committed delegates have a strong orientation to unionism and this raises the question of the extent to which constituency size affects a steward's orientation. Of course, it may be the case that stewards with this orientation may 'adopt' other workers within the vicinity of their work area if they are not being serviced adequately by their own steward.

Of the twenty-four unions involved in the SECV Latrobe Valley operations, eight have local branches, with FEDFA being broken into three sub-branches: Yallourn, Morwell (including Loy Yang) and 'Staff'. These branches usually meet monthly and the membership of the local branch is dominated by shop stewards employed in the SECV. Although these branches take a wider perspective than the power

industry[1] it is clear that many of the issues discussed relate directly to employment within the SECV. Local branch meetings afford stewards the opportunity to meet with full-time officials, to discuss issues of concern and to receive reports from their central union.

As at April 1985 some fifteen of the SECV unions were affiliated with the Gippsland Trades and Labour Council (GTLC). Notable exceptions were the MOA, AIMPE and the APEA, although the MOA subsequently affiliated in September of that year. The GTLC provides a local focus for unions. It is governed by a council which meets once a month and an executive committee which meets bi-monthly. It is financed through affiliation fees and all positions, at the time of the research, were honorary. The GTLC lost almost half of the affiliated unions during the 1955 split in the labour movement. Hampered by this narrow affiliate base and the consequent shortage of funds, for many years the GTLC was restricted to providing a forum for the SECV maintenance work unions. In recent years there has been a number of reaffiliations[2] and the emergence of a stronger central organisation. The GTLC has moved towards the pre-1955 position of a co-ordination role for inter-union industrial action within the SECV and within the wider Latrobe Valley community. With the broadening of the affiliation base of the GTLC, the vehicle for this co-ordination role was achieved by the formation of the SECV sub-committee. Made up of the SECV shop stewards of affiliated unions, this sub-committee meets monthly to discuss industry specific problems and forwards recommendations to the council of the GTLC on the most appropriate courses of action.

Shop steward organisation

The official attitude of the SECV unions to formal shop steward bodies varies considerably. The AMWU, for example, strongly supports the formation of AMWU shop steward committees and combined union shop committees (AMWU 1980:4), whereas the MOA prefers stewards to work through the local branch and to contact the relevant full-time industrial officer if a problem arises (MOA n.d.).

Intra-union organisation

Regular, although often informal, meetings of shop stewards from the same union occur within the workplace. Some 28 per cent of stewards reported that they frequently attended such meetings whilst another 47 per cent claimed they sometimes attended meetings with stewards

from their own union.[3] Although comparisons with the results of other studies must be made cautiously, this figure seems to be higher than that found by McCarthy and Parker (1968:19) in the UK[4] and, in general, confirms the conclusions drawn by Charleston (1977) in his nation-wide survey. Blue-collar stewards were substantially more likely to meet on a regular basis than were their white-collar counterparts (88 per cent and 55 per cent respectively). This result partly reflects the official attitudes of the unions, namely that blue-collar unions tend to support local steward organisation whereas white-collar unions are more likely to want stewards to work through local branches and consult with their full-time officials.

On the whole, meetings of shop stewards were organised by the stewards themselves. Some 64 per cent of respondents reported stewards initiated these meetings and a further 30 per cent indicated that these meetings were initiated by senior stewards. Only 6 per cent of stewards reported that these meetings were normally initiated by full-time officials. A similar picture emerged for both blue- and white-collar stewards, although considerably more white-collar stewards reported that these meetings were organised by full-time officials than did blue-collar stewards. Conversely, no Loy Yang steward reported that these meetings were organised by a full-time official. This supports the proposition that Loy Yang stewards are more likely to handle extraordinary issues themselves. Meetings were also more likely to be attended frequently if they were organised by the stewards themselves. Where meetings were organised by full-time officials it was likely that the majority of stewards would not attend.[5]

These meetings were rated as fairly to very important by 93 per cent of all stewards. Blue-collar stewards were significantly more likely to perceive intra-union meetings as important, as were their Loy Yang counterparts. Furthermore, all stewards who reported meetings were organised by senior stewards or full-time officials also felt these meetings were important. It may well be that these groups would only call a meeting if the issue warranted such action whereas the stewards themselves may not be as discriminating. Attendance at such meetings, however, remains uncertain.

Leader stewards were more likely to frequently attend meetings of stewards from their own union than were delegates, workgroup leaders and committed delegates. As Table 6.2 shows, the majority of each steward type attended these meetings at least sometimes and, accordingly, the difference between leaders and other steward types is one of degree rather than substance. Nevertheless, it is clear that those

stewards who are committed to the wider aims of unionism or display leadership are substantially more likely to attend steward meetings.

Table 6.2 Attendance at Intra-Union Shop Steward Meetings by Role Type

Attendance	Delegate %	Workgroup Leader %	Committed Delegate %	Leader %
Frequently	22.5	27.3	25.0	36.4
Sometimes	40.0	51.5	50.0	45.5
Rarely	20.0	9.1	22.2	12.1
Never	17.5	12.1	2.8	6.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	40	33	36	33

Leaders and workgroup leaders were also more likely to value such meetings. This clearly relates to the strategic leadership approach these stewards take with respect to their role. The perceived importance of these meetings tended to parallel attendance at such meetings and, once again, it is important to note that the vast majority of each steward type valued meetings with stewards from their own union. One difference between the four steward types was in their perception as to who initiated such meetings. Whilst the majority of all stewards saw the impetus for such meetings as coming from the stewards themselves, leaders were more inclined to perceive senior stewards as the important initiators.

From the foregoing analysis of the responses to the survey, leader type stewards were found to be more likely to attend and value meetings with stewards of their own union than were the other steward types. It should be pointed out that in many cases the local branch meeting will substitute for on-site steward meetings. This is particularly the case with a number of unions, such as the MOA, FEDFA, the AMWU and AIMPE, which hold regular branch meetings. As one steward claimed, the value of branch meetings is that they allow you to 'talk to other shop stewards about their problems on the job'. In many cases, therefore, on-site meetings of stewards from the same union occur only during periods of crisis and only when the issue involves the members of one union and perhaps the one workplace. If these conditions are not met, stewards are more likely to meet on-site but with stewards from a number of unions.

Inter-union organisation

Inter-union steward meetings are of considerable importance in understanding union organisation at the shop-floor.[6] As most work-sites would, in general, have stewards from other unions present, it may even represent the only avenue open for stewards from the smaller unions to meet collectively. Within the SECV some 77 per cent of stewards work in areas where stewards from other unions are present. Of the stewards that work in areas where other union stewards are not present, 50 per cent were MOA stewards working in the SECV's regional administrative headquarters.[7] These stewards would work alongside other MOA stewards and would tend to meet regularly with them.

Of those stewards that worked in areas where stewards from other unions were present only 33 per cent of stewards reported that they attended, at least sometimes, meetings with stewards from other unions. This figure is considerably less than for intra-union steward meetings, but roughly in accord with the findings of McCarthy and Parker (1968) in the UK and Charleston (1977) in Australia.[8] Blue-collar stewards were significantly more likely to attend such meetings than were their white-collar counterparts (42 per cent and 16 per cent respectively). This result reflects the dilemma facing white-collar stewards who occupy supervisory positions. It is difficult for these stewards to meet with other stewards, who are under their authority, to discuss issues that may relate to or impact on their supervisory role.

Loy Yang stewards were significantly more likely to meet with stewards from other unions than were their Yallourn or Morwell counterparts. Some 67 per cent of Loy Yang stewards met, at least sometimes, with other stewards compared to figures of 39 per cent for Yallourn stewards and 17 per cent for Morwell stewards. This result suggests that the potential for combined union activity may be stronger at a new work-site and is consistent with the previous finding that Loy Yang stewards are more likely to handle special problems themselves. The nature of the technology employed at Loy Yang coupled with the demands for special payments for all Loy Yang workers has had the effect of uniting stewards and developing their organisation.[9] The Yallourn and Morwell work centres have a larger number of unions on-site and thus this finding may also reflect this situation.

Once again these meetings were initiated predominantly by the stewards themselves (56 per cent), although senior stewards (25 per cent) were also active in this regard. Only 7 per cent of the stewards surveyed nominated a full-time union official as the initiator of such

meetings whilst 12 per cent of stewards nominated others such as members, management and local branch officials. Considerable differences existed between the perceptions of white- and blue-collar stewards as to who initiated the meetings. Although both white- and blue-collar stewards saw the stewards themselves as the major initiators (50 per cent and 63 per cent respectively), white-collar stewards also saw full-time officials and 'others' as important in this regard. This illustrates that white-collar stewards are more likely to respond to the demands of others than are blue-collar stewards.

A similar trend was also reflected in the responses of stewards when broken down by place of work. Morwell stewards, of whom 44 per cent belong to white-collar unions, also rated full-time officials and 'others' as significant, although still a minority in terms of initiating meetings. At Loy Yang it is more likely that the chairperson of the joint shop stewards' committee will call regular meetings of stewards. Once again, stewards were more likely to attend these meetings frequently if they were initiated by the stewards themselves, and in particular senior stewards or the chairperson of the joint shop stewards' committee.

Inter-union stewards' meetings were rated as fairly to very important by 88 per cent of stewards where such meetings were held. Whilst a little lower than the perceived value of intra-union steward meetings, it does indicate that stewards see value in inter-union collective action. Some 40 per cent of blue-collar stewards rated these meetings as very important compared to only 18 per cent of their white-collar colleagues. Consistent with the previous findings on intra-union meetings was that 48 per cent of Loy Yang stewards felt these meetings were very important. This figure compares with those for Yallourn stewards (30 per cent) and Morwell stewards (32 per cent). It would appear that shop steward organisation is a product not only of tradition, but also of the immediate needs and pressures that arise at the work-site. Loy Yang stewards have recognised that the development of a strong shop-floor organisation may well be the only way they will be able to achieve their members' demands. The perceived value of these meetings did not significantly differ when they were initiated by stewards, full-time officials or 'others'.

Leader stewards and, to a lesser extent, committed delegates, were more likely to meet with stewards from other unions than were delegates and workgroup leaders. The results are shown in Table 6.3. Orientation to unionism, as expected, thus appears to be an important predictor in attendance at such meetings. Some 21 per cent of leaders indicated that they usually initiated inter-union steward meetings. This

compared to figures of 5 per cent of delegates and workgroup leaders and 8 per cent of committed delegates. Workgroup leaders tended to rely on full-time officials or 'others' more than other steward types. Whilst the overwhelming majority of each steward type valued inter-union shop steward meetings to some degree, leaders were considerably more likely to rate these meetings as very important. This is not unexpected as it is these type of meetings that tend to reinforce these stewards' wider union orientation and the finding is compatible with their strategic approach to leadership. It thus seems that it is the interaction effect of orientation to unionism and leadership style that contributes to this assessment.

Table 6.3 Attendance at Inter-Union Shop Steward Meetings by Role Type

Attendance	Delegate %	Workgroup Leader %	Committed Delegate %	Leader %
Frequently	4.9	5.6	16.2	20.0
Sometimes	14.6	13.9	27.0	32.5
Rarely	26.8	27.8	21.6	30.0
Never	53.7	52.8	35.1	17.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	41	36	37	40

Shop stewards' wider union involvement

Effective shop-floor organisation requires the shop steward to deal with and become involved in the wider union organisation. This is partly due to the superior financial and human resources held by the central union and also to the need for a co-ordinated approach when negotiating certain issues with management. Stewards' wider involvement in the union may also influence how they perceive their role and how they perform their duties. It would, for example, be reasonable to expect that a shop steward who holds additional union positions would take a wider perspective than that of the immediate workplace and would adopt more of a leadership role than would stewards who seek only to represent their constituents to management. The shop stewards' involvement in union activities that are not directly related to their immediate workplace is of interest, in particular attendance at local branch meetings and accepting union office. These activities represent

two levels of involvement. The first measures the stewards' wider interest in union activities whilst the second suggests a higher commitment to the principles of unionism.[10]

Some 42 per cent of all stewards claimed they would attend most of the local branch meetings. A similar number, 36 per cent of stewards, reported that they would rarely, if ever, attend such meetings. These results are consistent with those reported by Batstone *et al.* (1977:183) although they are considerably lower than the 88 per cent of stewards that Goodman and Whittingham (1969:104) found attended branch meetings regularly. As noted earlier, only the larger unions have local branches in the Latrobe Valley (although they cover some 91 per cent of stewards in this study) and as a consequence some stewards would need to travel to Melbourne to attend a meeting of their branch. In addition, the nature of shift work can and does inhibit attendance at such meetings.

Blue-collar stewards (52 per cent) were significantly more likely to frequently attend branch meetings of their union than were their white-collar counterparts (27 per cent). This difference is understated as considerably more white-collar stewards belong to unions that have local branches (99 per cent compared to 86 per cent of blue-collar stewards). Loy Yang stewards were also significantly more likely to frequently attend branch meetings than their Morwell and Yallourn colleagues and this finding reinforces the notion advanced earlier concerning the problems inherent in a new work-site.

Those stewards who attended branch meetings cited a number of reasons why these meetings were of value. These reasons are detailed in Table 6.4. The major value of branch meetings included the provision of information, to be able to discuss general issues of unionism,

Table 6.4 Value of Branch Union Meetings

Value	N	%
Information	63	47.0
Contact with other stewards	11	8.2
Unity-support	9	6.7
Planning strategies	2	1.5
Discuss general issues	16	11.9
Discuss major issues	13	9.7
Rules-advice	4	3.0
Other	16	11.9
Total	134	100.0

and the opportunity to discuss major problems and concerns. From these results it is clear that stewards do not see branch meetings as the key forum to discuss and plan strategies for particular issues or disputes. This may be due to the composition of these bodies, in that some non-SECV stewards may be present, although it is more likely to be related to an assessment of the appropriateness of the branch to pursue what could amount to sectional interests. Stewards from the three production centres were also in general agreement, with one exception: Loy Yang stewards did not see any value in these meetings in terms of unity and providing support. Similarly, the various steward types did not differ substantially in the value they attached to branch meetings.

A substantial majority of stewards (72 per cent) did not, at the time of the research, hold any official position in their union apart from their stewardship. Blue-collar stewards were significantly more likely to occupy union office although this finding must be qualified. Most of the white-collar stewards belong to the MOA, and although this union has a local branch only a limited number of positions are available. As a consequence, the ability for wider union involvement is severely limited. Loy Yang stewards were also substantially more likely to accept official union positions compared to their Morwell and Yallourn colleagues. This complements the finding that Loy Yang stewards were more likely to seek and accept leadership positions in local community organisations (see Chapter 4), but it also represents the desire by Loy Yang stewards to gain superior conditions for their members. Accepting positions within their union is part of that strategy.

A range of official positions were reported by those stewards who did hold office. The majority of these stewards were members of the local branch committee (54 per cent) with a further 35 per cent of stewards holding executive positions within that branch.[11] The remaining positions included membership of state and federal management committees and one steward was an honorary state union official. Significant differences existed between blue- and white-collar stewards. White-collar stewards tended to restrict their involvement to membership of the local branch committee. Only five white-collar stewards occupied more significant positions: two had taken local leadership positions and three were members of their union's federal management committee. Blue-collar stewards were substantially more likely to seek and accept leadership positions, the majority at the local level.[12]

Leader type stewards were marginally more likely to be involved in union activities beyond the shop-floor than were delegates and committed delegates, in terms of both attendance at branch union meetings

and holding official positions. A higher percentage of leaders 'nearly always' attended branch union meetings than any other steward type. However, with the exception of committed delegates, a higher percentage of leaders than any other steward type rarely or never attended such meetings. This result can be partly explained by the fact that many of the unions who have only a small number of members in the SECV (and hence have not established a local branch) have stewards that act as leaders. This was the case, for example, with the Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union (FMWU), the Victorian Operative Bricklayers' Society (VOBS), the Operative Painters and Decorators' Union of Australia (OPDUA) and the Australian Building Construction Employees and the Builders Labourers' Federation (BLF). It should be also noted that the various steward types may be distinguished by the role they play at branch meetings. Anecdotal evidence suggested that leader stewards tended to propose more strategy and be more forceful in debate, whereas delegates concentrated on informing the meeting of their members' attitude.

Leaders and workgroup leaders were more likely to hold official positions within their union than were delegates and committed delegates. Yet the reasons for seeking these positions varied considerably. For leaders, higher office was generally part of their wider union orientation, whereas for workgroup leaders it was often seen in terms of a strategic action in furthering the interests of their immediate constituents. Committed delegates, in fact, were the least likely to hold such positions. Leaders and delegates tended to hold similar positions within their union, with just under 60 per cent of leaders holding executive positions in the local branch or holding formal membership of state and federal union bodies. Committed delegates, on the other hand, tended to restrict their involvement to membership of the local branch committee of management.

Other forms of organisation

Whilst the forms of organisation initiated by stewards and unions are of primary importance in understanding shop steward behaviour, there are other avenues open to stewards to meet and discuss mutual problems and issues. For example, at the local level, stewards may become involved in ALP branch activities or attend a variety of educational courses.[13] These informal forms of organisation can have a significant impact on stewards' organisation at the shop-floor.

One further mechanism that allows shop stewards to meet regularly and discuss problems are management sponsored meetings. This avenue for shop steward organisation has taken on extra significance for the Latrobe Valley SECV shop stewards since the introduction of working parties in 1976. Working parties are committees, made up of a number of shop stewards and management personnel, formed to attempt to solve a specific problem. As stewards are given time off work to attend meetings, liaise with other stewards and discuss the issue with members, membership of a working party affords considerable opportunity for stewards to interact and discuss a range of issues.

The members of a working party will normally be drawn from a number of unions, and hence there will usually be only one steward from each union. This was the case with the Asbestos Task Force and the Shift Work Working Party. In these cases stewards were more likely to see the value of joint consultation, in terms of shop steward organisation, as providing information and the development of united strategies. Whilst the organisational potential for shop stewards participating in any one working party is limited because of the small number of stewards involved and the time limits imposed, the majority of shop stewards interviewed felt that their participation did allow for a closer contact to be made with other stewards.

Some working parties, however, have involved stewards from only the one union. This is particularly the case with issues involving white-collar stewards, the majority belonging to the MOA, or a re-classification of job positions covered by only the one union. Two examples of single union representation on a working party were the Supplies Working Party and the Electrical Operations Working Party. In both cases worker representation was restricted to MOA stewards, although in some single-union working parties ordinary union members may also be included. The value of these types of working parties for shop steward organisation is normally in terms of advice and guidance, as the stewards would usually be familiar with the issue and the union's attitude to the issue.

Finally, the widespread use of joint consultation in the Latrobe Valley operations of the SECV affords the shop stewards a further opportunity to meet and discuss issues pertinent to their membership. The fact that the majority of stewards have, at some time, been involved in joint consultation with management (see Chapter 5) would suggest that this form of organisation can play a significant part in determining the behaviour of the shop steward at the workplace.

Assistance from and influence of the steward network

It is clear from the findings that stewards who attended meetings with stewards from their own union and/or stewards from other unions saw value in these meetings. Blue-collar, Loy Yang and leader stewards, in general, saw more value in these meetings than did other shop stewards. Formal meetings are, however, only one source of assistance to the steward in the performance of his duties. In day-to-day activities other stewards, at an individual level, may provide considerable assistance. This may take a variety of forms as suggested by Batstone *et al.* and can 'include the provisions of up-to-date information on events in the plant; interpretations of these events and theories of management and member behaviour; recipes of action and various forms of protection and support' (1977:64–5). Are those stewards who receive assistance from other stewards more likely to be influenced by the steward network than those who do not interact with other stewards?

Assistance from other stewards

Some 72 per cent of stewards indicated that they received assistance from other stewards in carrying out their duties. Just under half stated that they had received considerable support but did not specify the form of this support. The two major forms of assistance specified were advice and guidance and the provision of information. Other forms of assistance included moral support, aid in the development of appropriate strategies and organisational help.

Blue-collar stewards were more likely to receive assistance from other stewards than were their white-collar counterparts (76 per cent compared to 66 per cent) which, in part, is related to the collective consciousness promoted by these unions. The vast majority of Loy Yang stewards received assistance from their colleagues (85 per cent) whilst the number of Yallourn stewards (74 per cent) and Morwell stewards (64 per cent) was substantially lower. This illustrates the almost total reliance of Loy Yang stewards on their colleagues. This is to be expected as Loy Yang stewards often make claims that would benefit only their own members and so could not expect support from full-time officials.

Some 81 per cent of leaders received assistance from other stewards, compared to only 68 per cent of delegate and workgroup leaders and 70 per cent of committed delegates receiving assistance. Thus, whilst all stewards are likely to receive assistance from other stewards in the carrying out of their duties, leaders are more likely to receive such help.

The type of assistance that leaders seek tends to be almost exclusively information and/or advice, whereas the other steward types, whilst receiving similar assistance, will also seek moral, organisational and planning support.

It would seem reasonable to assume that stewards who regularly attend meetings of stewards from their own or other unions are more likely to develop relationships that encourage the seeking and receiving of assistance. This proved to be the case. Clearly stewards are more likely to receive assistance from other stewards the more frequently they attend meetings with those stewards. This is particularly the case with those stewards who attend meetings with stewards of their own union. This result is to be expected, as stewards are more likely to seek help from stewards from their own union as they would be familiar with the issues. Stewards who meet sometimes or frequently with stewards from their own union cited advice and guidance as the major form of assistance, whereas stewards who meet with stewards from other unions cited the provision of information as the major form of assistance. This confirms the view that stewards from the same union would normally be aware of the issues involved and would accordingly be looking for advice and guidance on how to process these issues. The type of assistance that stewards from other unions could provide is more likely to involve the provision of information, particularly their own unions' position on a particular issue.

Influence of the collective steward body

From this analysis it is clear that the majority of stewards receive some assistance from their colleagues. Does this imply that by meeting with and receiving assistance from other stewards, stewards are then more likely to be influenced by the collective steward body? This proved not to be the case. The overwhelming majority of stewards (77 per cent) felt it was the membership who had the most influence on them when making decisions. Only 5 per cent of stewards nominated other stewards in this regard. This latter result confirms the finding in Chapter 5 concerning the weakness of the steward organisation in influencing individual stewards' behaviour. Union officials (7 per cent), management (2 per cent) and no one (9 per cent) accounted for the remainder.

Loy Yang stewards were more likely to be influenced by fellow shop stewards or not be influenced by anyone other than their colleagues elsewhere. Stewards who attended meetings frequently with other shop stewards from their own union were more likely to be influenced by their colleagues and less by their membership than

were stewards in general. A similar trend was not evidenced with those shop stewards who met frequently with stewards from other unions.

Although all steward types were predominantly influenced by their membership, several trends can be discerned. First, leader stewards were less likely to be influenced by their colleagues but more likely to be influenced by full-time officials than were delegates. Second, delegates were less likely to be influenced by full-time officials and were more likely to take an independent position. Further, the two stewards who stated they were more likely to be influenced by management when making decisions were also delegates. Third, committed delegates were predominantly influenced by the membership. From these results, it does appear that the membership is a key influence on the behaviour of shop stewards. Yet it would be wrong to assume on this basis that the collective steward body or individual stewards have little impact on the day-to-day activities of stewards. Reaffirmation of values, support in times of stress, and advice and guidance on a range of matters are all factors that will ultimately influence the decision making of stewards. In direct dealings with members, however, as Farnham and Pimlott argued 'where there are divided loyalties or a conflict of interest arises . . . shop stewards generally side with their workgroups' (1979:357).

Conclusion

In terms of stewards' involvement in intra- and inter-union steward organisation the survey revealed that most stewards attended and valued meetings with stewards from their own union, with blue-collar and leader stewards significantly more likely to attend such meetings. These meetings tended to be initiated by the stewards themselves. A smaller number of stewards were likely to attend meetings with stewards of other unions and, generally, these tended to be blue-collar, Loy Yang-based and leader stewards. These meetings were usually initiated by the stewards and were regarded as important by those who attended. The finding that leader stewards are more likely to attend intra- and inter-union stewards' meetings is important in understanding their power base and their ability to reject members' demands when the need arises. The regular attendance at such meetings makes available a number of resources to the steward, back-up during times of crisis and, in general, a reaffirmation of values.

Other forms of steward organisation were also considered, including

the stewards' attendance at branch meetings of their union and their participation in joint consultation with management. Participation in branch union activity, including holding official positions, was not common amongst stewards although it was more likely to occur with blue-collar, Loy Yang-based or leader type stewards. The finding that leaders and workgroup leaders are more likely to be involved in branch activities can be partially explained by leader stewards' desire to adopt a variety of strategies to achieve their objectives. It may well be that these activities also enhance the stewards' leadership position. By attending branch meetings these stewards will be in possession of the necessary information to formulate arguments for or against a particular strategy. Equally, acceptance of an official position within their union will raise the status of these stewards and lessen the risk of a challenge to their position or to their arguments. They can then carry out their duties with considerably fewer impediments. The majority of shop stewards reported that they had been involved in joint consultation with management with leaders being significantly more likely to undertake joint consultation than other steward types. The benefit of this form of organisation varied, depending on whether the joint consultation involved shop stewards of one or several unions. In the main, the benefits tended to parallel those of the intra- and inter-union stewards' meetings.

Finally, the level of assistance stewards received from other stewards and the influence of the combined steward body was considered. Most stewards received some assistance from other stewards, with leader stewards significantly more likely to receive such assistance. This proved to be related to the attendance at stewards' meetings. That is, stewards who attended meetings of stewards, from their own or other unions, were more likely to receive assistance from other stewards. This has a direct impact upon the effectiveness of stewards and their ability to carry out their functions. Most stewards felt that the membership was the major influence on their behaviour and although this was the case for all steward types, leaders were more likely to be influenced by their colleagues.

The outcome, in terms of shop steward organisation, of stewards adopting a leadership role is clear. Leaders are more likely to meet formally with other stewards and from these meetings develop relationships with other stewards which will yield considerable assistance if needed. Whilst leaders remain loyal to the membership, the steward body will be a significant source of influence. Collectivity and unity with colleagues assumes a special importance.

7 Relationships at the workplace

Having examined the relationship between stewards and the forms of internal organisation that stewards adopt, this chapter extends that analysis by considering the relationships between shop stewards and their members, management and full-time representatives of their union. These relationships will influence the behaviour of shop stewards and will affect the form and style of industrial relations at the workplace.

The steward's relationship with members is a crucial role for the steward and will involve a variety of interactions where both the steward and members will attempt to influence the actions and decisions taken by the other. The relationship and dealings with management also represent an important role for the steward. Management can influence shop steward behaviour by the type of workplace policies it implements and the way it deals with individual shop stewards. The relationship of stewards with the full-time officials of their union is another element of particular significance as it represents the degree of external control and influence the union can achieve at the workplace. Regardless of the official policies of the union this relationship is largely dependent on the attitude of full-time officials and the individual shop stewards.

Shop stewards and their members

Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel suggested 'the extent to which stewards can act as leaders is influenced by their members' (1977:99), and Fox claimed 'for the most part, a steward's power lasts only so long as he retains the confidence of those for whom he speaks . . .' (1978:5). Both statements are valid, but the relationship between stewards and their

members is considerably more complex. Members can, and do, attempt to influence their stewards in order to achieve certain objectives. Failure on the part of the steward to achieve members' expectations can lead the membership to agitate for the replacement of the steward. On the other hand, steward leadership, as defined in this book, is the steward's ability to influence the membership, both in terms of specific issues and overall attitudes, and so be able to carry out duties and undertake action without necessarily gaining the approval of members. Accordingly, in examining the relationship between stewards and their constituents it is necessary to consider not only members' expectations and their attempts to influence the stewards but also the stewards' attempts to influence the membership. An analysis of this issue not only involves a consideration of the more overt forms of persuasion, but also an understanding of the way stewards approach their duties. In particular, the frequency of interaction between shop stewards and their members and the level of membership involvement need to be investigated.

Stewards' interaction with members

Steward leadership explicitly requires the support of the membership. Brown has argued that the level of group unity and equity between members are key determinants of this support: 'equity encourage(s) unity and hence increase(s) the workers' bargaining strength and the ease with which the shop steward can call upon it . . .' (1973:134). The main mechanism that enables shop stewards to develop a supportive membership is regular meetings at both a formal and an informal level with members. Of course, regular contact with the membership is not, of itself, sufficient to maintain membership support. The stewards' personality, ability and past performance will also influence their relationship with their members. This section, however, will limit the discussion to the type of interaction the stewards have with their members.

The typical SECV steward does not meet formally on a regular basis with his membership. A majority, 53 per cent of all stewards, met occasionally with their members with another 9 per cent of stewards reporting that they have 'never' held a membership meeting. The remaining stewards would meet weekly (9 per cent), fortnightly (4 per cent) or monthly (25 per cent) with their members.[1] Yet, formal meetings are not the only way stewards interact with their members, although in terms of promoting unity and a collective consciousness they are of considerable importance. Stewards also meet with their members on an individual basis in the course of their normal work.

For example, some 70 per cent of stewards reported having contact with the bulk of their members daily, whilst another 16 per cent reported having contact with the majority of their members on a weekly basis. Only 6 per cent of stewards reported that they would not have contact with the majority of their members within any one month.

Stewards who had frequent contact with their members in the normal course of their work or in their duties as a shop steward also tended to meet more regularly, on a formal basis, with their members. For example, all stewards who held formal membership meetings on a weekly basis reported that they had contact with the majority of their members on a daily basis. In contrast, only slightly more than half of the stewards who met formally with their members on a monthly basis indicated they had daily contact with their members. This finding indicates the practical difficulties stewards have in organising meetings of members they see infrequently. It is also indicative of the level of unity of the workgroup. Workgroups that are united, with members having daily contact with each other, are more likely to want decisions affecting their work life made at the collective level. The steward responds by organising formal meetings. This proposition is supported by the positive relationship found to exist between stewards' perceptions of group unity and the frequency of formal workplace meetings.

The main place of contact for stewards and members was the workplace. Only three stewards reported that they would meet their members mainly outside the workplace. These stewards, due to the nature of their work, would not normally come into contact with their members during work time. As expected, frequency of membership contact was higher where the major point of contact with members was the workplace. The vast majority of stewards (97 per cent) also reported that they could move freely around the workplace to contact members. Those stewards who were restricted claimed this was due to the nature of the job. Management obstruction was not, therefore, an obstacle to steward–member interaction.

Blue-collar stewards were significantly more likely to meet formally with their members than were the white-collar stewards. Just under half of the blue-collar stewards (48 per cent) conducted formal membership meetings at least monthly. The corresponding figure for white-collar stewards was 20 per cent. This finding, in general, mirrors the official policies of blue-collar unions compared with white-collar unions. White-collar unions are reluctant to allow stewards a role which raises possibilities of independent action by stewards. Membership meetings are crucial to the achievement of such action. All Loy Yang stewards

reported that they held formal meetings with members and had contact on a fortnightly basis at least. Figures for stewards from the other centres were considerably lower. This suggests that the potential for unity, and thus for collective action, is far higher in new work centres where a range of 'unique' problems will have the effect of uniting all those on the site.

Leaders would be expected to have more frequent meetings with members than would delegates, and conversely, delegates would have more informal contact with members than would leaders. This view is based on the premise that leaders, with the longer hours spent on their stewardship duties and their more frequent involvement in negotiations with management, will have less time available to meet informally with members. This view was substantiated. Nearly half of the leaders met formally with their members, at least on a monthly basis, compared to slightly less than one-third of delegates. On the other hand, delegates were more likely to have daily contact with their members than were leader stewards. This is in direct contrast to the finding that a positive relationship exists between the frequency of formal meetings and membership contact. It therefore appears that the role definition adopted by the steward is acting as an intervening variable. Leader stewards partly overcome their inability to mix regularly with their members by instituting formal meetings. Delegate stewards, on the other hand, see less need for formal meetings as they tend to have daily contact with the majority of their members.

This finding, however, raises two issues. First, delegates, by definition, provide little leadership and tend to respond to the wishes of the membership. By holding fewer meetings they are subject to the criticism that they have not tested the collective feeling of their membership on key issues. Second, by not conducting regular meetings of their members, delegates are doing little to promote unity between their constituents. This will tend to reinforce their actions as the members will see little value in collective gatherings. Leaders, by meeting more formally with their members, are likely to develop a higher level of unity and collective consciousness among their membership and thus provide further impetus to their leadership role.

What value do stewards see in the more formal gathering of members? Generally, stewards perceived the value of these meetings in terms of providing a forum to discuss problems (49 per cent), providing information to members (29 per cent) and providing feedback on particular issues (12 per cent). Providing information to members usually involved keeping the members up to date on the progress of

wage claims, other important issues and organisational matters. The other two areas, discussing problems and providing feedback, required the members to consider an issue and debate the appropriate response or strategy, with the steward providing detailed information on the status of the issue. The feedback may subsequently lead to more discussions and/or a change in strategy. The overall effect of these meetings can, as one AMWU steward claimed, lead to a general raising of the awareness among the membership of issues and potential problems.

Loy Yang and Yallourn stewards tended to see the value of membership meetings in terms of the ability to discuss a range of issues and provide an opportunity for feedback. Leaders held similar perceptions to these stewards, whereas delegate stewards, whilst also perceiving considerable value in discussing issues with members, were more likely to see value in being able to provide information. They did not, however, see the value of these meetings as providing specific feedback on issues to members. Committed delegates were the only group to see value of meetings in terms of improving unity and morale among the membership. It would be expected that leader stewards would also share similar perceptions; that they did not implies that these stewards used these meetings to complement and enhance their leadership role.

Members' influence and expectations

The ability of shop stewards to function effectively will depend primarily on the power granted to them by their membership. This power is not absolute or static and the rank-and-file will consistently attempt to realign the behaviour of stewards to meet their expectations. This section will examine the ways members attempt to influence the behaviour of the steward and the expectations members have of the role of the shop steward. It will be the stewards' perceptions of members' expectations and attempts to influence them that will ultimately determine how they behave.

Rank-and-file attempts to influence their stewards' behaviour occur continually, although in many instances these attempts go unnoticed. During times of disagreement these attempts can form a major part of the interaction between members and stewards. Stewards were asked to recall the means members used to put pressure on them when they disagreed with the membership. Not all stewards answered this question and of those that did (N=147) some 27 per cent felt that the members did not attempt to pressure them into accepting alternate points of view.

This is partly related to the view particular stewards hold of their role, namely, that stewards are elected to represent the collective views of the membership. These stewards would not normally have a firm opinion but would accept the views of the majority. For the remaining stewards, the major forms of membership pressure mentioned were the proposing of alternative plans (23 per cent) and ostracisation or confrontation (18 per cent). Other forms of pressure included a variety of threats, disruption of formal meetings and the pointing out to the steward of their 'proper' role.

Several important differences occurred between stewards from the three production centres. In particular, Loy Yang stewards were more likely to have members point out to them their preferred role for the steward, more likely to have alternative plans proposed and have their members seek the support of other shop stewards or union officials. Morwell stewards were more likely to be ostracised, whilst Yallourn stewards were less likely to be subjected to member pressure. In general, a higher percentage of leaders perceived the membership exerting pressure on them than did their delegate counterparts. This is not unexpected as the independent role adopted by leader stewards would, at times, bring them into conflict with their membership. Leaders were also more likely to be ostracised (18 per cent compared to 8 per cent of delegates),[2] have members seek the support of other stewards and face disruptive meetings. Delegates were substantially more likely to report that their members would present alternative plans, which reinforces the role of this type of steward as one of 'spokesperson for the group'.

Stewards' perceptions of membership pressure will relate, in part, to the perceived members' expectations of the steward compared to their own role orientation. The majority of stewards perceived members' expectations in terms of a spokespersons' role (33 per cent) or solving problems (25 per cent). Protecting members and negotiating on their behalf were also considered important. Although stewards generally felt these expectations were reasonable and achievable, there did exist a sizeable number of stewards who felt that members expected the impossible. One FIA steward with sixteen years' experience claimed members expected their steward 'to be able to solve all problems regardless of whether it is right or wrong and be able to pull a rabbit out of the hat'. This view was backed up by the comments of an MOA steward, a member of the sub-branch executive with four years' union experience, who suggested that the members wanted stewards to 'perform major and minor miracles'. Another MOA steward

with two years' experience claimed members expected stewards 'to be able to read minds'.

These results seem to reflect the expectations the rank-and-file have of their union.[3] Although there is a strong emphasis on the improvement of wages and conditions (39 per cent of stewards felt this was the major expectation the members had of the union) it is also clear that stewards perceived members' expectations of the union in terms of representing members (18 per cent), protecting members (30 per cent) and solving problems (7 per cent). These expectations were clearly expressed by one BWIU steward as being to 'represent them in negotiations with management and maintain and improve wage rates and conditions'. With one exception, blue- and white-collar stewards perceived similar member expectations. Blue-collar stewards were more likely to consider protection of members a major membership expectation than were their white-collar counterparts (17 per cent and 4 per cent respectively). This can be explained in terms of the positions held by white-collar union members. Usually, these members occupy supervisory or managerial positions and, as such, do not perceive protection from indiscriminate managerial behaviour as necessary.

Nearly half of the Loy Yang stewards (46 per cent) perceived members' major expectations in terms of a spokespersons' role. On the other hand, Morwell stewards (27 per cent) and Yallourn stewards (28 per cent) were more likely to perceive members' expectations in terms of solving problems, compared to 11 per cent of Loy Yang stewards. This reflects the long-standing traditions within these two centres compared to Loy Yang. The rank-and-file at Loy Yang want their stewards to speak up on their behalf although, in general, they demand to be involved in the final solution.

Primarily, delegate stewards perceived membership expectations as being a spokespersons' role, whereas leaders tended to perceive these expectations as being able to solve problems. As shown in Table 7.1, workgroup leaders also perceived members' expectations primarily in terms of solving problems whereas committed delegates perceived these expectations in terms of a spokespersons' role. It therefore appears that a key variable on the perceived role is the leadership style of the steward. Delegates and workgroup leaders also perceived members' expectations in terms of protecting members against managerial excesses.

Table 7.1 Perceived Members' Expectations of Stewards by Role Type

Expectation	Delegate %	Workgroup Leader %	Committed Delegate %	Leader %
Solve problems	12.0	30.0	19.0	39.6
Spokesperson	32.0	27.5	47.6	26.4
Protect members	18.0	15.0	4.8	9.4
Other	38.0	27.5	28.6	24.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	50	40	42	53

Involvement of members

The involvement of members in discussions with management not only represents a further avenue for stewards to influence members and to modify their expectations but is also an indication of the types of strategies stewards adopt in their bargaining with management. Involving members in negotiations with management may also be an insurance policy, for as Lane observed, 'not a few stewards took the precaution of having a fellow worker with them when it was necessary to ''go upstairs'' ' (1974:198). However, by involving members in this type of activities the steward is also enhancing membership control (Tannenbaum and Kahn, 1958:225).

Only 13 per cent of the stewards indicated they would normally go into negotiations alone whereas some 36 per cent reported that they would normally take members with them. The majority (51 per cent), however, reported that the decision to be accompanied by members will vary with the issue.[4] This tends to confirm the strategic nature of membership involvement. Stewards will make an assessment of the value (in terms of outcomes) of being accompanied by a member and will act accordingly. In some cases this may be a member with knowledge of, or expertise in, the particular issue, or the member may be a deputy shop steward.[5] On some occasions this involvement may be initiated by the members. This would particularly occur where the membership feels their steward may need support or they wish to monitor the process.

Blue- and white-collar stewards differed significantly in their involvement of members in negotiations with management. Blue-collar stewards were significantly more likely to be always accompanied by members (43 per cent compared to 26 per cent of white-collar stewards), whereas white-collar stewards were more likely 'to go in alone' or take members into negotiations depending on the issue. Given the comments made earlier regarding the relationship white-collar stewards have with management this result is to be expected. The social relationships that have built up over time, the nature of the work, and the fact that white-collar stewards and management personnel would, in the case of the SECV, normally belong to the same union (the MOA) provide the climate for a relaxation of the need to be accompanied by a member. Only a small number of Yallourn stewards (7 per cent) would go into negotiations alone, compared with 18 per cent of Morwell stewards and 14 per cent of Loy Yang stewards. This reflects the traditional practices that have built up at Yallourn over the past sixty-five years.

Do stewards who take members into negotiations always use the same members or vary the members depending on the issue? A substantial majority of stewards (81 per cent) tended to vary the members they involved in negotiations. This practice was significantly more pronounced amongst white-collar stewards. Interview evidence indicated that a partial explanation of this finding is that white-collar stewards tend to take into negotiations the member who first raised the issue or has knowledge of the matter, whereas blue-collar stewards tend to take in someone they can trust and know will not be intimidated by management.

Table 7.2 shows that whilst a similar percentage of all steward types reported they went into negotiations alone, over half of the leader stewards claimed they would normally take members into the negotiations with management. Conversely the majority of delegates and workgroup leaders would vary membership involvement depending on the issue. This result can be partially explained in terms of the stewards' orientation to unionism. With their broader commitment to unionism, leaders and committed delegates may see consistent membership involvement as an essential element in ensuring that the wider objectives of the union are met. Membership involvement may also be a protection against criticism from sectional interests within their constituencies. Accordingly, the strategic value of varying membership involvement in negotiations appears limited. However, it may also be a recognition by stewards, as Beynon suggests, that 'if the leadership becomes

isolated from the masses, its autonomy degenerates into empty talk' (1973:178). Those stewards who did take members into negotiations tended to vary the personalities depending on the issue. This was uniform across all steward types.

Table 7.2 Involvement of Members in Negotiations by Role Type

Involvement	Delegate %	Workgroup Leader %	Committed Delegate %	Leader %
Go in alone	14.3	9.1	12.5	13.0
Go in with member(s)	20.4	27.3	41.7	51.9
Varies with issue	65.3	63.6	45.8	35.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	49	44	48	54

Non-industrial issues

One further group of activities undertaken by shop stewards, although not formally within their range of responsibilities, is involvement in non-industrial type issues such as member welfare. This activity relates to what Dufty (1981) has referred to as the 'good shepherd' role, where stewards are oriented towards the pastoral care of their members. Issues relating to the welfare of members, counselling and the settling of disputes between members involved more than half of the stewards at some stage of their stewardship. As one senior AMWU steward commented:

> Workers have a great many problems which require expert advice and counsel. They look to the shop steward to tell them how to obtain such information as they may require to solve the problem before them. Marriage guidance, legal aid, financial management and assistance, child welfare, drug and alcohol programmes, safety and health regulations, health and medical services and a whole host of other items, all find their way into the compendium of a shop steward's accumulated knowledge. (Wragg, 1985:3)

Clearly, shop stewards in the Latrobe Valley do not restrict their activities to industrial matters. This finding provides support to the claim by Goodman and Whittingham that 'in many cases, stewards are supplementing, if not supplanting, supervisors and welfare departments in this function' (1969:92–3).

Blue-collar stewards were considerably more likely to involve themselves in the settling of disputes between members. Yallourn

stewards also were more likely to be involved in the settling of these types of disputes, which reflects not only the blue-collar concentration at that centre but the perception, held by members, that this is rightfully the stewards' role. This perception has been strengthened not only by the hardships faced by the Yallourn workers over many years but also by the concentration of workers in nearby communities.

Table 7.3 breaks down stewards' involvement in non-industrial issues by steward type; on each of the three issues considered leader stewards are significantly more likely to undertake such activities. Why this is so is difficult to explain. Workgroup leaders would, by definition, be expected to be active on these issues. Certainly, leader stewards with their general union orientation would provide a partial explanation and their demonstrated leadership ability would mean that members would be more likely to seek them out. Yet as Dufty discovered, the 'good shepherd' type of stewards 'do not emphasise shop-floor organisation and have below-average scores on pragmatic materialism, union commitment and consultation with other stewards' (1981:69).

Table 7.3 Stewards' Involvement in Non-Industrial Issues

Issue	Delegate		Workgroup Leader		Committed Delegate		Leader	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Welfare of members	25	47.2	28	68.3	30	65.2	43	79.6
Counselling of members	23	43.4	23	56.1	18	41.9	39	79.6
Settling member disputes	23	43.4	22	57.9	23	50.0	37	69.8

Shop stewards and management

The relationship between shop stewards and management can be critical in determining the role of the steward. Three major foundations of this steward-management relationship can be identified. First, management organises work and determines the general working conditions. By doing so it clearly controls a large part of the agenda for shop steward activity by determining the issues that will arise for debate and action. Second, management can influence the level of shop steward involvement once issues have arisen. As Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel observed, management 'may foster their (shop stewards') involvement in issues, they may make favourable agreements and in other ways support or challenge individual stewards' (1977:154). This involvement

can take place at both the organisational and individual manager level. At the organisational level, management may formally recognise and enhance the position of the shop steward. Within the SECV this is evidenced by stewards' involvement in joint consultation, in collective negotiations and in the development of policies. This policy of formal recognition has provided the shop steward with a level of authority and rights that are not provided by union rules or arbitrated awards. At the individual level, managers and shop stewards, regardless of the level of trust and respect, have to develop a working relationship with each other.

The third major aspect to the steward–management relationship is the part that management, consciously or unconsciously, plays in the creation of custom and practice. As Brown (1973:98–9) pointed out, this involvement may be due to errors of commission (concession granted to stewards) and/or errors of omission (failure to enforce rules). One example is the supervisor who allows considerable freedom to stewards, involves them in decision making and generally consults them on the day-to-day running of the section. The result is that stewards in other sections come to expect a similar level of involvement. Thus, it is clear that 'management may enhance the scope, power and authority of shop stewards' (Goodman and Whittingham, 1969:15). This, in turn, will influence the type of leadership role the steward ultimately adopts. However, it must be stressed that management should not be conceived of as a single entity. Individual managers, like stewards, have various philosophies, objectives and levels of commitment to their organisation. This will need to be kept in mind when examining the relationship between stewards and management.

Contact with management

The research clearly demonstrates that shop stewards in the Latrobe Valley have considerable contact with management personnel. As noted in Chapter 5 the majority of shop stewards reported that they had negotiated with management over a range of issues. For example, 77 per cent of stewards had negotiated over pay problems and 83 per cent had negotiated over working conditions. Less than 5 per cent of stewards reported that they had not been involved in negotiations with management. In addition, joint consultative arrangements provide stewards with considerable opportunity to discuss with management a range of problems that arise at the workplace. Yet what is the nature of these contacts with management and at what level do these contacts take place?

Steward–supervisor contacts occurred for four major reasons: informal chats (27 per cent), negotiations (25 per cent), receiving advice (19 per cent) and providing advice (18 per cent). Social and other reasons accounted for the remaining contacts. Clearly, negotiations form only a minor part of the steward-supervisor relationship. Exchange of information, 'off the record' talks and a variety of social encounters form the major contact stewards have with their supervisor. These meetings, however, provide an environment where strong bargaining relationships can develop. As Batstone *et al.* observed: 'a strong bargaining relationship involves the development of a relationship between steward and manager which goes beyond the minimum formal relationship which necessarily exists between them' (1977:168–9). This will in turn work to 'reduce the uncertainty of the relationship' (Brown, 1973:134).

A similar picture emerged with regard to the shop stewards' contact with more senior SECV management, although, as expected, negotiations become more prominent at this level (50 per cent of all steward–management contacts). Goodman and Whittingham postulated the reason for this was that 'many stewards regarded supervisors as staging points in bargaining procedure, important negotiations being carried out with department managers or above' (1969:97). Other reasons for contact at this level included receiving information/advice (18 per cent), providing information/advice (14 per cent) and informal discussions (14 per cent). Social and other reasons accounted for the remaining steward–management contacts. Clearly, at both the supervisor and more senior levels stewards and management do have extensive contact outside of the negotiating arena. These contacts not only reduce uncertainty but also provide a firm basis for the maintenance of strong shop-floor relationships.

Slightly more white-collar stewards engaged in negotiations with their supervisors and mixed socially with their superiors than did blue-collar stewards. Blue-collar stewards were, however, more likely to report that the reason for their last contact with their supervisor or line management was to provide/receive advice and information. Several trends between stewards from the three work centres could be discerned. Yallourn stewards were more likely to negotiate or have 'informal chats' with their supervisor and were less likely to negotiate with SECV management. Morwell stewards were more likely to provide advice to both supervisors and line management, whilst Loy Yang stewards were less likely to negotiate with their supervisors and more likely to negotiate with SECV management. This last finding can be

partly related to problems that exist in steward-supervisor relations[6] and partly to the strategic power those stewards occupy. This strategic power is further enhanced by management's willingness to grant concessions in order to achieve commissioning targets. This action by line management has served to undermine the position of the supervisor to a considerable extent.

Delegates' contact with management was more likely to be one of receiving information and advice, whereas the leaders' contact with management tended to involve negotiations. This proved to be the case for contact with both supervisors and more senior management. Leaders were also more likely to provide information/advice and considerably more likely to engage in 'informal chats' with supervisors and management. This last type of contact differentiates delegate and leader stewards. Whereas delegates tend to keep matters on a formal basis, leaders will tend to process the problem by having 'a word in the right ear' before matters get out of hand. These findings, in general, tend to confirm the results of Batstone *et al.*, although the differences did not prove to be as large as they had found (1977:170).

The finding that a higher proportion of stewards' contact with management involved negotiations, when compared to contact with supervisors, was to be expected. In carrying out their work duties as employees, stewards will tend to have frequent contact with their supervisor, which provides the opportunity to discuss a range of issues of concern to the membership. Only a small percentage of these informal or work-related contacts lead to formal negotiations. It may also be a conscious strategy on the part of the steward to negotiate with those management personnel who have got the authority to make decisions. As Batstone *et al.* concluded: 'unless the other person has a degree of power, there is little attraction in giving him confidences and support, for little will be gained in return' (1977:171).

In terms of the negotiation aspect of steward-manager contacts, stewards were found to almost equally negotiate issues with supervisors (40 per cent) and line management (43 per cent). SECV industrial officers (10 per cent) and a range of others (7 per cent) accounted for the remaining responses. A substantial number of shop stewards, therefore, do negotiate with their supervisors, at least in the first instance. That a majority of stewards go beyond their supervisor does not necessarily represent a deliberate strategy to circumvent normal procedures; it could also indicate the degree of encouragement given to stewards to go directly to more senior management. This aspect will be examined later in this section.

White-collar stewards were significantly more likely to negotiate with management above the supervisory level than were their blue-collar counterparts. For example, some 64 per cent of white-collar stewards claimed they negotiated most frequently with line management compared to only 31 per cent of blue-collar stewards. Conversely, blue-collar stewards were more likely to negotiate with their immediate supervisor than were their white-collar counterparts (54 per cent compared to 18 per cent). White-collar stewards were also more likely to negotiate with industrial relations personnel than were their blue-collar counterparts. Loy Yang stewards were less likely to negotiate with management (including supervisors) and more likely to negotiate with SECV industrial relations personnel than were their Yallourn and Morwell counterparts. This reflects the unique nature of many of the claims made at the Loy Yang complex and the recognition by the SECV of the need to ensure some consistency in terms and conditions of work across the three work centres.

As expected, workgroup leaders were more likely to negotiate with their immediate supervisor as they recognised they were not likely to gain special concessions for their particular workgroup from more senior management. A majority of committed delegates claimed they tended to negotiate with management personnel, whilst leaders were slightly more likely to negotiate with industrial relations officers than were the other steward types. From these results there is little to suggest that leader stewards behave differently, in terms of whom they negotiate with, than the other steward types.

Do stewards who negotiate more frequently with senior management make a conscious decision to by-pass their immediate supervisor? Only 9 per cent of stewards indicated they would by-pass their supervisor as a matter of course with another 15 per cent often engaging in this practice. A further 28 per cent would by-pass their supervisor sometimes whilst the remainder (48 per cent) would rarely, if ever, not consult their immediate supervisor in the first instance. This tends to support the finding in Chapter 5 that stewards, in the main, tend to follow procedures when disputes arise. Therefore, whilst many stewards negotiate with senior management personnel, it is not normally an alternative procedure but appears to be done in addition or subsequent to, negotiating with their supervisor. A similar situation was found to exist by Goodman and Whittingham (1969:97–8) with respect to British shop stewards. Blue-collar and Loy Yang stewards were marginally more likely to by-pass their supervisor once a dispute had arisen.

Once a dispute arose, in contrast to delegates, leaders were significantly more likely to by-pass immediate management in an attempt to negotiate a settlement. That leaders do by-pass their immediate supervisor must be seen in the context of the nature of the interaction with management personnel, including the supervisor. A high proportion of leader steward–management contacts are concerned with negotiations. Accordingly, as part of a conscious strategy, leaders will negotiate with those representatives of the SECV who can make decisions. In the majority of circumstances this would not include supervisors.

Management influence and expectations

The nature of the contact stewards have with the various levels of management within the SECV may be partially determined by the stewards' perceptions of the expectations of management and the forms of management influence. Some 15 per cent of all stewards claimed management made no attempt to influence them, whilst 24 per cent of respondents claimed this occurred often. The majority of stewards, some 61 per cent, reported that management did attempt to influence them on occasions. On this basis, there is no clear evidence that shop stewards, in general, are subjected to intense pressure from management in terms of influence. However, some 25 per cent of stewards perceived themselves as having been victimised by management, at least once, in terms of lack of promotion, transferral or dismissal, and another 20 per cent of stewards perceived cases of management obstruction. The former figure is significantly higher than the equivalent figure of 13 per cent reported by McCarthy and Parker (1968:48) in the UK. Such actions by management are the more overt forms of influence and are primarily designed to limit the activities of stewards. Blue-collar, Yallourn and Loy Yang stewards were more likely to report management attempts to influence them than were white-collar or Morwell stewards.

Leaders were significantly more likely to perceive management attempts to influence them than were delegates. As shown in Table 7.4 this was also the case, although to a lesser degree, for workgroup leaders and committed delegates. This finding is to be expected as, in the case of delegates, management would be able to influence stewards' behaviour through the membership. The leader stewards' willingness to initiate, modify or squash issues would not be so readily influenced by the membership. The type of leadership provided by stewards will therefore, at least in part, account for variations in management's

attempts to influence stewards. It may also relate to the frequency and type of contact leaders have with management. In particular, given the nature of the bargaining process, the higher frequency of involvement in negotiations by leaders would, almost inevitably, lead to leaders feeling more pressure from management.

Table 7.4 Perceived Management Attempts to Influence Shop Stewards by Role Type

Management Attempts to Influence	Delegate %	Workgroup Leader %	Committed Delegate %	Leader %
Often	13.0	22.7	26.1	37.3
Sometimes	64.8	63.6	65.2	51.0
Not at all	22.2	13.6	8.7	11.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	54	44	46	51

A more subtle form of influence is exerted by the expectations management have of steward behaviour. Batstone *et al.* found that staff management expected stewards to be fair and reasonable whilst shop-floor management made considerable reference to 'leadership and the stewards' ability to control the membership' (1977:165). For stewards to react to these expectations they would need to recognise that these were the expectations held by management. What, then, do stewards perceive are management's expectations of them? Table 7.5 presents the responses of the stewards and, in general, supports the findings of Batstone *et al.* (1977:165). The major expectations, as perceived by stewards, were to represent members and to be fair and reasonable.

Table 7.5 Perceived Management Expectations of Shop Stewards

Expectations	N	%
Responsible leader	13	7.5
Represent members	40	23.1
Fair and reasonable	30	17.3
Accept SECV decisions	17	9.8
Keep members in line	15	8.7
Liaise and consult	15	8.7
Solve problems	15	8.7
Other	28	16.2
Total	173	100.0

Leadership and keeping members in line were also perceived to be important expectations. That is, management appears to emphasise expectations of the personal characteristics of the stewards rather than the organisational aspect of their position.

White-collar stewards were more likely to perceive representation of members as the major expectation, whilst blue-collar stewards saw acceptance of SECV decisions as a major expectation of management. This blue-collar perception explains why some stewards react negatively to management. For example, one FIA steward with five years' experience who was also a delegate to the GTLC, responded that management expected stewards 'to believe that management and its line supervision are always right and don't tell lies'. This perceived expectation of management and the reaction of stewards makes more difficult the task of maintaining strong shop-floor relations. Some 40 per cent of Loy Yang stewards perceived representation of members as the major expectation of management compared to 23 per cent of Yallourn stewards and 17 per cent of Morwell stewards. This may be a reaction to the emerging shop-floor organisation at Loy Yang where management continually questions the stewards about the extent of membership support on issues. This is particularly the case with a range of new claims which, if granted, would upset relativities between the three centres. A significant number of Yallourn and Morwell stewards mentioned being fair and reasonable as the major management expectation, whereas no Loy Yang steward perceived this to be the case. Yallourn stewards also perceived management expectations in terms of liaison and consultation which reflect long-standing custom and practice at that centre.

Leaders were significantly more likely to perceive management expectations of them as being acceptance of SECV decisions, keeping members in line and provision of responsible leadership. In contrast, delegates perceived management expectations as representation of members and being fair and reasonable. This finding concerning leaders was also confirmed in discussions with management personnel. In the main, managers suggested that stewards should provide strong leadership in terms of control over the membership and, ultimately, ensure the acceptance of agreements and decisions. As Dufty suggested, 'there is little doubt that management prefers to deal with "strong" shop stewards, leaders who can control their members to the extent of ensuring adherence to any agreements reached, official or otherwise' (1980:381).

The committed delegate, whilst holding similar views to the delegate, also perceived management to place emphasis on the stewards'

ability to solve problems. The workgroup leader perceived management expectations to be the representation of members and liaison and consultation with management. In both these cases the expectations are membership oriented. One other important feature of these findings is the range of expectations as perceived by leaders. It is clear that leaders do not perceive management to have one overriding expectation but rather a range of expectations.

Shop stewards and their union

Shop stewards are dependent on their union for access to a range of resources, support in times of conflict and guidance on how to process various issues. Equally, unions are dependent on their shop stewards. This is particularly the case with a number of administrative duties,[7] the mobilisation of member support and provision of detailed local knowledge. Thus, as Hyman argued, 'a relationship of interdependence is the norm' (1975:163). The level of dependence on the union and in particular full-time officials will vary considerably between stewards[8] and will be influenced by a number of factors. Hyman and Fryer, for example, argue 'the structure and traditions of the union itself; the composition and work situation of the membership; and the policies and actions of the employer and the structure of collective bargaining' are all influences on the relative power of the steward and the full-time official (1975:192). In turn, these factors influence the role definition adopted by the steward and the effectiveness of the full-time official. To what extent does the union, via its full-time officials, influence the conduct and style of shop-floor industrial relations? As Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel concluded, 'it is possible that domestic organizations are strongly influenced, if not controlled, by external groups, notably full-time officials' (1977:178).

It is clear that shop stewards play an active and integral role in industrial relations within the SECV. This role has been encouraged by local full-time union officials who indicated, during interviews, that they expected shop stewards to handle shop-floor issues wherever possible.[9] As a consequence, these officials saw their role as providing co-ordination, human and technical resources and a link between the central union and the steward. It should be noted that, at the time of the survey, all local, full-time officials had been active shop stewards within the SECV prior to taking on full-time union duties. This is an important distinction as usually the advice and assistance of such officials will be perceived in a different light from the Melbourne-based

officials. The Melbourne officials are seen as remote, lacking in detailed knowledge of the SECV's operations and serving a different 'master'.

Not all stewards will want to process issues themselves, preferring to request the assistance of full-time officials as soon as an issue arises. Other stewards, during the course of events, will find it necessary to 'call in' the full-time official. In the twelve months preceding the survey, some 64 per cent of stewards reported that they had involved a full-time official in a local issue. The main issues that prompted this action were staffing and redeployment (31 per cent), wages and conditions (11 per cent), demarcation disputes (7 per cent) and health and safety (6 per cent).[10] In nearly half of these cases the steward had acted on their own initiative; only 4 per cent of stewards claimed it was the full-time official who had suggested their involvement. This confirms the earlier point that full-time officials desire stewards to handle issues themselves. Table 7.6 provides further details of the source of the initiative to involve full-time officials. In the substantial majority of the cases the suggestion to involve full-time officials came from the steward body. The only other significant group to suggest the involvement of full-time officials was the membership. This tended to be the case where the stewards' union had a local full-time official who was well known to the membership.

Table 7.6 Source of Initiative to Involve Full-time Officials

Source	N	%
Respondent	66	46.5
Other shop stewards	20	14.1
Senior shop steward	21	14.8
Members	19	13.4
Local branch meeting	9	6.3
Full-time union official	5	3.5
Melbourne-based union officials	2	1.4
Total	142	100.0

White-collar stewards were marginally more likely to involve full-time officials in shop-floor issues than were blue-collar stewards and were, in general, more likely to involve these officials in one-off, local problems (46 per cent compared to 30 per cent of blue-collar stewards). White-collar stewards were also more likely to call in full-time officials themselves (57 per cent compared to 39 per cent of blue-collar stewards), whereas blue-collar stewards tended to take into account the

wishes of senior stewards and local branch meetings (30 per cent compared to 10 per cent of white-collar stewards). The source of the initiative to involve full-time officials tended, therefore, to be more varied for blue-collar stewards than that for white-collar stewards. This result lends support to the findings of Batstone *et al.* (1977:194).

Stewards from the three work centres were similar in their use of full-time officials, although differences existed in the issues full-time officials were asked to deal with. The major issue for Loy Yang stewards was staffing levels, whereas wages and conditions, demarcations and individual issues as well as staffing were the major concerns that prompted Morwell and Yallourn stewards to bring in full-time officials. This finding is to be expected at Loy Yang, as the major issue confronting unions there has been the question of what constitutes adequate staffing levels in a high technology power station.

It was expected that delegates would be more likely to take an independent role from the union than were leaders. This was based on the premise that leaders, with their strong orientation to unionism, would tend to meet more frequently with full-time officials and, as a consequence, involve them in shop-floor issues. This did not prove to be the case. A similar percentage of all steward types involved full-time officials in workplace issues. Differences did emerge between steward types with regard to the type of issues on which they would call in full-time officials. Delegates and committed delegates would not involve full-time officials in staffing issues, preferring to leave the issue to the membership. Leaders, on the other hand, would tend to handle questions of wages, conditions and demarcations themselves. Further, leaders and workgroup leaders tended to specifically exclude full-time officials from local health and safety issues. Committed delegates and leaders were the only steward types to involve full-time officials on these officials' advice. This is consistent with their wider orientation to unionism.

Once having involved a full-time official in an issue, the majority of stewards (70 per cent) indicated that they would accept the strategies proposed by the official.[11] Only 3 per cent of stewards claimed they would rarely adopt full-time officials' proposed strategies. On the basis of these figures it is clear that full-time union officials have considerable influence on industrial relations in the SECV. White-collar stewards were slightly more likely than blue-collar stewards to accept strategies proposed by full-time officials, as were Yallourn and Loy Yang stewards. This tends to confirm the findings of Batstone *et al.* (1977:198), although the difference between staff and shop-floor

stewards was significantly greater in their study. Leader type stewards were also more likely to accept the strategies proposed by full-time officials than were their counterparts. This finding was not unexpected as delegates would tend to refer the proposed strategy back to the membership for their ratification.

One important aspect of the involvement of full-time officials is the stewards' subsequent perception of their usefulness in achieving a satisfactory resolution of the issue. These perceptions are of considerable importance as they will affect any future involvement these officials may have in SECV industrial issues, both in actual involvement and the timing of that involvement. Some 90 per cent of stewards claimed it was useful to involve full-time officials in shop-floor issues and only 4 per cent of stewards found the involvement of full-time officials not very useful. White-collar stewards were more likely to report the involvement of full-time officials as useful than were Morwell and Loy Yang stewards. As one FEDFA steward working in the Morwell open cut commented, 'in my situation both full-time official and shop steward become one working unit'. The higher percentage of Loy Yang stewards who found the involvement of full-time officials useful, coupled with the earlier finding that Loy Yang stewards were more likely to have involved full-time officials in shop-floor issues, warrants further comment. Whilst Loy Yang stewards prefer to handle 'extraordinary' issues themselves, they have tended to engage full-time officials in negotiating staffing levels in the power station and the open cut mine. The success of these officials in the negotiations would contribute significantly to the stewards' perceptions of the usefulness of full-time officials.

Where delegates and leaders have involved full-time officials, their perceptions of their usefulness did not significantly differ. As expected, workgroup leaders saw the least value in involving full-time officials, but even among this group of stewards some 86 per cent felt the involvement of full-time officials was useful. This finding suggests that shop stewards in the Latrobe Valley tend to be more complimentary about the involvement of full-time officials than those stewards in the Batstone *et al.* study (1977:192). This can mainly be explained by the distinction between unions with local full-time officials and those whose officials are based in Melbourne. Stewards who belonged to unions with local officials were considerably more likely to involve full-time officials (70 per cent compared to 47 per cent), accept their strategies (73 per cent compared to 60 per cent) and, overall, rate their officials' involvement as very useful (54 per cent compared to 30 per

cent). These results are to be expected as the locally based officials are more familiar with the issues and meet regularly with shop stewards on the job, at local branch meetings and at various social activities.

Whilst the overwhelming majority of stewards saw value in involving full-time union officials and were prepared to accept their strategies, it did not follow that stewards would not experience difficulties when working with these officials. The difficulties could be classified into two broad groupings. The first group relate to the difficulties stewards experience in attempting to involve full-time officials in issues, and include being hard to contact (30 per cent) and their lack of time to deal with the issue (14 per cent). The second group of problems relate to the official's handling of the dispute and include being out of date (17 per cent), not familiar with the issue (15 per cent), having a conflict of interest (7 per cent) and their overt political motives (3 per cent). A further 13 per cent of stewards reported a range of other problems.

Two differences existed between white- and blue-collar stewards' perceptions of the difficulties in working with full-time officials. Three times as many white-collar stewards claimed the officials' lack of time was a major problem. In the main, however, this difference represents the shortage of staff within the MOA. Just prior to the survey the MOA's second local full-time official had resigned. As one MOA steward with six years' experience claimed, 'our local industrial officer is so over-worked he is almost impossible to find'. Blue-collar stewards, on the other hand, more frequently claimed that the full-time officials were not familiar with the issues. One FEDFA steward of 10 years standing clearly summarised the situation: 'It takes so long to brief them in areas of which they have limited or no knowledge'. Few comments related to the reasons cited by Batstone *et al.*: too ready to compromise, lengthy and restrictive procedures and the official's own personal skill and competence (1977:192).

Yallourn, and to a lesser extent Loy Yang, stewards were more likely to complain that full-time officials were hard to contact. This is partly explained by the fact that all local full-time officials are located in Morwell. Loy Yang stewards, and to a lesser extent those at Yallourn, were more likely to claim that full-time officials were not familiar with the issues. Both these centres are the sites of the latest power stations (Loy Yang A and Yallourn W). It would, therefore, appear that the state of technology and the full-time officials' proximity to the work force are key factors in explaining variations in the types of problems experienced by shop stewards in dealing with full-time officials. Ironically, the less technologically advanced Morwell

production centre had the highest number of stewards complaining that the full-time officials were out of date.

The perceived problems of involving full-time officials did not differ significantly between delegates and leaders. However, some minor differences did exist. In particular, delegates complained of full-time officials not having sufficient time whereas leaders felt a major problem was that full-time officials lacked familiarity with the issue. A substantial number of workgroup leaders cited conflict of interest as a major problem compared to the other steward types. Given that the use, perceptions of effectiveness and difficulties of working with full-time officials were substantially similar across the four role types it is not possible to conclude that the role definition of the steward is a key determinant in explaining the influence of the full-time union official in SECV industrial relations. Leadership style, however, was significantly related to whether a steward would accept the strategies proposed by full-time officials and represents an important factor concerning the degree of external influence at the workplace.

Conclusion

In order to understand why stewards adopt particular roles and to explain their behaviour it is necessary to examine and analyse the relationship stewards have with the major groups involved in workplace industrial relationships, namely the union membership, management personnel and full-time union officials. However, these relationships are dynamic and complex and it is not possible to capture the full impact of such relationships within one time period. Nevertheless, some important findings for the understanding of trade union organisation at the workplace can be made. Although some significant differences occurred between stewards based on the type of union they belonged to and their place of work, only the general differences between role types will be considered in this section.

The chapter commenced by examining what is probably the key relationship for the steward—that between the stewards and their members. This relationship was examined by focusing on the forms and range of interactions between stewards and members. Leader stewards were more likely than delegates to meet regularly with their members, to use a range of arguments when discussing issues with their members and to involve members in negotiations with management. In part, this is based on their belief that the members expect them to solve problems

and that by interacting frequently with members, discussion and feedback will occur which will aid them in meeting members' expectations. In this process they perceive more pressure from their members and in turn exert more pressure on members when in disagreement.

This more active role for the membership, as promoted by leaders, is related to leader stewards' views concerning unity and the need to develop a collective consciousness. It also relates to the leaders' belief that democratic decision making is an essential prerequisite for strong shop-floor leadership. Further, most leaders recognise that membership support will be an important factor in achieving a favourable outcome.

The relationships shop stewards have with management were then examined with a particular emphasis on the various ways management may give credence to the position of the steward. Leader stewards were found to concentrate their activities on developing a solid negotiating relationship whereas delegates tended to restrict their contacts to receiving advice. Leader type stewards (leaders and workgroup leaders) were more likely to by-pass their immediate supervisors when a dispute arose, than were the delegate type stewards. As well, leaders tended to perceive more attempts by management to influence their behaviour and felt management had different perceptions of their role to that perceived by delegates.

It is therefore clear that leadership style and orientation to unionism are useful predictors of the way stewards will develop their relationship with management. Delegate stewards' leadership style and their workgroup orientation means that they will tend to allow management to initiate discussions, for example, by providing the steward with information, rather than raising issues themselves. Leader stewards, on the other hand, with their strong emphasis on representative leadership and their commitment to the wider union movement, will concentrate on developing a good bargaining relationship. This is partly achieved by spending more time with management in informal discussions.

In the examination of the relationship between stewards and their union it was argued that the stewards' level of dependence on, and use of, full-time officials would be influenced by a number of factors and, in particular, the role definition adopted by the steward. However, the differences between the steward types were statistically significant in only one instance: leader stewards were more likely to accept the strategies proposed by full-time officials.

Underlying these relationships (and those considered in Chapter 6), is the fundamental issue of steward autonomy and the right to act independently of the other key parties involved in workplace industrial

relations. From the research it appears that leader stewards are able to accommodate the demands and complexities inherent in such relationships to a degree that is not achieved by the other steward types. Yet it is this type of stewards who are often portrayed as acting independently of other stewards and their union during times of stress and pressure. Are these relationships, therefore, maintained during periods of overt industrial conflict? This will be the specific focus of the following chapter.

8 Industrial action and shop stewards

By analysing the various ways by which shop stewards processed issues that arose at the workplace (Chapter 5), it was found that the majority of Latrobe Valley stewards had engaged in negotiations with management over a range of issues. What would happen if those negotiations failed to achieve the stewards' desired objectives? Specifically, do stewards initiate and/or encourage some form of industrial action? This chapter will focus on the involvement of shop stewards in industrial action, paying particular attention to the relationship between the stewards' role orientation and the part they play in strike action. Although a strike is only one of many forms of industrial action,[1] it does involve an observable commitment to the objectives being fought for and brings into focus the leadership role of the steward. The role orientations of the steward and the level of shop-floor organisation will, thus, become important explanatory variables. As Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel concluded:

> Strikes do not just happen. As a form of collective activity they require the development of a degree of unity amongst those involved. Such organisation is not only important once a strike has began [*sic*]; it is equally necessary in creating a stoppage of work. Particular individuals or groups are likely first to introduce the idea of a strike and then to persuade their fellows of the validity of this course of action. The mobilization of strike action, then, is a social process involving systems of influence and power. (1978:1)

In the mobilisation of strike action the role of individual stewards will vary considerably in terms of the goals being pursued and the strategies adopted. Before addressing these issues the degree of militancy of Latrobe Valley stewards and the forms of industrial action that are used will be examined. This will serve not only to place the

subsequent analysis of strike action in context but will also add to the profile of stewards presented in Chapter 4.

Militancy and forms of industrial action

As Allen suggested, the term militancy 'has a strong emotive connotation in the trade union movement' (1972:18). Most trade unionists, and shop stewards in particular, would see themselves as militant, although their degree of militancy, depending on the definition adopted, would vary. The concept of militancy has been defined in a variety of ways. Marsh and Evans referred to a range of activities designed to 'bring pressure on employers' (1973:202) whilst Griffin preferred to limit the concept of militancy to 'any collective action which prevents, hinders or delays the normal flow of production' (1985:xii). This latter definition has the effect of excluding action such as demonstrations, protests and other social action that do not, of themselves, affect the employer directly. Both the definitions rely on actual behaviour to construct a measure of militancy and, accordingly, disregard a potential on the part of the employees to engage in industrial action under certain circumstances. In this chapter, this broader approach will be adopted and the degree of militancy will be measured by asking stewards whether they felt workers would be justified in withdrawing their labour or using other forms of industrial action in specific circumstances.

The overwhelming majority of Latrobe Valley stewards agreed that industrial action was justified to achieve improvements in wages and conditions (86 per cent), to keep management from breaking agreements (94 per cent), to speed up delays by management in negotiations (88 per cent), to prevent unfair dismissals by management (94 per cent) and to influence the Industrial Relations Commission (70 per cent). On the basis of the stewards' responses an index was developed to measure a steward's level of militancy.[2] Stewards were accordingly able to be classified as militant or non-militant. In this context, a militant shop steward is one who feels workers are strongly justified in taking industrial action, whereas a non-militant shop steward, whilst supporting such action, is less committed to such a strategy.

On this basis the majority of blue-collar stewards (61 per cent) were classified as militant compared to 47 per cent of white-collar stewards. A minority of Loy Yang stewards were classified as militant (46 per cent compared to 57 per cent of Yallourn stewards and 55 per cent of Morwell stewards). The majority of all steward types

were classified as militant, with marginally more leader stewards being considered militant.

Whether stewards actually become involved in industrial action is, however, problematic. To explore this proposition, stewards were asked to list the forms of industrial action that had been used in their section since they became a steward. As shown in Table 8.1, work bans, stop work meetings and overtime bans were the most frequently cited form of industrial action. This lends support to the view of Rosenthal and Russ (1988:111) that 'the most serious hidden cost is the effect of work bans within the industry'. The threat to strike is also frequently mentioned although actual strike action is considerably lower. These results are similar to the situation found in the UK by McCarthy and Parker (1968:91).

Table 8.1 Forms of Industrial Action Used

Form of Action	Yes (%)	No (%)
Threats to strike (N=169)	61.5	38.5
Overtime bans (N=174)	71.8	28.2
Work to rule (N=164)	51.2	48.8
Work bans (N=180)	78.9	21.1
Go slows (N=144)	13.9	86.1
Stop work meetings (N=180)	73.9	26.1
Strikes (N=160)	41.9	58.1

Some important differences existed between blue- and white-collar stewards and the forms of industrial action. Blue-collar stewards were substantially more likely to have used threats to strike, work bans, go slows, stop work meetings and strikes than were their white-collar counterparts. The major difference was in the use of the strike. Only 25 per cent of white-collar stewards had been involved in strike action compared to 53 per cent of blue-collar stewards. Several reasons may explain this variation. First, as Hyman suggested, white-collar employees 'have often regarded a stoppage as ''unprofessional'' and hence illegitimate whatever the provocation' (1977:128). Second, as Turner (1963:3) noted, most professions have been able by their nature and position to have considerable control over their conditions of employment. Third, white-collar unions often do not possess a strong commitment to traditional trade union values. This may be due, according to Hyman, to the 'workers' identification with the values of higher managerial strata into which they aspire to achieve promotion' (1977:128). These factors are relevant to the SECV white-collar unions.

The MOA, the largest of the 'staff unions', does not have a tradition of militant action and ideology and in many cases its members occupy influential positions in management. Given these factors, it was not unexpected that the white-collar stewards' involvement in strike action would be less than that of their blue-collar counterparts.

Loy Yang stewards have generally been less involved in industrial action than their Morwell and Yallourn counterparts. This can be partly explained by their limited time as shop stewards and partly by the effectiveness of the particular forms of industrial action utilised at Loy Yang. The use of bans (overtime, permit and black bans) was higher at Loy Yang whilst the use of other forms of action was substantially lower. This illustrates the strategic power stewards can develop in a new, high technology power station and open cut mine. The inter-dependency of activities and the setting of deadlines to achieve operational status means that the application of bans has proved equally as effective as strike action.[3]

Stewards classified as militant were significantly more likely to have been involved in black bans and strike action than their less militant counterparts. These stewards were also more likely to have been involved in threats to strike and overtime bans. On two forms of industrial action—work to rule and go slows—non-militant stewards were more likely to represent sections where these tactics had been employed. It may well be that as these actions are less overt than bans and strikes they are seen by non-militant stewards as more reasonable forms of protest.

The forms of industrial action considered above are collective in nature and, as such, may bear a strong relationship with the frequency of stewards' attendance at various stewards' meetings. There was no significant relationship between the use of these forms of industrial action and the frequency of the stewards' attendance at inter-union steward meetings. However, when frequency of attendance at intra-union steward meetings is considered, a significant relationship appears with respect to the threat to strike, the use of overtime and work bans, and strike action. This lends support to the view that the value of inter-union shop steward meetings is reinforcement of trade union philosophy whilst the value of intra-union steward meetings relates more to the discussion of tactics and the development of strategies during periods of conflict.

Earlier, it was noted that leaders and delegates did not substantially differ in terms of their level of militancy. This was not the case with regard to involvement in industrial action. Table 8.2 clearly illustrates

that in all cases leader stewards were more likely to have been involved in industrial action than their delegate counterpart. An examination of these results also reveals that workgroup leaders were more likely to have been involved in industrial action than their delegate (and committed delegate) counterparts. This suggests that the leadership provided by the steward may be important in the adoption of industrial action. It must be remembered that these stewards, by modifying and/or squashing issues, may well be avoiding a situation that ultimately may have led to industrial action.

Table 8.2 Involvement in Industrial Action by Role Type

Form	Delegate %	Workgroup Leader %	Committed Delegate %	Leader %
Threat to strike (N=165)	48.9	69.4	53.8	74.4
Overtime bans (N=171)	60.9	71.1	72.1	84.1
Work to rule (N=161)	40.9	59.4	53.5	54.8
Work bans (N=177)	76.0	84.6	76.7	80.0
Go slow (N=142)	7.3	23.1	5.1	25.0
Stop work meetings (N=175)	65.3	76.9	66.7	88.9
Strikes (N=157)	31.1	44.8	36.6	54.8

Blue-collar, Yallourn, Morwell and leader stewards were found to be more likely to be involved in a variety of industrial action. Which form of industrial action is considered by shop stewards to be most effective? In particular, is the adoption of strike action, as a strategy, an indication of the effectiveness of the strike as a method to achieve certain objectives or is it a reflection of the maintenance of traditional practices? Only 37 per cent of all SECV stewards felt that strike action, in general, was the most effective industrial tactic. Some 41 per cent of stewards felt strikes, on the whole, were less effective than other strategies whilst the remaining stewards were unsure. Blue-collar and Yallourn stewards were marginally more likely to perceive strike action as the most effective strategy. Leader stewards were more likely to rate strike action as the least effective strategy whilst delegate stewards were more likely to perceive strike action as the most effective tactic. This is ironic given these stewards' greater use of strike action when compared to their delegate counterparts.

Strikes in the Latrobe Valley

Industrial action can take a variety of forms. As noted by Kerr it not only includes strikes, but also may take the form of 'peaceful bargaining and grievance handling, of boycotts, of political action, of restriction of output, of sabotage, of absenteeism, or of personnel turnover' (1964:171). The most conspicuous of these actions, particularly in the case of the Victorian power industry, is the strike, as this has wide ranging effects on industry and the general public throughout the state. This section will provide a brief profile of the extent and form of strike activity in the SECV's Latrobe Valley operations.[4]

One-third of all SECV stewards (N=68) had been involved in strike action during their period of stewardship, with blue-collar (42 per cent) and Yallourn stewards (37 per cent) being more likely to be involved in strike action.[5] Leaders (43 per cent) were also more likely to have been involved in strikes than delegates (25 per cent). Stewards who tended, as a matter of course, to by-pass their immediate supervisor during an industrial dispute are considerably more likely to have experienced strike action in their section. This is similar to the situation in the UK (McCarthy and Parker 1968:45) and raises the question as to whether these strikes are used as part of the bargaining process with more senior SECV management. As Dubin suggests: 'it is common in the press to characterize a strike as a breakdown in collective bargaining. However, on closer analysis it will be found to be a continuation of collective bargaining' (1958:208).

The strikes usually involved three issues: wages (including allowances and penalties), staffing (including redeployment) and demarcation issues. Wages were the primary concern of white-collar stewards, accounting for some 43 per cent of strike incidence. Blue-collar stewards were almost equally concerned with wages and staffing issues and together these issues accounted for 50 per cent of strikes. Other issues of importance to blue-collar stewards, although of negligible importance to white-collar stewards, were working conditions, health and safety and the allocation of overtime. Leaders and committed delegates cited wages as the major issue (24 per cent and 53 per cent) whilst workgroup leaders (39 per cent) and delegates (18 per cent) cited staffing as the most frequent issue leading to strike action. Clearly, the issues which have led to strike action range far wider than demands for better pay, and as Rosenthal and Russ (1988:12) conclude, 'have increased the complexity of industrial relations at the power stations'.

The majority of strikes (61 per cent) involved only members of one union and 86 per cent of all strikes involved three or less unions. Yallourn stewards, of all groups, were more likely to conduct single-union strike action (70 per cent of all strikes). Single-union strike action was also favoured by leaders (74 per cent) and committed delegates (73 per cent) which tends to run counter to their wider trade union orientation. Delegates were most likely to be involved in strike action that involved two or more unions (64 per cent).

The typical strike (62 per cent of all cases) involved less than 250 workers and this tended to be uniform across unions and workplaces. A similar pattern emerged when broken down by the four steward role types, although 50 per cent of delegates reported that their strikes had involved less than 30 workers. This compared with figures of 10 per cent (workgroup leaders), 20 per cent (committed delegates) and 12 per cent (leaders) and illustrates the isolated and sectional demands that these stewards are likely to pursue.

In the main the strikes were of short duration. Slightly more than half lasted for one day or less and in 84 per cent of all strikes a return to work occurred within two days. Duration of strikes was uniform across production centres, whilst 74 per cent of white-collar stewards reported strikes of one day's duration compared to 46 per cent of blue-collar stewards. Both committed delegates and leaders (64 per cent and 62 per cent respectively) were more likely to be involved in short strikes (one day or less). This is related to these stewards' preference for single-union action and is part of a wider strategy used to achieve their objectives. Delegates and workgroup leaders were more likely to be involved in strikes of two or more days' duration (50 per cent and 67 per cent respectively) which may be indicative of the lack of leadership provided by delegates or the workgroup leaders' lack of commitment to the broader aims of unionism. Only one in ten stewards reported a strike lasting ten or more days. These strikes involved only stewards from blue-collar unions and the Yallourn and Loy Yang production centres. Further, workgroup leaders were considerably more likely to be involved in strikes exceeding ten days than other steward types. These strikes tended to involve matters that directly affected their workgroup, in particular staffing issues, and this determination to protect the membership, often regardless of wider union considerations, underlies the reference by Batstone *et al.* (1977:35) to this group as 'cowboys'.

In summary, the majority of stewards surveyed had not been directly involved in strike action. Where stewards had been involved,

the strike was generally of short duration (one day or less), giving rise to the claim that the strike was not so much a test of strength but rather a means to show management, and perhaps the Industrial Relations Commission, the degree of seriousness with which the workgroup viewed the matters in dispute. Generally the strike would involve less than 250 workers, usually members of the one union and usually involved wages, staffing and shift penalties. This profile of strikes in the 1980s differs in some important respects from strikes in earlier periods (Holden and Iverson 1981). In particular, the number of strikes has declined[6] and, whilst the issue of wages is still important, issues such as staffing and redeployment, particularly following the closure of Yallourn C and D power stations and the commissioning of Loy Yang A power station, have become important. It is likely that these issues will remain important in the future as the SECV implements a new corporate strategy, a strategy based on efficiency and cost effectiveness.[7]

Mobilisation of strike action

Although major strike activity in the Latrobe Valley attracts considerable attention, primarily due to the possible state-wide implications, little is known about the role shop stewards play in this activity. Benson and Goff alluded to the stewards' key role when they claimed that a major characteristic of strikes in the Latrobe Valley 'has been the strong leadership at the shop-floor level' (1979:217).

Issue raising

Shop stewards are in a unique position to influence their membership by raising issues they think important and proposing strategies to win improvements in wages and conditions of employment. In the Latrobe Valley the stewards' position of influence has led SECV management to express the view that if strike action occurs then the stewards should be held responsible, either for inciting discontent or providing irresponsible leadership.[8] Although it disregards the part the membership plays during strike action, this view raises the question of whether shop stewards are the primary source of issues that ultimately lead to strike action. Of those stewards who had experienced a strike only 14 per cent of stewards claimed that in the last strike they had been the ones who brought the issue to the attention of the union. Of considerably more importance were the membership (58 per cent) and full-time union officials (28 per cent). When the issue arose from the membership it almost always tended to come from a group of members (95

per cent of cases) rather than an individual. Thus, before a steward is asked to process an issue, it is likely that the members have discussed the problem informally and have made a decision that the issue is of sufficient importance to take further. This is consistent with the findings of Turner, Clack and Roberts (1967:214) who suggested that stewards do not appear to stimulate and provoke disputes.

White-collar stewards perceived the initiators of issues to be a group of members (57 per cent) or Melbourne-based union officials (43 per cent). Blue-collar stewards also perceived the membership as an important source of issues (54 per cent), although Melbourne-based union officials were not seen as important (18 per cent). Other sources of issues, as perceived by blue-collar stewards, included shop stewards (18 per cent), local full-time officials (6 per cent) and individual members (4 per cent). Loy Yang stewards perceived only a group of members (71 per cent) and shop stewards (29 per cent) as the initiators of issues. This lends support to the argument advanced in Chapter 5 that in new, advanced technology workplaces, full-time union officials will play only a minor role in initiating and processing issues.

Due to the small number of stewards who claimed they, as stewards, had initiated the last dispute it was not possible to ascertain whether certain steward types were more likely to have raised issues that ultimately led to strike action. It is, however, possible to reach some tentative conclusions regarding the initiation of issues in general. The vast majority of delegates (75 per cent) perceived issues as arising from groups of members, and where shop stewards were seen as a significant source of disputes this tended to be by workgroup leaders and leaders. Further, Melbourne-based union officials were not seen by delegates as the source of any issues that led to strike action. Thus, delegate stewards are more likely to perceive that the issues they process arise from the membership, whereas leader stewards are more likely to perceive that they raise issues themselves and process issues raised by full-time union officials.

It is clear from the above, and also the discussion in Chapter 5, that shop stewards perceive the membership as the major source of issues that arise at the workplace. This is the case for issues that lead ultimately to strike action as well as for issues that may be solved by discussions between the steward and the supervisor.

Use of procedures

Most stewards usually follow procedures for the settling of industrial disputes (Chapter 5). Less than 2 per cent of stewards stated they would

rarely follow such procedures. However, that finding related to all forms of industrial action and may not be relevant to issues perceived as serious enough to warrant strike action. Stewards who had been involved in strike action were therefore asked whether all procedures within the SECV had been exhausted before the strike took place. Some 73 per cent of these stewards claimed that procedures had been exhausted prior to the strike. White-collar stewards were more likely to have exhausted procedure than their blue-collar counterparts (91 per cent compared to 69 per cent). This provides some support for the finding of Batstone *et al.* that 'proportionately more issues go through procedure on the staff side' (1977:245).

Some 93 per cent of committed delegates had worked through procedure compared to 71 per cent for workgroup leaders, 67 per cent for leaders and 64 per cent for delegates. This indicates that stewards who adopt a leadership role are not more likely to disregard procedural arrangements. It suggests that other factors, such as the unions' attitude to the strike, may be important in a steward's decision to work through procedures.

This raises the question, was the strike sanctioned by the union? This is an important consideration for stewards as it may place them in conflict between the wishes of their workgroup and their own union representative role. Some 73 per cent of these stewards claimed the strike was sanctioned by the central union. Normally, union approval for strike action would only be given once all procedures had been exhausted. This was the case in 86 per cent of all strikes approved by the union. Stewards from white-collar unions and from the Morwell production centre were more likely to undertake strike action that did not have the official approval of their union. Also, a slightly higher percentage of delegates had undertaken strike activity not sanctioned by their union when compared to leaders.

It is clear, then, that Latrobe Valley stewards generally do work through procedures and seek approval from their union before engaging in strike action. This supports the proposition advanced by the Donovan Commission in the UK that 'it is often wide of the mark to describe shop stewards as ''trouble makers''. Trouble is thrust upon them. In circumstances of this kind they may be striving to bring some order into a chaotic situation and management may rely heavily on their efforts to do so' (1968:28–9). In those cases where procedures were not followed, the reasons discussed earlier—slow and cumbersome procedures, supervisor opposition—are partial explanations. One other explanation, at least for a very small number of strikes, was that the

union had approved of strike action even though the procedure had not been exhausted. Slightly less than half of these strikes that occurred prior to procedures being exhausted had been officially approved by the union. This provides a justification for shop stewards to terminate procedures for more visible and speedier methods.

The strike decision

Steward leadership depends, to a considerable degree, on the support of the membership. This is particularly the case during periods of stress, such as industrial action, and hence it would be expected that the membership would play a key role in the decision to take strike action. This proved to be the case. Some 88 per cent of stewards who had been involved in a strike reported that the decision to take strike action was made at a meeting of members. This was more likely when more than one union was involved. Normally a vote would be taken at these meetings, usually by a show of hands, after an opportunity to participate in the discussion was given to members. A slightly smaller number of stewards (76 per cent) felt the decision to take industrial action should be made at a meeting of members. This difference is indicative of the control the membership can exert over their representatives. Only in 6 per cent of strikes was the decision taken at a shop stewards' meeting. It is thus clear that the 'democratic decisions by members are major constraints upon the activities of both stewards and members' (Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel 1977:92). Nevertheless it is important to recognise that stewards have the ability, and are in a position, particularly in concert with other stewards, to direct the way matters are presented and hence to influence the final outcomes.

Whilst most blue- and white-collar stewards reported that decisions to take strike action were made at membership meetings, the remaining blue-collar stewards nominated shop steward or local branch meetings, whereas the remaining white-collar stewards nominated state and federal union meetings. Yallourn stewards were the only stewards to state that some strike decisions were made outside of the Latrobe Valley. Certainly part of the explanation of this finding lies in the history of the continual struggle for control over the Yallourn membership by some state and federal unions.

Strike organisation

Once strike action has been agreed upon, what role do stewards play in the conduct of the strike? In particular, are senior stewards and/or

full-time union officials involved from the outset and who are the key people in the day-to-day organisation of the strike? A number of shop stewards in the Latrobe Valley have assumed positions of seniority on the shop-floor. These have been referred to as senior stewards. They may occupy positions such as convenors of intra and/or inter-union shop committees, positions within the branch/union hierarchy or they may, due to their seniority, personality or ability, be looked upon by fellow stewards as the next level in the shop-floor structure. Their advice, guidance and assistance are frequently sought on a range of matters. Is this the case when strike action is imminent? Of the stewards who had been involved in strike action, some 61 per cent reported that a senior steward had been involved. A higher percentage of stewards, 75 per cent, reported that a full-time union official had been involved prior to strike action. In this circumstance, in the majority of cases the full-time official became involved at the beginning of the dispute prior to a consideration of strike action. The high percentage of strike action involving full-time officials, coupled with the strike usually being sanctioned by the union, weakens the argument that is often advanced that Latrobe Valley stewards act independently of their unions (Darroch and Armstrong 1977:16–21).

Blue-collar stewards were marginally more likely to send for a senior steward prior to the strike than were their white-collar counterparts. These stewards were also more likely to make the decision to involve full-time officials at the beginning of the dispute than were their white-collar counterparts who tended to involve these officials just prior to the actual strike taking place. These findings illustrate the strategy adopted by stewards concerning the involvement of 'others'. Blue-collar stewards, if they are to involve full-time officials, will involve them from the outset. If they choose to go it alone and subsequently 'the going gets tough' they are unlikely to shift responsibility to full-time officials. White-collar stewards, on the other hand, would not seemingly wish to undertake strike action without the assistance of their paid officials. This approach by white-collar stewards also reduces the possibility that full-time officials will perceive their power and authority being eroded by the action of local shop stewards. This perception has, at times, created difficulties for stewards from blue-collar unions.

Loy Yang stewards were considerably more likely to involve a senior steward prior to undertaking strike action than were Yallourn and Morwell stewards. However, they were less likely to involve full-time officials, either at the beginning of a dispute or just prior to

undertaking strike action. Only 50 per cent of Loy Yang stewards would involve a full-time official prior to strike action (including at the beginning of the dispute) compared to 67 per cent and 90 per cent for Yallourn and Morwell stewards. The high percentage of Morwell stewards who involve a full-time official partly reflects the higher concentration of white-collar stewards at that centre. Coupled with the findings relevant to the use of senior stewards, this result suggests that to a limited degree the use of a senior steward or full-time official are seen by stewards as alternatives. Where inter-union steward organisation is strong the senior steward is most likely to be sent for, whilst in sections where organisation is weak the full-time official will play a key role. The reverse applies to intra-union steward organisation. Where this is strong stewards tend to go directly to full-time officials; where intra-union organisation is weak stewards are more likely to call on the assistance of a senior steward. Whilst these results can be explained, for example, if stewards meet regularly with stewards from their own union the next step would be the involvement of a full-time official, they do indicate the complex nature of the decision to involve 'others' in strike action.

Delegate stewards were more likely to involve senior stewards and full-time officials, the latter at the beginning of the dispute and just prior to strike action, than were their leader counterparts. Leader stewards tended to handle the organisation of events leading to strike action themselves rather than involve significant 'others'. As shown in Table 8.3, committed delegates were the most likely to involve senior stewards and full-time officials before strike action took place. This may

Table 8.3 Involvement of Senior Stewards and Full-Time Union Officials in Strike Action by Role Type

Involvement	Delegate %	Workgroup Leader %	Committed Delegate %	Leader %
Senior steward				
—prior to strike action	55.6	58.3	83.3	50.0
Full-time union official				
—beginning of dispute	50.0	50.0	57.1	36.4
—prior to strike action	12.5	25.0	42.9	9.1

be explained by their desire to take a wider perspective of the issue whilst simultaneously not seeking a leadership role. It appears, therefore, that leadership style may well be a moderating variable in this respect.

Once a group of workers has decided on strike action, either as a workgroup or as part of a larger group of union members, who are the key organisers of the strike? In particular, who arranges meetings, reports progress to members, decides on strategy and negotiates with management? Another factor to be considered that is more pervasive and more difficult to identify, is the development of the social cohesion necessary to maintain strike action. Nevertheless, by their actions, certain steward types promote unity between stewards and with their membership.

Interviews with stewards and full-time officials indicated there were five groups of officials that could play important roles in the organisation of strike action. These were senior stewards/local branch officials,[9] a shop stewards' committee, the local full-time union official, officials from the GTLC and state union officials. The participation of these officials was clearly illustrated during the lengthy maintenance workers' strike in 1977 (Benson and Goff 1979). Well in excess of half the stewards stated that senior stewards/local branch officials/shop steward committees and state union officials played key roles in the organisation of the dispute. Local full-time officials were seen as less significant, and were considered important by less than half of the stewards. This result is surprising as two-thirds of the stewards involved full-time officials in disputes and usually accepted the strategies proposed by them (78 per cent). It may be that their failure to prevent the issue going to strike action (either by failing in negotiations or recommending inappropriate strategies) may have resulted in stewards taking the issue into their own hands or referring it to more senior officials.

GTLC officials were not considered important, with only 27 per cent of stewards claiming these officials played a key role in the organisation of the strike. The changing composition of the GTLC and the wider representation it provides for unions in the Latrobe Valley (see Chapter 6), has meant that the key officials may no longer work for the SECV. The shop stewards in the SECV, as a consequence, may not perceive these officials as appropriate to involve in SECV industrial issues. Also, the GTLC officials would only be involved if the issue concerned matters of union principles or several unions where a co-ordinating role may be requested.[10]

The frequency of involvement of each of these groups depended, in part, on the issues under consideration. GTLC and state union officials were more likely to be involved if the issue concerned wages and conditions. Given the sensitivity to wage relativities in the SECV's Latrobe Valley operations this finding was not unexpected. Senior shop stewards and local branch officials tended to be involved in demarcation disputes and health and safety issues whilst, predictably, inter-union steward committees would not become involved if the issue was one of demarcation.

Two important differences existed between blue- and white-collar stewards' forms of strike organisation. First, blue-collar stewards were substantially more likely to involve senior stewards/local branch officials and GTLC officials than were their white-collar counterparts. Second, white-collar stewards were more likely to involve a shop steward committee, a local full-time official and state union officials compared to their blue-collar colleagues. It is clear that the major difference between stewards from blue- and white-collar unions can be characterised by a desire on the part of blue-collar stewards to keep the dispute local and preferably in the hands of those most closely involved. White-collar stewards are more willing to pass on or refer issues to full-time union officials, both at the local and state level. This partly represents the degree to which external influences can play a role in strike activity.

Some differences were evidenced between the stewards' perceptions of the involvement of these five groups when broken down by production centres. Morwell stewards were more likely to involve the local full-time union official in their strike organisation (73 per cent compared to 29 per cent of Yallourn stewards and 33 per cent of Loy Yang stewards). This finding is related to the over-representation of white-collar stewards at that centre and the proximity of full-time officials to that site. It may also reflect the finding that half of the Morwell stewards participated in strikes that involved more than one union (30 per cent for Yallourn and 42 per cent for Loy Yang) and, as a consequence, necessitated co-ordination at a higher level. These stewards were also more likely to involve state union officials. Loy Yang stewards had not involved GTLC officials, but this was primarily due to the major unions at Loy Yang (FEDFA, MOA, AIMPE) not being affiliated with the GTLC or having affiliated very recently.

Leader type stewards relied almost exclusively on senior stewards/local branch officials and shop stewards' committees, whereas delegates—although relying heavily on steward committees—also relied

on state union officials, local full-time officials and senior stewards/local branch officials. Committed delegates and workgroup leaders relied substantially on all these groups, with the exception of GTLC officials, to play a significant role in the organisation of the strike. These results show that the leader steward can be characterised as organising strike action with the minimum involvement from outside the workgroup, and when 'outside' assistance is required the leader tended to look to fellow stewards, either individually or collectively in the form of a committee. Full-time officials, for these stewards, have little relevance in strike organisation. This approach very clearly assists in the maintenance of solidarity between stewards and the membership as a whole and reinforces these stewards' leadership position.

Strategy development

To maintain a strike requires a certain level of organisation at the shop-floor level. However, whilst this organisation is a necessary condition to maintain strike action it is not sufficient alone. Of prime importance to achieving the objectives underlying the strike is the development of appropriate strategies and the following through of these strategies in the negotiation process. The role of stewards in proposing strategy and their participation in negotiations will now be examined, though it should be noted that management and/or full-time union officials may deliberately attempt to exclude shop-floor representatives from the negotiations. Also, these negotiations may take place under the auspices of the Industrial Relations Commission via conciliation hearings and compulsory conferences. In recent years many of these hearings have been held on-site, thereby enabling many stewards to play a direct role in the negotiations and increasing the likelihood of the final outcome being accepted by the membership.[11]

In general, full-time union officials were seen by some 46 per cent of the stewards as the key proposers of strategy during industrial disputes.[12] A further 36 per cent of stewards nominated other stewards (either individual stewards, senior stewards or steward committees) and 18 per cent nominated the membership. Over half the stewards (62 per cent) who nominated stewards as the key proposers of strategy felt individual stewards were more important than collective bodies. Substantial differences existed between blue- and white-collar stewards in their perceptions of the proposers of strategy. For white-collar stewards full-time officials were of key importance, whereas for blue-collar stewards the stewards themselves were important. These results reflect the findings of Batstone *et al.* Batstone and his colleagues also found that

staff stewards were more likely to accept strategies proposed by full-time officials than were the shop-floor stewards (1977:197–8). This was not the case in this study although the difference between blue- and white-collar stewards was not statistically significant (see also Chapter 7).

A major point of agreement between blue- and white-collar stewards is that in the substantial majority of cases the members do not propose the strategies to be adopted in industrial disputes. Although strike action may require a greater commitment from the members, interviews with stewards did not suggest the membership would play a more active role in the development of strike strategies. As was to be expected, perceptions of Morwell stewards tended to reflect the concentration of white-collar stewards at that centre, whilst Loy Yang stewards had a higher percentage of stewards proposing strategies during industrial disputes, indicating their preference to organise industrial action independently of full-time union officials.

A similar picture also emerged with leader type stewards. As shown in Table 8.4, leaders were more likely to perceive shop stewards (individually and collectively) as the key proposers of strategy during an industrial dispute, than were their delegate counterparts. To a limited degree, these perceptions will reflect the part each steward plays in the actual development of strategy. In contrast, delegate stewards perceived full-time union officials and union members as the major proposers of strategy. Workgroup leaders and committed delegates tended, in their perceptions, to follow their leader counterparts.

Table 8.4 Proposers of Strategy During Industrial Disputes by Role Type

Proposer	Delegate %	Workgroup Leader %	Committed Delegate %	Leader %
Full-time officials	58.0	45.5	38.1	40.9
Members	24.0	13.6	16.7	15.9
Shop stewards	10.0	20.5	26.2	31.8
Senior stewards	2.0	2.3	2.4	—
Steward committee	6.0	18.2	16.7	11.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	50	44	42	44

It is clear, then, that stewards within the SECV play a key role in the development of strategy and the articulation of such strategy to the membership. Ultimately membership support will be needed if the recommended strategies are to be implemented. This support will not always be forthcoming and the membership retains the right to reject proposals advanced by the stewards. In the lengthy maintenance workers' strike referred to earlier there existed clear illustrations of both support and opposition to the stewards' preferred strategy. For example, key stewards were able to convince the membership that carriage of the dispute should be vested in local groups (GTLC and the combined shop stewards' committee) and taken away from the Victorian Trades Hall Council. On the other hand, the membership, on at least one occasion, rejected the stewards' recommendations to return to work. The lesson from that dispute is that where the membership has been closely involved in all aspects of the dispute (decision making, organisation, negotiations) it is less likely that the members will reject strategy developed by stewards or, indeed, full-time union officials.

Negotiations

The development of strategy during industrial disputes, in particular strike action, is an ongoing and dynamic process. Strategy can also be developed during the negotiation process, both during adjournments in negotiations and during the negotiations themselves. Coupled with the development of strategies during negotiations is the likelihood that compromises will have to be made if a settlement is to be reached. Accordingly, the importance of the role of the steward can be gauged by the steward's participation in the process of negotiations. Key negotiators during strike action were found to be senior stewards (59 per cent), shop steward committees (66 per cent), local full-time union officials (59 per cent) and central union officials (67 per cent). Of considerably less importance were members of peak union councils; the GTLC (22 per cent) and the VTHC/Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) (41 per cent).[13] The GTLC and the VTHC/ACTU would only become involved in major issues such as overall wages and conditions, protracted strikes or strikes involving several unions. Central union officials tended to be involved in those strikes concerning wages and conditions, staffing (particularly staffing issues relating to the closure of Yallourn C and D power stations) and shift work. Shop stewards, either individually or collectively, tended to negotiate more frequently on such matters as health and safety, and demarcation

issues. Overtime issues were, in the main, left to the local full-time union official.

Over two-thirds of blue-collar stewards saw a major role in negotiations for senior stewards. No white-collar steward perceived such a role for these stewards. Similar differences in the stewards' perception occurred with a role for GTLC officials (26 per cent of blue-collar stewards compared to no white-collar stewards) and VTHC/ACTU officials (46 per cent and 20 per cent respectively). White-collar stewards perceived shop steward committees (86 per cent compared to 61 per cent of blue-collar stewards), local full-time officials (78 per cent compared to 52 per cent) and state union officials (75 per cent and 64 per cent) as the key negotiators during a strike. The implication to be drawn from these figures is that blue-collar stewards will tend to keep the shop-floor involved in negotiations as long as possible. However, if the need arises they will involve a range of 'others' in the negotiations. White-collar stewards, on the other hand, will tend to negotiate through a stewards' committee whilst at the same time involve local and state union officials.

Loy Yang stewards, consistent with their desire to handle matters themselves, would normally negotiate through a senior steward and in the majority of cases rejected the involvement of all others. Morwell stewards tended to conform to the pattern observed for white-collar stewards, whilst Yallourn stewards tended to use a range of negotiators depending on the circumstances. This reflects the traditions that have built up over time; that is, Yallourn stewards were not adverse to calling on a range of people to represent them in negotiations if the need arose. This strategy, they argued, is more likely to achieve the objectives being sought.

As shown in Table 8.5, for leader stewards in general, the key negotiators were senior stewards and to a lesser extent central union officials and members of the shop committee. For delegate stewards the key negotiators were local union officials, members of the shop committee and central union officials. Workgroup leaders rated highly senior stewards and members of a stewards' committee, thus illustrating their desire to keep the issue confined to their workgroup. Committed delegates tended to rely heavily on local and central union officials and officials from the peak councils for the conduct of negotiations. These results show that stewards, either individually or collectively, played a key role in the negotiations with management over issues that led to strike action.

Table 8.5 Key Negotiators During Strike Action by Role Type

Negotiators	Delegate		Workgroup Leader		Committed Delegate		Leader	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Senior stewards	4	50.0	4	66.7	2	50.0	7	70.0
Steward committee	6	75.0	6	85.7	5	71.4	5	41.7
Local union officials	7	77.8	3	60.0	4	66.7	4	40.0
GTLC officials	1	16.7	1	20.0	2	50.0	1	14.3
State union officials	5	62.5	7	70.0	7	100.0	5	50.0
VTHC/ACTU officials	2	28.6	3	42.9	4	80.0	3	33.3

Return to work

Clearly all strikes within the SECV ultimately end with a resumption of work. How and by whom is the decision to return to work made? This decision may be made during the strike, although often the decision to strike is accompanied by a firm proposal to limit strike action. Strike action can be taken to illustrate to management the seriousness of the claim and the resolve of the membership. In these cases the initial strike may last only for a limited period: until the end of the shift or perhaps twenty-four hours. Rarely have strikes been undertaken without a definite period being specified. A motion for an indefinite strike would have trouble gaining membership support, particularly following the events of the 1977 maintenance workers' strike.[14] Further, the success of other forms of action, in particular work bans (black, overtime and permit) would lead the membership to argue for the adoption of these measures rather than an indefinite stoppage.

In the majority of strikes (88 per cent) the decision to take strike action was made by members. It would therefore be expected that the membership would be equally involved in the decision to return to work. This proved to be the case, with 89 per cent of stewards who had been involved in strike action reporting that the decision to return to work was made at a meeting of members. The remaining stewards reported the decision was made at shop stewards' meetings, local branch meetings or by their unions' state or federal committee of management. In these cases the strikes tended to be of short duration, often one day or less. Slightly more blue-collar stewards reported the decision was taken at a meeting of members than did white-collar stewards.[15]

Almost equal percentages of delegates, committed delegates and leaders reported the decision to return to work was made by the membership. A substantial although smaller number of workgroup leaders also suggested this avenue, thus raising again the question of these

stewards' commitment to their members. It would appear that regardless of the leadership style adopted by the steward, the workgroup will ultimately make the decision to return to work. This is consistent with Broad's suggestion that 'leadership styles adopted by shop stewards, while influenced by a range of factors, are critically dependent on the expression of opinion by the workgroup itself' (1983:66).

Of equal importance to the stewards' leadership style is the pressure placed on members to return to work. This pressure can take a variety of forms[16] and can come from fellow shop stewards, full-time union officials, other unions and management. Management (59 per cent) and union officials (30 per cent) were seen as the major source of pressure. Little pressure to return to work came from fellow stewards and other unions. The only difference in the source of this pressure, when broken down by type of union, was that white-collar stewards were substantially more likely to perceive this pressure coming from union officials (55 per cent of white-collar stewards compared to 23 per cent of blue-collar stewards). Loy Yang stewards perceived no pressure on members from union officials, although along with Yallourn stewards they perceived more pressure from management than did Morwell stewards.

Once having made the decision to take strike action,[17] and having gone on strike, do workers readily accept a decision to return to work? Just under half the stewards (49 per cent) reported that their members fully agreed with the decision to return to work, with another 37 per cent of stewards feeling their members, in general, agreed. However, 14 per cent of stewards were unsure of how their members felt, although no stewards reported any disagreement from their members. A slightly higher percentage of blue-collar and Loy Yang stewards felt their members fully agreed with the decision. The source of the decision to end the strike cannot be used as a predictor of the memberships' acceptance of the decision. For example, where the decision was made at a membership meeting only 46 per cent of stewards felt the members fully accepted that decision. Where the decision was made elsewhere—stewards' meeting, branch meeting, state and federal management committees—70 per cent of stewards felt the members fully supported such a decision. A significantly higher percentage of leaders and workgroup leaders perceived their membership to be fully behind the decision to return to work when compared to delegates and committed delegates. This finding suggests the influence of stewards' leadership is important in this regard. If the case for a return to work is well presented and stewards have used the strike to achieve an outcome that

is satisfactory then the membership will be more willing to accept such a decision.

In general, therefore, the decision to return to work was most often made by the membership. Leadership style and orientation to unionism did not alter the substance of this finding. Although not expected, this finding is nevertheless important. In the Latrobe Valley operations of the SECV it is clearly the membership that determines the adoption and termination of strike action. It should, however, be pointed out that stewards can and do influence these decisions. As Batstone *et al.* argued: 'the very idea of steward leadership involves an ability both to undertake certain courses of action without direct resort to the membership and to influence membership attitudes' (1977:99). There is, however, a limit to this independence. Strike action and a return to work is one such activity that clearly relies on the support of the membership.

Strike efficacy and the role of the steward

For workers to undertake strike action they must, as Hyman suggests, 'perceive this as an effective solution to their predicament' (1977:129). This is also the case for shop stewards. How did the perception of the value of strike action and the actual outcomes compare? Slightly more than three-quarters of the stewards who had been involved in strike action (77 per cent) felt that it had achieved a more favourable settlement. This result is similar to the findings of McCarthy and Parker (1968:46) in the UK. Some 15 per cent of stewards felt that no benefit was gained by strike action and a further 8 per cent of stewards were unsure. There was little difference in the level of satisfaction with the outcome between those stewards who felt strikes to be the most effective form of industrial action and those who felt strikes were less effective than other forms of industrial action.

All white-collar stewards felt strike action helped to achieve a better outcome. This may be explained by the strategic position occupied by white-collar workers within the SECV and by the general reluctance of white-collar unionists to take strike action. Thus, the decision to strike is accompanied by a thorough assessment of the likelihood of gaining an improved result. The equivalent percentage of blue-collar stewards was 73 per cent. No Loy Yang steward felt that strike action achieved a less favourable settlement, although some 14 per cent were unsure; 83 per cent of Morwell stewards felt strike action to be effective

although this result may reflect the higher concentration of white-collar stewards at this centre.

Four-fifths of leaders and committed delegates felt strikes were instrumental in achieving a better outcome. This compared to 73 per cent of delegates and 71 per cent of workgroup leaders. On this basis it would appear that a relationship exists between orientation to unionism and the perceived value of strike action. It may be that stewards who are committed to the principles of unionism are also committed to the traditional belief that strike action is the most potent of the available industrial weapons.

In the conduct of the strike what was the role of each steward? Collectively, this question has been addressed in terms of the stewards' role in the organisation of the strike and the ensuing negotiations. Stewards were also asked to state, in their own words, what was their individual role throughout the strike. Some 23 per cent of stewards stated they played no role whatever in the dispute. This may not always be the desired role of the steward. As one FEDFA steward, with ten years' experience and a member of the local branch committee, commented in disgust: 'I sat on my bum'. A considerable number of stewards (20 per cent) provided information to their members and a lesser number (13 per cent) helped in the organisational aspects of the dispute. The comments of an MOA steward with seven years' experience were typical: 'I provided information to the organiser, kept members informed, ensured their interests were protected, kept other shop stewards in our union, but in other areas, informed of our progress and provided support to the organiser at the negotiation table'. Not all stewards played a supportive role. One BLF steward with ten years' experience commented: 'I resigned for a short while because I couldn't accept a recommendation to return to work empty handed. I spoke against tactics at mass meetings'. The major role of nearly half the stewards (45 per cent) was involvement in the actual negotiations of the terms of settlement. The following comment of an MOA steward with two years' experience was representative: 'in conjunction with the other stewards I negotiated a satisfactory result and guidelines in the form of agreement for the future'. There was no evidence to suggest the more experienced stewards played a more active role in the conduct of the strike.

As expected, a slightly higher percentage of white-collar stewards played no role compared to their blue-collar counterparts. More blue-collar stewards were involved in negotiations (47 per cent compared

to 36 per cent of white-collar stewards). Loy Yang stewards were substantially more likely to have been involved in negotiations (71 per cent) compared to Morwell and Yallourn stewards (39 per cent and 42 per cent). In addition, Morwell stewards were also more likely to adopt a passive role when compared to their Yallourn and Loy Yang colleagues. Once again, these results confirm the more active role of the Loy Yang steward.[18] As suggested earlier, the establishment of an entirely new production centre may be an impetus to the development of a strong shop-floor industrial relations system.

Table 8.6 shows leaders were more likely to be actively involved in the conduct of a strike than were delegates. Rarely would a leader, or workgroup leader, not play some role during a strike. Usually this would involve being part of the negotiating team, but their involvement would not stop there. For example, as one leader steward, an AMWU member with forty-one years' experience as a shop steward, commented: 'I was active in the negotiations, raising money for the strike relief fund and keeping the media informed'. Another leader, an ETU member with ten years' experience as a shop steward, although not involved in the negotiations, 'attended picket lines, union meetings, and helped with the distress fund and distribution of food parcels'. On the other hand, about two out of every five delegate type stewards played no role at all. Nevertheless, it is clear that a sizeable proportion of all steward types do play an active role during a strike. It is important to note that leader stewards, including workgroup leaders, are more likely to be involved in informing their members of the progress of negotiations. This is seen as an important role as they will, at some stage, require the support of their membership.

Table 8.6 Function of Steward During Strike Action by Role Type

Function	Delegate	Workgroup Leader	Committed Delegate	Leader
	%	%	%	%
No function	36.4	9.1	41.7	5.0
Informing members	18.2	27.3	—	30.0
Organisational role	—	18.2	25.0	10.0
Negotiating	45.5	45.5	33.3	55.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	11	11	12	20

Conclusion

In seeking to explain the role of the shop steward in industrial action this chapter has examined the forms of industrial conflict used and the part played by shop stewards in strike action. A variety of industrial action had been used; the most frequent, being work bans, stop-work meetings and overtime bans. Generally, stewards followed procedures and only took strike action as a last resort. A detailed examination of strike activity shows that although less than half of the stewards had been involved in strikes, the membership was the major determinant of the issues that led to the strike and of the procedures adopted. Differences were found to exist between white- and blue-collar stewards and stewards from the three production centres. Of particular importance was the finding that stewards at Loy Yang, a new production centre, tended to handle issues themselves rather than involve 'others'. The speed at which steward organisation has developed at Loy Yang can be related to the advanced technology employed, the strategic power of the unions and the uniqueness of the problems experienced.

The theoretical framework adopted in this study proved to be of value when analysing industrial action. In general, leader stewards—those stewards who adopt a leadership role and who are strongly oriented to unionism—were found to behave quite differently to their delegate counterparts. In particular, leader stewards were more likely to have been involved in industrial action, but they also tended to exhaust procedures before resorting to such action. Whilst the membership was perceived to have raised the issues that ultimately led to strike action, leader stewards would also raise such issues. Leaders were also more likely to involve the membership in the decision to take strike action, be more actively involved in the organisational aspects of the strike, including developing strategies and negotiating with management, and were equally likely to involve their members in the decision to terminate strike action.

During industrial action leaders were more likely to attempt to keep the shop-floor in control of the dispute. In most cases this appeared to be in accord with union policy although some unions prefer to handle all issues centrally. The leaders, with their strong orientation to unionism, were less likely to undertake industrial action without getting approval from their union. Whilst advice and involvement of full-time officials were welcomed by leaders, they preferred to maintain a close involvement in the dispute. Delegates, once having referred an issue

to 'others', tended to consider that action marked the end of their responsibilities.

This finding highlights two major problems with the way delegates handle disputes. First, it means that 'outsiders' (usually from Melbourne) were negotiating in isolation from the environment, local feeling, and custom and practice. Second, any agreement ran the risk of not gaining the necessary commitment from the membership, as evidenced with the outcome of negotiations in 1980 concerning the introduction of a 37½ hour week/9 day fortnight. Many aspects of this agreement, reached by negotiations between the Victorian government, SECV, ACTU, VTHC and the various SECV unions, were subsequently found to be difficult, if not impossible, to enforce on the membership.[19]

Thus, by adopting a leadership role and maintaining a commitment to unionism, stewards were more likely to reach agreements with management that would have the backing of the membership. These agreements were achieved by leader stewards keeping negotiations close to the shop-floor, working through procedure and gaining union approval for industrial action.

9 Conclusion and implications

The main concern of this book has been to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of trade union organisation and activity at the workplace. Focusing attention at this level raises a number of questions concerning the role of the shop steward within a centralised industrial relations system and the factors that might explain variations in stewards' behaviour. In this chapter the basic argument underpinning this study is reviewed in the context of the research findings and the implications of these findings in gaining an understanding of trade union activities at the workplace are assessed.

Review of argument

In asking the question whether there was a role for shop stewards in a centralised arbitral industrial relations system, it is recognised that this role will depend, to a large degree, on what definition is adopted for stewardship and what activities are examined. Primarily, the literature places the stewards' role in the context of relationships between stewards and their members, union and management. Any one of these definitions will have some utility, depending on the perspective and position of the defining party. This is illustrated in the representative role generally prescribed for stewards by full-time union officials. Nevertheless, to limit the definition of stewardship to any one of these three relationships would deny the various sources of power and authority which define such positions. In a formal sense, there is little doubt that most Australian unions, via union rules and policy, have attempted to restrict the stewards' range of activities. Management has tended to extend this role via, as Brown (1973:98–9) suggested, errors

of commission or errors of omission. Yet clearly a degree of power resides with individual union members who may, at various times, demand that their steward adopts a particular stance. These demands may gradually be cultivated by the steward to create an interdependancy between the steward and the membership.

It was therefore argued that to understand trade union organisation at the workplace it was necessary to adopt a multi-faceted view of the stewards' role, one that would accommodate the complexities inherent in the various relationships and would recognise both the formal and informal sources of steward power. This argument was supported by the review of the limited literature available on Australian trade union workplace organisation. This literature demonstrated that in a number of industries and workplaces shop stewards have performed a wide variety of functions which, in most cases, extended well beyond any formal rights conferred on them via union rules, management regulations or award provisions.

Yet it was also clear from this literature that stewards varied in the range and extent of activities undertaken. This variation was most obvious between industries and between workplaces, but was also seen between stewards within the one workplace. What factors could explain such variations? The Australian literature, although substantially underdeveloped in this area, suggested a number of factors such as union rules and attitudes of full-time officials, management ideology and attitudes, the influence of the centralised arbitration system, certain characteristics of the workplace and particular characteristics of the steward.

It was argued that the effect of these factors on workplace union organisation and steward behaviour was problematic. Furthermore, given the reliance on formal institutions and rules it was contended that future research must accommodate both the formal and less formal aspects of a steward's role. Only in this way will the totality of the role be revealed.

Given the paucity of research in Australia it was necessary to examine the overseas literature to develop theoretical perspectives to guide the research. Whilst it was recognised that industrial relations in Australia and other countries such as the UK differ substantially, there are two reasons that make such a review meaningful for the study of Australian workplace trade union organisation. First, although industrial relations at the macro level may differ there exists a number of similarities at the workplace level, such as local branch union organisation, workplace representation, informal levels of authority and negotiations

with management. Second, the volume of research that has been conducted on workplace trade union organisation overseas, in particular in the UK, and the attempts to locate this research within theoretical frameworks, will provide important directions to Australian researchers. Even a cursory examination of the emerging Australian literature revealed that the British experience, in particular, has already begun to provide an intellectual reference point for Australian scholars (Taylor 1979; Davis 1980; Dufty 1980 and Rimmer 1983).

Following a review of theoretical frameworks developed in the US and the UK, and a consideration of the debate surrounding such approaches, a typology was developed based primarily on the work of Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel (1977), but modified to take into account the subsequent criticisms of their work. It was argued that this model would be able to explain, at least in part, the variations in the behaviour of stewards in the workplace.

The results of the questionnaire survey and interviews with shop stewards, union officials and management personnel made it clear that, in the Latrobe Valley operations of the SECV, shop stewards play a significant role in industrial relations at the workplace. This role included a substantial level of bargaining over wage and non-wage issues, the development of internal shop-floor organisations, the active participation in a range of activities related to industrial action, interaction with union members and management as well as liaison with external groups such as full-time union officials and central trade union bodies. At least for the Latrobe Valley stewards, the conventional wisdom concerning the role of the shop steward must therefore be re-evaluated. This belief concerning limited union activity at the workplace is generally based on the restrictions placed on stewards by union rules, the reluctance of full-time officials to widen the scope of steward activities and the preoccupation in academic research with the formal industrial relations institutions. Nevertheless, the sources of stewards' authority and power are much wider than suggested by the union rulebook (see Chapter 2). It is these sources of power coupled with a range of historical, social and institutional factors, including the strategic nature of the industry, that have created an environment in the Latrobe Valley where a high level of shop-floor activity has become the norm. The view that this level of workplace industrial relations could not occur simultaneously with a reliance on and a commitment to a system of compulsory arbitration must, therefore, be rejected.

Having demonstrated the level of shop steward activity, the second objective was to establish whether shop stewards defined their role

differently. A model based on the stewards' orientation to unionism and leadership style was used to assess stewards' role definition. Stewards in the Latrobe Valley were found to be reasonably evenly spread over the resultant four role types (leader, workgroup leader, committed delegate, delegate). That is, on the dual criteria adopted, stewards within the SECV Latrobe Valley operations defined their roles in substantially different ways. Three factors were found to be significant determinants of the stewards' role perception: length of stewardship, presence of a full-time union official and the possibility of the steward facing regular re-election. These factors must be taken into account when examining differences in behaviour between steward types on a range of activities. This is of particular importance with respect to the stewards' relationship with members and their use of full-time union officials. The absence of a local full-time official would suggest that delegates would seek support elsewhere within the Latrobe Valley, such as from more senior shop stewards or the collective steward body. This was not generally the case, with delegates preferring to work with the Melbourne-based officials. The type of issues they would involve these officials in, however, did not usually have a solely local focus. The presence or otherwise of a local official would also help to explain differences in the perceptions of stewards regarding the difficulties of involving full-time officials in local problems. For delegates, the major complaint was that full-time officials did not have sufficient time to resolve issues, a fairly typical complaint stewards level against full-time union officials, and in particular those officials located in Melbourne. On the other hand, it would not provide an explanation for the perception held by leader stewards, who tended to involve local union officials, that full-time officials often lacked familiarity with the issue.

Equally, the finding that stewards who faced regular re-election would be more likely to hold membership meetings and encourage a higher level of involvement of members in negotiations is significant. This is not only a reflection of these stewards' recognition that the continuation of their position rests firmly with the membership but is also an outcome of their high level of leadership. As Batstone *et al.* concluded: 'in the long term the steward has no power unless he has the support of his members' (1977:99). These actions by leader type stewards strengthen their stewardship position and partly account for their longer periods of tenure.

The final question considered was whether the diversity in role definition affected shop steward behaviour. The variations in role

definition did significantly relate to shop steward behaviour over a range of issues. In particular, leader stewards were found to be substantially more likely to have spent considerable time, both during work time and in their own time, on stewardship activities than were their delegate counterparts. This would involve higher levels of bargaining with management personnel, more involvement in joint consultation exercises and participation in a range of non-industrial issues of importance to their members. These stewards would also be significantly more likely to meet with stewards from other unions and to involve these stewards, via committees, in the organisation of industrial action and, in particular, strikes. Leader stewards also tended to use a range of arguments when presenting issues to members and to involve members in a variety of activities, including negotiations with management. These stewards also played a key role in industrial disputation and when strike action was undertaken they would often by-pass their immediate supervisor in an endeavour to reach a settlement. They were not, however, the type of stewards to process industrial issues without consultation with their union and were significantly more willing to refer special issues to full-time officials of their union and to accept the strategies proposed by these officials.

In Chapters 3 and 4 it was found that union type (blue-/white-collar) and place of work (Yallourn, Morwell, Loy Yang) did not relate to a stewards' orientation to unionism and that the four steward types were relatively evenly spread over the various types of unions and workplaces. Given these findings, and the argument presented in Chapter 2 concerning the typology's inability to specifically account for the impact of a range of structural and institutional factors upon steward behaviour, it was recognised that the analysis should break down steward behaviour by union type and place of work. By doing so it was argued (Chapter 4) these variables would, to some degree, provide a measure of the impact on steward behaviour of union rules and regulations, leadership styles of both full-time officials and management, prevailing workplace customs and practices and the state of workplace technology. Both variables proved to be partial determinants of the various types of behaviour engaged in by stewards.

Structural factors, therefore, are important in the understanding of union organisation at the workplace. Differences between various unions can be considerable, but on the basis of this research several important aspects stood out. Union rules, and in particular the role spelt out for stewards in these rules and other union documents, are important in setting the basic parameters of stewardship. The impact

of these rules, however, proved to be dependent, to a large degree, on how full-time trade union officials interpreted such rules and the ethos and practices that have built up over time within the particular union. The strength of local shop-floor unionism also interacted with these rules and attitudes in such a way as to make any predictions based on superficial structural differences problematic. A further factor with respect to union type was that the nature of work performed and management treatment of workers can often be distinguished in terms of the breakdown between blue- and white-collar unions. That is, blue-collar unionists, in general, undertake manual work and are subject to closer supervision and differential working conditions than their white-collar counterparts.

Place of work within the Latrobe Valley operations of the SECV camouflages a number of important factors that will affect steward behaviour. From the research several factors stood out. First, the differences in the operational age of each of the three workplaces was such that it became clear that local custom and practices were important determinants, not only of shop steward behaviour, but also of worker solidarity and management attitudes and strategies. This was most evident at the Yallourn centre which had commenced operations in the early 1920s. Related to this factor, but not as clearly defined, was the level of technology employed in each centre. In this study Loy Yang was the extreme example of new technology and the impact of this technology on the way stewards tended to handle matters themselves with little assistance from 'outsiders'. Equally, the attitudes of management were, at least partially, able to be ascertained from the place of work in that the younger and more educated managerial personnel tended to be located at new worksites. Finally, as each centre had a different composition of trade unions, then at least part of the established differences in shop steward behaviour will reflect these variations. Thus, underpinning the classification of type of union and place of work are a variety of factors that, in future research, will need to be examined.

The validity and usefulness of any theoretical framework partly depends on the objectives of the research. In Chapter 3 it was argued that, on this basis, the most appropriate model to adopt was that originally conceived by Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel (1977). However, recognition was given to the refinements proposed by Marchington and Armstrong (1983) and the need to statistically validate the model. Areas of shop steward behaviour which were significantly related to variations in role definition were outlined. These areas included levels of

bargaining with management, steward organisation, joint consultative arrangements, industrial action and relationships with members, union officials and management. On a number of other issues such as intra-union organisation, strike activity and the development of strategies with respect to members and management, the typology was not able to predict statistically significant differences. Nevertheless, even in these activities, whilst the differences were not statistically significant, leader stewards behaved in substantially different ways than their delegate counterparts. Thus the typology proved to be of considerable value in differentiating between the workplace behaviour of stewards.

When the model was used in conjunction with type of union and place of employment a more complete understanding of the dynamics of shop steward behaviour at the workplace was achieved. Where the behaviour of shop stewards was not significantly related, in a statistical sense, to the role definition of stewards, it was in many cases related to the type of union the steward belonged to and, in a lesser number of cases, to the steward's place of work. Accordingly, taken collectively, variations in role definition, type of union and place of work provided a more complete explanation as to the internal dynamics of steward behaviour.

It should be stressed that this research only examined factors internal to the workplace. The argument must be read in this context. In a more general sense structural and institutional factors may interact with these three variables (role type, type of union and place of work) in such a way as to confound the results. This remains a problem for all researchers who attempt to reduce the number of variables under examination. Using the alternative approach—taking into account a wide range of factors—does not aid the process because it becomes doubtful whether meaningful allocations of the effects of any one variable can be attempted.

Implications of the research

It is possible to extend this review by examining steward power and the practical implications of the research findings for trade union strategy, managerial policies and workplace reform.

Shop steward power

This research distinguished between the formal authority ascribed to stewards by virtue of their position and the less formal power which

allows stewards to fully carry out their functions. Thus, a major influence on the development of the typology was to accommodate the way stewards could initiate and shape issues and mobilise bias. This approach is consistent with the arguments advanced by Lukes (1974:21–5) about what he termed the third dimensional view of power. The alternative approach would be to limit the concept of power to formal authority, that is, to what is prescribed in official documents such as union rulebooks and awards. Yet the research clearly demonstrated that shop stewards do possess power derived from a number of sources and that much of their ability to act comes from the support given by their members. Yet this is not a one-way relationship as gradually some stewards (for example, leaders) have been able to create an environment where they can act independently of the membership. Their power base, therefore, is not dependent on any one relationship but on a more pervasive belief prevailing within the workplace that they have the right to act in a particular way. This, then, presents a number of important implications for the study of trade union activity and organisation at the workplace and for a fuller understanding of the stewards' role in industrial relations. Clearly research at this level must not be limited to an analysis of shop steward behaviour in terms of their formal and delegated roles. The research paradigm must go beyond what is obviously visible, yet in so doing the researcher is faced with the difficulty of studying behaviour which may not be readily observable.

The findings of the research into the stewards' role in industrial relations would strongly suggest that for some stewards, in particular leaders, the interconnections between the stewards and their members, management and their union are complex and can primarily be understood in terms of the relative power of the parties at any point in time. Furthermore, the stewards' role must be examined in the light of both the formal and informal systems of industrial relations that operate at the workplace. This is best illustrated by examining the proposals for workplace reform that would attempt either to limit or institutionalise the role of the steward. In either case the desired outcome, a 'problem-free' workplace, is unlikely to be achieved.

Limiting the role of the steward by formal mechanisms fails to recognise that most of the ability of a steward to act in a particular way comes from informal avenues such as the membership. Equally, attempts to resolve industrial conflict by isolating stewards from their membership does not take account of the stewards' relationships with other stewards and the wider union movement. In the case of the

leader type steward, these simplistic solutions will create numerous further difficulties for management. Even in the case of delegate stewards these solutions will prove ineffective as this type of stewards do not exert influence on their members; nor do they possess the leadership capabilities to control their members even if they desired to do so.

Strong union organisation at the workplace will then serve to constrain management behaviour. However, a high level of local union organisation will limit the degree of influence that the stewards' union and full-time officials can exert at the workplace. These findings, therefore, have important implications for trade union strategy, management policy and workplace reform.

Trade union strategy

Shop stewards in the Latrobe Valley operations of the SECV must be seen as the focus for trade union activity. This is particularly the case for stewards from blue-collar unions where organisational structure and informal practices have broadened the role for stewards in workplace industrial relations. Furthermore, in workplaces where a strong culture of shop-floor organisation exists (Yallourn and, to a lesser degree, Morwell) union policies towards shop stewards are diminished in terms of affecting behaviour at that level. Other factors, however, can serve to intervene in these relationships. This was clearly demonstrated at Loy Yang where the installation of the latest technology gave workers a degree of industrial muscle unparalleled within the SECV. Other factors may also have contributed to the strength of unions at that workplace, including the pressure to achieve commissioning deadlines and the social and community cohesion of the small but highly educated workforce. In these circumstances stewards operated very much within the confines laid down by the membership. These findings, coupled with the different behaviour of leaders and delegates, have a number of implications for trade union policy and strategies with regard to industrial relations at the workplace.

Increasingly, the emphasis in Australia is to focus attention at the workplace and to devolve responsibility to the participants at that level. This has been most recently illustrated by the proponents of enterprise bargaining and enterprise unionism but is also evident in the devolution of managerial responsibility for industrial relations to line managers. The key problem confronting unions, therefore, is: to what type of steward do they want to devolve responsibility? The findings of this research would indicate that whilst leader type stewards would be able

to handle such responsibilities, other steward types such as the work-group leader may use their increased authority to pursue more actively sectional gains for their membership.

As a consequence it becomes necessary to place these reforms within the context of steward training programmes which emphasise leadership skills and a wider union orientation. But even when stewards are trained according to the above criteria it is difficult to assess whether they can or will adopt a leader role. This may be due to the difficulty of translating attitudes to behaviour via training, or it may be due to these stewards not being able to mobilise the necessary resources or support from fellow shop stewards.

If responsibility can be successfully devolved to the shop-floor the questions must be asked: what role will full-time union officials play in workplace industrial relations and would the existing union structures be appropriate? A changed role for full-time officials may, at least in the short term, be difficult to achieve as it would necessitate a change in their focus, attitudes and the functions they perform. For example, co-ordination between workplaces, rather than control of individual workplaces, would assume considerable importance. Whilst trade union structures can be reformed it remains uncertain whether such changes, in the absence of a commitment from officials, would aid the process of devolution.

Management policy

SECV managers are largely concerned with questions of production, efficiency and regulation. To them, workplace industrial relations must co-exist with a centralised arbitration system, directives of the state government and formal regulations developed from time to time. Yet this research indicated that management cannot rely solely on formal rules and procedures to set the parameters of shop-floor activity. Importantly, management must ensure that its industrial relations policies take into account the level of influence and the degree of power possessed by shop stewards. This research confirmed the conclusion drawn by Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel that 'to believe that ''formal'' agreements can overcome and remove a host of ''informal'' understandings and custom and practice rules is to misunderstand the very way in which agreements come to have a day-to-day reality' (1977:264).

The research also indicated that SECV management, at least with respect to the Latrobe Valley, is willing to engage in extensive negotiations on a range of substantive and procedural matters. Initially this

would appear at odds with the warnings to management expressed above, but for a number of reasons this is not the case. First, whilst management has been willing to negotiate with stewards this has been more pronounced in well established workplaces like Yallourn, where an ethos of local resolution of issues exists. Second, although management is willing to negotiate issues, it nevertheless wants to formalise the outcomes via arbitration channels or regulation. Third, management has not recognised the dynamic nature of shop-floor industrial relations and the shifts in the balance and sources of power that can occur from time to time. In the past this has often led to a breakdown in negotiations and the implementation of some form of industrial action by the stewards and their members. Finally, when problems do arise at the workplace SECV management has tended, in part, to implement formal regulations and rules to 'prevent' the problem arising in the future. Thus, whilst management may negotiate on a range of issues it is neither committed to the process or, necessarily, the outcome.

The manner in which various stewards approach their job also has implications for first-line supervisors and what management can reasonably expect of them. The research indicated that stewards were prepared to by-pass their supervisor if the need arose but would not normally do so as a matter of course. Yet when by-passing does occur and more senior management reaches an agreement with the stewards, this tended to reinforce the correctness of the stewards' actions. Senior management effectively then does not have grounds for criticism of supervisors who increasingly find it difficult to resolve workplace issues.

This problem can be partly overcome by management continuing the devolution process down to the supervisor level. However, it is not sufficient just to provide the necessary authority; provision must also be made for the appropriate training of supervisors to enable them to resolve such issues. If senior management fails to do so it will only further consolidate the perception of stewards that at this level management is weak and ineffective.

Workplace reform

In recent years the Australian Industrial Relations Commission has focused attention at the level of the workplace in an attempt to effect reform that would make Australian industry more productive and efficient. Examples of this approach include the second tier negotiations and the more recent structural efficiency principles. What lessons can be drawn from this research in terms of the long-term effectiveness of such reform?

Any reform that seeks to change established customs and practices at the workplace cannot rely solely on developing formal rules and regulations emanating from tribunals and negotiations that have taken place outside of the workplace. These reforms usually do not reflect the norms of the workplace, nor will they have the necessary commitment from the key actors at that level. These problems were clearly illustrated in the ultimate failure of the work practice reforms associated with the introduction of the $37\frac{1}{2}$ hour week/9 day fortnight within the Latrobe Valley operations of the SECV in 1981.

Even if these reforms are negotiated at the workplace level with shop stewards playing a key role, the question remains: do the stewards have the authority to negotiate such changes and also the leadership capabilities to sell such reform to their members? Leader type stewards have the leadership qualities to undertake such functions, although it is probable that workgroup leaders will pursue sectional interests and thereby jeopardise the prospects of such reform. Delegate type stewards will rely, to a large degree, on the attitude of their members, yet in so doing will make it unlikely that a cohesive reform package can be achieved.

Technical appendix

1 Orientation to unionism and leadership scales

The theoretical framework developed in Chapter 3 derived its essential character from the model developed by Bastone, Boraston and Frenkel (1977). The contribution of a number of researchers, in particular Marchington and Armstrong (1983), Willman (1980), and Edwards and Scullion (1982), were taken into account in the development of the revised model. With the exception of Marchington and Armstrong, however, these writers did not base their criticisms of the Batstone *et al.* model on the application of such a model within a research setting. This section will therefore be limited to a consideration of the methodological issues arising from the research of Batstone *et al.* and Marchington and Armstrong.

Marchington and Armstrong (1983:40–1) made four significant changes to the Batstone *et al.* methodology. First, the answers to all items came from direct questioning, unlike Batstone *et al.* where the classification was based on observation. Second, the statement 'a steward should support joint shop steward committee/local branch resolutions even if they are against the best interest of his own members' was used to measure orientation to unionism rather than to measure leadership style. As a means of theoretical underpinning, this item is saying more about stewards' belief in the need to accept decisions taken at a wider level than that of the stewards' own constituency. Accordingly, this item will be used to measure orientation to unionism. Third, the question of 'referring issues to other shop stewards' was rejected in terms of measuring leadership. Given the range of ways a steward may pursue issues, Marchington and Armstrong (1983:37) concluded 'it became problematic to establish whether a leader or populist would be more likely to refer things to a more senior steward'. Fourth, the question 'What do you think are the main trade union principles?' was included to measure

orientation to unionism.

In the initial testing of this model all items included in Batstone *et al.* and the Marchington and Armstrong models were included, with the exception of attendance at branch meetings. This item was rejected on two grounds. First, not all SECV unions in the Latrobe Valley have a local branch structure. Second, a number of practical reasons may prevent stewards from attending such meetings. These may include the organisation of work (for example, rotating shift work), distance required to travel to meetings and family responsibilities. In its place, the statement 'I think of myself as primarily belonging to the trade union movement than to my own union' was included as this would gauge the stewards' underlying philosophy and attitudes to unionism. It would take them above the constituency level and would indicate a commitment towards, and an incorporation into, the wider union movement. The actual items included for testing are given in Table A.1.

A major criticism of both Batstone *et al.* and Marchington and Armstrong is that having developed criteria for classifying stewards their actual procedures for collecting and assessing data were neither methodologically rigorous nor statistically valid. Batstone *et al.* based their classification on observation; for example, if stewards shaped the majority of issues they handled the stewards would be classified as representatives. This required constant vigilance on the part of the observer as well as an ability to recognise that an experimental effect may have been introduced. Further, given that much of a steward's activity can occur outside the formal work environment it becomes difficult to place confidence in the final results. It also has the added problem that the arguments can become tautological and the research findings descriptive. That is, if a model is developed on the basis of observed behaviour then it should not be unexpected that different steward types behave in different ways.

Table A.1 Items Used in Constructing Orientation to Unionism and Leadership Scales

Items	Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel	Marchington and Armstrong	Benson
1 A steward is a representative but he is also a leader; sometimes he has to tell his members they're not on, sometimes stir them into action	*	*	*

Table A.1 (Cont'd)

Items	Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel	Marchington and	Benson
2 A steward should support joint shop steward committee/local branch resolutions even if they are against the best interest of his own members	*	+	+
3 Generally you can't act according to union principles—they don't feed the family	+	+	a
4 JSSCs are of considerable importance to the union movement	+	+	+
5 I think of myself more as belonging to the trade union movement than to my own union			+
6 When issues arise at the workplace I refer them to other stewards or the union organiser	*		b
7 As a steward I have to raise issues myself	*	*	*
8 As a steward I often amend, change or squash issues raised by members	*	*	*
9 What do you think are the main trade union principles?		+	a
10 Attendance at local branch meeting of union		+	

[*] Orientation to unionism

[*] Leadership

[a] These questions were included in the orientation to unionism scale but were subsequently rejected.

[b] These questions were included in the leadership scale but were subsequently rejected.

Marchington and Armstrong, whilst overcoming some of the conceptual problems inherent in the Batstone *et al.* typology, did not

improve on the validity, reliability and measurement aspect of the scales. No statistical procedures were carried out to ensure the scales were both unidimensional (measuring a single construct) and reliable (providing consistent results over repeated application). The measurement aspect of each scale was relatively crude as, with one exception, only broad agreement or disagreement with each item was used to rate stewards. This was exacerbated by categorising the stewards on the basis of scoring a positive response to a simple majority of items making up each scale.

In this study leadership will be measured in terms of a continuum of behaviour rather than a simple dichotomy between activities. Thus it was necessary to provide a range of possible responses to each of the items given in Table A.1, such as strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree and strongly disagree. The one exception is the classification of the responses to the question 'What are the main trade union principles?' In this case the open-ended responses were coded into five categories: there are no trade union principles, management oriented, worker oriented, union oriented and labour movement oriented. The two criteria for the construction of the orientation to unionism and the leadership scales were that they were internally reliable and unidimensional: the reliability to be measured by traditional item analysis techniques,[1] the undimensional aspects via factor analysis.[2]

Orientation to Unionism Scale: items 2, 3, 4, 5 and 9 (see Table A.1) were included in the survey to measure stewards' orientation to unionism. On the basis of simple observation the responses to item 9—the main trade union principles—proved less than satisfactory. Some 20 per cent of stewards did not respond to the question and accordingly would be excluded if this question was included in the scale. Subsequent interviews confirmed the view that many stewards had difficulty articulating what they saw as the main trade union principles. A majority of stewards (59 per cent), expressed trade union principles in terms of winning improvements in wages and conditions of employment. Only some 16 per cent of stewards mentioned the wider union movement and concepts embracing aspects of workplace control. Responses to the remaining four items could range from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The responses to these items were spread relatively evenly over the five available categories.

The reliability (alpha coefficient) of the four items taken as a single scale was considerably improved by the exclusion of item 3 (0.3118 to 0.4141). Given the small number of items contained in the scale and the homogeneity of the respondents, this level of reliability was deemed

satisfactory. The decision to exclude item 3 from the orientation to unionism scale was confirmed by factor analysis where items 2, 4 and 5 loaded heavily on factor one whilst item 3 loaded heavily on factor two (see Table A.2). Factor one, the major factor, accounted for some 58 per cent of explained variance and 35 per cent of total variance. Given the relatively high loadings on factor one for items 2, 4 and 5 (0.542 to 0.740) these items can be considered as being unidimensional and their relatively high communalities (0.408 to 0.563) indicate a reasonable degree of reliability.[3]

On this basis, the orientation to unionism scale consisted of three items that had reasonable levels of reliability and could be conceived as substantially measuring a single construct.[4] The scale was constructed by the addition of the three items, weighted by the factor loadings given in Table A.2. The scores for this scale ranged from 2.01 to 10.05 with a mean of 6.21 and a standard deviation of 1.60.[5] Shop stewards with scores below 6.21 on this scale were considered low on orientation to unionism, whilst those above 6.21 were deemed to be high on this dimension. Shop stewards who thus have a high orientation to unionism are more likely to believe stewards have a wider responsibility than to their own constituency, believe in collectivity and unity and feel part of the wider trade union movement.

Table A.2 Factor Analysis of Items Making Up Orientation to Unionism Scale (Varimax Rotation)

Item No.*	Factor 1	Factor 2	Communalities
2	0.732	0.032	0.537
3	0.058	0.943	0.893
4	0.542	–0.338	0.408
5	0.740	0.121	0.563
% Total Variance	34.6	25.5	
% Common Variance	57.6	42.4	
Eigenvalue	1.382	1.019	

*Refers to item numbers given in Table A.1.

Leadership Scale: items 1, 6, 7 and 8 (Table A.1) were designed to ascertain the degree to which stewards were willing to take action independent of the membership. Five possible responses for each item were provided, ranging from either strongly agree to strongly disagree (item 1) or always to never (items 6, 7 and 8). The responses to the four items were reasonably evenly spread over the available categories. The reliability of the items taken together, however, was only 0.2099.

This index was dramatically improved if item 6 was deleted (0.3798). Once again, this level of reliability for a three-item scale was considered acceptable if the size of the scale and the homogeneity of respondents were taken into account. Factor analysis of the four items confirmed the decision to delete item 6 from the scale. Items 1, 7 and 8 loaded heavily on factor one (0.563 to 0.763), with this factor accounting for 57 per cent of explained variance and 34 per cent of total variance (see Table A.3). These items had relatively high communalities (0.415 to 0.658), which indicate a reasonable level of reliability.

The leadership scale accordingly consisted of items 1, 7 and 8 and hence is identical to the questions used by Marchington and Armstrong to locate stewards on the representative/delegate activity (see Table A.1). The rejection of item 6—referring issues to other stewards—confirmed the view expressed by Marchington and Armstrong (1983:37) that it is difficult to predict whether delegates or representatives are more likely to refer issues to more senior shop stewards. As with the orientation to unionism scale, the leadership scale was constructed by the addition of the three items weighted by the factor loadings given in Table A.3. From the survey results scores ranged between 2.55 and 9.95 with a mean of 6.38 and a standard deviation of 1.27. Shop stewards with scores below the mean were deemed to be low on leadership whilst those above the mean were regarded as high on leadership. Thus, shop stewards were considered to have adopted a strategic leadership role if they not only made decisions on behalf of their members, but influenced the agenda by initiating issues and instilling organisational priorities by amending and sometimes squashing issues they felt were inappropriate or unwinnable;[6] unlike those stewards low on leadership these stewards are not merely a 'mouthpiece' for the workgroup.

Table A.3 Factor Analysis of Items Making Up Leadership Scale (Varimax Rotation)

Item No.*	Factor 1	Factor 2	Communalities
1	0.763	0.275	0.658
6	–0.032	0.931	0.869
7	0.665	–0.106	0.454
8	0.563	0.313	0.415
% Total Variance	34.0	25.9	
% Common Variance	56.8	43.2	
Eigenvalue	1.358	1.038	

*Refers to item numbers given in Table A.1.

2 Militancy scale

In this book the concept of militancy is defined in terms of the stewards' potential to engage in industrial action under certain circumstances. In particular, stewards were asked to relate this to improving wages and conditions, the breaking of agreements by management, the speeding up of the negotiating process, the prevention of unfair dismissals and to demonstrate the seriousness of an issue to the Industrial Relations Commission. By defining militancy in this way it becomes an attitudinal concept rather than a measure of actual behaviour.

Responses to each of the five questions were poorly spread over the range of possible responses, although the reliability of the five items (the alpha coefficient) was 0.7427. Factor analysis of the five items suggested the need to delete item 5 from the scale (see Table A.4). Items 1 to 4 loaded heavily on factor one (0.610 to 0.839) with this factor accounting for 78 per cent of common variance and 52 per cent of total variance. These items had relatively high communalities (0.582 to 0.704) which tend to confirm their reliability. It is thus clear that item 5, whilst a reliable item, is actually measuring something other than militancy. Thus, the militancy index consisted only of items 1 to 4, although given the poor spread of responses to these items it is to be expected that scores will cluster around the more militant end of the scale. The scale is hence a measure of more or less militant attitudes.

Table A.4 Factor Analysis of Items Making Up Militancy Scale (Varimax Rotation)

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Communalities
1 Improving wages & conditions	0.709	0.284	0.584
2 Breaking of agreements	0.627	0.434	0.582
3 Speeding up negotiations	0.610	0.461	0.585
4 Prevention of dismissal	0.839	–0.020	0.704
5 Seriousness of issue	0.130	0.926	0.875
% Total Variance	51.6	14.9	
% Common Variance	77.6	22.4	
Eigenvalue	2.582	0.747	

The scale was constructed by the addition of the four items weighted by their factor loadings given in Table A.4. Scores ranged between 2.79 and 10.74 with a mean of 4.55 and a standard deviation of 1.55. The lower the score the more militant the attitude of the shop

steward. Stewards who scored below the mean would be classified as militant, whilst those above would be considered non-militant. In this context, militant shop stewards are likely to strongly agree that workers are justified in withdrawing their labour or using other forms of industrial action to achieve their objectives. Non-militant stewards, whilst generally accepting the legitimacy of these actions, are less willing to sanction such actions.

Notes

Chapter 1

[1] Unitised power stations consist of a number of discrete units (one boiler supplying steam to one turbine) in contrast to the earlier 'range stations' where a number of boilers fed a common steam range which in turn supplied steam to a number of turbines.
[2] Extraneous variables in this context should not be considered as unimportant but merely outside the aims of this particular study.
[3] The SECV employs some 23 000 employees of which 9000 are employed in the Latrobe Valley, primarily in coal winning and power generation, 4000 at Monash House, the SECV's headquarters in Melbourne, with the remainder scattered throughout the state.
[4] The 1989 restructuring negotiations have resulted in a substantial reduction in the number of awards.
[5] Since the research was conducted two unions, the Builders Labourer's Federation (BLF) and the Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers (AIMPE), have ceased to cover SECV employees.
[6] Further details of each of the 'SECV Unions' can be found in Table 6.1.
[7] Formerly the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. The present title will be used throughout this book.
[8] A body set up by the Victorian government to co-ordinate terms and conditions of employment in all statutory authorities.

Chapter 2

[1] The terms 'authority' and 'power' are subject to a variety of definitions and interpretations. For an interesting debate on the meaning of authority and power see Dalton, Barnes and Zaleznick (1968).
[2] A consideration of the creation of ideology as a source of power is discussed by Lukes (1974).
[3] See, for example, the Federated Cold Storage and Meat Preserving Employees' Union of Australasia, *Rules*, Melbourne, n.d., section 25; or the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners of Australia, *Federal and Branch Rules*, Melbourne, 1973, section 11.
[4] For example, the Hospital Employees Federation of Australia specifies that the shop steward may receive up to 15 per cent of all fees collected, *Branch Rules*, Melbourne, n.d., section 18.
[5] See, for example, Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, *The Metal Industry Award 1971*, n.d., section 30.
[6] See, the SECV, *Latrobe Valley Construction Projects Agreement*, Metal Trades, 1982, section 15 (1).

[7] Charleston's results should be treated with caution. The method of sample selection (stewards who undertook a trade union postal course) and the low response rate (17.9 per cent) raises the distinct possibility that the results may not be representative.
[8] For example, see BHP's written instructions to supervisors concerning the role of the shop steward, reproduced in Kriegler (1980:218).

Chapter 3

[1] This is a similar classification to Sayles and Strauss (1967) and as such their typology will not be considered. A further American study by Peck (1963) examines the stewards' role from both a class and status perspective. This approach was considered not appropriate to the present study.
[2] Power defined in this sense closely resembles the third dimensional view as described by Lukes (1974). It should be noted that this view is based on the work of Bachrach and Baratz (1979:43–4) who bring into the discussion of power the idea of the 'mobilization of bias'.
[3] In the remainder of this book the term orientation to unionism will be synonymous with steward ideology.
[4] The use of the term determinants in this context is not implying a cause and effect relationship, but rather that the dependent variable shares a certain amount of variance with one or more independent variables. In this case it is interchangeable with the term predictor. This follows the convention expressed in Kerlinger and Pedhazur (1973:15)
[5] For both orientation to unionism and leadership style scales were developed and statistically tested for validity and reliability. Details are presented in the Technical Appendix.
[6] The procedures to be adopted for the regression analysis are standard least squares estimation. See Kerlinger and Pedhazur (1973).
[7] This became sixteen factors when place of work was recoded into two dummy variables for entry into the regression equation.
[8] Note that the sign of the regression co-efficient must be read in conjunction with the wording of the particular question.
[9] For a review of research on this aspect of leadership see Bass (1981:253–69, 419–34).

Chapter 4

[1] The distinction between blue and white-collar unions is not clear. The definitional problems associated with this distinction are covered by Davis (1987:15–18) and with the incorporation of white-collar unions into the ACTU in recent years and the growing militancy of white-collar unions, many of the traditional differences have diminished. Nevertheless, in the white-collar unions in the Latrobe Valley three differences were apparent at the time of the research. First, the three white-collar unions were not affiliated with the Gippsland Trades and Labour Council. Second, white-collar union members were generally employed under a different payment and superannuation system than their blue-collar counterparts, although within some blue-collar unions similar variations existed. Third, the local leadership of the white-collar unions were perceived (by themselves and others) as being more conservative than their blue-collar counterparts.
[2] Staff refers to those employees who at the time of the survey had superior working conditions and were paid on a fortnightly basis. Staff would join a white-collar union. Wages personnel would join the appropriate blue-collar union. Membership is com-

pulsory in that all unions operate a closed-shop policy. This policy has the support of SECV management.

[3] This information is based on the present steward's perception of why the previous steward relinquished his position.

[4] This figure would almost certainly be higher if only adult male residents were considered as most of the residents under 21 years of age would have been born in Australia.

[5] As previously noted, Charleston's respondents were drawn from a sample of shop stewards undertaking a correspondence course in trade unionism. This, in itself, would tend to suggest a more active political interest.

[6] In 1985 this figure fell to 52.7 per cent, primarily due to the gains made by an independent candidate campaigning on a local issue.

[7] A further 9.9 per cent of respondents were unsure about their fathers' union activities.

[8] This figure may be understated as respondents were asked to indicate which range covered their income. The top of the range, which included 18.7 per cent of respondents, was income over $33 000.

[9] Wanna surveyed sixty-three stewards in South Australia and although an average length of service is not provided, a conservative estimate based on Table 5.3 (page 322) would give a figure of 6.5 years.

[10] In total, the survey found 77 per cent of the population belonged to a variety of community groups. If allowance is made for overlapping membership this figure would drop considerably; 60 per cent would seem a reasonable, although perhaps generous, estimate.

[11] Of the 209 shop stewards who responded to the survey some 7 had to be excluded from this aspect of the study as they had failed to respond to at least one of the six questions making up the two scales.

[12] One factor, presence of full-time union official, was found to be a significant determinant of both orientation to unionism and leadership style.

[13] This prediction can only be tentative due to the small amount of variance explained by each model.

[14] Note that the age of the steward was deleted from the regression analysis due to its significant correlation with length of stewardship.

Chapter 5

[1] It must be remembered that the leadership scale incorporated the initiation of issues, and hence, although the scale related to the stewards' assessment of their ideal role it would be expected that leaders and workgroup leaders would tend to see other stewards as a major source of issues.

[2] This method of consultation involves a shared decision making approach. For further details see Benson (1982).

[3] On some of these more 'collective issues' it is possible that the steward is negotiating on behalf of an individual member. This could be the case with pay problems, shift work, overtime, rosters and allowances.

[4] There were differences in questions asked (McCarthy and Parker asked stewards whether they had personally *discussed and settled* with management a number of selected issues), different methods of compilation and a different time period under consideration. With later surveys of British workplace industrial relations it is not possible to make such comparisons because these surveys shifted the focus away from the individual shop steward and to the workplace as the key unit of analysis. See, for example, Daniel and Millward (1983).

[5] Significant variation would be expected to occur between stewards on discipline and victimisation matters as white-collar employees have access to an internal appeals and grievance committee. On these matters employees could take their complaints directly to the committee.

[6] Some 81 per cent of committed delegates belonged to these three unions compared to membership figures of 71 per cent for workgroup leaders, 58 per cent for delegates and 55 per cent for leaders.

[7] Only one such procedure, disputes arising out of the introduction of the $37\frac{1}{2}$ week/9 day fortnight, would be applicable to all SECV employees in the Latrobe Valley.

[8] For a discussion of these concepts see Goodman and Whittingham (1969:164–7).

[9] This was often with the express approval of SECV management. For example, at the time of the survey, one FEDFA steward had been given leave with full pay by the SECV to act as the union representative on a particular working party.

[10] One steward felt his primary responsibility was to management. This steward was from a white-collar union and based at the Morwell production centre and is not included in the analysis by role type as he did not answer all questions making up the orientation to unionism and leadership scales.

Chapter 6

[1] The MOA, AIMPE and FEDFA sub-branches are exclusively for SECV-employed members.

[2] In particular FEDFA, FIA, and the Pulp and Paper Workers' Federation of Australia.

[3] Fifty-nine stewards reported that there were no other stewards from their own union working in their workplace. These stewards (many from the smaller unions) plus five who did not respond to the question are excluded from this analysis.

[4] McCarthy and Parker (1968:19) found workshop meetings of stewards from the same union occurred in 55 per cent of workplaces. Attendance at such meetings was calculated at 'a few per cent' below this figure.

[5] The small number who reported such meetings (N=7) makes any conclusion tentative.

[6] They are important in the sense that they represent the only formal avenue for the representatives of the various unions to meet. The increasing affiliations with the GTLC have, in recent years, provided an alternate or supplementary avenue for such meetings, although not all stewards have official delegate status.

[7] The other main unions represented in this group were FEDFA, the APEA and the ETU.

[8] Both these studies focused on the occurrence of workplace meetings and only estimated the frequency of attendance.

[9] The Loy Yang Power Station is the most complex and technologically advanced power station in the Latrobe Valley. In recognition of this the unions have demanded and won special payments for their members that are not applicable outside of the Loy Yang Production Centre.

[10] These principles will be defined by the steward and do not rule out 'other motives' for seeking and accepting union office.

[11] Branch president, deputy president, secretary or member of the executive.

[12] As already noted, the limited opportunity for white-collar stewards to obtain positions available at the local level, would explain some of these differences.

[13] Of special significance to shop steward organisation are those courses conducted by the Trade Union Training Authority for SECV shop stewards. One example was the two day 'Power Industry Seminar' held in Morwell on 7–8 November 1985.

Chapter 7

[1] McCarthy and Parker (1968:18) in the UK found some 75 per cent of stewards held meetings of members at the workplace, although the frequency of such meetings was not given.
[2] The 'ostracisation rates' for workgroup leaders and committed delegates were also substantially higher than for delegates (20 per cent and 24 per cent respectively).
[3] As perceived by the shop steward.
[4] Note that these figures relate to collective issues rather than individual matters.
[5] Deputy shop stewards are union members who substitute for the steward in their absence.
[6] Interview evidence indicates that Loy Yang stewards have not, as yet, developed strong and positive relationships with their supervisors.
[7] For example, recruitment of members, monitoring management practices and acting as a communication link between the union and members.
[8] Hyman and Fryer (1975:192) postulate four possible patterns: independence, dependence on and subordination by the shop steward, dependence on and subordination by the full-time official, or mutual dependence and control.
[9] Including local full-time officials from the AMWU, the ETU, the FIA, the MOA and FEDFA.
[10] Some 38 per cent of stewards reported the issue was a one-off, local problem.
[11] Strategy in this context is defined as the methods aimed at achieving certain goals. As such, it may also involve the definition and re-definition of the actual goals.

Chapter 8

[1] As Kerr suggested, the 'means of expression [of industrial conflict] are as unlimited as the ingenuity of man' (1964:171).
[2] Details of the development of this index are reported in the Technical Appendix.
[3] This is particularly the case with the commissioning of each 500 mega-watt unit in the Loy Yang Power Station.
[4] In this section, no distinction is made between official and unofficial strike action. As Allen claimed, 'the distinction has no relevance for an understanding of strike action' (1972:114).
[5] It should be noted that these figures do not necessarily represent the number of strikes as the possibility of double counting exists and stewards were asked to refer not to all strikes, but to the most recent strike. Five stewards did not respond to this question.
[6] See also SECV, *Annual Report* 1980–81 to 1985–86.
[7] SECV, *Corporate Strategy*, Melbourne 1985.
[8] For example, on this latter point, in referring to the 1977 maintenance workers' strike, SECV management claimed: 'The S.E.C.V. Maintenance Workers are on an indefinite strike over a list of claims which Latrobe Valley shop stewards have refused since March 29 this year, to submit for consideration through normal, established trade union channels' (De Campo 1977).
[9] Many of the senior stewards were also officers of their union's local branch.
[10] One other explanation is that GTLC officials were involved but that shop stewards saw their involvement in terms of their position as stewards or local branch officials.
[11] Interview with Commissioner Fred Brown, the member of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission responsible for the Power Industry, Melbourne, 12 November 1986.
[12] This question was designed to include all industrial disputes as strategies are often developed prior to strike action being agreed on or taking place. This, however, will

limit the conclusions that can be drawn with regard to the ongoing development of strategies during strike action.

[13] It should be noted that in many of the short strikes, lasting one day or less, the return to work may have occurred prior to any negotiations having taken place. Thus, for this question the number of respondents will be less than the number of stewards who have been involved in strike activity.

[14] This strike, consisting of several stoppages, was indefinite in nature and many of the strikers subsequently felt that the costs far outweighed the benefits gained. For a wider discussion on the willingness to take strike action following a lengthy dispute see Hyman (1975:191).

[15] Due to the small number of white-collar stewards who had been involved in strike action (N=12) it is not possible to argue these figures represent a broader trend.

[16] Forms of pressure include suggestions, moral arguments, threats, and in some cases, violence.

[17] This is often a decision workers have to grapple with individually, not only in terms of whether the claim is legitimate and whether a strike will be the most effective form of action but also the moral and financial implications of such action.

[18] Earlier in this book it was reported that Loy Yang stewards were more likely to meet with stewards from other unions, less likely to involve full-time union officials and more likely to negotiate issues with management. This last point is equally applicable to strike action.

[19] For example, the agreement called for morning and afternoon tea to be taken on the job. This would save the time employees took to get to and from their work location and the 'crib huts'. However, custom and practice prevailed and tea breaks are still held in the 'huts'. Details of these negotiations can be found in Devries (1983).

Technical Appendix

[1] The reliability of the scale was estimated by the calculation of Cronbach's (1951:297–334) alpha coefficient.

[2] Of the various forms of factor analysis available, component factor analysis was deemed the most suitable as it 'does not require any assumptions about the general nature of the variables' (Kim, 1975:479). Further, component factor analysis is concerned 'with patterning all the variation in a set of variables, whether common or unique' (Rummel, 1967:455) and thus simply defines the basic dimensions of the data. It is also necessary in most cases to rotate the factors to allow for each variable to be accounted for by a single common factor. Varimax rotation was utilised as it is 'generally accepted as the best analytic orthogonal rotation technique' (Rummel 1970:392).

[3] Communalities can be conceived as the lower bound estimate of reliability for each item.

[4] This scale differs from the scales used by Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel (1977) and Marchington and Armstrong (1983). The problem of scales not being adequately tested for unidimensionality and reliability must throw doubt on the subsequent findings of such research.

[5] Items expressed in the negative were recorded to ensure compatability.

[6] This is similar to the Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel (1977:35) study where the representative exercised power at a number of levels.

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