

## Bill Westley and Eric Trist.

### Socio-Technical Projects in the Canadian Public Service<sup>1</sup>

Trist:

Now, I'd just like to say a very brief word about the events which have taken place in the field of quality of working life (QWL) since 1976, when the original three experiments supported by the Treasury Board took place. If I look at the world of QWL in Canada and in other countries, we have passed beyond a stage where we were mainly concerned with pilot projects often called "experiments." This turns out to be rather an unfortunate word. People thought they were guinea pigs. It was tentative and exploratory but it was, in a sense, very real from the beginning. We've moved from this phase of starting in little places and just finding out whether it was going to work at all or not, what might be in it and so on--getting through the uncertainties and ambiguities--to a phase of systemwide organizational change in pretty large units. We quickly found that just to do something in one small place in a department or agency didn't work out and it was usually phased out. We had to take on the much larger system and to look at QWL not as something merely for people on the shop floor or in the office, but something which concerned everyone, at all levels and in all functions.

QWL has to do with a transformation of organizational life, a new paradigm of organizational life which seems to be emerging in all western countries. I have been very struck

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<sup>1</sup>This report was presented to the Conference on Quality of Working Life in the Federal Public Service convened by Labour Canada and the Treasury Board in 1981.

with this in the last two or three weeks. I have been to two meetings in New York concerned with innovation and productivity and the relation of these to QWL. I haven't been working continuously in the United States for three or four years as I have been mostly in Canada, and I was impressed with the change. Various U.S. organizations like General Motors, U.S. Steel, AT&T--places like that; one or two representatives from smaller States; then local government; then the federal government. The unions were represented at quite a high level in these industries--the UAW, the Communication Workers of America and the Steel Workers. Among a number of leaders of industry, it is now taken for granted that a change toward something--which none of us see too clearly yet--has happened. We've got to get on with it, in a strategic way, a businesslike way.

Here in Canada, we started late but have been on the move relatively rapidly and, as some of you may know, the second International Conference on QWL will be held in Toronto. Canada is the host country and I think has earned that right through the developments that have taken place in the last three years. This International Conference is a very different type of conference from the first one, which was held at Columbia University in 1972; the people present then were, with one or two exceptions, academics. There were about two hundred of us. We were concerned with problems of theory and method. It was at that conference that the term QWL was coined. We had to find something that wasn't as narrow as "job enrichment" or as wide and unsuitable for North America as "industrial democracy" in the European sense. Something new had to emerge, and it was then that the idea of linking the quality of one's experience at work with the quality of one's life as a whole, was becoming an international concern. People were concerned that no matter how we

might be improving economically, we didn't seem to be getting on all that well from the point of view of the quality of our experience of life. It was felt that the quality of life in the workplace, where we spend a third of our time, was of vital importance. At that time, it was appreciated widely, for the first time, that large numbers of people in the workplaces of the western world were having anything but a high quality time. Low QWL was having a negative effect on productivity and industrial relations. The conference we are planning for Canada at the end of August is not mainly an academic conference. It will be a signal to the world that the leadership in this field has passed from people like Bill and myself to those whom we call "real-world people" such as yourselves. I mean that the leadership is passing to managers and to union people and to representatives of various government agencies throughout the West. I hope that this conference will clearly make that signal and I am very proud that it should be in Canada.

As he has done the bulk of the work in the present project, I will now ask Bill to make the main report.

Westley:

I have learned a tremendous amount about the Public Service, about the way people work, their qualities, their imagination. I have not had that experience before, and I want to express my gratitude to you all. It was a good experience, and it wouldn't have been possible without a lot of sincere help from all of you. I want to say one other thing before getting into the detail and that is to reiterate one point that Eric has made. What we see now is a massive movement, particularly in the private sector, into QWL programs. This is not simply a predisposition to "do good." It represents a solid need for control and for motivation which

organizations have been losing and which they find that they can regain through QWL programs. In industry, this is seen as a way of running organizations. It is not seen simply as a goodwill gesture to the workers. I think it would be worthwhile mentioning that Proctor and Gamble build all their new pulp and paper plants entirely according to socio-technical QWL principles and they regard themselves as having a serious competitive advantage over all other companies in the field. This demonstrates that when you get people involved, use their human resources and move to a new management paradigm, important things happen in the control and running of the workplace.

## QWL Projects in the Federal Public Service

Our reconnaissance of QWL in the Federal Public Service included interviews with at least 75 people in 17 different organizations (departments, agencies, unions). These included people as high as the Deputy Minister, as well as the groups of employees involved in the QWL programs. Throughout, we were received courteously, given ample time and had frank and open discussions. Many people we talked to were eager for further information about QWL. Some were desperate for help in keeping their projects going.

We found nine projects in the Federal Public Service. They vary as to whether they were the first, second or third wave projects and in the degree in which they have represented change. We classified these projects into six categories:

*Canceled: one project.*

This was a project which had been started, moved along; then there was a management decision to cancel the project.

*Redesigned: one project.*

This is a project which took off in one form, seemed to falter and then the management redesigned it into a new package and it has been moving forward since then.

*Arrested: two projects.*

These projects started off strongly with steering committees, design teams and consultants. They progressed to a certain point and then stopped. They still exist, but they are incomplete. For example, in one of the projects, they moved to the point of having project committees and setting up a certain amount of consultation with employees. At that point, they seemed to run out of energy and nothing new happened.

*Incipient: three projects.*

This title does not refer to people thinking about having projects, for in some cases the projects were well advanced. Instead, it refers to QWL-type programs which are not recognized as such, or programs which, though called QWL, are only in the stage of union/management collaboration. Thus, in one case there was a group of eight people under a foreman who had developed some QWL redesign and team work. But the managers didn't see this as a QWL program; they saw it as part of a program to upgrade productivity and efficiency. Another case was a project where the organization felt strongly that it had a big quality of working life

program under way. But, while they had made a good beginning in an extensive set of management/labor committees and a QWL committee, they had as yet no plans for redesign. This is what I meant by incipient projects.

*Stable: one project.*

A stable project is a mature project which has gone through all the stages of analysis and development and seems to be a permanent part of the structure.

*Growing: two projects.*

A growing project is one in which there is vigorous management support for the expansion of QWL in the department or agency. I should point out that we only had two of these and the redesigned project was one of them.

This gives you a brief overview of what we found. In each of these cases, incidentally, I talked to people who were involved--employees, supervisor and manager. Whenever possible, I talked to union leaders. We talked about the project and what they thought about it. Most of what I am saying today is based on these discussions.

## Accomplishments and Shortcomings

First, the accomplishments. These are six characteristics of QWL in the Public Service that are of great importance:

You have always operated with labor/management steering committees, and it's been a very important part of trying to build the confidence, the trust and the collaboration necessary for success.

The projects have had unusually strong union support. In Canada, the Public Service Alliance of Canada is the only union that has issued a policy statement supporting QWL. This is a tremendous advantage to a QWL program.

Many projects agreed to allow innovation. This is more important than one might think. In the midst of detailed regulations and contracts, unions and managements said, "Okay, we will turn these people loose for a while and let them do something very different and then we will review what they have done." This has resulted in some very interesting developments.

There has been a recognition of the need for job redesign. What I mean is that in some places QWL programs are seen purely in terms of working conditions and do not involve the redesign of jobs for real and durable change. The job should be redesigned to increase the amount of responsibility or autonomy, variety, challenge, mobility and learning on the job itself. These are qualities of jobs which are the criteria of redesign and this has been recognized in the Public Service.

There have been changes in the conditions of employment like flextime. I don't know whether they are QWL changes in the strict sense, but they certainly accompanied it. The Public Service employs a lot of single parents. For them, flextime and other changes in the conditions of employment become very important life variables. The fact that they have been introduced is a real advantage.

There have been, fairly consistently, changes in the supervisor's role. The idea has been recognized--the idea that what supervisors used to do can be done by employees for themselves has been widely accepted.

In complex systems like federal departments and agencies with a heritage of intricate regulations, these are solid accomplishments.

Next, the shortcomings:

The most important and consistent shortcoming of the Federal Program has been the lack of clear management commitment and training. There has not been a single department that we have encountered that has an unambiguously clear management commitment or reasonable management training. This has had important consequences. First, management cannot and will not provide the support, guidance and leadership necessary to successful QWL change without the training which provides in-depth knowledge.

Secondly, managers consistently fear QWL systems and do not see their advantage to management. They think it will result in loss of control. They assume that it's going to be costly, full of people out of their control and that they are going to be blamed. All they see are people doing things in ways which they are not accustomed to. Since no one has shown them how to manage people in a QWL system or how to get outcomes, they don't understand that the QWL program produces higher degrees of control in terms of outcome. In other words, it gets results. Under the circumstances, it's natural that they should be afraid and, when they are afraid, they backlash against programs.

Thirdly, this lack of commitment and training produces conflicting ideas of QWL within the hierarchy of an organization. We found that people had very different views of what QWL is, what commitment means, what the outcomes should be and so on. During our discussions, many of the managers were naturally quite hostile to QWL. They felt, for example, "this is simply management by committee." However, when they understood that it was a real management tool and suitable to their needs and plans, they became more interested.

## Training

There have been only two kinds of training available so far--awareness training to appreciate what QWL means and introductory workshops which explain the basic concepts. They tell a manager what QWL is, but they do not teach him how to manage a QWL system. But the knowledge is available.

In industry, managers are being trained to manage in terms of socio-technical principles. This is a QWL training that enables a manager to grasp the complex confused system he's involved in, so that he can allocate the responsibility, understand how to divide functions and responsibilities, understand how to use information systems and how to allow autonomy in the developed program. This is a management skill. It is not merely a way of managing QWL; it is a new paradigm.

## The Special Character of Work in the Federal Public Service

I came armed with prejudices like many other citizens. I would encounter somebody in the customs office who would not wait on me and be furious. I had many of the typical complaints of an ordinary citizen. When I came to Ottawa, I came feeling that government had developed into a set of unwieldy bureaucracies which employed too many people. I was not sure what they were doing or how well they were doing it. But as I began my work and came to know the people in Ottawa, my impressions changed.

I am a trained sociologist, the kind of sociologist who goes into the middle of an environment and spends a long time sensing what it's like around him and then tries to put words around it. I trust my reactions. In Ottawa, the first thing I became aware of was that everywhere I went there were lots of people. I was never so bumped and jostled in my life. For a while, this was confusing to me; it was like the New York subway, but I was not in subways but in office buildings. Then I realized that what I was experiencing was a labor intensive environment, one in which people were moving briskly to do their jobs. This is certainly not the image I had before. I had thought that working for the Public Service was a leisurely activity. Instead, I

found people working hard. I also became aware that these people were exceptionally well qualified in terms of education and intelligence.

Then I began to hear people talk about their work in ways which I had not heard before. Their talk implied a significance to their work which I certainly hadn't encountered in industry. I realized that what was significant in their work was that it was connected to the major social purposes of our society. In Canada, whenever we have a major value or a social purpose, what do we do about it? We create a public agency! These departments or agencies are the structural articulations of the values of society. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) exemplifies this tendency. We lead the world in offering a proportion of our income to help the rest of the world. Why do we do this? Nobody forces us to. It was a definite value decision, and we are putting a lot of money into it. I began to realize that if this was really what Government was all about, its purposes were the basic social purposes of society. I got very excited about this. I said, "Well, you know, I'll bet that lots and lots of people come here for that reason. They want to work in something that's socially meaningful."

Then I said, "Well, that's really interesting, I never thought about that before!" My view had been that we ought to run the Government as inexpensively as possible, and I never really thought about effectiveness. But I realize that, if these are major social purposes, our major concern is not cost. I don't mean that we are not concerned with cost, but we set up an agency because we want it to accomplish something, not to make money. If you have a problem in health, justice--any area like this, you want it to be effective. This was the second revelation to me. It was an enormously moving experience.

Then the third thing I ran into was confusion. I kept running into confused people

at every level. Some people in new agencies at high levels knew what they were doing, but most people didn't. There was a gap between the work and the social purposes. For me, in my work in QWL, this is a crime. The most difficult thing to do is to attach people to social goals. If you go to the business world, getting people committed to the goals of business is probably the most difficult thing to do. But here, the social goals are loud and clear. The people are dedicated and intelligent, why aren't they connected?

I came out of it feeling that I wanted to see the Government grow, and I was no longer an advocate of shrinking government. You may not be aware of it, but Eric and I are highly aware that technological displacements are occurring at such an enormous rate that our problem is going to be what to do with unemployed people. The old problem was: how will a small production population support growing numbers of young and aging people? Now, with technological change, the problem has disappeared. With modern technology, a tiny fraction of people can support an enormous population. What will you do with the load of population? What should they do but work with major social purposes? So my view, for what it's worth, is "let the Government grow." I don't suppose you ever heard anybody say that before.

## Images of QWL in the Federal Public Service

As I talked to people, I began to pick up images of QWL in the Public Service, and I want to share some of these images with you.

One image was that it was a failure. Many people felt it was just not working. What is the fact? The one program which people thought was a failure had been canceled by the management group. Eric and I agree that that program was an outstanding success; there's no

question about it. If you talk to those people today, the redesigned work system is intact. They are the most turned-on, enthusiastic, thinking group of people you've ever met; it's just unbelievable. The organization had decided that it cost too much. The reason for it costing too much was a design error, a serious design error, but the program was a great success. And a lot of people think it is a failure. It is not a failure. In human terms it is a great success.

Secondly, some people thought that QWL was a success but only for low level jobs, like data entry clerks. The fact of the matter is that it has succeeded with professionals. If you would stop and reflect on it at all, you'd realize it's almost the ideal prescription for a group of professional jobs. Professionals are, by definition, internally controlled persons with a wide range of competence. If you can just build jobs in such a way that they can use those skills and that competence, they will work well. There isn't any question about the fact that QWL is, if anything, more suitable to professionals than to nonprofessionals.

The third image I got was: It's government by committee. This is a reasonable fear because, in the early stages of a QWL program, during the process of analysis, there are a lot of meetings. People keep coming to meetings. There are committees formed; there is analysis, and it seems almost interminable. Actually, it is not: it only lasts about a year-and-a-half to two years, then you are over the hill. But, meanwhile, some people regard that as an interminable process. The critical thing to realize is that, as the group matures, it creates responsible people who move toward autonomy. When they can be autonomous, meetings will be no longer necessary, at least as far as the manager is concerned. The group may meet, but the manager does not need to be there, so his meeting time drops sharply. I have no hesitation in guaranteeing

to the managers that when they have a mature QWL program in place, they will have more productivity, not less.

The fourth image was that QWL is a form of worker control of management. What is the fact? The fact is that the workers take more responsibility and make more decisions about their work, decisions which were previously made by supervisors. Thus, QWL is almost always welcomed by managers and supervisors because if you talk to them, they often complain about having to make all the decisions for their subordinates. This changes when the subordinates make those decisions. There isn't any question about the fact that some power, or authority, is transferred down the system. But it is power that never should have been that high in the system in the first place, because it's using up the time of managers. In a modern world, managers need tremendous amounts of time to deal with the complexities of the external world. They don't have it.

Finally, there was an image that QWL involves a loss in productivity. This is a complicated question, but the fact is that, in some projects, there is a loss of productivity--a temporary loss of productivity. If you have professional people who are working reasonably well to start with, and you take them off the job to go to meetings or to do an analysis, their productivity has to drop. At the point when the analysis is finished and they return to work, the productivity curve should go right back up again. What's interesting is that there are some projects I encountered where there was no loss of productivity at all. I asked somebody about this, and they said to me that the people who volunteered for the design team were hot shots anyway and they were compulsive about getting their work done, so that they did just as much work as they always did and still went to committee meetings. So you see, it varies.

In the long run, there should be no loss of productivity at all. In most cases, in 80 percent of the cases, in an industry where you do a complete QWL program along socio-technical lines, there is an increase in productivity.

## Evaluation

QWL represents a major change in how jobs are designed and work systems are managed. Therefore, people are interested in how they can evaluate their success. I will approach this in terms of three criteria: motivation, effectiveness and efficiency.

First, motivation. In looking at the program in Ottawa, I have no hesitation in saying that, exactly to the degree that QWL change was introduced, employees became devoted, enthusiastic, interested and made creative contributions. Whether the program is regarded by any of you as a success or a failure, in my experience it is a success for the majority of those involved. Now what do I mean by "to the degree that ..."? Some programs only went as far as consulting employees but did not change jobs or organization structure. A committee was formed, and the committee met regularly to be consulted by the supervisor or the manager. What was remarkable to me was how enthusiastic those people were, how much they got turned-on by just being consulted. However, in those cases, the people who were not on the committee and didn't experience consultation were losing interest. That's what I mean by "the degree." The people who got involved in the consultation began to feel more human, more mature, more seriously treated and felt involved.

When a program went as far as redesigning the jobs, giving the employees autonomy and withdrawing supervision, employees responded by accepting more responsibility

and becoming self-disciplined. In one case, the employees now take such responsibility for their own work that when they began to appreciate that technological change was causing a loss of jobs, they initiated the study themselves. They went to management and asked for a training program which would allow them to be retrained to absorb the other jobs. Management didn't have to think about it at all! The whole thing was laid out there on the shop floor, by semi-skilled people! That's people taking responsibility for their own lives! In a full change program, when employees were given increased responsibility and autonomy, they were strongly enthusiastic about their work. So I have to end up by saying that every single government project was a success in terms of motivation. In other words, you got a return on the investment you made. Sometimes the investment was small, sometimes it was large. I don't mean money, I mean in terms of the amount of change implemented.

Now, to turn to effectiveness. Effectiveness to me is measured by the degree to which the department or agency achieves its mission. That's a complex question. I don't know how many agencies have a clearly defined, collectively agreed-on mission. In QWL programs it's critical that the whole management group come to a mission exercise and that the mission be translated into goals and goals into performance or achievement indicators. I use the term mission because it's the only thing that encompasses something as grand as a department or agency in terms of goals. Within complex agencies, this mission appears as a set of sub-goals for the different subsystems. With this in mind we can define effectiveness as the degree to which the subsystem meets its subgoals. For many subsystems in the Federal Public Service, the goal is service, and the key factor is the employee who meets the public. They determine effectiveness. They are providing the service. We know that in all QWL programs, there is a substantial

increase in effectiveness when socio-technical redesign occurs. The outstanding story, which you probably all know, comes out of Bell Telephone. It was written many years ago by a man called Ford, who wrote a book called Motivation Through the Work Itself (1969). He described the complaints department in Bell. This work was so complicated that they only hired college graduates, and it took a long time to train them. But they had something like a 70 percent turnover. Work was organized along typical production line patterns with a supervisor allocating the work load to each one of these employees every day. Ford simply redesigned that situation. Each employee was given a territory and dealt with all complaints coming from that territory, dealing directly with the customers, and with the people in the company needed to solve the problems. The turnover dropped to something like five percent. Those customers belonged to somebody in the organization; they didn't belong to anybody before.

When people have the autonomy to deal with a customer and feel a sense of ownership of the customer and the resource they provide to them, you are going to improve your effectiveness. Quality of working life job redesigns are customer-driven. Where a work system is redesigned to emphasize service to the customer and is guided by its effectiveness in doing so, effectiveness definitely increases.

Finally, there's the boogie man of all areas--cost. How much does it cost? Does it cost more to operate a QWL designed unit? Costs usually increase during the change period because productivity drops due to the diversion of time to analysis and training and because of consultant's fees. The only long range increase in cost that we found is for training. Training increases because QWL programs require that people be growing and changing. That is part of the basic motivational system of any organization. The changes usually improve efficiency

because of

- reduced costs for supervision as workers become self-supervising;
- reduced absenteeism; in industry there have been large decreases in absenteeism, sometimes from as high as 16 and 17 percent to three percent;
- reduced turnover; if you like your work and find it fulfilling you come to work;
- reduced waste; as people get more interested in and committed to their work, there is less waste.

These are just the most precise and easily defined ways in which QWL can increase efficiency in the Federal Public Service. Less precise, but more important, are increases in efficiency arising from employees' attention, thoughtfulness, creativity and resourcefulness. If people share the goals, understand the costs and like their work, they will find many ways to reduce costs.

You may be aware that there are a number of evaluation studies about QWL projects in the Federal Public Service. I have read practically all the evaluation studies on all the projects. I am a person who is absolutely against "before and after" survey measures for evaluation purposes. Let me give you a simple example of why. One of the things that happens in QWL programs is that everybody's standards change. At the beginning of a program you ask

employees, "Are you satisfied with your job?" They might say, "Moderately satisfied." Six months later, after they have learned that the jobs can be made more creative and that there should be mobility, in response to the same question they sometimes reply, "No, I am very dissatisfied with my job." Does this mean that QWL is showing negative results?

I have seen some good surveys. A lot of you have used the Michigan survey. You'll see that some attitudes become more positive and other attitudes become more negative. Many of the changes may well be statistically significant. But this doesn't mean that they are psychologically or socially significant. Statistically significant results can occur from a few people changing position in a profile of 40 and that simply isn't significant as far as I am concerned. Surveys are wonderful ways to learn about your organization to start off. If you give them back to people who can use the data themselves it can be kind of exciting. But that's what they are for, not "before and after" studies. Productivity in its normal sense is a very complex phenomenon. Every agency should look carefully at what it really means, what can it use, what can it work with.

## How Should QWL be Evaluated in the Public Service?

This may well be a question you are asking in view of the criticisms leveled against surveys. My reply is in terms of its dominant concerns and needs. The Federal Public Service has its own culture and obligations so that in answering this question I have tried to imagine myself the Deputy Minister or director of a department or agency. As such I would be concerned with running a department, with the problems of maintaining a decent reputation, with getting work done, with dealing with the Minister as a political figure, etc. Obviously, I don't

understand it well enough, but that's the position I try to take, and I have chosen three criteria affecting this position: the public image, effectiveness and industrial relations.

First, the public image. I would want my department to have a good reputation, to be seen as one which was doing a good job, was a good place to work and a good place to get service from. I would want the public to say, "That's a good department, people want to work there." The industrial experience has been that QWL improves reputation by creating an image of a good place to work. In one Montreal company, before they started the program, they had difficulty recruiting workers. Two years later, when the program was in place, they had a thousand people on their waiting list. The image of that industry as a workplace changed in that community. That is not an unusual outcome. Modern, highly educated people don't want to work in traditional departments. They love working in redesigned departments.

Secondly, if you go back to my discussion on effectiveness and if you take the service criteria, the people who are on the leading edge of your organization should be providing the kind of service to the public which is effective in getting it done. But, more importantly, they should like relating to the public. If we ask what is it about work that affects how people treat the public, we find that if people feel misunderstood--that somebody's on their back all the time--and frustrated, they are not inclined to be nice. If they do get angry and are in a situation where they have little power, being low on the totem pole, there is only one person they can take it out on because he or she has no authority over them and that's a member of the public. This is because the public can hurt the Minister, but it can't hurt the employee. So, if somebody's angry and feeling bad, they are going to give bad service to whomever they encounter.

On the other hand, if people feel good, feel rewarded by their job, feel valuable,

they meet the public with the sense that they are doing good work, they belong to an agency that people like. They will enjoy giving service. When citizens encounter an agency where they get efficient, effective service and meet competent, pleasant people who are interested in their work, they begin to say nice things about the agency to their friends and relatives. Where do you think reporters get their leads when they start to give you a hard time? They get them from employees and citizens. The whole question of reputation hinges around your capacity to deliver a program which adequately meets people's needs, fulfills their self-image, lets them grow. The differences are really astonishing. In my view, making an agency a good place to work can have a tremendous impact on the image of the public service.

Second, effectiveness. Well, effectiveness, as I said before, means the delivery of a quality service and this, in turn, is linked to something else: the people carrying out the work should take seriously the goals of the organization. Just what is it they are supposed to be doing? Is it their goal? Do they take ownership of it? Within every organization there is always a struggle between private and organizational goals. Everyone of us has it all the time, for example between our home life or our careers and doing a good job. But most people don't know how to do a good job for they don't know what the goal of the agency is. They don't know what they are supposed to be doing. Try it out. Take a little questionnaire and send it around, asking people about the mission, the goal of the agency; you'd probably get very upset. The point is that the goals are not shared; sometimes they are not consistently articulated. Even where they seem to be shared, people may use different performance indicators, differences which imply different goals. Goal-setting isn't a matter of doing it once; it isn't a matter of writing a pamphlet. It's a process that has to be kept in motion. Effectiveness depends on two things: the commitment of

people willing to deliver quality service and people knowing what they should do. Any good socio-technically redesigned system automatically builds that in. It has to be done.

Finally, industrial relations. One of the things we know is that the world is so complex and the needs of people are so complex that there's a huge area of needed collaboration between workers and management, between management and the unions. The potentiality for these differences in needs becoming differences in goals, deepening into serious social cleavages and conflicts, is now so great that it is a major achievement to maintain a modest amount of cooperation between the levels and functional divisions of an organization. If the cleavages become deep and competitive, and adversarial relations predominate, managing the differences can consume large amounts of organizational energy.

If there is much conflict--particularly when it is unadmitted and under cover--people will engage in defense work, allocating time and resources to covering up and maintaining face. If this is the case, the gulf between workers and management will be large, and distrust will prevail. It will then spill over into collective bargaining, which has been designed to deal with legitimate conflicts of interest.

QWL programs, because they are collaborative and because they build a shared collaborative work system, do build trust and bridge differences. In fact, this is one of the early and striking gains from a QWL program. Thus, QWL improves industrial relations in the office and even in the bargaining session.

## Trist:

Though it would not be appropriate for us at this stage to make any specific

concrete suggestions as to what might be attempted, we should like to indicate more generally the directions that future developments might take. The aim of any sustained implementation scheme would be to establish conditions that would enable as many projects as possible to grow and diffuse throughout departments and to reduce to a minimum those that get held back. We postulate that QWL involves systemwide change geared to the longer rather than the shorter run if significant operational benefits are to be attained and maintained.

Two strategies may be suggested, which are complementary and which may with advantage be developed simultaneously. One concerns what may be undertaken inside departments and represents an intradepartmental strategy. The other concerns what may be undertaken between departments and represents an interdepartmental strategy. It is postulated that one will reinforce the other. To make this reinforcement possible is the great advantage of a sectoral approach.

Bill will deal first with what might be involved in a systemwide program covering all levels and functions within a department. I will conclude with a sketch of what might be involved in the interdepartmental context.

## Westley:

Until recently, QWL programs have focused on the office employee or shop floor worker. These have often had "experimental" status. Thus, often with the support of a steering committee, one or two sites would be selected, and the technical and social systems in these sites would be analyzed by a team consisting of a diagonal slice of that part of the organization (manager, supervisor and workers of various kinds). Predictably, this has led to conflicts between the change site and the rest of the organization which has not changed. Recent work has

suggested that, for change to be really effective, one must adopt a total systems approach within an organization.

At McGill University, we have recently developed a program that we call "Action-Learning: The Four Key Roles." This program is aimed at the simultaneous involvement (not just support) of policy managers, operational manager, supervisors and employees. Each group is asked to operate in a team setting and to go through a specialized action-learning program to analyze and redesign their own work roles and work role system. Naturally, the substance of their analysis will differ for these different roles, but their efforts must be coordinated. In fact, a well designed QWL program should be constructed so that the work of each group supports the work of the other groups. For example, the policy managers' action-learning program should be designed to specify both the mission and the human resource management philosophy of that organization, which in turn is translated into goals to be provided to supervisors and to workers. Thus, each key role uses material developed from the analysis of the other key roles.

The result of these four simultaneous action-learning programs is that a total organization, as a system, adapts to the challenges of its environment and of its people, and develops a redesigned system adequate to meet these challenges. It also means that the managers, for example, will find a redesigned role for themselves which is not only compatible with the QWL program in the office or on the shop floor, but uses QWL as an intrinsic part of managing the organization. We have found that managers going through these programs experience QWL in a new and more vital fashion, saying, for example, "Now I finally understand why this is necessary."

In programs without action-learning for the other key roles, managers often find themselves burdened with managing the old system in terms of the metaphor of the new system. They call this "management by committee," and they are right. It imposes upon such managers an intolerable burden and explains why they so frequently reject QWL change programs.

The development of QWL in the Federal Service needs such total organization programs for its departments and agencies. It needs them if the agency is collectively going to establish clear goals, improve public reputation and achieve a high degree of organizational effectiveness. Since QWL is so successful in the office or on the shop floor in the Public Service, it stands to reason that the addition of this total system approach could materially strengthen the operations and management of Federal Agencies.

## Trist:

As regards the interdepartmental context, we have the advantage of having two critically relevant bodies already in existence, namely, the Senior Steering Committee and the Core Group. Our suggestion is that the activities of these two bodies be expanded in ways appropriate to their roles.

The role of the Senior Steering Committee is, in relation to the Treasury Board, to formulate the general policy of the Federal Public Service in the QWL field. For this purpose, it needs to meet sometimes alone and sometimes as a Joint Steering Committee with the presidents of the unions concerned. Presumably the latter would also at times wish to meet alone.

Committee membership would need to be kept to a high level: Deputy Ministers (DMs) or their equivalent, with relevant Assistant Deputy Ministers.

Questions are likely to arise sooner or later that will involve the political side and may require legislative change. Issues of job classification and compensation are cases in point, as are questions of overall budget allocation and what to treat as development (capital) expense and what as operating expenses. The present system is based on the old paradigm and, in the long run, will need extensive overhaul.

For the foreseeable future it may be expected that the Senior Steering Committee would have to meet as a joint committee with the union presidents at least once a year.

It would also need to meet not less than once a year with the Core Group--to be directly informed of the state of projects; the types of problems being encountered; the evaluation of strategies and outcomes; and the kinds of action required of it. Great uncertainty has been experienced in the Core Group concerning its relations with the Senior Steering Committee and the role of the latter. An annual joint conference with a lunch or dinner would do much to symbolize the importance of the interaction and affirm the continuing commitment of senior management.

It is assumed that the Secretary of the Treasury Board and the Deputy Minister of Labour are the core members of the Senior Steering Committee--along with the Chairman of the Public Service Commission. Thereafter are the DMs of departments with active QWL projects. From time to time, this group might like to have an extended meeting of the kind hosted by the Deputy Minister of Labour this week.

Occasionally, either the more restricted or the more extended group may care to invite distinguished outsiders to make presentations, or discuss informally and in private, their experiences in developing strategic QWL programs: senior executives of large corporations or of

leading unions; key officials of foreign governments or international agencies such as the ILO; academics or consultants with recent experience of topics of particular relevance to the Federal Public Service.

Among these topics would be the microprocessor revolution and its implications for the office of the future, both with respect to job design and the substantial reductions in personnel made possible. Another topic might be work-sharing and the spread of part-time employment.

There would be an advantage in asking Ministers to attend some of these meetings as it will be necessary to keep the political as well as the administrative side updated regarding major changes likely to take place in the world of work in the decade now beginning.

The aim would be to develop a shared appreciation of the likely policy consequences at the highest levels of the Federal Government, which has now on more than one occasion--for example, in speeches by the Minister of Labour--committed itself to support QWL in the country at large.

The Core Group, composed as it is of management and union representatives from departments with ongoing projects, can function as an invaluable exchange for the comparison of QWL experiences in the Federal Public Service as a whole. On the one hand, it has a dissemination and nurturant role; on the other, a training and development role. It is the medium through which impending policy issues may be brought to the attention of the Senior Steering Committee.

With the Senior Steering Committee meeting once or twice a year, the Core Group might meet quarterly, given that the number of projects is likely to increase. In addition to

being concerned with issues arising, exchange of information and preparation of briefs for the Senior Steering Committee, these meetings should be actively concerned with promoting training and development.

The Core Group should keep itself updated in the field as a whole, using the QWL units in the Treasury Board and Labour Canada as immediately available resources. Both units have built up libraries of reference material which are underutilized.

Departments need to be encouraged to develop in-house consultants. The Core Group, using the Treasury Board Unit, should actively concern itself with their development. There should be funds for such people to attend outside courses and workshops.

The Core Group would need a small budget, say \$15,000 pa, to hold special events and invite appropriate external resource people to them. There would be great advantage in holding a residential retreat of two or three days every year at which the state of the art in QWL in the Federal Public Service could be surveyed, special topics discussed and future development adumbrated. A number of large corporations hold such events. Members of the Senior Steering Committee might attend at least one session of this conference.

Core Group events of this kind are postulated as leading to the development of a QWL network in the Federal Public Service which could become highly interactive, with the more experienced aiding the less experienced, on informal as well as formal lines, and the knowledge of all being increased. Various Core Group events would tend to become peer-group gatherings of this network. Such meetings provide ideal conditions for mutual learning as has been demonstrated in the United States where several interplant QWL networks exist in the private sector and, until funding was withdrawn by the present Administration, one--called

Project Network--was successfully launched in the public sector. Recently, New York State has decided to proceed along these lines, quite extensively.

The development of interdepartmental activities depends on the development of intradepartmental activities which will entail a substantial investment in training at all levels, as Bill has suggested, if projects are successfully to be sustained and diffused.

These activities will need to be fostered on a collaborative basis by an institution such as the Core Group. The Treasury Board Unit will need to provide assistance at a sufficiently senior level to command attention.

Funds should be made available, whether by departments or by the Treasury Board, to use external as well as internal third parties. It will be some time before the Federal Public Service builds up enough internal expertise to be self-reliant. In any case, it will need to keep a window open on the outside world.

The developments envisaged are systemwide throughout the Federal Public Service and are long range. They are aimed at securing substantial results. The cost of not embarking on such a course is likely to be considerable by the end of the decade. While departments will participate voluntarily, strong and active leadership is required by the Treasury Board and Labour Canada in their complementary roles.

## Reference

Ford, R.N. 1969. Motivation Through the Work Itself. New York: American Management Association.