

**CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY**

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**MANAGING TRADE UNIONS**

**A CASE STUDY EXAMINATION OF MANAGERIAL  
ACTIVITIES IN FOUR UK TRADE UNIONS  
FORMED BY MERGER**

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## ABSTRACT

In 1985, the researcher took up employment in what he regarded as a senior management position as Assistant General Secretary (Administration) of NALGO, the public service union. The objective was to gain management experience alongside continuing management education. Whilst there were others seeking to manage to the best of their ability, the idea was not universally accepted. However, the union, by the end of the decade, had embarked on management development courses for senior managers and by the time it merged and became part of UNISON, managerial activities were visible in many areas. It was not, however, clear the extent to which – if at all – such phenomena were observable in other trade unions. The literature did not help in this respect. Research to establish whether trade union managers existed and, if so, what their roles were appeared to offer the prospect of examining a new area of trade union life.

This research is based on interviews with 56 senior trade union staff in four trade unions formed by merger – CWU, PCS, UNIFI and UNISON. Only one of those individuals professed not to accept a managerial role and that person accepted that he had a responsibility to ensure that the union was managed.

Original findings include the following:-

- There is a category of employee in trade unions known as a 'trade union manager', a role not previously identified by empirical research and discussed in the literature.
- Trade union management develops depending on the level of institutional support. In the case study unions, there were links between this and the stage of merger that the unions had reached. Prior to institutional acceptance, there are managers who do their best to manage, operating in something of a cocoon.
- Trade union managers espouse trade union principles which include the notion of fairness, imputing a concern for the way people are treated, including the staff for whom they are responsible.
- Management remains in many ways a problematic concept in trade unions, leading often to its undervaluation. Trade union managers may perceive that it involves the exercise of power of the powerless, judgment on the weak. Trade union managers may as a result be ambivalent at being judgmental and, consequently, at managing conduct or performance.
- Trade union managers manage stakeholders in polyarchal organisations but boundaries with lay activists are unclear; they engage in contests to define those boundaries and to manage what they regard as their own responsibilities.
- Boundaries may include those relating to conflictual relations, constitutional boundaries, moveable boundaries, staff boundaries and policy/political boundaries.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

In 1987, I wrote a series of articles in the Local Government Chronicle with the main title; 'Trade union management; a professional job.' Whilst initially the contact had been made by my union's Press Officer, she subsequently refused to handle articles because union management was not within her remit. Two years later, the union embarked on a programme of management development courses for senior managers, including the Press Officer's line manager, which was probably unique in unions in the UK. Senior union managers had always been required to practise management skills. Here there was a recognition that management was a defined role for which training was required.

I had taken the job as Assistant General Secretary of the former union NALGO because my management education was proceeding and I sought a senior management job. Nobody outside the union understood this and, within the union, the only formal understanding was amongst the staff trade unions who always referred to us, derogatively, as 'the management'.

Not much more than a decade from the start of our first management development courses, much has changed. It has now become possible not only to identify trade union managers but for them to talk intelligently about their roles. This, basically, is the focus of this research. The profession I practised for 15 years in what was my second career can now be given identity and substance. I find this as exciting and important as I did on the first day of the first course, in a small hotel in Kettering.

### 1.2. HISTORY, DEVELOPMENT AND THE RESEARCH QUESTION

My first career comprised 18 years working as a lawyer. At least half of that time was concerned with town and country planning and, as any planning lawyer will testify, one works very much as a planner *manqué*, becoming involved in issues of buildings and physical structures of all kinds, in which I developed an enduring interest. This interest became important as this project was conceived, as will become clear.

My second career was as a manager in NALGO, a large trade union, in which I was responsible (*inter alia*) for the management of professionals dealing with all aspects of buildings, their construction, maintenance and the allocation of space within them. I had taken on this job having been engaged in obtaining management qualifications, culminating in an MBA. In addition, therefore, to my interest in physical space, I became interested in the extent to which concepts and theories of management could be applied within trade unions. Indeed,

much of my MBA was spent applying such concepts and ideas and I became aware of the dearth of management literature examining the managerial implications of trade unions as organizations and their officials as performing management tasks.

After my organisation merged to become part of UNISON, the public service union, I managed a project which at first was concerned with finding a new head office for the merged organization. This project failed for reasons which, in my opinion, were concerned with cultural perceptions of national management trying to centralise power and resources in London rather than with any judgment of whether changes in physical space would have facilitated psychological merger (Bouno and Bowditch 1989). The project therefore became one of re-allocating existing functions to two head office buildings and closing the third.

These activities brought home to me the importance of physical space to the achievement of any organisation's strategic objectives. I could see the way in which the existing buildings were designed and run in ways which were consistent with the culture of the three old organizations and was convinced of the contribution which a new building could have made to the success of the merger. I was aware that there were complex reasons why the decision-making process had taken the turn which it did and believed that, properly analysed, they could have told a researcher a great deal about the organisation in which they took place.

My project therefore started life as one in which the way in which trade unions used physical space affected the way those unions were managed – a circular process described by Churchill (1924) in the memorable phrase ‘we make the buildings and then the buildings make us’. The context of merger was important to this because bringing organisations together created cultural management issues in which physical space became potentially important.

The most dramatic lesson I learned in the whole PhD process was one taught by Professor Mary Jo Hatch in the first six months; ‘every month, get out a blank sheet of paper and write down “my PhD is about.....”, because otherwise you will forget.’ The mutations in this project became very stressful to a lawyer used to dealing with things that were relatively concrete. But, as the project mutated, the mutations seemed inevitable. It became clear, for example, that the management of physical space is just one of many activities undertaken by these new beings called ‘trade union managers’, particularly in the context of merger.

That context remained in the project. The rationale became that, since I could not assume that managerial activities would be discernible, researching unions which had merged would be more likely to uncover such activities – simply because, in bringing two or more organisations together, somebody had to manage something in the process. With



hindsight, this seems as though it may have been pessimistic reasoning. I may have partially fallen into a trap which readers of the literature on trade union governance might have been expected to have encountered – that management is not a concept known in the organisation and administration of trade unions.

The ideas for this research project thus arose from my own interests, my own experience and my own learning activities. Its content is primarily founded on the words of 56 senior trade union officials in four UK unions (CWU, PCS, UNIFI and UNISON) and is designed to answer the following research question:-

**How do those who manage UK trade unions which have engaged in merger activity go about the management of their unions?**

### **1.3. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH STUDY**

There is in management literature a wealth of material on the world of managers and management. A proportion is sector-specific, looking at management in, for example, the not-for-profit sector (see e.g. Butler and Wilson 1990) from which some analogies can be drawn. Streams of literature look at stakeholder management within organizations (see e.g. Freeman 1984), and at power relations which affect, and are affected by stakeholders during decision-making processes (see e.g. Rowley 1997).

In the field of trade unions, discussion of their nature and role has taken place throughout the century and works such as *Industrial Democracy* (Webb and Webb 1902) are still regularly cited. Studies of unions using concepts of organizational theory have appeared more recently, with Warner (1972) arguably being the first. Much has been written about the role of 'full time officers' - the staff who act in the field on behalf of members, in particular with reference to their relationship to the members and the democratic processes of the union (see e.g. Kelly 1988). Conversely, some writers have posited theories of unions as polyarchies - containing a variety of interest groups whose goals are sometimes shared, sometimes in conflict (see e.g. Crouch 1982).

Virtually nothing is, however, published about people who undertake management roles within unions. The first significant text (Dunlop 1990) introduces the management of labor (sic) unions as an 'oxymoron' and undertakes an interesting comparison of the common elements among executives in four fields, private business, government, academic institutions and labor organizations. Weil (1994) presents what is in effect a manual to assist labor unions in America 'respond to external changes creatively and proactively.' Kelly and Heery (1994), in a study which refreshingly unpicks simplistic theories of union bureaucracy and oligarchy, examine the work relations of full

time officers and the nature of the managerial authority to which they are subject.

It is probably true that, in the past, notions of management and of trade unionism have been regarded as mutually exclusive. Ourousof (1993) refers to 'a deep ambivalence [of those staff in the unions which now make up UNISON] to the concept of management itself,' because of their bad experiences of managerial activities in the organizations with which they had to deal. But there are reasons for thinking that the management of unions is now an important issue. Dunlop (1990) draws attention to the difficult environment which has confronted American unions and the fact that this has led to 'experimentation in new methods of management'. The activities of the Cranfield Centre for Strategic Trade Union Management (now re-named the International Trade Union Centre) symbolise this and the fact that it has been used by many major unions demonstrates the interest within unions in learning managerial lessons. Those lessons have, in the main, been based on the use of models from other sectors precisely because of the lack of literature which examines trade unions from a managerial perspective.

For UK unions, the environment over much of the last 20 years has also been difficult. Even if it is marginally improving, those organizations cannot escape from the speed of change in the global economy. Developments in information and communication technology require every membership organization to re-think its relations with its members and every organization employing staff to consider the most appropriate way to deploy them and the most effective way to provide physical space for them to work. UNISON has introduced access to services through a call centre into which its members can dial to access services and in doing so it has recognised that in responding to members' requests for services it is competing not so much with other unions but with members' perceptions of other organizations of which they are members, such as the AA or of other organizations to which they go for advice, such as a Citizen's Advice Bureau. Kelly and Heery (1994) identify the dispersal of staff by public sector unions in response to the decentralisation of collective bargaining. At the same time, falling or static membership figures, particularly among young people (Kerr & Waddington 1995), mean that pressures for organizational changes such as mergers, with major implications in terms of resource management, physical and human, will continue. Merger activity has continued since this project started. Originally, one of the case study unions was intended to be the AEEU – an amalgamation of the AEU and the EEPTU. However, the AEEU was, at the time research design was taking place, already in the process of merging with MSF, making it less appropriate to study the previous merger. Now, the resulting union, Amicus, is in negotiation to merge with UniFI, another of the case study unions.

Union organisation is often very complex and those in their top echelons have to consider the management of the democratic process, representing the interests of many of the most significant stakeholders in their unions. The theory of polyarchy recognises that unions consist of a variety of interest groups and individuals with legitimate interests in those unions. Yet, the suggestion that senior officials should in any respect manage any part of the democratic process would be regarded as an affront by many academics writing in the trade union field. One such academic walked out of the room when the researcher made such an implication at an academic conference. Stakeholder management, however, does not imply that managers are assuming powers or responsibilities which belong more properly to the members or their elected representatives. It suggests that thought is being given to how (inter alia) the democratic process might work better or staff in the union working with the members might empower the membership. Modes of management in such circumstances might arise from a manager's deeply held belief in trade unionism, in fairness, justice, equality and unity. In literature from the management, as distinct from the trade union, field this might be described as normative stakeholder management.

This study is researching managerial activities in trade unions. Originally, the study was much more closely concerned with the management of mergers, so it was natural that, in considering which unions to study, there should be concentration on unions which had merged. As the study changed, this focus was kept for a different reason. The extent of managerial activities in unions other than the researcher's own were simply not known. As mentioned earlier, what was assumed was that, in bringing unions together in merger, somebody had to manage something. Four merged unions were therefore chosen.

### **CWU**

The Communications Workers Union was formed in 1995 from the merger of the Union of Communications Workers (UCW) and the National Communications Union (NCU). Both unions had their origins in the Post Office, when that organisation ran Post Office Telecommunications (now BT) and the Post Office. The UCW was predominantly a blue collar union and the NCU was mixed blue and white collar – it had itself merged in 1985 with a section of CPSA white collar workers working in the Post Office. Those members had retained a good deal of autonomy within NCU, which became an issue when the CWU was formed because they wanted to retain as much of that autonomy as possible.

There was a long history of rivalry between UCW and NCU over many years. Merger only came on the agenda when Alan Johnson became General Secretary of UCW and Tony Young became General Secretary of NCU. They were close personally and politically and were very influential in bringing the merger about. There were, however,

significant cultural differences between the two unions. The UCW accorded considerable power and influence to its General Secretary. It also has a system of election of many of its full time officers. The NCU, by contrast, was significantly more lay member led. All its officers, with the exception of the General Secretary and Deputy, were appointed. On merger, it was the latter election system which largely prevailed.

As a result of privatisation of BT and the deregulation of the telecommunications industry, CWU is a union representing members in both the private and public sectors.

In terms of merger management, the two unions stayed in two separate buildings at national level for over two years, until late 1997. Even then, the negotiating teams stayed on separate floors with artefacts on their floors relating to the identity of their former unions. Systems and staff grades remained unmerged until the arrival of a new General Secretary and Senior Deputy in 2002 (Billy Hayes and Tony Kearns) who were determined to achieve more integration. To this extent, merger management was still being undertaken nearly 8 years after merger.

### **PCS**

The Public and Commercial Services Union was formed in 1998 by the merger of the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) and the Public Service, Tax and Commercial Union (PTC). PTC itself was formed in 1996 by the merger of the Inland Revenue Staff Association (IRSF) and the National Union of Civil and Public Servants (NUCPS). The latter was also the result of a merger; one of the Joint General Secretaries of PCS boasted that he had been Chief Executive of three organisations, all of which had merged. Because the PTC and PCS mergers had taken place so close together and because also the IRSF head office was still in existence housing former IRSF staff until 2000, the history and traditions of IRSF were still an issue for staff several years after merger.

PCS is primarily a public sector union, for blue collar and lower grade white collar staff, but it has substantial private sector membership, largely as a result of the outsourcing of civil service functions, such as the Inland Revenue computer operations. It actively seeks to recruit in the private sector.

Merger between these two unions had been sought before but was rejected by CPSA activists. CPSA was a particularly factional union with a long history of political disputes at all levels. The merger which eventually took place included new Rules which reduced the frequency of conferences to once every two years and enshrined the principles that conferences which took decisions of significant political importance, or which sought to change Principal Rules as defined in the Rule Book, would have to be the subject of affirmative postal ballot amongst the members before they could take effect. The merger was rejected by the CPSA conference but, despite that, the senior staff and

elected members of both unions went ahead to membership ballot on the proposals. There was an unsuccessful legal challenge before merger could take effect.

There were significant cultural differences between PTC and CPSA. The latter, despite its strong activist led culture, did accord significant power to the General Secretary. PTC had a decision structure which was much more open and committee based. The CPSA General Secretary used his power, in ways which were not (allegedly) always transparent. When, therefore, the decision was taken to move PTC staff into the old CPSA Head Office soon after merger, there was scope for significant cultural collisions.

The strategy on merger had been that the two Joint General Secretaries would run the organisation for two years but that, on the retirement of John Sheldon, the ex PTC General Secretary, Barry Reamsbottom, the ex CPSA General Secretary would take over. However, rule changes were effected in 2000 which led (after a series of convoluted events not directly relevant here) to an election for General Secretary taking place in that year and the election of Mark Serwotka, who took office in May 2002. The union had to face legal proceedings prior to Mark Serwotka's taking of office being confirmed. Barry Reamsbottom was one of only two officials in any union who refused to see me.

### **UNIFI**

UNIFI was formed in 1999 by the merger of the Banking, Insurance and Finance Union (BIFU), the National Westminster Bank Staff Association (NWSA) and UNIFI, formerly the Barclays Bank Staff Union. BIFU had been by far the largest of the three unions and regarded itself as the union for all finance staff. However, it had not been appealing to potential members, partly, it was suggested, because of BIFU's political nature and its 'one size fits all' approach to unions who might otherwise have merged with it. Unions preferred to merge with ASTMS (later MSF) to be able to have a degree of freedom to pursue their company affairs without too much central interference.

The massive changes in the finance sector had led many unions to consider their positions. Cranfield undertook a report on these trends in 1997 which led to UNIFI, for whom the report was written, deciding to merge with MSF. However, this was overturned by the Executive and the three way merger was proposed as the alternative. The tripartite nature of it was regarded as important to prevent the domination of BIFU. Further, central to the scheme of merger were rules which gave autonomy on collective bargaining matters to Company Committees, preventing interference in those processes by any centrally operating National Executive Council.

The General Secretary of NWSA, Rory Murphy, had been appointed from outside the union and very early on indicated that merger would

be a priority. Ed Sweeney, the General Secretary of BIFU, had also realised that this was something inevitable and had studied trade union mergers in some detail so as to facilitate the process. The General Secretary of UNiFI, Paul Snowball, left the union whilst negotiations were under way; it was suggested that was not unrelated to perceptions that UNiFI was not pulling its weight in those negotiations. Bob Drake, his successor, is Chief Executive of Uniservice Ltd., the wholly owned company providing member benefits. Ed Sweeney is General Secretary and Rory Murphy Joint General Secretary. Both of them agreed on how the job would be divided and both stood for election (unopposed) on the same date.

UNiFI is a wholly private sector union.

In terms of merger management, a decision was taken early on that the union would for three years keep all three old head offices – in Raynes Park (BIFU), Haywards Heath (UNiFI) and Bournemouth (NWSA). Haywards Heath was used as the Head Office for Uniservice Ltd. Because it was much larger, Raynes Park tended to be regarded as the principal office, something which senior management tried to discourage. A working party was formed in 2001 to look at the possibility of the union's moving to a new Head Office. However, in 2002, UNiFI experienced financial difficulties which led to its closing the Bournemouth office. Subsequently, merger discussions with Amicus commenced and no decision has therefore been taken on bringing all the central staff together into one office.

### **UNISON**

UNISON was formed in 1993 by the merger of three public service unions, COHSE (the Confederation of Health Service Employees), NALGO (the National and Local Government Officers' Association) and NUPE the National Union of Public Employees). It was, and still is, the largest merger in UK trade union history and the merger was a process of extreme complexity. The process was initiated by NALGO in 1989 as a result of a conference decision and this was unusual in that it has often been suggested (see e.g. Undy et al 1981) that union mergers are initiated by unions in positions of financial weakness. NALGO was not in that position. The original proposal was to discuss merger with NUPE but, when COHSE indicated its wish to join in the discussions a year later, the negotiations were re-started.

There was a history of antagonism between NALGO, a white collar union with membership in many public services but principally in local government and the NHS, and NUPE, a predominantly blue collar union principally in those two industries. The two unions had different political traditions (NUPE was affiliated to the Labour Party) and some overlap in membership. NUPE, however, was allegedly very reliant on its principal officers who had considerable influence in the union. NALGO was very activist led and those activists distrusted what they saw as NUPE's less democratic model. Consequently, there were very

considerable cultural differences between the two organisations. COHSE was a much smaller union which had been seeking to develop a team ethos in the way it worked. It was particularly concerned not to be submerged by the two bigger unions and therefore, as a single industry union, sought a leading role in a strong Health service group.

The General Secretary of NUPE, Rodney Bickerstaffe, was by far the best known of the three, the others being Alan Jkinson (NALGO) and Hector MacKenzie (COHSE). Negotiations, however, were long and involved and lay members from all three unions were involved to a greater or lesser extent. It was always expected that NALGO members would be the most resistant to merger (as it proved in the ballot) and so it could be argued that Alan Jkinson had a principal role in getting out the vote and handling some very difficult conferences; furthermore, merger would not have been on the agenda of his predecessor. However, unlike the other mergers, arguably the personality and attitudes of the General Secretaries were not as much of a significant factor in leading the process. Rules were agreed under which Alan Jkinson retired in 1996 and was replaced by Rodney Bickerstaffe. Hector MacKenzie was Associate General Secretary until his retirement in 2000.

UNISON is principally a public sector union but does have private sector members as a result of privatisation and outsourcing.

In terms of merger management, UNISON made significant use of trainers and training establishments (mainly Cranfield) in guiding the process. Its managers accepted early on that the creation of a new union was a 10 year enterprise – and so it has proved. Only after over 6 years were staff brought together at national level in a single Head Office – that of former NALGO. The very substantial cultural differences between the unions were addressed by the commissioning of an anthropological study (Ourousof 1993A and 1993B) which surfaced the values and assumptions of organisational members and suggested ways in which the new union could address them. This was probably a unique step amongst unions and is very rare elsewhere.

Because of my previous employment at a senior level in UNISON until January 2000, I did not commence researching in that Union until August 2002.

#### **1.4. METHOD AND CONTRIBUTION**

A case study approach has been adopted. This has been for a number of reasons. First, Yin (1994) suggests that case studies can facilitate the answer to 'how' questions and the research question falls into that category. Yin defines the case study as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context' (page 13). Miles and Huberman (1994) define it as 'a phenomenon of some sort occurring within a bounded context' (page

25). Yin (1994) notes that the evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling and the overall study as being more robust than in single case designs, though he emphasises that one should use replication, not sampling, logic in designing multiple case studies.

All these observations assisted in making a decision to adopt the approach utilised here. How officials manage within a real life context is precisely what the research examines. Different cases have been chosen, not in order to maximise a 'sample' but to provide contexts where it is possible to examine the propositions in four very different organisations. Those organisations have been chosen because of their variety, their different traditions, sectors of organisation and so on; the only common factors being their status as trade unions and the fact that they have been formed by merger.

This study is reliant on the voices of those who are engaged in a senior capacity within their unions. Only very rarely have those voices been heard in the past and never in managerial capacities. Those voices could never be heard by the use of survey methodology. A qualitative approach, apart from being consistent with my own world view on the nature of reality, was the only way in which the lives and experiences of those who are the subject of the study could be elicited in a way in which meaning might be made from them. The ontological position is realist. The semi structured interviews which were the principal method utilised, together with their analysis, do, it is argued, present a view of reality – though not necessarily the truth (Tsoukas 1989; Silverman 1993).

The study makes a contribution in three principal ways:-

1. It makes a contribution to the literature on trade union management. This is not difficult. There is very little about it. Dunlop (1990) is the only principal text which looks at 'trade union managers' as such. Other texts (Weill 1994; Hannigan 1998) look at managerial processes. The author (Dempsey 2000; Dempsey and McKeivitt 2001) has looked at merger management in trade unions. But trade union managers are not identified; neither are their activities analysed or their development examined there.
2. It makes a contribution in bringing in to the literature on trade union governance a factor not previously considered – that of trade union manager. As indicated above, there is material on trade union officials (see e.g. Kelly and Heery 1994) and a good deal of theoretical discussion about the relationship of the 'rank and file' and the 'bureaucracy', stemming from Weber (1920) and Michels (1915) through Lipset et al (1956) to Marxist writers of today (e.g. Kelly 1988). But if it is the case that senior trade union officials are now engaged in management, this raises potentially quite different issues about the consequences for trade union governance, for the



maintenance and improvement of the democratic system and for the relations between elected and appointed officials.

3. It makes a contribution to the literature on stakeholder management and, in particular, to an issue concerning whether and, if so, why this is a type of management practised by trade union managers in a polyarchy. There are many theories of stakeholder management but, particularly in literature with ethical dimensions, there is an emphasis on normative theories (e.g. Donaldson and Preston 1995). One might expect that those who have achieved high office in trade unions would have certain principles, for example of fairness and equality, which might be discernible in the way they manage. So the issues of whether it is, why it is and whether stakeholder management is recognisable is novel in a literature which, in its theoretical form, is often more concerned with defining new theories of the firm rather than examining the practice of stakeholder management, and its theoretical implications, in other contexts.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER TWO

Chapter 1 shared my own experience of the bemusement in the world at large at the suggestion that trade unions were managed, by managers. It suggested that the notion dawned even on practitioners only relatively recently.

In the academic world the position is little different. As Terry (2000:5) observed:- 'It is an oddity that despite numerous studies of union governance over several decades, little attention has been paid to the processes of union management.....If any inference could be drawn from much academic analysis, it is that the work of [managers] should flow unambiguously from policy set through approved democratic mechanisms (good) but that in practice they are more likely to be dancing to the tune of the general secretary (bad). Both comments are rooted in such naïve and simplified views of the government and management of complex organisations as to be laughable if they were transferred to other organisational contexts.'

The reasons for this, evidently risible, situation are many and various. They are, as has been suggested, a consequence of the approaches of academics and practitioners alike. Importantly, however, they have effectively prevented any analysis to speak of on union managers, what they believe and what they actually do. This chapter is intended to see whether, despite these drawbacks, frameworks are available which will enable an analysis to be mounted.

### 2.2. KEY ISSUES

As will appear in this chapter, trade unions have rarely been the subject of analysis using models from management literature. Indeed Hyman and Fryer (1975) argued, in an analysis of the work of Etzioni (1961) which attempted an organisational analysis of trade unions, that the limitations of such an approach demonstrate 'the impossibility of constructing a distinctive discipline of organisation theory which is both comprehensive and at the same time integrated.' (p 158).

Yet it is clear that Hyman and Fryer are talking about very different organisations from those which are the subject of this research project. They say that trade unions 'have only a limited number of full time employees. Their "management" exhibits little professionalism and specialisation (hence such problems of "staff" and "line" relationships are virtually non-existent).....The problems of identifying "organisational goals"...are particularly acute' (page 159). They say that the salaries of first line full time officers were rarely substantially above the earnings of the members they represented. They also discount a perspective on trade unions that is 'concerned principally

with managerial tasks of achieving the smooth, continuous and efficient co-operation of all employees in pursuit of the official objectives of the organisation...and motivating maximum performance'

It is argued in this chapter that both management and trade unions have changed. Literature is discussed which suggests that managerial activities are recognisable in trade unions and this research endeavours to explain if and why that situation has arisen, seeking also to identify both the nature of managerial activities and the reasons they are undertaken. In that the case study unions have arisen from merger, explanations are sought as to whether that feature will be likely to play a part in the development of managerial activities, including the management of the merger itself – though literature has recognised that management in trade unions may be a problematic concept. However, the use of models derived from management and organisational literature can, it is argued, provide insights into these issues. It is noted as a fact that one of the case study unions has been awarded the Investors in People standard and two others aspire to it. This does not suggest that Fryer and Hyman's assertion that management in trade unions exhibits little professionalism is axiomatic in today's world.

This is not to say that trade union specific literature is not important. It is argued that the identification of unions as polyarchies (e.g. Banks 1974), structures in which legitimate interest groups compete for power and influence, is of particular significance. Whether or not the assumption is made that conflict between these groups is inevitable (which this research does not assume), it is argued that polyarchy is a recognisable reality. The argument goes further and seeks to make links between the management of organisations identified as polyarchies and the practice of stakeholder management. 'Normative' stakeholder management (Donaldson and Preston 1995) assumes that stakeholder interests (the interests, for example, of interest groups within a polyarchy) are legitimate and intrinsically valuable. If trade union management is practised within a polyarchy, therefore, it is difficult to see how it will not include the necessity of undertaking some managerial activities vis-à-vis interest groups operating within the union. Thus, it is argued, normative stakeholder management should be an identifiable reality within the case study trade unions even if boundary management, arising from political and power relations between the various stakeholders, may render that activity one of some complexity.

Normative stakeholder management is an ethical activity founded on a belief in the intrinsic value of legitimate stakeholders. It has always been recognised that trade unions have been founded on sets of principles, even if the literature has found it difficult to define them with any consistency. This research adopts the definition proposed by Batstone (1977) which talks (inter alia) of 'unity', 'social justice', 'fairness', and 'equality'. The argument is presented that such

principles will influence the way in which trade union managers undertake their managerial roles, thus making the adoption of 'normative' stakeholder management more likely.

In looking at those managerial roles, the framework which has been of particular significance has been that of Hales (1999). This suggests that managerial activities are contingent on a range of factors including 'facilities' available to managers (such as office accommodation to accommodate the merged organisations researched); 'meanings' arising, for example, from the cultural features both in a manager's existing organisation and (after a merger) her/his previous one; and 'norms' arising from the moral rules (for example, trade union principles) influencing an organisation and those who work in it. It is argued that this is of great utility in analysing management activities in trade unions. Organisational culture is an issue of significance in organisations that have merged, in that organisational members find themselves in a new organisation where unity depends on some consensus about cultural values. Resources, too, will be an issue as the new organisation seeks to build its strength. And, as we have seen, moral rules, trade union principles, are posited to influence trade union managers. This framework is, therefore, adopted to facilitate the analysis of the actions and behaviours of trade union managers.

### **2.3. ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES**

#### ***Governance***

'Governance' is regarded in the Oxford dictionary as an old fashioned form of the word 'government'. It is, however, given a slightly different meaning of (inter alia) 'the act or manner of governing.' That is the sense in which the word is used, in this chapter and throughout the thesis. The interest is in the relationships between the various actors in the act of governing and the manner in which they do so.

Much of the literature analysing union governance is based on deeply gloomy notions of the inevitability of oligarchy in organizations, arising from the work of Michels (1915: 401) for whom 'optimism will remain the exclusive privilege of utopian thinkers.' 'It is organization which gives birth to the dominion of the elected over the electors, of the mandatories over the mandators, of the delegates over the delegators,' said Michels. 'Who says organization says oligarchy.' This approach has many times been applied to analyses of union power structures, principally (as in Lipset et al 1956) as part of an argument that unions resemble one party states with the bureaucracy holding all the resources and the powers of communication, rendering them oligarchic rather than democratic. Marxist writers go further (see Kelly 1988) and argue that as union officers and leaders receive material rewards for their work and become assimilated into middle class lifestyles, so their commitment to the goals of the members diminishes and they become inevitably conservative. Marxist ideas have had a disproportionate influence in both academic discussion, and the day to day lives, of

trade unions; it is easy to see the polemical potential of an idea like this.

The Webbs (1920) recognised the possibility that officers could develop different ideas and outlooks. But they believed that some form of bureaucracy was desirable, mainly to take account of unions becoming more complex organisations but also in order to regulate the members so as to protect the union itself from the consequences of irresponsible action. The analysis therefore involved recognition of the inevitability of the development of Weberian forms of bureaucratic organisation, understanding that this would lead to complex power relationships between members and officers. This involved recognition of the ways in which officers had on the one hand to remain close to the members whilst on the other hand maintaining the integrity of the union itself.

Marxist theorists share much of this analysis (see Kelly 1988 chapter 7), save that they saw the 'irresponsibility' of the members as evidence of the manifestation of class struggle and the organisational work of officers as evidence of their collaboration with capitalism. These ideas, not surprisingly, perpetuate, as Kelly and Heery (1994:196) note, the 'over-simplistic' bureaucracy vs rank and file division which has proved so unhelpful in examining the dynamics and organisation of trade unions.

Using phrases like 'optimistic' and 'pessimistic' is a value laden action because if one adopts a Marxist perspective, the development of oligarchies and cleavages between members and officials, elected and appointed, might be expected to increase class consciousness and therefore enhance the class struggle, something Marxists would be optimistic about. Representing the views and interests of the members, though, is such a significant trade union goal that it does not seem unreasonable to regard Michelsian and Marxist approaches as being pessimistic in that they posit the inevitable 'selling out' of the membership.

In these terms, there is more optimistic material available. Weber himself (1920), who interestingly was Michels' teacher, believed that because of the greater efficiency of bureaucracy, it would render obsolete all traditional forms of rule. A deal of writing on the topic, however, tends, implicitly or explicitly, to assume the existence of oligarchic tendencies and to identify ways in which they can be kept at bay. Hyde (1984) advocates the need for the membership to formulate bargaining demands and to ratify agreements. Hartley (1982) seeks more freedom for what in the USA are called 'locals' and protection of minority rights. Bok and Dunlop (1970) point to the importance of internal interest groups in describing the influence members can exert over union policy. Schwab (1992) draws an analogy with the corporate sector, suggesting that the problems faced by members in controlling leaders are similar to those faced by shareholders in controlling managers – though he suggests that because of the altruism of some,

but not all, union leaders, members often have difficulty in assessing the motives of their leaders. Whether this is right or not, it does place trade unions in some sort of organisational perspective.

Allen (1954), in his classic work, argues that union members' right to terminate their membership if they are dissatisfied with the work of the union to which they belong, now the norm in the UK, provides sufficient guarantees that union leaders will serve members' interests – something which might now be termed a 'customer led' view of trade union organisation. One of the most frequently quoted passages in his work also has the ring of a more modern 'service' orientation to union organisation, in that he asserted that the end of union activity is to protect and improve the general living standards of its members rather than to provide workers with an exercise in self-government.

Terminating one's membership when dissatisfied with the actions of one's union is a somewhat passive approach towards exercising membership rights. Schumpeter (1976) accepted such passivity. He argued that in general people would not participate in the democratic process beyond the election of those who would carry out activities on their behalf; such an election would be a competitive process so that the election was the nucleus of democracy. This rather begs the question of why people might be so passive. Perhaps the exercise of their constitutional power by stakeholders in a trade union is a more complex process than is represented by models of customer satisfaction.

### ***Unions as organisations***

In what sort of organisation, then, are these stakeholders involved? Can we look at organisations, specifically trade union organisations, in the light of realistic, modern, frames of reference?

Child et al (1973) were amongst the first to present ideas on the trade union as an organisational type. They review literature on the voluntary sector which subsumes trade unions within a broader class of organisation (cf. Blau and Scott 1963), but suggest that whilst union administrative and representative structures may lend themselves to measurement in terms of Weberian bureaucratic frameworks, their rationales are qualitatively different. The bureaucratic dimension they characterise as 'administrative rationality', which they believe conflicts with the ideal of membership involvement in the representative process – what they term as 'representative rationality.' The former, they suggest, is located at the top of the hierarchy; the latter at the grassroots. At member level, Child et al (1973) present a typology of membership attachment describing the 'stalwart, the 'card-holder', the 'trouble-maker' and the 'alienated member'. At activist level, members participate in a union's structure in one or many of the different committees or bodies set up as part of the representative structure.

Undy et al (1996) extend this model to include a dimension which they describe as 'political rationality' – the ultimate purpose and primary means of trade unions. Their study is looking at unions' responses to Thatcherite trade union legislation, responses which were political. But it is not immediately apparent how this dimension helps one understand the critical dynamics of union organisation. Politics are part of the environment in which unions operate and, in so operating, they are seeking to represent the views of their members. Thus, politics are arguably a component of representative rationality.

Willman et al (1993) point out that both administrative and representative rationalities have to co-exist in the management of a trade union and suggest that a key skill in managing a trade union is managing the co-existence between administrative and representative rationality. This is done within a highly political environment, containing many different stakeholders. The external environment will include the Government, politicians and social actors of many types, employers and commentators. Internally, it will include not just members and activists but different categories of members and activists in constantly shifting categories.

On a practical level, Willman et al (1993) discuss union financial controls within a framework where, they say, the two forms of rationality are inherently in conflict, although there is a need for the co-existence mentioned above. They present a series of hypotheses on union financial systems, including that formal financial systems will be neither common nor rigorous and that union 'leaders' will seek to centralise the management of funds. These are ideas of interest in this research and will be addressed in the case studies.

All this suggests that, far from union governance being defined by a simple dichotomy between administrative and representative rationality (mirroring the division between bureaucracy and rank and file) it involves attention to the legitimate interests of a wide range of stakeholders. Various writers have described union organisation as 'a political system in which a variety of interest groups whose goals are sometimes shared, sometimes in conflict, contend for power and influence.' (Kelly and Heery (1994:15). This is usually described as the polyarchy theory of union organisation.

Different writers posit different bases for the definition of these power structures. Banks (1974) views the primary locus of competition as between officers and lay activists. Crouch (1982) identifies two types of union goal - money goals and participation goals - pursued at different levels by national officers, shop stewards and members. James (1984) looks at sources of 'legitimate' power in a polyarchy. Kelly and Heery (1994) argue that within this framework it becomes possible to analyse systematically the shifting alliances between different groups within a union. Their own research identifies divisions between local and

national officers, male and female officers and divisions associated with generation and ideology.

If one studied trade unions free of the constraints of ideological determinism, it seems likely that one would come to the conclusion that they comprised political systems in which there could be identified a variety of interest groups whose goals were sometimes shared, sometimes in conflict. The way the theory is used, by for example Kelly and Heery (1994) places the theory, however, in the pessimistic tradition because it carries the assumption that the stakeholders pursuing their interest conflict in a dysfunctional way. This does not seem implicit in the idea itself and this research does not begin with that assumption.

As indicated above, this research is interested in whether, if one accepts the validity of the theory of polyarchy, there are identifiable ways in which trade union managers, from conviction or in practice, manage organisations in which interest groups seek to attain their goals within union structures. Regarding these interest groups as stakeholders leads logically to a discussion about whether ideas of stakeholder management can assist in determining this issue.

### ***The stakeholder perspective***

The language of 'stakeholders' has already been employed in discussions in this chapter. Partly this is because it is modern usage – some would say over-usage since it pervades not only managerial language but also community and political language. Arguably, however, it is a helpful way of thinking about social institutions of any kind. It concentrates the mind on individuals and groups who might legitimately have interests in the institution under analysis.

Individuals and groups who might have legitimate interests in trade unions were discussed above in connection with the theory of polyarchy. This research has not, as already noted, adopted the assumption that the individuals and groups contend for power and influence in a dysfunctional way. It may or not be correct. It has, however, accepted that trade unions (in common with many other organisations, to a greater or lesser degree) are characterised by stakeholders with legitimate, sometimes similar, sometimes different, interests in the organisation. Hence the potential congruence between polyarchy theory and stakeholder theory.

Much of the groundwork in developing stakeholder theory was done in Sweden (Rhenman 1964). It is interesting that direct translation from the Swedish of the term Rhenman used, 'intressent', is 'somebody having an interest.' The text usually regarded as the seminal source is that of Freeman (1984). Freeman was concerned with strategic management and initially intended the concept of stakeholder to apply only to external stakeholders in an organization's environment. He proposed a wide definition of the term as 'any group or individual who



can affect or who is affected by the achievement of an organization's purpose.' Brummer (1991) draws attention to the fact that, under that definition, virtually everyone is a stakeholder. Freeman narrows the concept later to include only those groups that can presently damage a firm or its reputation in some important way. Brummer suggests that this confers stakeholder status on environmentalists, consumer advocates and even terrorists.

This would seem to suggest some test of legitimacy. Donaldson and Preston (1995) suggest that stakeholders are 'persons or groups with legitimate interests in procedural and/or substantive aspects of (corporate) activity.' They make the point that stakeholders are identified by **their** interests in the organization, whether or not the organization has any corresponding functional interest in them. Another appealing approach to definition is that of Clarkson (1995A) who suggests that stakeholders are risk-bearers. He argues that a stakeholder has some form of capital, either financial or human, at risk and, therefore, has something to lose or gain depending on an organization's behaviour. This is attractive because it recognises the personal and often emotional attachment which many people have to their unions and the corresponding moral duty (it could be argued) on the part of union management to manage the organization in ways that take this into account, perhaps to identify legitimate interests which require their attention - to manage a tension not only between management and politics but also between the active, elected, minority and the passive majority; to take account, also perhaps, of the legitimacy of different active minorities.

Implicit here is a moral basis of stakeholder management as it applies to the management of unions. Whatever the language used, it will be an issue in conceptualising the nature of that stakeholder management to understand the judgments of legitimacy which managers make in order to focus their managerial activities.

Donaldson and Preston (1995) present three theses concerning stakeholder theory;

1. that stakeholder theory is descriptive in that it presents a model of what the corporation is - a constellation of co-operative and competitive interests possessing intrinsic value. This is one of the foundations of the research propositions which assume that this is the case in trade unions and that stakeholder management is a central feature of the work of union managers.
2. that stakeholder theory is instrumental, in that it establishes a framework for examining the connections, if any, between the practice of stakeholder management and the achievement of various corporate performance goals. This is more problematic in the case of unions. Corporate performance of unions is not usually measurable in economic terms and, as is the case with most not for profit organizations, (see, e.g. Kanter and Summers

1987), the achievement of value-driven objectives is inherently difficult to measure in other terms. Donaldson and Preston themselves have difficulty supporting the thesis from evidence in respect of commercial firms.

3. that stakeholder theory is normative in that it involves acceptance of the legitimacy of stakeholder interests and the fact that they have intrinsic value. It is this that provides the moral basis for the theory and renders it such a suitable vehicle for the examination of management in unions.

Although stakeholder theory is now generally very intertwined with ideas of business ethics and corporate social responsibility, it is surprising that (with the exception of Lewis (1991), who argues that performing stakeholder analysis in the public service is an ethical necessity since only by understanding stakeholder interests and concerns is an organization likely to take truly ethical action) those who advocate stakeholder management in sectors other than the commercial one ( see e.g. Blair and Fottler 1990, Hartnett 1993, and Batsleer and Paton 1991) do not address the concept in moral or ethical terms. In an organization which aspires to democratic ideals, such as a trade union, it is arguable that the practice of management requires managers to manage in ways which recognise the legitimacy of the democratic process and, consequently, all of the actors within it. In managerial terms, this requires the practice of stakeholder management.

In a themed issue in 1999, the Academy of Management Review published a number of articles discussing, inter alia, normative stakeholder theory and the basis of Donaldson and Preston's typology. Jones and Wicks (1999) attempted to distinguish between descriptive and instrumental stakeholder theories and normative theory and proposed a hybrid theory which included both ethical and instrumental elements. Amongst the articles debating this proposition is one by Freeman (1999) which suggests that you do not need a convergent stakeholder theory if you 'toss out the Donaldson and Preston typology!'(page 235)

Donaldson and Preston (1995) had also pointed out that attending to stakeholder interests did not imply that all stakeholders, however they may be identified, should be equally involved in all processes and decisions. The literature suggests a variety of ways of determining the importance of various stakeholders. Clarkson (1995B) suggests that a primary stakeholder is one without which the organization cannot survive as a going concern. A trade union cannot survive without members and there is a case for saying that this definition rightly places the members in the forefront of the process of stakeholder management. Dempsey (1996) presents a stakeholder map of an anonymised union known as Ribbon which has been the subject of a merger. There, stakeholders are divided into external, member, staff,

activist, regulatory and client/customer categories. Further division into primary and secondary stakeholders would be possible using Clarkson's approach but this might involve some controversial value judgments. For example, the union clearly could not survive without members, activists and staff. Could it however survive without groups of black or women members, or an Annual Delegate Conference? A process of determining this could have the advantage of concentrating on the core purposes and activities of the union but this might in the end prove overly reductionist.

Starik (1994) suggests an approach borrowed from the issues management and crisis management literature involving an analysis of probability and impact. Those entities which have the highest probability of interacting with an organization or those that would have the greatest impact on, or the greatest impact from, an organization's activities would receive the most management attention. There is a certain intuitive truth in this approach although, if trade union managers truly exhibit principles of justice and fairness, one might expect them to be attending to the interests of minorities in appropriate circumstances.

There are two further interesting points arising from considering stakeholder categories. First, people can be in more than one category. An activist is also a member; she may also be a member of a women's committee or of the National Executive Council. Brummer (1991) addresses a similar point when he discusses whether the 'general public' is a stakeholder in a corporation. Whoever is not directly affected by the conduct of corporate executives is, for that action, a member of the general public, Brummer says. Therefore, the class of individuals designated as members of the general public is a shifting one. A person may be a member of the general public for one corporate action while being a stakeholder for another. In other words, a person's classification as a stakeholder is related to the managerial action being studied, not to the inherent role of the individual, organization or group concerned. An approach such as this is useful in operationalising the concept.

Secondly, representation of stakeholders in Ribbon shows relationships only between stakeholders and Ribbon itself. In the real world, there are interdependencies between stakeholders - to take one obvious example, between senior managers and the activist committees to which they are required to report. Rowley (1997) has used social network analysis to construct a theory of stakeholder influences which accommodates multiple, interdependent stakeholder demands and predicts how organizations respond to the simultaneous influence of multiple stakeholders. Whether this framework has utility in a trade union is not yet clear but the principle of recognising stakeholder interdependence is difficult to gainsay.

Another approach is that of Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997) which suggests that managers' attention to stakeholders is determined by the

concepts of power, legitimacy and urgency. Where all three of these attributes are perceived by managers as present, stakeholder salience will be high. This is a useful test which offers practical explanations for the way managers behave in an environment of high stakeholder involvement. This was the subject of further research by Agle, Mitchell and Sonnenfeld (1999). This found, *inter alia*, in the minds of Chief Executive Officers, the stakeholder attributes of power, legitimacy and urgency were individually (with only two exceptions) and cumulatively (with no exceptions) related to stakeholder salience, suggesting that these stakeholder attributes do affect the degree to which top managers give priority to competing stakeholders. As already noted, in trade unions trade union managers, influenced by trade union principles of, for example, fairness and equity, might be expected, on occasions, to be attending to the interests of minorities rather than those interest groups who may enjoy superior power and influence.

In the circumstances where research is examining managerial activities in trade unions, where attention has been drawn to the interest groups and individuals with legitimate interests in those unions and where the values and principles of trade union officials have also been recognised as an issue, the ethical basis of stakeholder theory, specifically normative stakeholder theory, can be seen as being of potential assistance in analysing those managerial activities. There has often, though, been something of a search amongst stakeholder theorists for a theoretical basis for a normative approach. Two such approaches are of interest here. González (2002) proposes an approach based on corporate moral responsibility. She concludes (*inter alia*) that 'the moral responsibility of the corporation must be understood in relation to an economic, legal and social environment within which the [corporation] will make its decisions and take action with respect to its three spheres or scopes of responsibility; economic, ecological and social.'

Argandoña (1988), by contrast, proposes an approach based on the 'common good'. Building to some extent on Christian social doctrine, he attempts to define this concept and apply it as a theoretical basis for normative stakeholder theory; as well as a means for 'determining, in each specific case, the rights and duties of the participants, in accordance with the common good of the company, of the particular 'society' it has with its stakeholders, and of society as a whole.' (page 1100). The definition applied is 'the overall conditions of life in society that allow the different groups and their members to achieve their own perfection more fully and more easily' (page 1095).

Part of the definition of 'trade union principles' utilised in this review (Batstone 1977) included 'some idea of social justice.....those within the collectivity are to be treated both fairly and equally.' At the very least, this is not inconsistent with Argandoña's (1998) definition of the 'common good.' Whilst it would be tendentious to suggest that this research has foundations which rest on these definitions, there was certainly a thought that it would not be unexpected if trade union

managers approached their relations with their organisation's stakeholders in ways which reflected their trade union principles. Whether articulated or not, normative stakeholder theory, insofar as it is possible to define it, is a relevant concept.

This discussion has been a lengthy one because of the potential links of stakeholder theories of governance to polyarchal theories of trade union organisation. The latter, however, are usually based on pessimistic notions of governance, positing a situation where interest groups are in conflict, whereas many contributions in discussions of stakeholder theory focus on the positive rights of stakeholders and the need for management to attend to them.

Stakeholder theory is not the only theory of governance which could be relevant here. Cornforth (2002) examines the governance of public and non-profit organisations, an area which he says is under-theorised. He proposes a paradox perspective as a conceptual framework to bring together a number of different theoretical perspectives in a consistent manner and explain their domains of application. He uses the language of 'owners' and 'boards' but it is easy to adapt this to enlighten a discussion of the relative roles of, particularly, activists in unions and trade union managers who interact with them. Exhibit 2.1, adapted from Cornforth's article, seeks to do this.

The ideas here are of considerable interest. The case studies will reveal a variety of relationships between managers and activists. The partnership model – seen in this study as midway between the conception of membership participation and leadership predominance (Fairbrother 2000) – is clearly recognisable. The democratic model may perhaps be related to the membership predominance perspective and the 'rubber stamp' model to that of leadership predominance. Cornforth (2002) describes the role of the (Executive Council) under agency theory, and also under resource dependency theory, as 'boundary spanning', and we shall see that boundary management is a key issue in the relationships between activists and managers. This is something which has been addressed in literature relating to different types of organisations; network organisations (Hirschorn and Gilmore 1992), public sector organisations (Baddeley and Payne 1997; Peters 1998) and the non-profit sector (Kramer 1985, Leat 1988, Harris 1991). Whilst these represent different historical and/or practical contexts, such work may be of interest in examining the dynamics of these relationships.

So although the propositions below focus on stakeholder theories, it may be that other theories of governance will assist in explaining how activists and managers relate. One does not have to abandon stakeholding language in this exercise. Cornforth specifically looks at the interests of different stakeholders so the application of his ideas remains consistent with the notion of interest groups pursuing legitimate goals within a trade union, seen as a polyarchy, and of trade union managers seeking to manage within such a framework.

<b>THEORY</b>	<b>INTERESTS</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE MEMBERS</b>	<b>EC ROLE</b>	<b>MODEL</b>
<b>Agency theory</b>	Activists and managers have different interests	Representatives of the members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conformance – to seek to safeguard the interests of the members, as they see them</li> <li>• Oversee management</li> <li>• Check compliance</li> </ul>	Compliance model
<b>Stewardship theory</b>	Activists and managers share interests	Experts – to inform management of membership views, to add political perspectives and ‘add value’ to the relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve performance – add value to managerial decisions and strategy</li> <li>• Partner and support management</li> </ul>	Partnership model
<b>Democratic perspective</b>	Activists/members contain different interests	Lay representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political – represent member interests</li> <li>• Make policy</li> <li>• Control the executive</li> </ul>	Democratic model
<b>Stakeholder theory</b>	Stakeholders have different interests	Stakeholder representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political – balancing stakeholder needs</li> <li>• Make policy</li> <li>• Control management</li> </ul>	Stakeholder model
<b>Resource dependency theory</b>	Stakeholders and organisation have different interests	Stakeholder representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boundary spanning – secure resources, stakeholder relations and maintain external perspective</li> </ul>	Co-optation model
<b>Managerial hegemony theory</b>	Activists and managers have different interests	Representatives of the members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symbolic – ratify decisions, give legitimacy (managers have real power)</li> </ul>	‘Rubber stamp’ model

**EXHIBIT 2.1 Theories of governance (adapted from Cornforth 2002)**

### ***Stakeholder power***

The discussion above of stakeholder theory and other ideas of governance was conducted using language of stakeholder power and influence. There are separate streams of literature considering aspects of power in organisations which can usefully now be addressed.

Marxist writing on power forms, as Hardy and Clegg (1996) point out, the root of one of two clear streams of writing on power in organizations, one which regards power as domination and actions taken to challenge it as resistance. Management writing (see e.g. Mintzberg 1983) regards power structures in organizations as reflecting legitimate, functional authority and resistance to them as illegitimate and dysfunctional. Almost all of the literature examining power structures in unions comes from the former tradition.

Thus, Gaventa (1980) presents a vivid picture of events in an Appalachian valley in the early part of the century, looking not only at 'colonialisation' and industrialisation but the activities of the United Mine Workers of America in representing many of the workers whilst these processes took place. The author models the 'three faces of power'; the pluralist view (that A prevails over B through superior bargaining resources - see e.g. Dahl 1961); the second dimension (the construction of barriers against participation of B through control of the agenda which results in non-decisions and the mobilisation of bias - Bachrach and Baratz 1962); and the third dimension (influencing or shaping the consciousness of B about inequalities through myths, information control, ideologies etc. - Lukes 1974). He then analyses the events of his study by reference to these three dimensions. He concludes that the first and second dimensions cannot explain the failure of the members of the UMWA to exercise their constitutional rights to ensure that the union represented their interests. From a third dimensional perspective the members' attitudes grew from an instilled conception of the appropriate relationship between the leaders and the led. 'The position of dependency within the union relative to the powerlessness outside it allowed and encouraged the response of loyalty to the regime when challenge to it occurred'. (1980: 200)

A more recent work on power offers another perspective of these dilemmas in a democratic context. Flyvbjerg (1998) provides a longitudinal study of a town centre, environmental and traffic project in Aalborg, Denmark. It charts the formulation, presentation, involvement, opposition, amendment and partial implementation of the project, an implementation which actually had a negative environmental benefit. The progress of the project is analysed in terms of power relations, specifically explaining much of it in terms of Lukes' (1974) third face of power. The power of the various stakeholders is identified in historical social and political terms and the reaction of the managers of the project to the exercise of that power is fascinatingly outlined.

For example, at one point in the project, the local Party with the greatest environmental credentials put forward its own alternative plan which involved road construction which was wholly outside the objectives of the City authorities. Yet with only five more votes in the City Council, this counter-plan would have been approved. The planners determined to tackle the power of those proposing the plan with technical rationality and to undertake a technical assessment of the plan which showed that it was wholly impracticable. Flyvbjerg presents the proposition that the less an actor (a stakeholder) has power, the more that actor has to depend on rationality. This accounted for the actions of the City authorities who had no other form of achieving their goals. But in general terms, the greater the power the less the rationality and in open confrontations, he hypothesises, rationality yields to power. It should be noted that this itself is a theory which is pessimistic in terms, not only of trade union democracy, but of democracy itself. Whilst it may illuminate aspects of stakeholder behaviour, arguably one should be cautious in elevating these ideas to a deterministic level.

This study of the power of various stakeholders – managers politicians, business interests, trade unions, interest groups and citizens seeking to exercise their rights and responsibilities within a democratic framework, is of considerable interest in the examination of stakeholder behaviour in a trade union. During the debate about the Aalborg project, the Council, which was in the forefront of good practice in this respect, made several decisions about how the public could become involved – including exhibitions, meetings and literature. Similarly, rather than accept that members of trade unions are passive individuals whose views are only expressed during elections and whose power in the interim is consequently to be expressed, many unions have gone out of their way to reach out to particular stakeholder interest groups within the membership. A good example of this is UNISON, one of the case study unions in this research. It has brought its structures for the involvement of women, black members, gay and lesbian members, disabled members, young members and retired members into a central structure known as the Membership Participation Unit. Fryer (2000:34) says that the intention was to project the union as having ‘a powerful vision for the equitable representation of all types of members.’ At the time of the merger, this vision included a rather coded idea called ‘fair representation’ which was designed to facilitate the involvement of lower paid workers who were, it was believed, traditionally less likely to want to become involved in the union’s structures. Fryer (2000:35) suggests that this latter objective was not successful, and for reasons that call into question the extent and reasons for a perceived passivity on the part of the membership: ‘even where explicit rules were established to ensure such representation nationally, it was sometimes difficult to secure sufficient nominations to run a competitive ballot or even, on occasion, to fill the position’.



The most radical of UNISON's policies to promote involvement and inclusion was the policy of 'proportionality' – the objective that by the year 2000 women would be represented at all levels of the democratic structure in proportion to their membership of the organisation as a whole – by then around 80%. McBride (2000) charts progress towards this whilst arguing that the structures take into account the representation of and by individual women but not of women as a social group. She notes also that, even with proportionality, in her view decision making can be detached from members' experiences.

Studying these issues directly is outside the scope of this research. The point in referring to them is threefold. First it is to demonstrate that trade union 'officials' have been instrumental in designing and initiating structures which are intended to enhance members' ability to become involved in their unions and, implicitly, to be able to challenge their officials; thus, not to accept passivity as inevitable. Second, it is to demonstrate the potential complexity of power structures within modern unions – the sheer number of stakeholders with legitimate interests in the union whose interests have to be taken into account. Third, it is to seek to make the point that unions have changed. Even if they were once the rather one dimensional organisations of which Michels wrote and of which the 'over-simplistic bureaucracy vs rank and file' (Kelly and Heery 1994) division was discernible, arguably that is far less the case now. They are complex bodies with histories, traditions, structures, cultures and members which are vastly different. Cultural assumptions about the nature of the relationships between officials and members are different and can form a prime focus for cultural clashes when unions merge. Morris and Fosh (2000), for example, analyse the CPSA (a component of PCS, another of the case study unions) against four models of union democracy, containing many features of member/official power, or lack of it, and conclude (inter alia) that 'assessments of whether a particular union has become more or less democratic....depends on what one means by trade union democracy' (page 112). One would not be surprised to learn that, on the merger of the CPSA, understanding these different meanings became an issue.

A more specific meaning expressed by officials in many unions, including the one into which CPSA merged, is that of whether a union is full time officer led, or member led, or something in between (usually described as 'partnership'). Cornforth (2000:3) says that partnership is based on an assumption that that 'managers want to do a good job and will act as effective stewards of an organisation's resources. As a result senior management and ...representatives on the board are seen as partners....The role of the board is primarily strategic, to work with management to improve strategy and add value to top decisions'. Fairbrother (2000:28) proposes a model as dividing unions between those which accept the principle of 'leadership predominance', and those which are committed to the principle of 'membership participation'. He presents a highly loaded description of unions in which the leadership have predominance as resembling external

agencies providing services at a cost and in which leaders have to resort to subterfuge to introduce changes of policy of which they suspect the members would not approve. Nevertheless, the idea of a union where there is comparatively more power and influence held by the central leadership is recognisable. Membership participation unions he defines as ones where 'the leadership and members place emphasis on the active involvement of members in the genesis and development of union policy, in the execution and administration of bargaining and negotiation'. (page 29). He does not recognise the principle of partnership in the context of his model. To this extent the model, although useful in outline, if not in detail, is another which is based on 'the over-simplistic bureaucracy vs rank and file division.' From another generation, Turner (1962) suggested that the larger a union, the lower its degree of membership participation which does not appear to be discussed in Fairbrother's work. Yet these stakeholder dynamics illustrate usefully the complex processes in which, it could be argued, stakeholders contend for power and influence within polyarchies and in which trade union managers may be required to manage these processes.

## **2.4. MANAGERIAL ISSUES**

### ***Officers and leaders***

The discussion heretofore has been concentrated on organisational issues and the character of stakeholder management that might be expected to take place within polyarchal organisations. It is now necessary to examine whether it is possible to identify the individuals who might be undertaking such managerial responsibilities.

In the literature one can find much discussion of trade union officers. They are concerned with representing and organising members, individually and collectively. As noted above, they also have to balance a range of complex stakeholder relationships, internally with individual members, branches, regional organisation, line management and strategic management as well as externally. Kelly and Heery (1994) found that in most unions officers were in practice subject to dual systems of control, from lay representatives and superiors, but with comparatively light control from the latter. Brooke (1984) identifies this as a characteristic of many voluntary organizations. The majority of unions studied said that their officers had almost complete or a great deal of autonomy in their work. Managers tended to exercise greater control in three main circumstances; allocation of responsibilities, a crisis in the officer's work or to further a national campaign or policy initiative. Officers themselves valued their autonomy and were highly focused on serving the members for which they were responsible, with limited sympathy for policy initiatives which blurred that focus. A majority regarded accountability to the members as more important than accountability to union management.

Kelly and Heery's (1994) findings placed great stress on the significance of officers' values, which they categorised as managerialist, regulationist or leader ('resting on a perception of worker-employer interests as antagonistic' p. 25). This is a highly loaded categorisation. A more general encapsulation of trade union principles (tested by the writers with not altogether encouraging results) is that of Batstone et al (1977:27) which includes 'an emphasis on unity and.....the prevention of the fractionalisation of the domestic organisation (and) some idea of social justice. That is, those within the collectivity are to be treated both fairly and equally (Brown 1973:133). This involves, on the one hand, ensuring that members of the collectivity are not subject to managerial whim.....There should be no discrimination against the less fortunate, while the unbridled pursuit of self-interest should be minimised.' (Batstone et al 1977:27)

This definition has been criticised, most notably by Willman (1980) who regards it as vague and ambiguous and leading to the construction of a model of leadership behaviour by shop stewards which is difficult to operationalise. Yet, as a conceptual, rather than an operational, definition, there is little criticism. Willman says that 'obviously, trade union principles have to do with notions of justice and fairness' (page 41). He also cites a definition by Brown (1973) which includes 'the search for equity between members of the constituency.' (page 41). As a definition of a value base with which most trade unionists would identify, it is difficult to believe there would be much disagreement.

If this is right, then it may acquire some relevance when the activities of those senior officials who manage trade unions are examined. In most of the literature they are described as 'union leaders' without much discussion of their identity. Batstone et al (1977), building on their definition above, specify four components of the role:-

- (1) ability to play a representative role
- (2) attempting to implement union principles
- (3) a commitment to such goals
- (4) the ability to achieve them.

One can see why Willman (1980) criticised the use of the definition of 'trade union principles' in formulating an operational definition of trade union leader such as this. Furthermore, the analysis undertaken is of shop stewards; it does not attempt to identify leaders at other levels than the workplace. Clark and Paton (1999:36) define leadership more promisingly as 'influencing other people, in ways that are more or less acceptable to them, regarding certain core issues that face the group or organisation' – leaders consequently are 'people who are expected to be, and are seen to be, influential on important matters'. It is certainly possible to see how this might be operationalised in a trade union context.

Undy and Martin (1984) describe leaders as preoccupied with institutional survival. Their discussion of the identity of those leaders is

rooted in a belief that they are drawn from a restricted recruitment base of 'moral activists'. Whilst this certainly was true and is still true in many unions, it is by no means axiomatic. Unions today, many of which are seeking Investors in People status and which have modernised their HR and recruitment processes, frequently advertise all posts externally, even senior ones. This is the stated policy of three of the case study unions. Whilst experience in the sector is likely to be a criterion of appointment, as it is in many other industries, it is no longer universally true that, to become a union leader (using that phrase in this context to include anyone in a senior position in a union where they have the ability to influence union strategy) one needs to become known by working (one's) way through the branch, district and regional committees, attending conferences, educational courses and sometimes factional meetings (Undy and Martin 1984), still less to have been 'bred to the trade' (Allen 1954:190) or to have been tested in piece rate calculations (Turner 1962). Nearly 44% of the unions in Kelly and Heery's (1994) study practised open recruitment, something which is likely to have increased in the interim.

This has been the case in some unions even where there were legislative requirements for election. In 2002, both the AUT and BALPA proceeded to the installation of General Secretaries by open recruitment, followed by a ballot in which the NEC's chosen candidate either stood against other candidates (AUT) or was elected unopposed (BALPA – where the successful candidate came from a senior position in PCS). Election (which is practised far more in, for example, the CWU than in UNISON) does not, then, seem to be a criterion for union leadership in many cases.

Allen (1954) thought that intellectual brilliance would be undesirable in a trade union leader. The leader should not stand out from the members. 'He (sic) must be one of them; a representative member.....but with each quality that makes him (sic) developed above the average so that the members feel affinity but also feel respect for the leader's superior ability' (page 190). Whilst, as already suggested, this might be seen as somewhat anachronistic, Allen may have been one of the very first to recognise that general secretaries required a high standard of administrative ability.

Management ability, though, was not something he considered and the use of the word in the context of unions' internal processes has until recently been rare. Dunlop (1990) describes the management of unions as an 'oxymoron' and Ouroussof (1993A:1) referred to 'a deep ambivalence [of those staff in the unions which now make up UNISON] to the concept of management itself,' because of their bad experiences of managerial activities in the organizations with which they had to deal. This is something that is not exclusive to trade unions. Paton and Hooker (1990) argue that 'to use the language of management means buying into a tradition of thinking and practice that is at best

inappropriate to the needs of voluntary organisations and at worst a real threat to some of their central values and greatest strengths.'

### ***Managers and managing***

There has been some literature relevant to the management of trade unions. Björkman and Huzzard (2002) assert that the pursuit of a union's mission requires to be supported by sound management practices but they do not identify who is responsible. Dempsey (2000) and Dempsey and McKeivitt (2001) extensively discuss managerial activities taking place during and subsequent to the merger which created UNISON but, again, do not identify specifically who were UNISON managers. Broom (1994) analyses the organisational lives of women managers in UNISON but assumes their existence; she does not analyse in any respect their role as managers, concentrating, as she does, on their experiences as women managers. Weill (1994) provides copious frameworks for strategic planning processes in unions without once mentioning the word manager. Hannigan (1998:ix), in a text which is a primer for managing unions rather than one identifying what is going on, describes union 'officers' as filling 'the roles of union leader, workers' representative and manager', suggesting that there are conflicts between all three roles; though he does go on to say (page 276) that 'Directors' are responsible for clarifying expectations, communicating objectives, motivating people and maintaining high level performance.

Willman et al (1993), is one of few studies discussing union managers of any type, union Finance Officers. Three roles were identified - Administrator, Manager and Expert. Administrators were concerned with day to day affairs and their function was distinct from, and subordinate to, policy making. Managers combined long-term planning and short term management and their role was comparable with the role of the Financial Controller in a business. Experts were primarily advisory, recognising that administrative decisions arose from policy making and contributing expertise on budgeting and financial planning. A substantial majority, regardless of role, believed they should be actively involved in decisions with financial consequences and that financial issues were taken into account.

The first work addressing the issue of the management of trade unions as an idea, however, was Dunlop (1990) and perhaps we should be surprised that it was relatively so long ago. The book is subtitled 'decision making with historical constraints', many of which have been described above. Dunlop comments that his observations are confined to the U.S.A. and this is clear in, for example, the trade union model applied, involving extensive election of senior managers, rare though not unknown in the UK. The CWU is an example of a union where there is considerable election of this type, though even here the system probably does not match the American model.

Nevertheless, the analysis is of interest. He compares the role of 'executives' in four fields - business, government, academia and unions. He suggests that there are six commonalities among these categories of manager - in environmental analysis, setting roles and priorities, selection and development of people, shaping the structure of the organization, negotiating and consensus-building skills and generating and introducing innovation. This could easily be related to models of leadership in organizations in general although in unions, as in public and other not for profit organizations, it does to a degree beg the question of to what extent the exercise of these responsibilities is affected by the need to manage what in the public sector the Audit Commission (1989) called the interface between politics and management. Similarly, in the not for profit sector, Rochester (1995: 21) describes a similar phenomenon where 'elected leaders and paid staff have to understand the rules of both games - the informality, membership, mission and elections of the associated world and the formality, conditions of service, staff development, levels of decision-making and managerial authority and accountability of the world of bureaucracy - and manage the tension between them.'

Dunlop goes on to identify six differences between the four fields. These are affected by the American nature of the examples. Interestingly, however, except in one area (where it is suggested that the measure of performance of a union manager is the votes of the members) the distinctive elements are largely of degree rather than being diametric opposites. For example, there is a discussion of where managers in the four sectors fall on a continuum of efficiency and equity, the analysis of which suggests that union managers are in similar positions on the spectrum to academic and government managers. The summary of this analysis is shown in Exhibit 2.2.

Dunlop suggests that business leaders in modern organizations achieve results by 'command and control' and this is placed at one end of a continuum which seems to place 'persuasion' at the other end. One could describe this as a contingency theory of management. Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973) propose a similar model, set out in Exhibit 2.3.

Tannenbaum and Schmidt suggest an appropriate style will be contingent on four variables:-

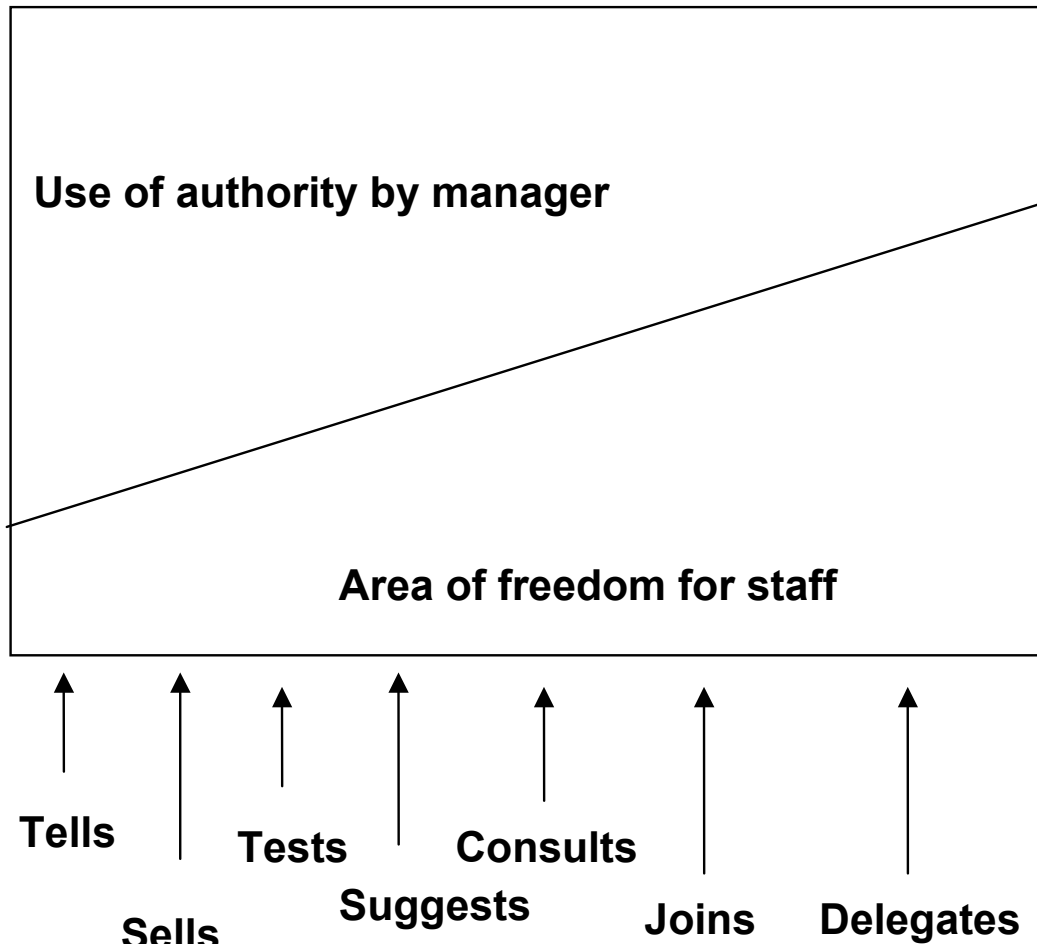
- *the leader* – her or his personality and preferred style
- *the led* – the needs, attitudes and skills of the subordinates or colleagues
- *the task* – the requirements and goals of the job to be done
- *the context* – the organisation and its values and prejudices

This seems a useful framework for considering how union 'executives' as Dunlop describes them, might be expected to approach the management of their organisations. 'Leaders' themselves are, like all of us, creatures of their own experiences and values, within and without

trade unions. In the past, these might have resulted in the ‘deep ambivalence to management’ of which Ouroussof (1993A) spoke. On the other hand, their trade union principles, concerned, one would anticipate, with values such as ‘unity’, ‘social justice’, fairness’ and ‘equality’ may influence the way they approach their relations with the people working in the organisation. Later in this chapter, there is a discussion about the framework provided by Hales (1999) for the analysis of managerial work. In that it permits the researcher to examine just such influences on trade union managers, it can be appreciated why the arguments for its utility in this context are strongly made.

<b>Element</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>Government</b>	<b>Academic</b>	<b>Union</b>
<b>Measures of performance</b>	Profits or value creation	Votes programs	Judgments of students, faculty and alumni	Votes of members
<b>Efficiency and equity</b>	Market performance, efficiency	Largely equity	Academic efficiency bows to equity and custom	Largely internal equity
<b>Command and persuasion</b>	Command and control	Extensive persuasion first	Extensive and lengthy consultation	Administrative command and political notification on policy
<b>Private or public processes</b>	Private until released	Public at each step	Largely private with periodic exposure	Internal, officially controlled with informal lines
<b>Personnel constraints</b>	Large degrees of management freedom	Strict civil service restraints and political process	Academic strict processes	Relative freedom except as limited by political and election processes
<b>Length of service and time perspective</b>	Relatively long term in most cases but with increasing insecurity	Limited by short term election results	Relatively unconstrained although reduced in 1960s and 1970s	Renewed specified terms at national levels

**EXHIBIT 2.2 Contrasts among four fields (Source Dunlop 1990:13)**



**EXHIBIT 2.3 The Tannenbaum and Schmidt continuum (1973)**

Many of 'the led' may also share the same principles. However, 'within unions there is a widespread but incorrect tendency to make assumptions about staff commitment', as Dempsey (2000:54) points out. If true, this suggests that whilst building on existing commitment may be one aspect of the approach of a manager in a trade union, achieving commitment of other staff may be another. In terms of skills, Clark and Gray (1991), citing Barbash (1959), suggest that the background, experience and personal characteristics of those who succeed to high office in unions tend to clash with the businesslike characteristics needed to administer a large organisation. In the absence of evidence for the statement, this may be seen as a rather patronising generalisation.

A contingency relating to the achievement of a task may have little different effect to its effect in other organisations. If an employer is



about to lock out a significant number of staff, this is going to have a bearing on where in the continuum a manager's style rests; by contrast, if the task is the drafting of a long term strategic plan, the style adopted may be different.

The context, however, may be a particularly significant factor. Three contextual contingencies may at this stage be identified. First, the trade union context is one where, in the UK, unions have been struggling to make headway. Retaining existing members and recruiting new ones, as well as improving services by (inter alia) providing 24 hour telephone access to services are significant strategic objectives for many unions. Many unions are seeking to achieve this by seeking a change from a 'servicing model' ('trade union officers, rather than lay representatives, provide support to members who encounter problems' Waddington and Kerr 2000:232) to an 'organising model', in which lay representatives are recruited, trained and resourced to provide support for members locally. This is not just a procedural change; it is in many cases a profound cultural change in which appointed officers give up areas of work in which they may have become specialist and which they value.

It is also part of a corporately led strategic change. UNISON, for example, has set recruitment targets which are monitored managerially. Kelly and Heery (1994) found ambivalent attitudes to national initiatives interfering with officers' own priorities ('when they [national initiatives] are over, I'll go back to my own priorities': page 86). How to manage this change is an issue which managers need to consider. On the one hand, officers value their autonomy; on the other hand, organising and recruitment is seen as vital to union survival. Tannenbaum and Schmidt's (1973) framework would suggest in these circumstances that management style would move rather more to the centre of the continuum.

A second contextual contingency relates to whether or not management has in any respect changed since Dunlop wrote his study – indeed, since most of the bureaucracy theorists considered trade union governance. In so far as the management of people is concerned, there has been the onset of human resource management (HRM). This takes many forms, based on several different assumptions, but a definition which illustrates, it is suggested, a qualitative difference from a 'command and control' model is that of Keep (1989:10):- 'If the term 'human resource management' is to be taken as something more than an empty 'buzz phrase', then the word 'human', in this context can only relate to the employees, past and present, of the enterprise. The use of the word 'resource', as opposed to commodity or cost, implies investment therein. The word 'management', for its part, implies that strategies aimed at the motivation, development and deployment of this resource and its associated investment will be directed in such a way as to maximise its potential. Training is a prime investment in human resources and that

plays a vital role in securing these goals. Companies that, for whatever reasons, are inclined to treat their employees as a cost or a commodity and who hence fail to invest in training and development activity cannot meaningfully be said to be practising human resource management.'

As already mentioned, three of the case study unions either have or are seeking Investors in People (IIP) status. This is a standard (consistent with the definition of HRM above) supported by the UK government against which organisations match their people management processes. It includes the setting, dissemination and monitoring of objectives, in particular by matching individual objectives to organisational objectives. Training and development plans are implicit in these processes, facilitating the achievement of those objectives. The philosophy is succinctly expressed in a statement on the IIP web site:- 'Organisations recognising the importance of their people can help them to develop their potential, improve their skills and gain greater job satisfaction. Successful organisations are those that appreciate their people and value the contribution they can make. By being given encouragement and praise everyone within the organisation pulls together as a team.' (IIP Ltd web site accessed on 1/4/03)

These models are highly people centred. Within the context of national frameworks and individual objectives, they suggest that individuals will be given a good deal of autonomy to achieve their goals. It is a change from styles of management in some unions which have enabled 'officers' to exercise high levels of autonomy around, on occasion, their own priorities. In some cases it may be putting controls into force where few existed before. As Metcalfe and Richards (1990) point out in the context of decentralisation in the public sector (in public sector unions a contingency in its own right), the question is what kinds of controls and processes should be instituted to assure overall direction at the same time as effective delegation.

Again, Tannenbaum and Schmidt's (1973) framework would suggest that, although 'command and control' styles of management are not likely to be appropriate, where officers have been given a high level of autonomy to follow their own priorities, even these people centred approaches to management might involve managers moving more towards the centre of the continuum.

Of course, a manager in any organisation may perceive her or his management style as being people centred but that style may not be perceived in that light by those who are being managed. This is only ascertainable by research amongst union staff, which this project does not do. However, Argyris et al (1985) proposed the concepts of espoused theory (the world view and values on which people believe their behaviour is based) and theory in use (the world view and values implied by their behaviour). When discussing people centred styles of

management, the researcher is under no illusion that these might reflect espoused theory rather than, necessarily, theory in action.

A third contextual contingency relevant to this research project is merger. All of the case study unions have been created as a result of merger. As noted above, the rationale for this was that management activity was more likely to be identified in unions that had merged because there had to be some proactive action taken to bring the merging organisations together. It could be said that the case study unions were in this sense a 'test bed', enabling trade union management to be observed even if it was invisible elsewhere.

### ***Merger***

There has been very little examination of the management of trade union mergers – as could be expected when so little has been written about many other aspects of trade union management. Only identified to date are Dempsey (2000) and Dempsey and McKeivitt (2001), both examining aspects of the merger which created UNISON. It is suggested (Dempsey 2000:51) that the management of mergers is a management task in itself. It follows that there may be managerial activities which will become visible from research amongst managers who were, in most cases, directly involved in the merger of their unions.

Bouono and Bowditch (1989) proposed a seven stage model for the examination of activities occurring when organisations merged. This is set out in Exhibit 2.4. Dempsey and McKeivitt (2001) found that they could identify many of the features found by Bouono and Bowditch (1989) in their case studies – loss of organisational pride, employee detachment, fractionalisation, loss of job security and feelings of helplessness – many of which were unanticipated consequences. They also found that the Bouono and Bowditch (1989) stages were recognisable and that many of the predicted consequences occurred.

The Organisational Combination Process		
	Stage	Characteristics
Stage 1	Pre Merger	Degree of uncertainty affecting the union as the world changes may vary but organisations are relatively stable and members are relatively satisfied with the status quo.
Stage 2	Merger planning	Degree of uncertainty increases causing discussion concerning merger. Fears that unless the union grows, it may fail. The union is still relatively stable and discussion is confined to top level.
Stage 3	Announced merger	Degree of uncertainty for the union's people continues to increase as the decision is announced. The union is still relatively stable and while members have mixed emotions concerning the merger, expectations are raised.
Stage 4	Initial merger process	Organisational instability increases and is characterised by uncertainty about structural and some cultural issues and roles although members are generally cooperative at the beginning, goodwill quickly disappears.
Stage 5	Formal legal merger	Organisational instability increases again as people have to come and work together. More rigid unions take on some more fluid characteristics for a period. Conflict between stakeholders increases.
Stage 6	Merger aftermath	Lack of cooperation and "us-them" mentality exist and unachieved expectations lead to mutual hostilities. Instability decreases, but cultural and role ambiguity remain high. Dissenters leave the organisation.
Stage 7	Psychological merger	Organisational stability recurs as ambiguities are clarified Expectations are revised; renewed cooperation and tolerance begin. Time-consuming process.

**EXHIBIT 2.4 – Stages of Merger. Source: adapted from Bouno and Bowditch (1989)**

One specific issue is relevant to the discussion above of staff autonomy. In looking at cultural change during merger the authors note that Cartwright and Cooper (1996:63) adopt a simple cultural typology of power, role, task/achievement and person/support cultures. Cartwright and Cooper place these on a continuum in which a power culture is at the limits of placing high individual constraints on employees and a person/support culture is at the limit of imposing little or no individual constraints. They then argue that it is not so much the distance between the merging parties that is important, but the direction in which the other culture has to move, i.e. 'whether members of organisations experience the culture which they are expected to adopt as imposing more or less constraint on them as individuals.' Dempsey and McKeivitt (2001) found that managers from NALGO, used to a role culture, tended to feel less constrained whilst those from NUPE, a power culture, felt more constrained. So the level of staff autonomy may depend on more than merely the extent to which national and individual objectives are set and monitored.

The word 'culture' is almost as pervasive in the public prints as the word 'stakeholder' but it is inherently difficult to define and there are many disagreements about its meaning. Fryer (2000) highlights the extensive use of the idea in discourse during the negotiations that led to the creation of Unison. He makes the point that participants who used the word did so in a way which was pregnant with their own perceptions of their own union's culture, and of the culture of the other unions and this is undoubtedly true. Nevertheless, the astonishing pervasiveness of the concept, one which previously had had precious little provenance in any literature relating to trade unions, is reflected in this research. Culture was not an area of enquiry during the interviews held in pursuance of this research but, of the 56 interviews held, 53 interviewees used the term. Searching against the word produced 289 coded passages. In some cases, the use of the word did not relate to organisational culture – there was reference, for example, to the enterprise culture. But it is plain from the case studies that interviewees had vivid understanding of the meaning of the term as it impacted on them, either with relation to their old union, to a partner union or to their new union.

Instead of using the idea of culture as an analytical tool, Fryer (2000) uses the term 'character' which he defines (page 30) as 'that rich collection of aims, values, purposes, ways of working, relationships, moods, signs, symbols, rites, 'feel', orientations and identities which go to make up what has sometimes been referred to as the 'ethos' of an organisation. A union's character is also recognisable from its reputation, style and the typical vocabularies and attitudes expressed by its leaders and members. The notion of organisational character thus deliberately acknowledges the effective and emotional dimensions of organisational life and its construction, which are utterly central to

the understanding of trade unions' purposes and methods, with their inescapable preoccupations with matters of aims, values and ethics.'

At the risk of engaging in semantics, there are two points to make here. First, Fryer's definition of 'character' has striking similarities with what one might term the social emergent view of culture. Meek (1988), for example, adopts the view that culture is the product of negotiated and shared symbols and meanings; it emerges from social interaction. The interpretation of organisational culture must be deeply embedded in the contextual richness of the total social life of organisational members. It is, she says, socially produced and reproduced over time, influencing people's behaviour in relation to the use of language, technology, rules and laws, and knowledge and ideas. Secondly, there seems little point in developing an idea of union 'character' if the term that union managers themselves use freely is the one that Fryer has rejected. The challenge is to use the term in a way that is meaningful.

Here, therefore, the term 'culture' will be used as interchangeable with 'character', as Fryer defines it, and with the assumption that culture influences the way in which union managers manage their organisations. Partner union cultures, impossible to define adequately as they are, nevertheless acted as cognitive influences on those who experienced them, as do the cultures of the new unions on their members. The extent of that influence is analysed using the framework suggested by Hales (1999), as discussed below.

In all of the case study unions, one particular management of change – indeed, cultural management - issue concerned the location of the head office of the new organisation. It is not surprising that this became an issue. In trade unions, symbols are important – sometimes derived from their history, sometimes from other cultural factors. It was reported that Arthur Scargill's office had large portraits of himself on all four walls, symbols crying out for psychological analysis. Union buildings also often have a high symbolic (hence, cultural) content. One of the histories of NALGO (Newman 1982: 554) mentions the importance of its new headquarters building as a 'worthy symbol of NALGO's stature and strength.' By contrast, the office housing the trade union Centre in Bucharest is the one formerly housing the state union under the Communist regime and is built in the best socialist realist tradition. It seems an inappropriate symbol of the movement's new image.

Above there is reference to some of the literature commenting on perceived problems of union officers moving socially and economically away from their members. Physical reinforcement of that message obviously runs the risk of increasing those perceptions as well as raising issues about how members' money is being spent.

So, the issue of physical space and physical structure is likely to be important in the management of trade union mergers. Becker (1990:23) suggests, the linking of physical space issues to an organisation's

strategy and proposes the use of stakeholder generation and management models in achieving this.

Issues of physical space and structure are relevant to this research in two ways. First, the management of them is a component of merger management, particularly in seeking to achieve greater cultural cohesion. Secondly, resources available to managers influence, according to Hales (1999), aspects of managerial activities and physical resources are likely to be of particular importance precisely because they are a factor in merger management.

In terms of the Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1993) continuum, likely management styles in dealing with the contingency of merger are difficult to identify. They may be a factor of the whole approach to change management adopted by the union concerned or they may be left to individual managers. Decisions on merger will be taken by the members of the unions concerned, so to that extent managers and staff will be involved only, if at all, in a persuasive capacity. Deadlines will be set. To this extent, managers may be on the left of the continuum. But, as Buono and Bowditch (1989) suggest, people management which is not only sensitive to the context but to the stage the merger has reached will be required if the benefits of any merger are to be realised. Kanter (in an address cited in Lorenz 1985) draws attention to the negative consequences in any change process of people feeling that they have lost control, are excessively uncertain, are the subject of surprises or where familiar symbols, such as buildings, are altered. This indicates a style of management much further over to the right hand side of the continuum.

In this discussion, various managerial activities have been identified. They include building commitment; managing change; setting and monitoring strategic goals; motivation; staff development and training; setting, dissemination and monitoring of individual goals; delegation; merger management including cultural management and the management of physical space. In examining managerial activities in the case study unions, can any other models render assistance?

### ***What managers do***

There is a substantial literature on the topic of 'what managers do'. This literature is diverse and dispersed over time, perhaps stretching from Fayol (1916), Gulick (1937), Carlson (1951), Stewart (1967) through to Mintzberg's classic work in 1973. Mintzberg's principal finding, which has not been seriously challenged, though it was based on the observation of only five American Chief Executive Officers, is that the nature of managerial work, far from being rational and planned as Fayol might have assumed, is brief, varied, fragmented and highly interpersonal. He identified ten managerial roles grouped into three areas – interpersonal roles (figurehead, leader and liaison), informational roles (monitoring, dissemination and spokesperson) and

decisional roles (entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator and negotiator).

The field has been characterised by methodological disagreements to the extent that in 1991 Mintzberg asked why scholars had failed to come to grips with managerial work. He suggested this flowed from a failure to apply sufficient imaginative effort to the study of managerial work. Since then, Mintzberg has re-visited the subject (1994) and there has been further work by Hales (1993 and 1999) and Noordegraaf and Stewart (2000), amongst many others. Mintzberg's more recent work on the subject (1994) is of particular interest. Contrary to his statements in 1991, he starts by saying that he did not feel the need to go find out what managers did – 'we knew that already' (p11). He argued that the managerial job could be depicted in terms of a series of ever-wider concentric spheres. The *person* is at the centre, whose values, experience, knowledge and competencies determines their managerial *style*. The person is located within the *frame* of the job, how it is conceived by the manager in terms of its purpose, perspective and positions. The frame is then set within an *agenda* comprising issues of current concern and a schedule of time allocation. All this is the 'core' of the manager's job, set within a three-layered *context*: inside the unit, within the organisation and outside it, in the environment. Within these contexts, Mintzberg says, managers manage in three ways – by *information*, through *people* and by *action* in doing things.

A number of significant matters reported by Mintzberg are:-

- The job of managing, based on evidence from both his studies, is fundamentally one of processing information – developing systems, designing structures and imposing directives.
- Managers lead on the individual level – they motivate, inspire, coach, nurture, push and mentor. They lead on the group level, by building and managing teams. They lead on the unit level, especially with regard to the creation and maintenance of culture. But Mintzberg believes there has been inadequate attention paid to the role of linking because managers have been found to be external linkers as much as they are internal leaders.
- If managers manage passively by information and affectively through people, they also manage actively and instrumentally by their own direct involvement in action.

Mintzberg touches on management style and, most interestingly, makes the point that managers in different contexts have to emphasise different roles. For example, he says, 'the managers of autonomous professionals...tend to favour linking over leading (let alone controlling) since professionals tend to come to work naturally empowered. In other words, they need little encouragement or supervision, although they do require considerable external support.' (page 23) It was noted above that managers in trade unions have often tended to assume commitment – Mintzberg here seems to be making the point that this is



not unusual, though this does not remove the manager's responsibility to manage in other ways. Indeed, Raelin (1991), looking at the clash of cultures between professionals and managers, suggests a range of mediation strategies in which managers can approach the issue of supervising professionals.

There are criticisms of Mintzberg's model (e.g. Hales 1999:341) but at the same time a recognition that the work does carry an explanatory account of managerial work, 'one where the structural context in which managers operate plays a problematic role' (Hales 1999:341). Hales himself has attempted a theoretical explanation for commonalities in managerial work. He sketches a theory of how the defining characteristic of managing – responsibility – is shaped by the resources, cognitive rules and moral rules of the social systems in which managers are located and the way they draw on those rules and resources. The activities, substantive areas and characteristics of managerial work which are common to managers are, Hales suggests, 'traceable to the institutional, organisational and management resources and rules which, together, shape managerial responsibility and which are, in turn, reproduced by what managers do and how they work.' 'Resources, cognitive rules and moral rules both constrain and enable what they do and which are reproduced and reaffirmed by what they do' (page 343). In not for profit organisations, he says, cognitive and moral rules may carry greater relative weight. (page 344)

Hales' model is described in the diagram at Exhibit 2.5. It is of particular importance in this study because, as has been mentioned on a number of occasions, it is a highly effective vehicle for examining trade union management. Chapter 4 will describe in more detail how this is achieved but the view has been taken that examining the resources, cognitive rules and moral rules of the social systems within which trade union managers work will be of value in endeavouring to explain how they go about their management activities. Hales' (1999) enables this to be done, just as Mintzberg's (1994) framework helps to identify particular categories of trade union management work. Hales' model also maps with the realist character of this research in that it is possible to argue that the 'modalities' which he identifies are equivalent to realist 'mechanisms' and thus enable the researcher to identify the reasons why trade union managers behave in the way that they do.

For this reason, as will shortly appear, Hales' (1999) model is one of the principal frameworks employed in the analysis of this research into the activities of trade union managers.



## 2.5. PROPOSITIONS

As will later appear, this research has been undertaken consistent with a realist ontology, 'a theory which provides an explanation of the link between the two events, a theory which provides a conception or picture of the mechanism or structure at work. These mechanisms are nothing more than the tendencies or powers that things have to act in a particular way' (Bhaskar 1973:59). Propositions, founded on the literature, have been developed which (inter alia) identify those mechanisms. These are:-

1. Factors which have led trade union officials in merged unions to accept managerial roles and undertake managerial activities are:-
  - the need to create and manage a larger, more complex, organization
  - the need to bring staff together
  - the need for staff from partner unions to work together.

This derives from the basic design of this research, that management would be likely to be visible, if at all, in merged unions and from the literature on merger management. Buono and Bowditch (1989) propose that particular types of management action are appropriate to different stages of merger, something that implies that such forms of management action is more likely to be observable in unions that are at higher points on their seven stage continuum.

2. Factors identified in hypothesis 1 have led to trade union managers attaching importance to the strategic role of physical space and physical structure.

This derives from the discussion of the literature on merger management and, in particular, the discussion of the significance of physical space and structure in cultural integration. It suggests that managers will see this form of cultural integration as significant.

3. The experiences of senior trade union officials in confronting management during their careers are a significant factor in management being regarded as a problematic concept within trade unions.

This derives from the discussion on trade union officers and, in particular, the work of Dunlop (1990) and Ouroussof (1993), suggesting, in the latter case, that there was a deep ambivalence in the organisations she studied about the concept of management itself.

4. Trade union principles<sup>1</sup> influence the way that trade union managers undertake their managerial roles, specifically
  - in their management of people
  - in their practice of normative stakeholder management in respect of stakeholders within unions' democratic structures.

This derives from

- a. the literature that seeks to identify the nature of trade union principles
  - b. the content of that literature that identifies principles conveying concern for people being treated fairly
  - c. the notion, discussed in this chapter, that normative stakeholder management (a concept that involves ethical dimensions and is therefore founded on principle) is an appropriate way to manage in a polyarchal organisation.
5. Irrespective of the terms of a union's Rule Book and despite its being a significant factor, political and power relations cause boundaries between the roles of trade union managers and lay member stakeholders to be unclear.

This is founded on the discussion of the literature on stakeholder power within organisations and the suggestion (particularly in Flvbjerg 1998) that, within democratic organisations, rationality is subservient to power; thus, that boundaries between stakeholders are likely to be difficult to define depending on the extent of the different forces at work at any one time.

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<sup>1</sup> For this purpose, the 'trade union principles' which apply here are those identified by Batstone et al (1977 p 27) which include 'an emphasis on unity and the prevention of the fractionalisation of the domestic organisation (and) some idea of social justice. That is, those within the collectivity are to be treated both fairly and equally (Brown 1973 p 133; Batstone et al 1976). This involves, on the one hand, ensuring that members of the collectivity are not subject to managerial whim. . . . There should be no discrimination against the less fortunate, while the unbridled pursuit of self-interest should be minimised.'

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER THREE

This chapter explains the philosophy underpinning the research and how this has guided the choice of research methodology, which is described and justified. It is posited on a belief that an understanding of one's own world view, and of the implications of that for any examination of any part of that world, is a vital prerequisite in academic research. Because it is related to personal beliefs, it is largely written in the first person.

Whilst this research is academic in character, it is profoundly hoped that it can be useful in the world of trade unions. In that world, there is a long tradition of making relationships with academics and seeking to learn from them. In all of the mergers which created the case study unions, academics played some part. But it is a far cry from there to suggesting that academic writing on trade unions has been of much practical utility in guiding the operation of those unions. As someone undertaking academic work whilst managing a trade union, I do not recall making reference to academic literature on trade unions throughout my career as an aid to my work. Of course, those with a strong political motivation, such as Marxists, may have some familiarity with literature which reflects their own points of view. But this is not the same.

This is not unusual. As Daft and Lewin (1990:1) put it: 'the body of knowledge published in academic journals has practically no audience in business and government'. Managers in all fields seem more attuned to prescriptions arising from railway station management books or sound bites from gurus such as Charles Handy in his 'Thought for the Day' mode. Arguably, a good deal of research into trade unions, most of it quantitative and political, does not help those at the coal face make sense of their lives. As one of the interviewees in this study put it, describing moving from being a civil service manager to being a trade union manager: 'I had no reference books to turn to for advice. I found that very scary, having to make up things as I went along.'

Of course, there is little or no research into trade union management as such and trade union managers have had to rely, if they have been so disposed, on literature from other fields. Even that literature, however, has been criticised as offering too little for the practitioner. It has been suggested that the theory testing character of much of that literature is one of the reasons for that. Partington (1998:3), expressing that view, says that such literature is 'characterised by the premature application of quantitative methods....not enough is inductive and theory building, using more qualitative approaches.'

This research is qualitative and theory building. It is rooted in the everyday lives, experiences and practices of those who describe

themselves as trade union managers and/or exercise managerial responsibilities in trade unions. It seeks to have academic validity and practical application arising from those practical experiences.

### **3.2. PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH**

Self-knowledge is always valuable. Undertaking a PhD has required that I extend my knowledge of myself into an area which for over 50 years had not troubled me, namely what, in philosophical terms, were my basic beliefs about the world.

The reason for this act of introversion was the need to determine the research paradigm which would determine the course of this project. Morgan (1979) suggests that this term can be used at three levels:-

- At the philosophical level, where it is used to reflect basic beliefs about the world
- At the social level, where it is used to provide guidelines about how the researcher should conduct his or her endeavours
- At the technical level, where it is used to specify the methods and techniques which ideally should be adopted when conducting research

In precise terms, I needed to address the notions of ontology and epistemology; the first, according to Blaikie (1993:6), 'the claims and assumptions that a particular approach to social enquiry makes about the nature of social reality'; the second 'the claims or assumptions made about the ways in which it is possible to gain knowledge of this reality.'

The assumptions or beliefs held by researchers are often said to lie on a continuum between positivism and what is sometimes called interpretivism and sometimes phenomenology. I have always found these terms confusing because both of them refer also to a particular philosophical tradition, the first originated by Weber and the latter originally by Husserl. Some writers use the terms 'quantitative and qualitative' as a synonym for the opposing ends of this continuum but that is even more open to criticism because positivists, to take one example, undertake qualitative research, even if it is only to validate a quantitative instrument. I think there needs to be a rational reason for adopting what might otherwise be an ambiguous word. I will therefore use the term 'phenomenology' for two reasons. First, those philosophers like Heidegger who studied Husserl's work wanted, in Blaikie's (1993:34) words to 'establish a method that would see life in terms of itself'. This is a phrase which usefully encompasses most, if not all, of those who see themselves at this end of the continuum. Secondly, one can see the word as a metaphor referring to the study of phenomena in society, in contradistinction from those who study societal regularities.

Positivists believe that reality is 'objective and singular, apart from the researcher' (Cresswell 1994); phenomenologists see it as 'socially constructed and only understood by examining the perceptions of the human actors' (Hussey and Hussey 1997:49). It is a projection of human imagination. These are ontological assumptions. From an epistemological point of view, positivists believe that they can discover reality by using value free methods of inquiry which resemble those of the natural sciences. They are concerned with the study of objects which existed before they commenced their studies and will remain when their studies have been completed, and with the interrelationship between those objects. At the other end of the continuum, phenomenologists believe that the values held by researchers 'help to determine what are recognised as facts and the interpretations which are drawn from them'. (Hussey and Hussey 1997:49). Research is thus value-laden.

My own philosophical journey has been long and troubled. At the start, I assumed that I would be conducting a positivist study, probably for three reasons. First, within trade unions, research conclusions often require numbers. It would be no good going into some trade union general secretaries, invariably male and used to counting the number of members who supported him, and explaining the socially constructed nature of trade union management; even less to try to undertake cognitive mapping. Secondly, physical space and physical structure, then central to the research, are observable realities. Thirdly, the Centre at Cranfield of which I am a member is located within a group which has a positivist tradition.

A proximity to positivism was suggested when, as part of the Cranfield Research Methods course, my learning style was examined and the conclusion was that I was, very strongly, a converger. Dominant characteristics of this type were abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. The greatest strength of the type was the practical application of ideas and people falling into this category were said to be happiest using hypothetico-deductive reasoning. I recognised myself from this analysis. I consequently said in my First Review paper that I could not at that time see anything which suggested that the research I was proposing could not be effectively undertaken from a critical rationalist perspective.

Nevertheless, I remained troubled because I was not really convinced by my own rationalisation. Although Popper was a critic of positivism, many people who call themselves positivists use hypothetico-deductive methodology and the approach is, on the continuum I described above, very close to positivism. My approach was becoming more qualitative the more I developed it. I was proposing semi-structured interviews which would reveal a great deal about the managerial activities undertaken by trade union managers and the reasons why they approached the role in the way that they did. Whilst the union structures within which they worked – the biennial conference in PCS,

for example, which caused so much strife for them – were observable realities, their approach to management was, I felt, socially constructed.

I had never really studied realism seriously when I was studying the philosophy of social science. It had seemed so easy to opt for the centre ground and I felt that I would be looking for what Blaikie (1993) suggests could be an excuse for sloppy research, by-passing the intricacies of philosophical debate. When I did return to it, however, I found a philosophical approach expressed very much in the terms that I had outlined in the reference above to my First Review paper. For example, Miles and Huberman (1994:4) outline their realist approach as follows:-'Unlike researchers in physics, we must contend with institutions, structures, practices and conventions that people reproduce and transform. Human meanings and intentions are worked out within the frameworks of these social structures – structures that are invisible but nonetheless real. In other words, social phenomena, such as language, decisions, conflicts and hierarchies, exist objectively in the world and exert strong influences over human activities because people construe them in common ways. Things that are believed become real and can be inquired into.'

It seemed to me that I had finally found a philosophical approach which did explain my view of the nature of reality, that there were observable realities in society but that other phenomena were socially constructed. Furthermore, I could espouse that philosophical position not because it was a soft option but because I had acquired sufficient self-knowledge to enable me to explain my true beliefs.

### ***Realism***

Realism is a relatively recent philosophical approach and, like most philosophies, has different emphases and approaches and has generated a good deal of critical attention. It accepts the notion that an 'actual' world exists which has immutable features. But realists have an interpretative belief that social actors give meaning to the world. In the words of Layder (1993:16) 'a central feature of realism is its attempt to preserve a 'scientific' attitude to social analysis at the same time as recognising the importance of actors' meanings and in some way incorporating them into research.'

Bhaskar (1975:56) proposed that experiences, events and mechanisms constituted three overlapping domains of reality; those of the empirical, the actual and the real. The *empirical* domain consists of events which can be observed, such as a trade union conference. The *actual* domain consists of real events, the possibility of whose existence is accepted even if they are not directly observed – perhaps the stages which a delegate to a union conference goes through in forming a view of how to react to a proposition of importance to the management of a union. The *real* domain consists of the underlying structures and mechanisms which produce the events – perhaps the



experiences of work which have led to the delegate forming the value systems that have resulted in her espousing trade unionism.

Ontologically, realism believes that the ultimate objects of inquiry exist and act independently of scientists and their activity. Social reality is viewed as a socially constructed world where the objective of research is to explain observable phenomena with reference to underlying structures and mechanisms. Realist epistemology is based on the building of models of such mechanisms such that, if they were to exist and act in the postulated way, they would account for the phenomena being examined. The models are hypothetical and can only be known by constructing ideas about them. (Blaikie 1993:172).

Mechanisms are, consequently, of critical importance in realist ontology. Blaikie (1993), discussing Bhaskar's (1978) and Harré's (1970) outlines of realism, says as follows:-(Bhaskar) argued that there is a distinction between a causal law and a pattern of events. A constant conjunction must be backed by a theory which provides an explanation of the link between the two events, a theory which provides a conception or picture of the mechanism or structure at work. These mechanisms are nothing more than the tendencies or powers that things have to act in a particular way. The capacity of a thing to exercise its powers, or the likelihood that it does, will depend on the circumstances which may be favourable or unfavourable. Realism is ultimately a search for generative mechanisms.' (p 59). Blaikie goes on to cite Harré and Secord (1972) to the effect that at the start of a realist investigation, one needs to produce in theoretical studies a rational explanation of non-random patterns by identifying the causal or generative mechanisms which produce those patterns.

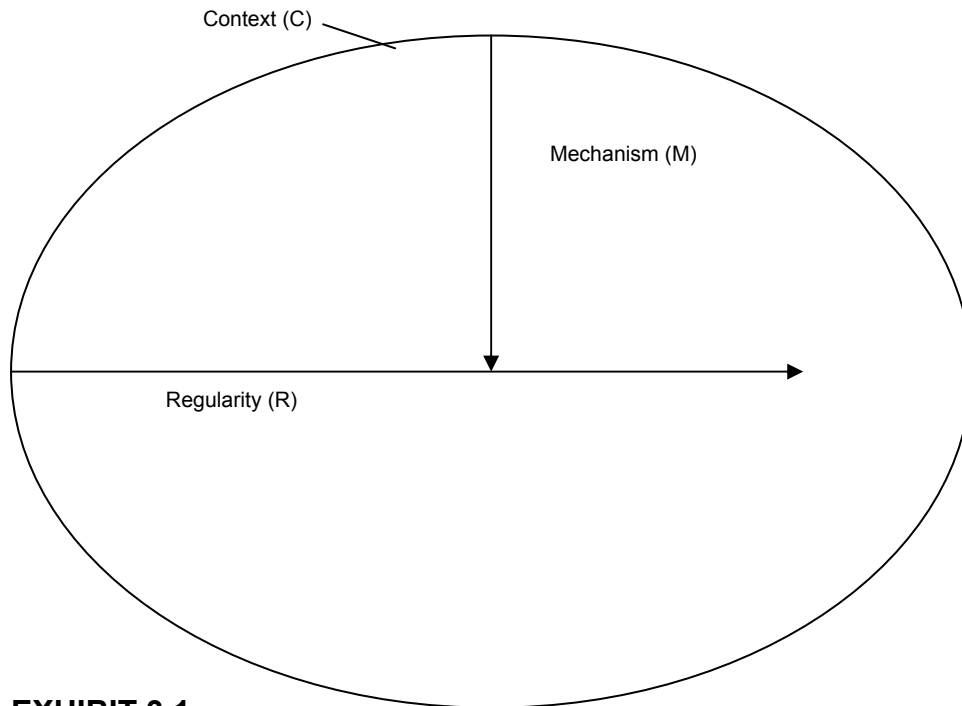
My understanding of these ideas was greatly helped by reading an outline of realist social science in Pawson and Tilley (1997). This book is concerned with the evaluation of social programmes but it succeeds in explaining a realist approach to such programmes in highly practical terms. Thus:-

*'Identifying mechanisms involves the attempt to develop propositions about what it is within the program which triggers a reaction from its subjects. These hypothesised processes attempt to mirror how programmes actually work'. (1997 p. 66).*

*'The idea is that the mechanism is responsible for the relationship itself. A mechanism is thus not a variable but an account of the makeup, behaviour and interrelationships of those processes which are responsible for the regularity. A mechanism is thus a theory – a theory which spells out the potential of human resources and reasoning.'* (p68)

*'The basic task of social inquiry is to explain interesting, puzzling, socially significant regularities. (R). Explanation takes the form of*

*positing some underlying mechanism (M) which generates the regularity and thus consists of propositions about how the interplay between structure and agency has constituted the regularity. Within realist investigation there is also investigation of how the workings of such mechanisms are contingent and conditional and thus only fixed in particular local, historical or institutional contexts (C).'* (p 71)



### **EXHIBIT 3.1**

**Basic ingredient of realist social explanation** (Source Pawson and Tilley (1997 p 72))

Realism, then, seeks explanation of mechanisms and structures of society. This implies, but does not dictate, a qualitative approach which 'involves examining and reflecting on perceptions in order to gain an understanding of social and human activities.' (Hussey and Hussey 1997:12). The nature of that qualitative approach may differ depending on the context and the nature of the phenomenon under inquiry. Miles and Huberman (1994:6) have usefully suggested some recurring features of qualitative research, summarised below:-

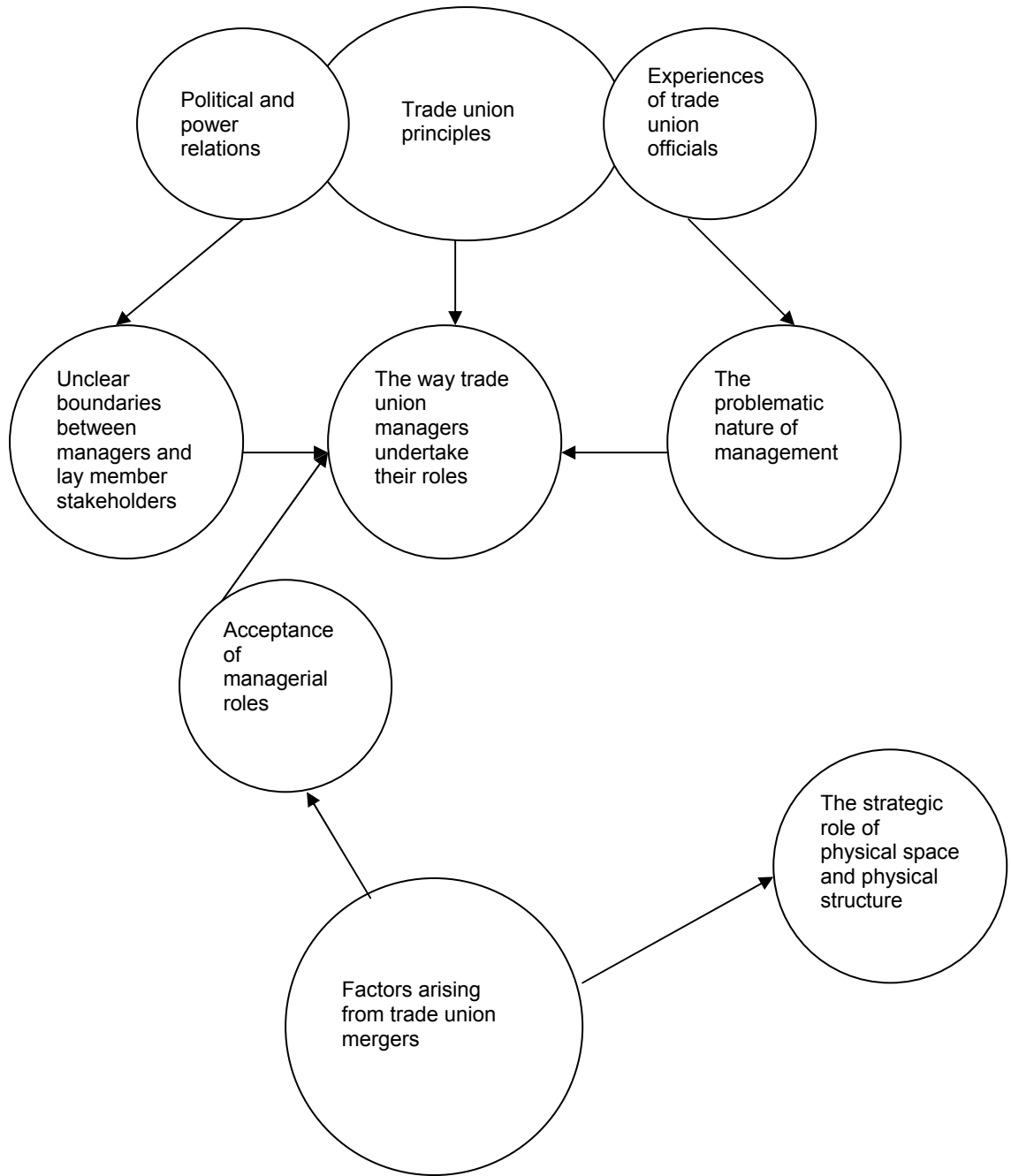
- It is conducted through an intense and/or prolonged contact with a 'field' or life situation. These situations are typically 'banal' or normal ones, reflective of the everyday life of individuals, groups, societies and organisations
- The researcher's role is to gain a 'holistic' (systemic, encompassing, integrated) overview of the context under study; its logic, its arrangements, its explicit and implicit rules
- The researcher attempts to capture data on the perceptions of local actors 'from the inside', through a process of attentiveness (and) empathetic understanding

- Reading through these materials, the researcher may isolate certain themes and expressions that can be reviewed with informants
- A main task is to explicate the ways people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action and otherwise manage their day to day situations
- Many interpretations of this material are possible but some are more compelling for theoretical reasons or on grounds of internal consistency
- Relatively little standardised instrumentation is used at the outset.
- Most analysis is done with words. The words can be assembled, subclustered, broken into semiotic segments. They can be organised to permit the researcher to contrast, compare, analyse and bestow patterns upon them.

Consistent with a realist ontology, a qualitative research strategy might be expected to have a 'retroductive' character (Blaikie 1993:168) whereby a model of observable phenomena is constructed which, if it were to represent correctly underlying structures and mechanisms, would causally explain the phenomena. The model is then tested as a hypothetical description of the entities and their relations (incidentally involving my undertaking in some respects a hypothetico-deductive process). The process can be iterative, whereby, as one set of structures and mechanisms is revealed, others at a lower level go through the same process.

The components of the model in this project are linked in a more complex way. Exhibit 3.2 shows us the factors which are crucial in the management of unions and the way in which they influence, or are influenced by, other(s) of those factors. These model the relationships which are the basis of the research propositions set out in Chapter 2.

Blaikie (1993:163) says that a central problem for realism is to establish the plausibility of hypothesised structures and mechanisms. The model of this research is based on my experience in 35 years of trade union membership, 15 years as a senior trade union manager, critical involvement in the processes that led to the largest trade union merger in British trade union history and the years I have spent studying for this project, in particular acquainting myself with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Layder (1993:72) provides a resource map for realist research which contextualises such research, and this is contained in Exhibit 3.3.



**EXHIBIT 3.2 Conceptual model**

	Research Element	Research focus
<b>H I S T O R Y</b>	<b>Macro, social organisation</b> CONTEXT	Values, traditions, forms of social and economic organisation and power relations.
	SETTING	<b>Intermediate social organisation</b> Contingent factors described in Chapter 2
	SITUATED ACTIVITY	<b>Social Activity</b> Face to face activity by participants involved in the contexts and settings described above. Managerial activities.
	SELF	<b>Self-identity and individual experience</b> As these are influenced by the above sectors and as they interact with the individual. Specific managerial activities.

**EXHIBIT 3.3. Resource map for realist research – adapted from Layder (1993)**

### 3.3. CASE STUDIES

Yin (1994:13) defines the case study as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context'. Miles and Huberman (1994:25) define it as 'a phenomenon of some sort occurring within a bounded context' They suggest that the case is the unit of analysis but that there is a 'heart' or 'focus' to the study with a 'boundary' defining the edge of the case. They point out (page 27) that it is not possible to study individual cases devoid of their contexts in the way that a quantitative researcher often does.

Yin (1994:13) suggests that one reason for choosing a case study is 'because you deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions, believing that they might be highly pertinent to your research design.' As we have seen, this is a characteristic of a realist inquiry, as is also noted by Tsoukas (1989) who suggests that such studies usually have utilised, though maybe not exclusively, the case-studies form.

There are significant contextual issues in this research project. First, because of lack of knowledge, personally and theoretically, of the extent to which management is recognisable in trade unions, a decision was taken to examine managerial activities in unions which had merged. Thus, the fact of recent or relatively recent, merger was a contextual issue which was central to the work.

Secondly, trade unions are very different organisations. The experiences of their members, and hence of their officials, are significantly related to the industries in which they organise. The most easily identifiable characteristics in this connection are whether the members are predominantly white collar or blue collar and whether they are within the private or public sector. White collar, public sector, organisations often have highly developed committee systems, reflecting the experience of the members, and these might be expected to raise issues about the boundaries between the roles and activities of those committees and the roles and activities of managers. Blue collar unions might be expected to have more of an oral tradition, where boundaries might be more negotiated than formal. They might also value election of officials as an expression of union democracy.

Thirdly, union activists demonstrate very different political traditions. It is probably not possible to correlate politics with boundaries between activists, working within union governance structures, and managers but those traditions may lead to a union being relatively leadership predominated or relatively committed to membership participation (Fairbrother 2000) – or to partnership. This explicitly affects boundaries between them.

All this indicates that it would not be realistic to study 'trade union managers' as though they were a *sui generis* group of managers. Every manager works within a context and contingencies affect every

manager as they affect trade union managers. But to draw conclusions about the nature of management of trade unions without trying to take into account these contextual factors would affect the validity of the study. It would also affect its credibility. Trade unions tend to think of themselves as totally unique organisations; within the trade union world, a study which did not take contextual issues into account – for example by seeking to generalise to the whole trade union movement the results of a study in a private sector finance union – would not be taken at all seriously.

There are other reasons for suggesting that a case study strategy would be an appropriate approach. First, Jankowicz (1991:163), citing an early edition of Yin, suggests that one reason for choosing case study method is to study a process which has rarely, if ever, been studied. This is the case here. Secondly, Yin (1994:6) suggests that case studies are appropriate to answer 'how' and 'why' questions.. The research question, set out in Chapter 1, is solely a 'how' question.

Case studies therefore give the opportunity of examining managerial activities within the contexts of individual unions which have engaged in merger activity, noting and taking into account those contextual issues. They also, however, give the opportunity of cross case analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994:172) suggest that one aim of studying multiple cases is 'to increase generalisability, reassuring yourself that the events and processes in one well-described setting are not wholly idiosyncratic.' The importance of generalisability is proposed not for positivistic reasons but on the basis that, as they say, provided that the cases are typical, diverse, or unusually effective or ineffective, they can help us answer the question 'do these findings make sense beyond this specific case?' The second reason is to deepen understanding and explanation. They cite Silverstein (1988) who points out that we are faced with the tension between the particular and the universal: reconciling an individual case's uniqueness with the need for more general understanding of generic processes that occur across cases.

This reconciliation is what this project attempts. The field is so new that it was not clear at all whether there would be differences between the cases. If there were, it would be possible to identify theoretical reasons for the differences. If there were no such differences, then generic theoretical pictures of this hitherto invisible phenomenon called a union manager might begin to emerge.

The case study design will have to satisfy other tests of its quality. Yin (1994:33) summarises four such tests:-

- Construct validity: establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied
- Internal validity: establishing causal relationships or explanations

- External validity: establishing the domain to which a study's findings can be generalised
- Reliability: demonstrating that the operations of the study can be replicated.

On the first of these tests, Yin suggests(1994:34) (inter alia) two strategies; multiple sources of evidence and to establish a chain of evidence. On the first of these, documentary evidence has been used as a means of giving fresh consideration to the conclusions from the interview data. On the second, the use of the package QSR NVivo (see below) for data analysis has enabled chains of evidence to be discerned and audited throughout the project. The extent to which causal relationships flow from the data will also be discernible from that source, addressing the issue of internal validity. Reliability can be demonstrated by the audit trail of the study; its structure, explained herein, the interview aide-memoire, transcripts and the computer based analysis.

External validity is addressed by the use of replication logic in this multiple case design. Yin (1994:46) suggests that such studies should follow a replication logic. Each case, he says, should be selected so that it either '(a) predicts similar results (a literal replication) or (b) produces contrasting results (a theoretical replication). Case study subjects have been chosen for contrasting reasons, so that, if there are contrasting results, these can be identified. The theoretical framework, however, suggests literal replication. In the event that theoretical replication occurs, this will have the effect of modifying the theoretical framework. This is recognised by Yin who says that 'if some of the empirical cases do not work as predicted, modification must be made to the theory.'

The conclusion presented here, therefore, is that a multiple case study design for this research, with in case and cross case analysis, is an appropriate design for the study of managerial activities within trade unions which have merged.

### **3.4. CASES AND INTERVIEWEES**

The case study unions have been described in Chapter 1, as has the reason why the decision was taken to choose unions which had merged. In the light of this decision, the choice of unions needed to reflect a range of characteristics – particularly white collar, blue collar, public sector and private sector.

When the choice was first being considered, in 1998, the most significant mergers in the previous few years were the AEEU and UNISON. A preliminary interview was held with a senior official of the AEEU to sound out the possibility of access. Whilst this was a highly amenable discussion, it was fairly clear that senior officials would be likely to be unwilling to co-operate with anything like the candour which



would be required. UNISON was considered likely to result in bias because the author was employed there.

The merger which created PCS, by contrast, was relatively recent and was a significant one because it brought together two unions with very different traditions. Merger management, therefore, would have to take account of a whole range of contingent factors. PCS was a major predominantly public sector union with members in a variety of occupations.

Similarly, the move of the CWU Head Office to Wimbledon was relatively recent and it was well known that the union's merger still had a lot of loose ends to tie up. BT had been privatised and therefore a very significant proportion of the union's membership was in the private sector. The other big element in the union's membership was in the Post Office. Although in the public sector, that organisation was struggling with achieving some commercial freedom which was a difficult concept for the union. Contrasting approaches could therefore be expected amongst the union's officials.

A private sector union was required to replace the AEEU. In 1999, UNiFI was formed which represented staff at all levels within the banking and finance industries. Two aspects of interest in this merger were first that it brought together staff unions with a traditional industry based union, suggesting significant change for all three unions; secondly, that it had decided to retain all three head offices, making the creation of the new union potentially more problematic.

Finally, having left UNISON in 2000, the research of that organisation became more viable. It was the largest trade union merger in the UK and was obviously the case against which all others would be compared. Because of the size of the project, merger management was still, recognisably, taking place. It is a mixed union, primarily public sector, with members at all levels in the public sector and the privatised water, gas and electricity industries, as well as outsourced catering, cleaning and other manual staff. Because of having such a close involvement with the union, the decision was taken to leave research until last, when a significant breathing space had been achieved. Interviews were commenced in August 2002.

These merged unions represent, apart from the AEEU, arguably the most significant union mergers in the 1990s.

### ***Interviewees***

The intention was to interview a reasonable number (no number was determined in advance but 12 to 15 was at that time the aim) of trade union officials in the top three or four tiers of union management. This would thus include General Secretaries, Deputy General Secretaries, Assistant General Secretaries, Senior National Officers and functional heads. Wherever possible, I tried to include women managers in order

to achieve some element of gender balance – not for theoretical reasons in connection with this project but in the hope that this would broaden the perspective and possibly set the scene for some future gender based further research.

The identity of the interviewees from each union, and the circumstances in which they were chosen, are set out in the case study chapters and, where quotations are set out, the identity of the interviewee is indicated only by a code number, unless the nature of the quotation is such as to require identity to be given.

### **3.5. INTERVIEWS**

Fieldwork began after having undertaken literature reviews. This was not only something which is suggested by realist method (cf Strauss and Corbin 1990) but by the Cranfield process which requires a literature review to be undertaken for First Review and updated for Second Review. In this case, literature on trade union governance was also undertaken after Second Review, as suggested at that meeting, by which time some interviews had been undertaken at PCS.

When appointments were made for interviews, it was indicated that they would take an hour to an hour and a quarter. Where an interviewee was in full flight, I sometimes let it run on but in all cases I informed the interviewee when the allotted time had expired and indicated that the interview could end then, whether I had finished or not. No interviews were unfinished, in terms of the plan devised for them individually, but some covered less substance than others. Nick Wright of UNISON could only spare 45 minutes and Alan Johnson, who was interviewed in the cafeteria at the House of Commons, only 30 minutes. This changed with experience, but mostly only to re-order the interviews as it became clear which structure worked best. Apart from the two interviews mentioned above (the first of which was in a committee room at UNISON headquarters), all but one interview took place in the interviewee's office. The one that did not take place, at the interviewee's insistence, in the Great Court of the British Museum. A diary note was kept of all interviews, noting any contextual issues which had arisen (for example if an interviewee had a heavy cold which affected her/his response), highlighting issues of interest and also noting any issues concerning the interview itself which required attention in future interviews.

After the first interview, which was unsatisfactory both as an interview and in terms of the amount of material garnered from the notes, all interviews were taped. No interviewee refused to allow this. There were no technical problems occurring as a result of taping save that, on occasion (for example at the British Museum) extraneous noises made transcription difficult. Transcription took place as soon as possible after the interview. This was particularly useful as it was often the case that things were picked up during transcription the importance of which had

not been appreciated during the interview. Speech recognition software (Dragon Naturally Speaking v 4) was used for transcription, which more than halved the time taken. Hard copies of the interviews were filed and used for analysis.

All interviews were organized around the aide-memoire which is included in Appendix 2. This summarized the propositions in a left hand column so that the interview could be steered not only by reference to topic but also to theory.

### ***Opening of interview***

The opening of the interview was designed to allow the interviewee to talk in a relatively unstructured way, about her or his role in the merger. This was based on the slightly homespun belief that the ice could be broken by people being able to talk in their own terms about an issue that was familiar to them without, so to speak, engaging brain. The closer the interview took place to the merger, the more this question resulted in long answers. In some cases, people spoke for five or 10 minutes without intervention. Where appropriate, the interview was steered towards issues concerning stakeholders and the relationship of lay member stakeholders to appointed officials in the old and new unions.

### ***Union Managers***

In the next section, the issue of the acceptance of managerial roles and responsibilities was covered. The Dunlop (1990) summary of areas union managers had in common with managers elsewhere and those which were unique was outlined and interviewees asked for their views on what trade union managers did. Interviewees were probed about specific issues they raised about how they managed and, if necessary, they were asked about issues such as management style and delegation. The issue of whether management as a concept was problematic was raised and interviewees asked for their views. If appropriate, interviewees were asked about managing full time officers, something arising out of Kelly and Heery's (1994) study.

### ***Stakeholders and governance***

In the next section of the interview, interviewees were asked for their relationships with lay structures and their approaches to their management of those relationships. Attempts were made to see if there were ethical issues behind the way in which they defined their relationships with the governance structures of the union and whether the Rule Book itself had an overt role in how they approached the issue. Issues of legitimacy were raised where possible, both for reasons related to union governance but also in the light of the Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997) model of stakeholder management. Questions were asked about the way in which interviewees managed conflict between stakeholders.

### ***Merger management, including physical space***

The next section changed as the project changed. Initially, as has been mentioned, the project had a high element of focus on the management of physical space and structure. Its emphasis changed to discuss merger management, such as recognizing problems faced by (for example) former members of PTC coming into the old CPSA Head Office and trying to find out how these potential cultural clashes were managed. The issue was also raised to enable discussion to take place about the stakeholder management issues involved in the process of merger management – and, indeed, the management style engaged, since there were considerable differences in the level of participation involved in the different unions. Finally, some questions were asked about the role of head office, a contingency which was thought to be of interest in forming a picture of the different case study unions and also discovering whether this was an issue which had arisen in the context of merger management. This is not pursued in this thesis.

After the transcription of each interview, the transcript was e-mailed to the interviewee. It was indicated that speech recognition software sometimes came up with infelicities which might not have been spotted and suggesting that the interviewee read the transcript to spot any such. Very few did so. Nobody attempted to change any of the substance of the interview even if embarrassed by their mode of expression or the content of what they said. One person was so alarmed at what he had said that he asked for assurances about confidentiality before he would make any corrections. Another said that I must be quite a good listener to have led to them being as candid as they were.

Progress of the project was tracked using a short case study protocol as recommended by Yin (1994:63) and by a diary of interviews held.

## **3.6. DATA ANALYSIS**

Qualitative data analysis techniques can take many forms. If one envisages a continuum, content analysis, using counting methods, lies at one end and grounded theory, where the researcher proceeds by feel and intuition, lies at the other end (Easterby-Smith et al 1991). The analysis of the data in this project was particularly influenced by the work of Partington (2000). He presents a structured approach to grounded theory building aimed at researchers who are analysing recollections of past events, usually in interview data, to develop explanations of management action. He adopts a cognitive perspective, emphasising the 'stimulus, organism, response' model, which focuses on the mediating role of the manager between environmental stimulus and behavioural response. Anchored in a realist ontology, involving mechanisms providing 'an account of the makeup, behaviour and interrelationships of those processes which are responsible for the regularity' (Pawson and Tilley 1997:68), he says that the researcher's role is to speculate on what plausible,

understandable cognitive mechanisms are intervening between stimulus and action. He then proposes procedures for analysis, which can be summarized as follows:-

- Code each instance of active environmental stimulus
- Code each instance of action
- Seek to link all instances of stimulus and action
- Speculate as to possible underlying mechanisms which could offer an explanation of the cognitive processes which intervene between, and explain, links between instances of stimulus and response
- Develop the theory, continually testing and modifying the coding scheme. Focus on a cognitive process which offers a valid link between stimulus and action
- Write the theory at three levels; (1) case narratives with illustrative data examples (2) summary within-case and cross-case tabulations (3) theoretical propositions and summary process models.

Before explaining the methods of data analysis applied in this case, it is appropriate to describe the analysis tool employed. This was QSR NVivo version 2. NVivo as a tool and its utility is described in Bazeley and Richards (2000). The software stores documents in rich text format and enables ideas to be coded and stored at nodes. 'NVivo allows management of nodes in logical trees. Nodes are cut, copied, merged as the researcher gets a stronger feeling for what is going on with the data.' (page 6). Categories for coding can be shaped 'using a search tool that enables you to specify the scope of the search and what you want to do with the result.' (page 6) As any of these processes are taking place, the researcher can add memos, or databytes, which attach to a specified piece of text and go with that text wherever it appears, reminding the researcher of a salient piece of information arising whilst the text was being explored. Back up CDs made at each stage of analysis enable an audit trail to be constructed.

For this project, the software enabled a large amount of data to be imported, stored, analysed and searched. The transcripts of all 56 interviews were imported into NVivo. Attributes were set up for each interview, enabling each one to be analysed by reference to individual or union characteristics. A tree of nodes was then established, based on the propositions. Later, relevant documents collected from the four case study unions were scanned into my system and imported into NVivo; larger, bound, texts were set up as proxy documents (summaries of key points, treated in the same way as any other text).

The analysis process adopted was as follows:-

1. Rough code data into substantial chunks of text. In this process large amounts of text were coded to one or more of the nodes. During the process, new nodes were added – for example when interviewees described various managerial activities they

undertook. Nodes which contained no text were deleted; others were merged. The coding scheme arising from this process is set out in Appendix 3.

2. Fine code the data into much narrower conceptual categories. This produced much more extensive coding structures which were categorized by node trees. An example of this, relating to 'mode of undertaking managerial roles', is included in Appendix 4.
3. Analyse data to identify stimuli, mechanisms and management action. This was undertaken on a hard copy basis. Reports from NVivo on all the coding categories were printed off. Each data extract was, where possible, annotated with a note of the stimuli, mechanism and action suggested, speculating as what those categories should be.
4. Prepare an overview of the analysis. This endeavoured to tell the 'story' arising from the data and proposed new codes reflecting the main features of the story and, as far as possible, mechanisms leading to management action (see example at Appendix 5). This resulted in a more rational, and parsimonious, structure. Some codes, such as managerial actions themselves, were regarded as descriptive and were left in their original form. The final coding structure arising from this process is set out in Appendix 6.
5. These processes had involved continuous speculation, using Hales' (1990) words about the 'meanings' and 'norms' that might be influencing managerial action. The process of writing up the case studies consisted of a process of continuous and developing analysis. The project thus contains case narratives with illustrative data examples; summary within case matrix and cross-case tabulations; theoretical propositions and models.

It can be seen from this description how closely the process related to that proposed by Partington (2000). As Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest, the data analysis consists of data reduction, data display and drawing/verification. It involves matrices and charts, as they again suggest is an appropriate way to present realist research.

### **3.7. TRIANGULATION, BIAS AND TESTS FOR DESIGN QUALITY**

Miles and Huberman (1994:267) say that 'in effect, triangulation is a way to get to the finding in the first place by seeing or hearing multiple instances of it from different sources, by using different methods and by squaring the finding with others it needs to be squared with.' As has been made clear, the principal data in this study consists of interview transcripts. However, as has also been noted, other material has also been collected. This is principally documentary but it includes one video – a production prepared for the CWU when staff moved to the new head office in Wimbledon. All this is categorized in Appendix 1. This secondary data made possible a comparison between the results

of the analysis of the interview data with what senior officials were engaged with in other circumstances.

Webb et al (1981) note the overdependence on a single, fallible method of research such as interviews. No research method, they say, is without bias. 'Interviews and questionnaires must be supplemented by methods testing the same social science variables but having *different* methodological weaknesses' Lincoln (1980) points to six factors bearing on the accuracy of records and cites Clark (1967) as a source for critical questions about the origins and usefulness of documents – including history, completeness, the circumstances of its production, the author, the intended audience, the purpose, sources of information, bias and so on. Appendix 1 lists the documents included in this research with answers to as many as possible of these questions tabulated. The intention is to be as transparent as possible about the circumstances of each document so that readers of this thesis can judge for themselves the extent to which they can be relied on. The submission is that, taken with the interview data, the documentary evidence is a helpful form of triangulation.

Another potential source of bias in qualitative research relates to the representative nature of the data presented. Bryman (1988:77) notes that (inter alia) extended transcripts 'would be very helpful in order to allow the reader to formulate his or her own hunches about the people who have been studied and how adequately the ethnographer has interpreted people's behaviour in the light of the explication of their systems of meaning'. This danger has been addressed in the following three ways:-

1. Wherever possible, extended quotations are presented in the four case studies. The quantity of data presented in those chapters is unusually voluminous. This is quite deliberate, with the intention of allowing the reader to understand, as far as possible, the context of the quotation and 'where the interviewee is coming from.' This is regarded as an important design issue in theoretical terms, despite its resulting in extended case studies. To facilitate the narrative, 'signposts' have been inserted in the form of headers, confirming the topics that the interviewees are addressing.
2. NVivo is particularly helpful in enabling the researcher to check on the context of a piece of data whilst working with it. If there is any question that it might be out of context, a click with the mouse enables surrounding text to be brought up into the report being studied. If there is any concern that, for any reason, coding has been inadequate and more or less data should be available on a particular topic, or relevant to a particular quotation, searches can be undertaken which, in effect, produce freshly coded text. So the researcher can continually check that the data selected is being used correctly
3. Back up reports have been taken throughout the coding process

and stored on CD Rom. Thus, a complete audit trail of the coding process exists which would enable any future researcher to work with the data in the same way as the researcher and endeavour to reach the same results.

In the trade union field, research is usually quantitative. There is, therefore, often pressure on qualitative researchers to overcome positivist pressure to demonstrate the objectivity of their research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) say that trustworthiness is needed, through triangulated empirical materials. They employ criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. This does not, it is suggested, involve external coding of the data. Greene (1994) says that, in interpretivist work, it is precisely the individual qualities of the human inquirer that are valued as indispensable to meaning construction. The researcher in this study, in his unique position as practitioner and academic, has, it is submitted, brought these qualities to this project. The method used is in all respects transparently laid out in this thesis so that readers can see and understand the perspectives of the interviewees and follow how that relates to the literature upon which the study is based.

This argument is also relevant to the issue of bias. The researcher was one of the very first within the British trade union movement to argue for the importance of management in trade unions. This is a strength but also a weakness in that it is easy to suggest that negative findings would be reached at great personal cost. Miles and Huberman (1994:263) identify three 'archetypal' sources of analytic bias:-

- The holistic fallacy – interpreting events as more patterned and congruent than they really are, lopping off the many loose ends of which social life is made
- Elite bias – overweighting data from articulate, well-informed, usually high-status informants and under-representing data from less articulate, lower status ones
- Going native – losing your perspective or your 'bracketing' ability, being co-opted into the perceptions and explanations of local informants

The holistic fallacy is, it is suggested, tackled by the transparent way in which analysis is demonstrably linked via coding structures directly to the propositions arising from the research, and by triangulation. Elite bias is not involved; almost all of the interviewees are high level officials and the perspectives of them all have been analysed from text, not from status. Emotionally, the researcher has found it very easy on many occasions to become deeply involved during interviews, and transcriptions, and coding, in what interviewees were saying. Going native would have been very easy – were it not for the structured analysis process followed which concentrated on text rather than, as noted above, on individuals. This is not to say that the researcher is not left with a sense of tremendous admiration for the respondents and the extent of their work to improve the lives of the members by improving



the way their unions operate in the members' interests. The argument is that the data demonstrates that this is what they are seeking to do.

Yin (1994:32 et seq) sets out a number of tests for judging the quality of research designs. These, together with an indication of the extent to which this study meets these tests, are set out in Exhibit 3.4:-

<b>Tests</b>	<b>Case Study Tactic</b>	<b>Treatment</b>
<b>Construct validity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple sources of evidence</li> <li>• Chain of evidence</li> </ul>	Interview and documentary evidence QSR NVivo trees of nodes established from propositions
<b>Internal validity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pattern matching</li> <li>• Explanation building</li> </ul>	Both these tactics have been employed as part of the analysis of this data
<b>External validity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replication logic in multiple case studies</li> </ul>	This tactic is the basis of the claims for generalisability made in the conclusions.
<b>Reliability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use case study protocol</li> <li>• Develop case study database</li> </ul>	The protocol is intended primarily for cases where there are multiple researchers, though one was used. The whole research material, however, is held on an NVivo database.

**EXHIBIT 3.4 Case study tactics. Adapted from Yin (1994:33)**

Healy and Perry (1998) propose a set of quality criteria specifically related to case study research within the realist paradigm. They develop six criteria for judging realist research. These are shown in Exhibit 3.5:-

a.	Developed for this paper	Brief description of criteria for realism research	Case study techniques within the realism paradigm	Criteria for case research
b.	<b>Major authors</b>			Yin (1994)
c.	<b>ONTOLOGY</b> 1. Ontological appropriateness	Research problem deals with complex social science phenomena involving reflective people	Selection of research problem e.g. it is a how question	
d.	2. Contingent validity	Open, 'fuzzy boundary' systems (Yin 1994) involving generative mechanisms rather than direct cause-and-effect	In depth questions; iterative search for cognitive mechanisms.	Internal validity
e.	<b>EPISTEMOLOGY</b> 3. Multiple perceptions of participants and of peer researchers	Neither value-free nor value-laden, rather value-aware	Multiple interviews, supporting evidence, broad questions before probes, triangulation. Papers accepted through peer review	
f.	<b>METHODOLOGY</b> 4. Methodological trustworthiness	Trustworthy - the research can be audited	Case study database, use of quotations in report.	Reliability
g.	5. Analytic generalisation	Analytic generalisation (that is, theory-building) rather than statistical generalisation (that is, theory testing)	Identify research issues before data collection to formulate interview protocol. Theoretical and literal replication.	External validity through the specification of theoretical relationships, from which generalisations can be made
h.	6. Construct validity			Construct validity

**EXHIBIT 3.5. Quality criteria for Case Study research within the Realist paradigm (Adapted from Healy and Perry (2000))**

## CHAPTER FOUR: INTRODUCTION TO CASE STUDIES

### 4.1. EXPLANATION OF CHAPTER

The four case studies in the next four chapters follow a common framework which needs explanation if the reader is to negotiate them successfully. This chapter briefly seeks to provide this explanation.

### 4.2. FRAMEWORK OF CASE STUDIES

Exhibit 2.5 sets out Hales' (1999) model which sets out an analytical framework for the analysis of the work of trade union managers. The basis of the model is explained in Chapter 2 and the researcher, in employing the model, has to establish the systems and modalities in a particular organisation before examining managerial actions in each of the three categories set out in the model. There are, therefore, nine categories which have to be completed in respect of each union. Modalities for each union are extrapolated from the discussions of systems. All of the nine categories are summarised in the diagrams which follow each case study but the text is divided into the six areas relating to systems and actions.

Furthermore, Mintzberg (1994) suggests that managers manage in three ways – by information, through people and by action. Therefore, when discussing managerial action (following discussions of merger management) the types of managerial action discussed are divided into Mintzberg's categories.

This means that the structure of each case study is as follows:-

- About the union. This is an explanatory background to the case study
- Interviewees. This lists the interviewees and their position in the union. The case studies try to guard against overt identification of the individuals, as far as possible, except where that is essential to explaining the comments quoted.
- Trade union managers. This section deals with the data concerning whether or not the interviewees accept their managerial roles.
- SYSTEMS  
This is the first of the categories of Hales' (1999) framework and involves:-
  - Systems relating to distribution of resources
  - Systems relating to cognitive rules, in particular cultural issues. Here, use is made of the Fairbrother (2000) framework in which attempts are made to establish managers' perceptions of

their unions as involving leadership predominance, membership participation or some other formulation, most notably 'partnership.'

- Systems relating to moral rules, particularly trade union principles

Modalities are then extrapolated and the case studies go on to look at actions. Although distinctions are made between 'meaningful' actions and 'legitimate' actions, the model makes it clear that actions are influenced by both 'meanings' and 'norms'.

- ACTIONS

- Deploying resources
- 'Meaningful' managerial actions, three of which equate to the categories identified by Mintzberg (1994)
  - merger management
  - managing by information
  - managing through people
    - performance management
    - staff development
    - teams
  - managing action
- 'Legitimate' managerial actions
  - Stakeholder management
- Modes of management (management styles)

The diagram at the end of each case study follows this framework in summarising the findings in respect of each union. It is designed as follows.

<i>Systems related to distribution of resources</i>	<i>Systems related to cognitive rules</i>	<i>Systems related to moral rules</i>
<i>Resources</i>	<i>'Meanings'</i>	<i>'Norms'</i>
<i>Deploying resources</i>	<i>'Meaningful' managerial actions</i>	<i>'Legitimate' managerial actions</i>
<i>Management style</i>		

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**CASE STUDY – MANAGERS IN THE COMMUNICATION WORKERS UNION**

***About the union***

- 5.1. The CWU was formed in January 1995 by a merger between the National Communications Union and the Union of Communications Workers. Paradoxically, the logic for the merger was stronger in the years before it took place than it was in 1995 because prior to the privatisation of British Telecom, members of both unions worked for the Post Office, either in telecoms or in postal services. In those days, so the General Secretary says, it was not unusual to find post office engineers who started life as postmen, having put in for a test to achieve this.
- 5.2. The impetus for the merger dates from around 1985 and had ebbed and flowed in the years since then. There are three basic constituencies within the union. The first is communications engineers, working for BT and some other communications firms. The second is clerical workers who worked for Post Office Communications, as it was then, were members of the Civil and Public Services Association but who were transferred to the NCU in 1985. The third is the postal workers who made up the UCW. The union does organise in other organisations, for example the Alliance and Leicester, who took over Girobank and it does have a strategy of seeking to organise members in, for example, the expanding telecoms sector.
- 5.3. The generally received wisdom is that it was the election of Tony Young as General Secretary of the NCU and Alan Johnson as General Secretary of the UCW that were the really key factors in the achievement of the merger. Both were very much in favour of it and enjoyed good personal, political and working relationships; both were able to provide the leadership that convinced the activists and, subsequently, the membership that merger was the way forward for the two unions. However, fuelled by demarcation disputes, there had been a good deal of branch pressure for merger over the years, in which the current General Secretary had been particularly active.
- 5.4. CWU has declared membership of 279,679 in the current year of which around 20% are female. It deals with two major employers and therefore it is not surprising that its paid staff of 187 are concentrated almost exclusively at national level. Whilst it has a small number of regional offices, these are largely branch facilities, occupied by people who are on full time facility release from employers. On the postal side there are Divisional Officials paid in this way, serving to emphasise the fact that the regional structure is largely an ex UCW set up, dominated (contrary to initial plans) by ex UCW activists. The union's national structure, accommodated in a single head office in Wimbledon, acquired in 1997 and intended to be equidistant between Ealing and

Clapham but actually much nearer Clapham, is also the product of the division between postal and telecoms, and therefore between ex UCW and ex NCU. There are two industrial Executives and the National Executive is comprised of the two industrial Executives brought together. At staff level, the two major industrial groupings are also separated on different floors, with cultural artefacts from the old unions' headquarters displayed on those floors. This serves to indicate that, as will appear below, functional merger has been slow and the current General Secretary and his team have set themselves the task of speeding up the process.

- 5.5. A matter of significance in terms of the management of the union is the high level of election of officers which takes place. This is something which the union has taken from the UCW which elected everyone with any form of responsibility for negotiations or for functions. The NCU, by contrast, appointed everyone below Deputy General Secretary level. Whilst not all appointed negotiators were required to stand for election on merger, the Deputy General Secretaries, all other new national negotiators and two other National Secretaries with responsibility for Legal and Medical services and membership records are now elected. Functional managers are appointed, so the result, whilst it involves a substantial element of ex UCW practice, does stop short of the more radical practices mentioned by Alan Johnson. It is, nevertheless, different from the practices in any of the other case study unions.

#### ***Interviewees***

- 5.6. The General Treasurer, David Norman, made it clear that interviews would only be possible with those managers whom he identified and his secretary arranged the interviewees. This meant that several of the managers were lower level than anticipated and one was an NEC member who managed the move into the new Head Office. David Norman himself retired part way through the research and his secretary left the union at the same time. As a favour, she left a message for her successor asking her to organise an interview with David Norman's successor. Through him, it was also possible to organise an interview with the new General Secretary and, through him, with a past General Secretary of one of the partner unions (the other had already been interviewed). Thus, it was possible to raise the overall hierarchical level of the interviewees. One Deputy General Secretary indicated (after David Norman left) that he had not the time for an interview.

Interviewees were:-

Ian Cook, Information Manager (ex UCW)  
Roger Darlington, Research Officer (ex NCU)  
Jeannie Drake, Deputy General Secretary (ex NCU)  
Billy Hayes, General Secretary from 2001 (ex UCW)  
Derek Hodgson, General Secretary till 2001 (ex UCW)  
Alan Johnson, former General Secretary UCW  
Tony Kearns, Senior Deputy General Secretary from 2001 (ex UCW)

## Trade union managers

Edith McCaulay, Legal Officer (ex NCU)  
John McCarrick, Print Manager (ex NCU)  
David Norman, General Treasurer (ex NCU)  
Rita Read, Facilities Manager (ex UCW)  
Karen Turley, Personnel Officer (ex NCU)  
Spike Wood, Chair of re-location sub-committee (ex CPSA/NCU)  
Tony Young, former General Secretary NCU

After discussing the attitude of trade managers to their roles, this chapter will continue by looking at trade union management using the structure of Hales (1999), which examines systems, modalities, managerial activities and management style.

### **Trade Union Managers**

- 5.7. Only one interviewee in the CWU did not accept that they had a management role. This was someone who had actually left the union and whose experience, therefore, was less current than others. But his rejection of the role was not founded on any ideological impediment:-

*I should have done and every so often, you know, I would get people.....saying, you know, you've got to pay more attention to these things. And I should have done and I think that was a fault. We were fighting against privatisation of the Post Office in 1992 to 1994 and then we were straight into a dispute, practically, with Royal Mail so I would use that as an excuse. But it is an excuse. I should have perhaps concentrated more. I didn't see myself as a manager and I think lots of trade union leaders, although they are in essence the Chief Executive of an organisation employing, in our case, over 200 people, I don't think we see ourselves that way as much as we should. So I don't think I did that particularly well.. (Interviewee A)*

There was speculation about the extent to which the industrial officers regarded themselves as managers. Some evidence suggests the old practices whereby anything people-orientated was passed to the Personnel Department had been followed in the past:-

*Here was a group of people, as many as 20, who were being managed and technically that was the manager but the manager says 'well I don't have to deal with it, that's not my responsibility, it's a matter for the administration.' (Interviewee M)*

Furthermore, recognition of the fact of management responsibility did not necessarily mean that management tasks were personally undertaken:-

*As far as the building is concerned, I have responsibility as the chief executive but what I do is that I delegate that authority to the general treasurer in his capacity as the central management figure in the headquarters joint Council (Interviewee D)*

## Trade union managers

Dunlop's (1990) suggestion that:-

*trade union management is an oxymoron in itself (Interviewee O)*

was expressed and there were doubts expressed on the extent to which the role was institutionally recognised:-

*The problem is that I have to define my managerial role myself because nobody will define it for me. It's very unclear as to where the extent of my role is so it's not me resisting having clarity or having managerial responsibility, it's that the system doesn't give it to me. So I have to deal with it as best I can. (Interviewee G)*

*I do not know if I am officially recognised as a manager. I take it that since the General Treasurer has invited me to speak to you this accords me some locus in the subject. (Interviewee L)*

All this evidence relates to managerial activities carried out prior to the election of the current General Secretary. His approach to management is very direct and seems to reflect a qualitative change in the way the union approaches it:-

*Let's talk about my own perception. I am completely comfortable with the idea of being a manager in the sense that that's what I have to do. Now I have always been a little bit of an organisational type person buff, you know, I am always one for reading the latest management books and theories and stuff like that and I don't see that as at all incompatible with being a trade unionist, or being a socialist for that matter. I don't see any conflict whatsoever because you are talking how do you manage big organisations. It's a bit like saying, isn't it -- if you believe in trade unions as class organisations, waging class war, as it were -- the Soviet army shouldn't have a strategic battle plan but the German army should have a strategic battle plan. If you believe in organisation and being organised then clearly you need to be a manager. I won't carry the metaphor too far but that's the fact. So I don't think there's any problems in seeing it that way. None whatsoever. Now I think some of the better officers see that but I suppose partly because of politics, small and big p, they think it's all a bit namby-pamby and this is just like the bosses organisation blah blah blah. But my attitude would be it's just like the bosses organisation -- so the Soviet army had rifles and the Germans had rifles but the Soviet army shouldn't have rifles. It's the same way of looking at it, you know. We've got an organisation that employs people, people depend on this organisation for their wages and therefore we have to have the same skills in miniature that we have in any organisation.*



## Trade union managers

The willing acceptance of the role is echoed by his Senior Deputy, elected at the same time:-

*I knew that I would be a manager. Previously I had, in the department that I was heading, I was the lead negotiator for accounts and clerical issues and I had staff working to me, a personal assistant, a senior secretary and a second secretary. So you have to manage those staff. Three people. There are no big managerial issues. They are more or less there when you want them to be there and it is easy to have control. My managerial responsibility in this building is that I am the manager. The Senior Deputy General Secretary assumes the management of all the staff in the building.*

There are still doubts, both before and after the new appointments, of the extent to which the negotiating officers see themselves as managers:-

*I don't think anybody sees themselves as managers within the union at Officer level apart from D. I think some of them see themselves as the leader and they've got there and the rest of you jump because I'm the leader. They see the leader bit, they don't see the manager bit. So I don't think many of them do. (Interviewee G)*

Views which are supported by another senior manager:-

*I don't think that the generality of elected officers from the former UCW see themselves in a management role in the same way. Certainly, if I look within my postal grouping, I don't think they see themselves as managers and as having responsibility as managers. They will direct staff and all the rest of it but I do not think that they appreciate that they have a management role (Interviewee O)*

In some cases, these attitudes may be affected by the elected status of some of the individuals concerned:-

*In my mind it has been slightly confused, certainly in the minds of a couple of individual officers, in the fact that they still live in their previous cultures. Those elected industrial officers still maintain a vote on the national executive so they can go from one day having a major or a minor problem with a Secretary to the next day wanting to attack the administration because they are in that position of being able to because they have a free vote on the NEC. (Interviewee C)*

But it may be that other individuals' views are not quite so polarised:-

*Some officers think it's all rubbish. The better ones don't. I think the better ones understand that you need to be a manager and of course the ones that get into the biggest stress, in my view, are the ones that are the lousiest managers, both in themselves and in their approach because they think every day is a crisis. Every day is a problem. Monday morning is a surprise to them, that it's come around and you see that so much. So I think the best officers do see a role for management. (Interviewee B)*

Although half the interviewees were elected, the only way of finding out the views of elected officers below Senior Management Team level would have been to ask them and, as mentioned above, this was not permitted. However, the tasks of those officers will have been affected by the strategic planning process instituted by the new General Secretary, referred to below, whereby senior staff have responsibility for achieving SMART objectives.

### **Systems**

#### **Systems relating to distribution of resources**

- 5.8. In line with its centralised character, financial systems in the CWU have traditionally revolved around the allocation of resources as required by the General Treasurer. There is a budget but managers do not have the responsibilities normally carried by budget holders. Furthermore, a top up system has ensured that financial allocation has dealt with immediate crisis situations rather than reflecting strategic objectives. These systems are likely to change, as outlined below.

Some managers are not conscious of a budgetary system at all:-

*I don't actually have a fixed budget. It's quite vague... I put in a report to the General Treasurer once a year. Unless I want to spend anything unusual the only increases I see are inflation increases. (Interviewee H)*

Others perceive the system but feel detached from it:-

*I have a budget in theory but I don't actually have much control over it. (Interviewee J)*

On a functional level, some managers can make the system work:-

*I check personally every solicitor's performance. It's all in the computer - how many cases they deal with, what disbursements are returned, I make sure the accounts are OK. Let us say I get an account for £700. I won't pay it. Every file is put on my desk and looked at to see the amount of work they have done. I'm always writing letters backwards and forwards and I always get the bill reduced to about £400. That's important because that makes us keep within budget (Interviewee E)*

## Resource distribution systems

Delving more deeply, however, some of the issues at the root of the problem are perceived:-

*I'd like more control over the budget. He gives us a budget but there's not much I can do with that in the sense that if I said to the executive members, well you are not to have three meetings a year, then that is extremely difficult because of the power relationship there. But there is not much visibility of the budget and the budgeting process. What is missing is perhaps more authority to enforce it. The weakness in it is the top up system. I think what undermines it is that if you have a budget and different interest groups get top ups, it undermines the whole bloody thing. Instead of holding to it and going to my executive and saying about the budget, they would say well they will get it anyway so why should we bother. So it is undermined a bit by that sort of topping up. And then the financial control of the union, the transparency of the financial control of the union is one area where there is need for a lot of change. D is trying to put more structure into the budgetary process but on the other hand he is fighting a political culture where access to money is patronage and it gets very difficult really. And then again you have got the inconsistencies and lack of transparency.  
(Interviewee G)*

At a micro level, activists are to be brought into the system of budgetary control:-

*The finances of this union -- and I don't know how the finances of other unions work but I am going to speak to other unions -- are almost, there is a mystique about the money. Nobody knows what it gets spent on but they make decisions about what it gets spent on. Which has got to stop. We have set up a new committee called the Budget Scrutiny Committee which is separate from the Finance Committee which is literally going to go through the bills and say, "what was this £2000 payment for, for this consultancy? Show us what we got?" Some head of research or some education officer will send you a bill -- I have got this university to do this research for me, you owe them £1700. I never asked them for it, I want to know what you have got for your £1700. You will come to me. You will explain what it is you want, why you have got to go to that university, why you can't go on the Internet, why we can't use research. The processes are going to change now, which they have never done in the past. As a result of that, people just spend money.  
(Interviewee N)*

To achieve better financial control, new systems are planned:-

*We're going to devise a software system that enables need to interrogate membership records so I can predict so that when a cheque arrives from the Post Office or BT, we can say to them,*

## Resource distribution systems

*that's not right. The cheque arrives from BT now, a cheque for £250,000, and I do not know which members it is for, whether it is the right amount, whether that is broken down £200,000 for full-timers, £50,000 for part-timers -- nothing at all. So we can't predict income. We can only predict it by generally saying that we are 285,000 strong, our headline rate is £10 so therefore we are due in about that much money. What kind of work is that, a £28 million turnover organisation? So we don't have any control over income and we just pay bills and that is the Finance Department. Not my idea of Finance or management. (Interviewee N)*

There is an awareness of the consequences of greater control over budgets and the need to face them:-

*I used to sit in my office up there and I would call down the reps that I needed to deal with when I needed to deal with them and felt like it. That process costs an arm and a leg. If we carry on spending like that, at some point I will be saying to all those people that you will have to change the process of dealing with reps. And they will say that you can't do that because it undermines democracy, can't talk to the reps, they can't talk to the members, can't get the feedback to make sure we do the deal properly, blah blah blah, and I will be saying to them, well, we have not got the money for you to carry on doing it. Understand that. (Interviewee N)*

And when control has been gained, activists will be asked to face the implications:-

*We have all got to change because of the way the finances are going. One, the way we run finances, the way we don't control spending and the fact that we have got less money to spend. We have got to change from the top to the bottom. Now it is dead easy for me to go to Conference and lecture at the branches about tightening their belts and do nothing up here. What we are going to put in place by changes in here towards the back end of the year so that we go to Conference next year and say "it is your turn now, comrades. We have done it." And we can prove that we have done it. (Interviewee N)*

It could be hypothesised that in a centralised union like the CWU, changes of this type, which depend on those responsible for spending money to assume control over what they spend and to make difficult decisions having political implications, involve significant cultural change and that, therefore, the way in which the changes are managed will be critical. In one respect the planning process had already confronted this:-

*What some people have done with a plan, which is easy to see coming, is that we need more staff. We need this, we need that.*

## Resource distribution systems

*And now what I would like everyone to do is to sit down with everybody and say, this is what we do. (Interviewee B)*

In terms of physical resources, CWU had committed itself under the Instrument of Amalgamation to find a new head office somewhere in between Ealing (where NCU resided) and Clapham (where UCW resided), although the outcome, Wimbledon, was closer to Clapham. There were some serious political issues which surfaced in achieving a decision on this:-

*What happened is basically that Stalinism took over. Because what happened is there was an attempt by people at Ealing to block going to Wimbledon. Basically, there was an NEC called and the vast majority of the ex UCW made sure they turned up to vote it in. And it was as brutal and as crude as that, to vote in coming to this building because they thought it was the ideal thing. So it was quite a brutal process, to be honest (Interviewee B)*

The move took place two years after merger and did not resolve the cultural aspects of merger because the two industrial groups encamped on different floors, with artefacts of their previous existence installed as a 'comfort blanket'. The system for allocating space was centrally driven, though there was consultation on individual aspects of it. Within that, the approach seems to have been relatively *laissez-faire*:-

*I was consulted on general facilities for the floor and how we should arrange our floor because very often how you arrange and layout reflects the culture you have got anyway, doesn't it? It is quite interesting. All our officers said no we must have small offices so that our secretaries can have offices on the open floor whereas on the postal side all the officers said we wanted big offices and all the secretaries ended in the middle. It shows that we have a slightly more collegiate style here. And you noticed that virtually all the PAs have got their own office or are in a shared office. Now that was the officers' choice, not the PAs' choice. (Interviewee G)*

In the view of at least one manager, this approach was only partly successful:-

*A lot of staff in the postal and telecoms areas were given their space and told to organise it and they were working with the same colleagues. They just had to move their office. The departments which involved the bringing together of staff included the Research Department where we thought that we had already got a common style of working. At the other extreme was the Legal Department which not only were moving two groups together but moved them at different times, which I think was a cultural disaster. (Interviewee L)*

## Cognitive rules and culture

Some of the issues surrounding awareness of the strategic importance of physical space, in the context of merger, will be explored later in this case study. However, one particularly unique aspect of the establishment of the CWU head office was that a video was produced and shown at Annual Conference describing the move ('Moving on Up' Winter 1997) This showed staff in the process of moving and, in some cases, expressing their apprehension. Four interviewees made on the video strategic points about what was happening:-

*We have made massive savings by moving from two buildings to one and we will deliver those financial benefits to our members next year (Interviewee C)*

*The benefits of one site as far as members are concerned is that we have one headquarters and one number to ring. As a result we can become more efficient on behalf of the members we represent (Interviewee M)*

*We have two unions that merged several years ago but we have not yet merged in culture and style (Interviewee D)*

*It will be really good for the members because we will be one union and I think we'll see the benefits of being together (Interviewee O)*

*We did our level best to ensure we planned to the maximum extent (Interviewee C)*

Whilst these comments may have sought partly to pre-empt criticism of the cost of the new building, they demonstrate the importance of the process in terms of resource allocation.

### **Systems relating to cognitive rules**

Here the intention is to examine cognitive systems conveying 'meanings' to managers in CWU. The first relates to 'culture' as it is defined in the preceding chapter. One significant cultural issue relates to the extent to which the union is organised according to the principle of leadership predominance ('officer led') or the principle of membership participation ('member led') (Fairbrother 2000), or of partnership.

There seemed to be general agreement that UCW was 'officer led':-

*Well, if I had to over simplify the UCW model was very General Secretary centred; when I was talking about how difficult it was to create a committee structure, in part that was because the UCW largely operated without a committee structure. The one important committee was actually called the General Secretary's Committee. Very few rule books will have a committee named after an individual. That was the policy committee, the driving*

*force -- in fact the terms of reference were very broad. It was whatever the General Secretary wanted to do, really. That was the most important issue. And that was accepted because the role of the General Secretary was pre-eminent. (Interviewee L)*

There is, however, much less clarity on the place of the NCU on this continuum, at least partly because it was a highly factional union and consequently difficult to pin down the sources of power. However, there is more common ground on a conclusion that the CWU is a partnership union.

*Partnership. It just can't be General Secretary led or senior officer led because of the size of the National Executive Committee. As soon as anything is put to the vote, if the lay members have decided that they're not having it, it doesn't matter what the General Secretary says. The vote is the vote and that's it. Generally speaking, the only way to achieve anything is through partnership (Interviewee M)*

The power of the NEC is conceptualised in different ways:-

*The balance of power is not excessive one way or the other, the General Secretary or the executive. I would not sit and say that the executive or the General Secretary dominates excessively. I think the balance of power is tilted towards the executive, which I don't have a problem with, I have to say. I don't think this executive is a pushover. It is quite capable of getting itself mobilised and checking any officer, including the General Secretary. (Interviewee G)*

*I would say that it is a very old model. Newspapers even very recently were talking about union barons meeting with the leader at the Labour Party, Gordon Brown and so on. With the greatest respect .....there is no union in the country, even my friend Ken Jackson's union, which is run in a feudal way any longer. This is a leftover from the Sixties. (Interviewee C)*

*You certainly couldn't say that this was a General Secretary led union; although he is a very powerful character; he suffered some very heavy defeats at conference this year. In fact, I think they were the worst that I have ever seen. (Interviewee O)*

More significant in some areas may have been the issue of election of officers where there was significant difference between the two unions, reflected in the values of organisational members:-

*I think there were a lot more of, and this is only my perception now so this might be wide of the mark, a lot more of appointed officers in the ex NCU who were vocal about making sure that there was still a role for appointed officers because most officers in the ex UCW were elected and they were reluctant to go to that*

*system. In ex UCW it was almost a matter of principle, in ex NCU it was a matter for individuals, if you see what I mean, because if you are an ex UCW officer who was elected, then you had to stand by the principle of election because even though you could become unelected, whereas if you were an appointee, nobody is going to turf you out and replace you with an elected person so my perception was, just from receiving reports back and casting my mind back seven or eight years, that the ex NCU appointed officers were more vocal than their lay members or lay executive. Although their lay executive firmly believed in appointed officers but the ex UCW lay members were a lot more vocal that their officers should be elected. (Interviewee N)*

It is demonstrable that far more officers are elected in the CWU than was the case in the NCU, so to that extent it seems that ex UCW values predominate. Nevertheless, it was suggested that attitudes may not be quite so polarised as one would expect:-

*My opinion is, if anything, that the lay members who would have been members of the ex UCW Executive, although they are new members since merger, -- members of the postal Executive who would have been ex UCW -- I think they have not softened their position but they have more time and more respect for some of the appointed officers that they see. (Interviewee N)*

In many other respects, managers engage with the idea of culture, often highlighted as a result of merger, imparting meanings to them about the way the organisation works. Some of these experiences have gender content:-

*I think there can be a bit of blame type culture. I think they are inclined to be fairly macho in terms of their management. I think that most other organisations these days have more women managers. (Interviewee J)*

There is some suggestion that things are improving:-

*A bit of a macho world. That is one of the good things that has come out of the merger because that is lessened, actually. I think that is one of the advantages of culture which we have taken from the NCU. The style has changed and is changing. (Interviewee K)*

But another suggestion that this particular cultural manifestation comes from the very top:-

*Unions, you know, are very male cultures and a lot of women who are very able, I have to say, are intimidated..... There's not much he can do to me and I can't take another man bawling and shouting at me. So I don't get intimidated when he storms in to me. I just stand there and say don't start that, I'm not going to*



*listen. But that is the benefit of being old and long in the tooth and in the job for a long time. A lot of people are intimidated by it, are anxious about it. And of course he makes you jump for an issue but then tomorrow that isn't the issue. But everybody has moved their priorities round and, of course, you create a culture that you do what you need to do to keep the General Secretary in a good mood. You don't do what you need to do to make the organisation work. (Interviewee G)*

This particular observation related to a previous General Secretary. The current one, though admitting that he personally does have a temper which he has to keep under control, related a particular structural change which has cultural implications somewhat different from the cultural manifestations described above:-

*I think the biggest change has been the development of advisory committees which we didn't have in the old UCW and there was a certain degree of snobbishness when we merged. Everybody thought the Gay and Lesbian Advisory Committee, the Women's Advisory Committee, the Ethnic Minority Advisory Committee would be laughed out of court and we wouldn't get the volunteers from the postal side because everyone believes postmen are white, male and heterosexual. And of course what happened initially, there wasn't a great deal of interest in the committees but now they have taken off. So that has been definitely something that has changed in terms of the union. There is a long way to go. In terms of the union's culture, that's a definite change from the old UCW*

And the General Secretary also offered an explanation for one manifestation of male cultural behaviours:-

*We managed to get staff covering for senior clerks and also what happened is that women are volunteering. It's all male over there at the moment. So that's been a change. That would never have taken place under the old UCW because people -- there is a certain degree of, I suppose you can call it an element of sexism really, that the women members of the staff couldn't do the job of the officers, although it is never expressed like that.*

Nevertheless, the Review of Equality undertaken for the CWU in order to examine its institutional character in response to the Stephen Lawrence report does corroborate suggestions that the union's culture has not been comfortable for staff and, in particular, that at the time of the report it was not yet homogenous:-

*In the review of the activities of the CWU as a union we referred to the "cultures of the previous unions" and we found that this was a consistent theme in many of the discussions and meetings held at all levels. However, we concluded that in terms of equality it was not a key indicator in relation to the CWU*

## Cognitive rules and culture

*operating as a trade union. In our meetings with CWU staff, the issue of the previous two unions again came up frequently as a point of discussion. When staff had problems they often referred to the "different cultures" that resulted from the amalgamation of the two previous unions as being a factor. Many staff referred to a "golden age" in the previous unions when everyone "got along" and was "happy", compared to the new organisation located in Wimbledon. Frequently there appeared to be a "them and us" situation. The "us" being the staff you worked with and the others being "them". (Delivering on Equality, 2000)*

So cultural issues relating to the union and its predecessors impact on the cognitive processes of those working for the CWU, including its managers. Individual experiences of managers are also significant in impacting on those cognitive processes, in particular experiences of management in their trade union careers, within and without the union.

There seems to be a recognition that arriving at a position that accepts a management role, which most managers in the CWU do, is not an easy journey:-

*I think the truth is that trade union officials find management very difficult. It's what managers do and they spend most of their lives on the other side of the table from management..... You have to remember that most of the officers of the union came up through the ranks. They started as a telecoms technician or as a postman. So they have had no training in management and their whole experience of management is in negotiating and sometimes in a very confrontational way. You can't be too surprised if it doesn't come naturally, the idea of having appraisal procedures and budgets and strategy. (Interviewee L)*

It can perhaps be a very personal process:-

*I don't know whether it spreads across all trade unions - I think it probably does - that because they are elected people in that sort of tradition where a lot of managers came from the trade union movement themselves, - you know they've been activists and then they are appointed - it is as if they can't admit that they need to be trained to be managers. (Interviewee J)*

A rather more graphic depiction of the experiences bearing on senior trade union officials is:-

*One of the difficulties in having elected officers -- and I'm now elected though I didn't start off elected -- that jump very quickly from executive to very senior positions is that there is nothing. Their whole life has been pugilistically fighting for that position, they come in and want to run the staff on the basis. (Interviewee G)*

## Cognitive rules and culture

But the suggestion is made that perhaps the merger has resulted in attitudes changing:-

*Certainly in the UCW, I would have thought, management is bollocks was a fairly commonly held view. It's probably breaking down a little bit. I think certainly at senior level we have recognised that an organisation with a turnover of whatever it is, £20 or £30 million needs to be managed. I think they realise now that trying to merge two organisations needs to be managed. It wasn't going to happen by a process of osmosis or whatever so I think you would find more officers who are more open to listening to management is not quite bollocks thesis, anyway and that there is something to be learned. (Interviewee F)*

It has been suggested that one of the ways of differentiating management in trade unions from management in industries in which unions operate is to use much more trade union specific language, and this was succinctly put in one interview:-

*If it is a managerial term then we will use another term. (Interviewee B)*

The cognitive processes of CWU managers will have been affected also by their perceptions of any constraints bearing on them in their managerial roles. Frequently mentioned are personnel issues:-

*We had difficulty dealing with discipline cases because we were a union. Sometimes you had people who were kamikaze employees who think the union will never take them to a tribunal -- that if they are bad employees they will get a deal. (Interviewee A)*

*I don't say this lightly and I respect that this is in confidence and I don't want to sound the wrong way but we don't sack anybody.....I do not want to sack people. I only want to say to people, hold on, we are paying you and it is your responsibility in that job to service those members who are paying your wages. That is the game. If you do not want to play the game, then fine. Just let me know. But we want you to. But we do need to have in place processes now, given the financial state of the union, we need to have in place processes for all of the people who are involved. There has always been a reluctance. "Oh we can't do that, we are a trade union." But we are an employer as well. (Interviewee N)*

Linked to that is the fact that there are no procedures in place for setting standards or dealing with performance:-

*I think, though, that the disciplinary code, as I suppose it should be, is largely seen as a last resort. It isn't the best method of*

*dealing with performance and we don't have a set procedure for that. (Interviewee J)*

This may be a complex web, in that managerial perceptions of constraints affecting their ability to take a harder line with staff is self-fulfilling in that they have not ensured that systems are in place to enable action to be taken or standards to be set. There may also be an issue in the lack of experience, or training, in management leading to less strong management in other areas.

*In some areas we have weak managers. We have people who are, by being elected to a position, or being appointed to a position, suddenly find themselves as managers. They don't want to be. They have no intention of being or can't be. So we don't train them to be managers of people.....We don't put it in the job adverts,, probably is one of our biggest failings. There may be something implying that, you know, you have got to be Che Guerava but what we don't say is, though, by the way you will be managing 100 staff and experience in that would be useful (Interviewee N)*

This raises at least two issues. First, the impact which the system of election has on the effectiveness of management of the union's infrastructure. The fact of election and its impact on acceptance of managerial roles was referred to earlier. In the context of constraints on management, CWU is particularly different amongst case study unions in that regional representatives are, certainly in the Post Office, seconded and paid for by the employer. It is difficult to talk, therefore, about managerial relationships in the conventional sense. There is, though, one example, of where election might be expected to have an impact on how work is undertaken. :-

*You take somebody who is a first-class branch secretary or executive member and suddenly get them up heading a Department, completely responsible for the computerised records, the whole computerised base and whatever, and you wonder why it doesn't run smoothly (Interviewee G)*

The UCW's last General Secretary mentioned the limitations of its election system insofar as it involved, for example, trying 'to turn postmen into the Editor of our Journal' – suggesting that the UCW was obsessed with election whilst confirming that the system was not as prevalent in the CWU.

Secondly the effect of lack of training for management which has been a feature of the union's life was raised above:-

*I think the other problem for managers in trade unions is that in some trade unions none of the officers in charge have had any professional training whatsoever (Interviewee K)*

## Cognitive rules and culture

This may not only be an incident of the union's training policy but may be related to individual managers' own insecurity in achieving a position which involves undertaking tasks which have not been central to their perceptions of what full time work in the union is about:-

*I think in the macho environment of the trade union world there is a reluctance to say "Okay, I'm a manager but I don't actually know how to do it, so I will go on a course or I will get some training or whatever". People are very reluctant to do that. It seems to be acknowledging a deficiency. It isn't. It is actually quite enjoyable, I think, for people to learn new skills. It's not culturally welcome to admit that you don't know everything and you need to go on a course. (Interviewee L)*

Even in the case of one very thoughtful manager, there was a perception that the union was not itself clear about what it wanted her to do:-

*If there was a dispute between myself and a member of staff it's very unclear what my line of authority is. I certainly do not have any formal line in terms of any appeal or grievance level. So that makes it very difficult. So on the one hand you are supposed to give the leadership, set the cultural tone, set the expectations, the standards of work, have a word with them if they are off course, there's no formal structure that confirms you have that authority and no formal mechanism to seeing that through if you meet a problem. So that's very frustrating. (Interviewee G)*

In the period before the 2002 strategic planning exercise, several managers perceived that there was a weakness in strategy – that managers managed for the present, not the future and that they did not communicate strategic objectives when they were in existence. It would be misleading to visit that now because perceptions may be different. There were, however, perceptions that constraints were imposed on managers by the interface which they had to manage with political issues:-

*I suppose the constraints are a kind of political constraint in the sense that, you know, it's easy to exploit the fact that you call yourself a trade union (Interviewee B)*

and by the interface they had to manage with lay members and lay member structures:-

*I think that the biggest constraint that you have between the union and a company in the conventional sense is the role of the executive. Sometimes there is a desire of the executive to actually try and run the administration of the organisation or to*

## Moral rules and trade union principles

*interfere with it in ways that are not always helpful. If you are managing a company you are managing a command structure; we have this democratic structure. At the end of the day if they don't like what you're doing they can actually act as the last Court of Appeal. It is a constraint and we have a very big executive -- it's like a mini conference -- and I don't think it's helpful. (Interviewee O)*

Managing democratic structures was elevated to the status of a rule in one case:-

*There are such political sensitivities that they are subject to what I called the 51 week rule -- you do them 51 weeks before the next annual conference. Consciously, I had held back on doing unpopular things in relation to the staff until immediately after conference to forestall any stirring that goes on. That is the constraint. (Interviewee D)*

Issues of boundary management and representative rationality are significant and will be discussed below. At this stage it is sufficient to note that, whatever positive attitudes CWU managers may have to the fact of working in a democratic structure, aspects of that structure are felt by some managers to be a constraint which has to be managed.

### **Systems relating to moral rules**

- 5.9. We look here at whether managers in the CWU expressed any espousal of principles having a bearing on how they managed in the union, in particular on how they manage people. There are some interesting contrasts in the way in which managers conceptualise their values in this area. One manager equated trade union principles with a concern for individual problems, a subset of 'fairness', one could argue:-

*If you go back to core trade union principles in allocating resources you must have regard to the scale of the problem that the member is facing and if you move too far away from that as an allocation for resources you potentially get corrupt, if you know it I mean. Because you are driven only by political considerations (Interviewee G)*

Others mentioned fairness specifically, but in the context of the need to be firm at the same time:-

*The trick is to be seen to be firm but fair. You can't have one without the other. (Interviewee O)*

*It was just listening to people - firm but fair and we got there. (Interviewee M)*

## Moral rules and trade union principles

*The one thing that I believe is that you have got to be firm but you have got to be fair. People may not agree with view but they must not doubt your integrity. (Interviewee D)*

A similar sentiment was expressed in much more colourful language:-

*I suppose the hardest bit is being tough, to be honest. Trade unionists tend to have an emotional response to a lot of things -- this is outrageous, they shouldn't be allowed to get away with that blah blah blah. Whereas managers tend to be a bit more cold and a bit more rational. Now I am not saying that we need to be a bit more cold and rational but we do have to be a bit hard at times and my thing about being a trade unionist is that you need to have the sensitivity of a butterfly and the hide of a rhinoceros. You know, you have got to be both. So I try sometimes not to let a commitment to, you know, making the world a better place, as it were, interfere with being a good manager, do you know what I mean? A side of me has to say, now you have got to be hard on this one. Where that gets a bit difficult is like, you know, being the other side of the role is thinking about the impact of sacking somebody, finishing somebody. So I do try to permeate my values (Interviewee B)*

The same interviewee expressed strong beliefs in the idea of searching out commonalities, of seeking unity, in his managerial roles:-

*Well the job of a trade unionist is to look for areas of commonality. Sometimes they can be forced and to try and pull people together and see that you have unity of purpose. (Interviewee B)*

*My view is that when people say, democracy is majority rule I say, it's not. It's majority rule with the consent of the minority. The minority must feel that they count as much -- not to the point where they have a veto on change but, you know, everyone has got to feel like they have had a chance. I am always working for consensus, if you can get consensus. (Interviewee B)*

This reference to democracy usefully moves the discussion to consider CWU managers' approaches to representative rationality. Most unions and union members would be delighted to think that their senior staff had such an uncomplicated view of the dynamics of their union as this:-

*From a personal point of view, I'm working for members rather than shareholders. I'm committed to the trade union movement anyway. I've always felt not only that I love my job, it's almost a privilege to be doing a job you really enjoy. Meeting members, meeting branch secretaries at Conference is really a boost. So I'm actually working for people like me and that degree of commitment is reflected in the way I think. (Interviewee H)*

## Moral rules and trade union principles

Another manager celebrates the involvement of Executive members in her work, having taken the initiative in widening their roles:-

*The executive thought their only job was to sit on committees and pontificate. Mine are getting really quite good at doing more hands on work. We have had a strategic debate about it. We have done a strategic analysis with the telecoms executive about what the industrial challenges are in the sector and what the implications are for how we organise ourselves internally. I have got buy in to two documents and I kind of keep them up and keep coming back to them with the executive because I have got to implement chunks of it. So I have started the structure, a strategic analysis and then it was not a total strategic plan because I do not control all of the bits. I am dependent on some people to deliver but it was an attempt as far as I could at a strategic plan. I am trying to track delivery.....It is not producing the change at the rate we did but if you were to look at it compared with two years ago there has been a transformation of attitudes. Executive members have been quite surprised. Issues have blown up and I have said "I have not got the resources; you are an executive member, you are on full-time facilities". And it is amazing; some of them have done very good jobs out there on hot issues. (Interviewee G)*

Faith in the democratic process can come, however, with views on the way in which boundaries should be drawn on a strategic level:-

*Now my faith in the democratic process, I'm just as likely to be wrong as they are to be right but I would like to think, and I think this is the role of officers, you have got a degree of experience. I don't want to stress the football metaphor too much but it's a bit like going to the crowd every Saturday saying, who do you think we should play today? You could do that and they may come up with a perfect team selection but you can't do that every Saturday. Somebody is required to say, this Saturday I think this. At the end of that period of office, they have the ability to say -- they may well do it to me, who knows -- your judgment over this five-year period has been more wrong than right, or the reverse. That is the role. (Interviewee B)*

So the principle of accountability to the members is defined by this elected manager in a way that influences his approach to the management of his relationships within the union's democratic structures. It is fair to say, however, that there is a good deal of criticism of aspects of the systems of representative rationality with which managers have to work. The first of these relates to the consequences of annual elections:-

*It's very important that the General Secretary is elected. It's important that the Executive is elected. There needs to be facility*



## Moral rules and trade union principles

*for the Executive, once they are elected, to be allowed a certain way to make decisions and then stand on those decisions next time they are re-elected, which shouldn't be every year, rather than continually having to go back to the members every time on every issue on every agreement. The union just can't function like that because you lose the respect of the employer because you end up in a situation, a hiatus, where you just can't negotiate a deal. (Interviewee A)*

*In addition to our officers being elected every five years, we elect our entire executive every year. So between February and May each year, in effect you have an election going on. It is very hard to ask executive members to think about the strategic objectives of the union over the next three to five years, where we should be allocating our resources, what our recruitment targets should be, what new technology there is likely to be, what new markets our employers might go into, when in six months time they will be facing an election in which they could be back in the local office. I mean, where are their priorities going to lie? (Interviewee L)*

There is also criticism of the extent to which the systems of representative rationality actually function in the interests of the members:-

*The ultimate stakeholders are, of course, the members and going to a ballot among the whole of the members on an issue sometimes got you round some of these problems. So, for instance, clause 4. I was the only union leader in 1994 to go to the rostrum and support abolition of clause 4. Thereafter I was snowed under with resolutions from area committees saying that the North West Regional Committee of the UCW unanimously object to any change to clause 4. So I said, fine, we will go to the members. The new clause 4, the old clause 4, through our union journal we will give six arguments for change, six arguments against change and we will ask the members to decide. The members voted 93% to change clause 4. End of unanimous resolutions from regional committees. So if that filter is generally giving you the views of the members, it's very good but that sent all kinds of alarm bells to me that the filter is actually giving you the views of union officials, not the views of the members and whilst they always say how sacrosanct the views of members are, it is surprising how many times lay officials try to get a decision that involves groups of people meeting in a room and having a show of hands but doesn't involve the ultimate test of democracy which is putting it to the members. (Interviewee A)*

CWU is infused with democratic systems in which there is a high level of election and in which the governance structures are both substantial and the members of which are elected annually. Unlike, say, PCS, the

## Deploying resources

structures do not provide for membership ballots as a matter of course. In the practical world in which CWU managers work, it is necessary for them to work with those structures rather than rail against them when there is little prospect of major change. This may account for the comparatively low level of observations on the issue. Nevertheless, it is possible to discern systems of moral rules which impact on the way in which managers perceive their roles

### ***Managerial Activities***

#### ***Deploying resources***

- 5.10. As has been discussed, systems of financial control in CWU are undeveloped but the subject of aspirations for improvement. As in all areas of the union's life, however, these are affected by the strategic planning process which has been introduced into the union. This seeks to set financial objectives for the union, consistent with the objectives of the Strategic Plan, which can be monitored. The Senior Deputy General Secretary is identified as the manager with this responsibility and he sees the process as helping to

*achieve more transparency in the union's finances*

The objectives are to make a modest surplus of current income over current expenditure and to ensure effective control over, and good use of, the union's income. To this end, the Plan seeks to:-

- *reduce expenditure by 5%*
- *aim for a surplus of 2% each year*
- *work towards a financial information system providing better visibility of actual costs of activities and a control system that gives more information and control to individual budget holders*
- *submit quarterly accounts to the EC*
- *prioritise organisation and recruitment work by making an assessment of expenditure and considering how sustainable increases can be achieved*
- *create a special fund for organisation and recruitment contributed to by branches (CWU Strategic Plan 2002)*

These objectives clearly provide a strategic dimension to the management of the union's resources. We have already seen that managers are seeking to achieve change at the centre so that can be demonstrated in the union as a whole that financial discipline needs to be exercised at all levels. The Finance Department Strategic Plan discusses all these strategic objectives before setting itself a series of its own strategic objectives, including:-

- *producing detailed monthly financial reports for the NEC*
- *designing a financial management system providing quality relevant information*

## Deploying resources

- *restructuring the Department to control financial management and budgets and to move to open plan working to facilitate teamworking*
- *designing detailed budgets including labour and administration costs, to facilitate the management of each budget directly with budget holders to control costs whilst improving service to members*
- *producing a report benchmarking CWU services against other trade unions with the aim of working towards best industry practice (CWU Finance Department Strategic Plan, May 2002)*

As has already been debated, this type of budgetary and financial control will mean that the union has to prioritise some things over others, not something that has been undertaken until now but something which impacts on representative rationality insofar as it may involve changes to the operation of the democratic structures.

One senior manager indicated the extent to which her trade union principles influenced her approach to resource allocation in that resources should be related to the extent of the members' problems rather than to sheer numbers of members. Common sense had some application in such a situation:-

*Today there is a big engineering issue going on and you jump because that is 30,000 people and to say "well I'm sorry there are 2 members over there with whatever" -- well, that would be stupid. (Interviewee G)*

But this did not affect her commitment to her ethical approach to resource allocation:-

*I try and say "look at the issue." It's issue driven. Is the issue time-critical; is the issue for that group of people much bigger. So you have 500 people with this issue and 2 there with that; is the issue for those 2 far greater? Like, for example, the colour of the painting in the accommodation block -- not that we would deal with that at this level -- for the 500 but loss of occupational pension for the 2. So we would put the resource to the 2. So I would try and look at it issue-driven in the sense that it is the issue that matters. (Interviewee G)*

This is not, however, an issue that arose to any extent in interviews with CWU managers. This could be because of the political character of the union, with its preponderance of elected officers and the power structures this creates. Or it could be because of the occupational profile of the interviewees, with some gaps between lower level managers and the four General Secretaries or ex-General Secretaries where this sort of issue might be more of a real one.

## Deploying resources

The deployment of physical resources arising from merger was, as we have seen, an important issue for the CWU in that the Instrument of Amalgamation committed the new union to a new headquarters. Evidence cited above from the union's video shows how managers saw the move as being one which was of importance in bringing people together, because the two unions had not yet merged in culture and style. This attitude was shared by other managers:-

*I think the one element of management strategy that we did have from day one, which was right and which was good, was that we would get into a single building as soon as possible because until you got into the single building you couldn't integrate the cultures and it's the cultures that keep the processes separate (Interviewee G)*

*We took the principled view, the truthful view, that we should get rid of what we saw as the repository of the two cultures and try and find a new headquarters which hopefully would be equidistant between the two old headquarters. (Interviewee O)*

It is to some extent a truism to say that they saw the new building as something which brought staff together – of course it did - but as in other unions, managers in the CWU were aware of the concept of culture and its importance for the new organisation. So there were a number of critical feelings about what actually happened:-

*We weren't using the new building as a way to impose a new culture. Because some organisations do that, don't they? If they've got a new building they see an opportunity because a building can actually influence management style and all sorts of things. I know for instance BP deliberately went open plan to encourage networking - the building was designed to influence the management. We didn't have any vision when it came to it. It was just a case of trying to get us into one building. (Interviewee J)*

*The one thing that I regret is that the union did not use it (the move) as an opportunity to use the space to start changing cultures (Interviewee K)*

*The departments which involved the bringing together of staff included the Research Department where we thought that we had already got a common style of working. At the other extreme was the Legal Department which not only were moving two groups together but moved them at different times, which I think was a cultural disaster (Interviewee L)*

Management of the union in the interim between merger and the move into the new building had been culturally problematic:-

## Merger management

*I was in charge of the Research Department and half my staff were in one building and half were in the other. I was physically travelling between the two and every week encountered these very different cultures. Most people stayed in their buildings and stayed within their cultures (Interviewee L)*

Other managers sought to do similar things to try to understand and get to know individuals, cultures and ways of working. Cultural integration of the industrial departments, however, has not occurred to any great extent and the new General Secretary has characteristically forthright views on that issue:-

*One of the things I don't like that's happened is the first floor is the postal and the second floor is telecoms. These are only little things but little things mean a lot of things. If I had had my way, I would have had the telecoms on the first floor and the postal on the second floor. It wouldn't have meant a lot but it would have been saying something, you know. And the other thing that has happened is that on the second floor and the first floor -- on the second floor they have got a plaque from Alvescote and the first floor they have got a plaque from the UCW. Now when I saw them going up, this is before I was GS, I thought it was terrible because it was like saying, we still exist.*

As suggested above, no strategic view was taken on layout of the office space with a view to cultural integration. Some years on, however, the role of open plan space was identified by one senior manager as having potential for improving teamworking in the Finance Department, a department still very much divided by old union systems and ways of working, and the objective of moving to open plan working was included in the Finance Department's Strategic Plan for that purpose.

*What it will do in the long run is that out in the general part of this area, we can see more what people are doing or not doing and then people eventually, maybe not necessarily some of the individuals here now but in the long run, those individuals will become more part of the team (Interviewee N)*

So managers in the CWU recognise the strategic role of physical space and physical structure and the impact it can have on merger. A significant factor in their recognition is cultural – both in terms of their original intentions and their critique of the less than perfect cultural changes that have occurred since the new building was occupied.

### ***'Meaningful' managerial actions*** ***Merger Management***

- 5.11. The CWU merged in 1995, long before this research commenced. However, as has become clear already, the merger was by no means 'complete' in psychological terms (Buono and Bowditch 1989) by the time research started. Some merger management actions are, therefore, clearly discernible.

## Merger management

The merger was always a difficult one in terms of the different backgrounds, industrial experiences and cultures of the two old unions:-

*How did we merge those two cultures? Well, with great difficulty....they are not there yet..... The way we decided to play it, wrongly or rightly, is -- let's just push for the merger. If we try to sort out all the issues prior to the merger, we will never merge. The enemies of merger never said they were against merger because it wasn't politically correct but they would find road blocks to put in the way, so let's give them as few opportunities as we can. We engaged Lord McCarthy, Bill McCarthy, who was very good. He said, there has to be a spirit of generosity here. We are not negotiating with an employer. You know, your comrades are round the table. You are trying to forge a better union. That was a very powerful message. And so we decided to get the main things sorted out, merge and then other things would be sorted out afterwards. We merged with three very distinct cultures, all with their own constitutional safeguards. (Interviewee A)*

The problem for the CWU was not just the industrial demarcation between the postal and telecoms industrial sections but also the ex-CPSA clerical group, whose interests had been protected in the Rule Book so that (Rules 15.1.5 and 15.2.4) rule changes could not be passed without a majority in each of the three sections. At the time of merger, the clerical group had their own view of what the merger would bring:-

*One of these senior clerical Executive Council members there was very vocal -- no, it wasn't going to be a merger, it was going to be a federation and I think perhaps they still see that to an extent. And to some extent I think they still see themselves, you know, you have a postal section, and engineering section and a clerical section. We are recruiting in other areas now and I think they still see themselves as operating fairly autonomously (Interviewee F)*

The tensions between the three groups surfaced very early, however, when at the first Rules Revision Conference in September 1995:-

*Suddenly these three constitutional groups, the posties were voting for a change to impose their culture on the other two bits. I was so disappointed with people who I had persuaded to go into merger and then totally lost their spirit of generosity, you know, we are going to do things the old UCW way. But of course they couldn't because of the constitutional safeguards and every time the clerics stuck up for themselves as a minority group, the posties started to get really angry (interviewee A)*

## Merger management

On the Executive, however, a view was that the lay members were not so divided:-

*The people on the Executive, the people who managed to change, I think did have a spirit of generosity. (Interviewee A)*

But, in 2002, generosity did not appear to mean cultural cohesion:-

*When B became General Secretary -- and perhaps he'll tell you this -- he actually sent a document round saying "I keep hearing this word culture and (something like) it is a load of rubbish, it's just an excuse for not changing". Something along those lines and I thought, perhaps you have got a point there because I was guilty of it as well saying, oh yes, we come from different cultures. And I think it goes back to the constituencies. Whether people confused culture and constituency because if you interviewed people on the postal side, certainly to me from outside they operate differently to people on the engineering side and people on the clerical side. (Interviewee F)*

These difficulties are of course exacerbated in the CWU by the continued and, at the moment, inevitable existence of the two industrial Executives. The new building was used in part to try to create more social relations between lay members who have a suite of offices on the top floor of the building and it is suggested that there is some social intercourse arising from that which has been helpful. However:-

*You find them mixing a lot more than they used to. But then when you go and look on NEC days in the canteen, you see all the engineering group together, all the clerical group and they tend to perpetuate things (Interviewee D)*

*The lay members of the NEC, who are not permanently based in this building but have to come here regularly have got a suite of offices on the fourth floor. They have created artificial barriers. You will find that there will be four postal people in one, four engineers in another and the operator and ancillaries grades in another -- they have just done that themselves (Interviewee N)*

As anticipated, these managers display perceptions of the importance of culture in the merger, if something of a lack of control over the management of it as far as the industrial structure and the lay members are concerned. The new General Secretary, however is seeking to tackle the issues:-

*We have had all these studies and the intention is to look towards restructuring the union to bring in what we were expecting to get out of merger which is economies of scale and unity of purpose.*

## Merger management

This will obviously involve looking at the management structure as well as the lay member structure. So how was merger managed at the management level?

The union did have some external help right at the outset in that certain managers went to Cranfield to examine merger management issues:-

*I had heard about what Cranfield had been doing in relation to the TUC. I came back and I sold it to the leadership of the NCU who put it to the leadership of the UCW. Both unions eventually bought into it. The UCW much more reluctantly than the NCU. When it actually took place the NCU provided many more participants : the UCW was antipathetic to the idea and this was reflected in very poor participation. Whereas I thought that it would be a process and that Cranfield would do a number of things before, during and after the merger, in effect it was just one round of "getting to know you" seminars. So it's not their fault that they didn't have a bigger influence on the merger. It's just that we did not make proper use of them (Interviewee L)*

In consequence:-

*We didn't actually take seriously that building the union was more than writing a rule book and devising structures. There were these profound issues of culture which had to be addressed and they were very sensitive and would take a lot of time. We still haven't in many senses addressed that. Time, as you know, has a way of smoothing over some edges but there are still a lot of outstanding issues. (Interviewee L)*

This is corroborated from another source:-

*We still have huge cultural problems where you do things according to what your background was. It must be very difficult for new people coming in. It is not quite are you a big ender or a little ender but it's not far off that. And the new people must sort of gulp. So that's still a problem. (Interviewee G)*

That problem may have been exacerbated by the inevitability, in an industrially delineated union, of the election of a General Secretary from one of the industrial areas:-

*It's the problem when you take a new General Secretary -- the same could have happened if it was telecoms person -- you come from one cultural way of doing things and nobody has actually set down and talked through, well what are the new terms of reference for each of the senior parties in the new organisation. It's not the same organisation therefore your roles and expectations are not the same. (Interviewee G)*

Apart from a commitment on job loss:-



## Merger management

*The starting premise was that there were going to be no redundancies, not even voluntary ones. That came about because we had downsizing at Ealing two years before and we ended up with too many volunteers because it was a good package. The reality is that a lot of people actually wanted redundancy- they didn't want to come to the new headquarters but to manage that would have been very difficult. So the starting point was that we didn't want any redundancies, voluntary or otherwise. So everyone was going to have a job (Interviewee J).*

there was no corporate approach at all to the management of the merger, which seems very much to have been left to the managers concerned. At the outset, this even stretched to reaching agreement on who would do what:-

*Myself and my counterpart were very much left to our own devices to decide what we were going to do. Now that was probably a wise decision because we happen to be both very professional and we could come quite easily, because of our personalities, to a happy mutual agreement, because also of what our first loves were. So personally from that point of view that worked out well. Whether it was the right approach to have in this sort of situation, from a strategic point of view, with two senior people, I'm not sure but it turned out OK. In other words from a management point of view in dealing with myself and T there wasn't any input from senior level other than agreeing what we decided ourselves (Interviewee K)*

*We worked it out between us. We eventually reached agreement that I would take on the role of Personnel and she would do Facilities. She wanted to keep some element of Personnel so we agreed that she would also do training. But no-one really asked us what was happening. If you asked D what his views were, he just wouldn't give them. So it really was a case that you had to sort it out yourself. I'm not sure what would have happened if we hadn't sorted it out ourselves. I suppose there was the pressure of knowing that if we couldn't sort it out ourselves, someone else was going to do it and we might not like the outcome. (Interviewee J)*

This individualistic approach continued with the building of new functions within the merged headquarters building:-

*So I had to make sure that the two different cultures were merged together so that the benefits of membership will be well achieved by all. In doing so, first of all what I had to do was to visit the office in Ealing because I came from the Postal side,*

## Merger management

*from the Clapham culture. I watched the way they worked and I studied it for about two months. (Interviewee E)*

*Once the merger was voted through, we decided that the best way to move on this (because I do actually know people who worked for unions that have merged in the past and have seen the difficulties) was from Day 1 to get to know the staff at Clapham. We socialised, we went over for meals, drinks; we had some new equipment delivered at Ealing essentially for projected joint purposes - we had more space over there - so the first thing I did there was to get all the staff from the Clapham office to come over to Ealing regularly to learn how to operate it and get friendly. So by the time we actually merged we were all great mates. (Interviewee H)*

*Although we were in two separate buildings for nearly three years, the head of department would spend three days a week at Ealing, which is where the NCU were based, and two days a week at Clapham which is where the UCW were based and tried to produce an integrated structure, an integrated way of working across the whole of the Research Department. So for the first couple of years the merger didn't really impinge. We carried on doing what we did but J and me were in touch with each other to say, well, you deal with more on the telecoms side and I will deal with the postal side. (Interviewee F)*

And this laissez-faire approach was continued even after the new building was occupied-

*At the staff level, the trade unions meet but they are talking about internal matters. We should have social events where people get to meet each other. All we have is one Christmas event and it is so structured as to exclude the executive and to be such that a lot of people do not go to it. So space is important but the culture is about more than space and I think that we should be looking for ways of building bridges (Interviewee L).*

In some areas, ex NCU staff have continued with ex-NCU work and ex UCW staff with ex UCW work:-

*I am just doing a quick recce sitting here. S is new, the wages are done on the ex NCU system, the office manager runs the ex UCW system, we have two people to deal with ex UCW branch claims. We have one person deals with ex NCU branch claims, they are both ex NCU employees so, yes. So basically it is, apart from where somebody has left and we have recruited somebody new, predominantly the people who work in this department are ex UCW and ex NCU employees who work on it.....We have taken on a number of people from the TUC Academy, the Organising Academy over the years. They are*

## Merger management

*not ex NCU people but they have come in and gone straight into the ex NCU culture because we haven't merged the Organising and Recruitment department to have one CWU recruitment culture, if you see what I mean.. (Interviewee N)*

One manager found it possible to identify the culture which had become dominant:-

*I have constantly referred to the fact that you have two cultures in this organisation. Another demonstration of that is that, at least until now, on the telecoms side most of the officials have been appointed by the executive, subject to confirmation by conference. On the postal side everybody is elected for a five-year term. It looks as if the postal culture is now dominant and, from now onwards, the CWU will elect officers (Interviewee L)*

This research took place amongst managers many of whom, as can be seen, confirmed the lack of a corporate approach to managing change arising from the merger and testified to the consequences of this. This is corroborated by the Equality and Diversity report, presented following a survey of staff:-

*It is emphasised that we are aware that mergers and amalgamations are difficult and it can take a long time before a new organisation settles down and begins to develop a corporate culture of its own. However, the CWU does still seem, some years after its merger, a long way from becoming one organisation in the minds of many of its staff, (rather than two organisations who happen to share the same building). There were, naturally, other more positive views expressed by staff regarding elements of the previous organisations combined in the CWU, along with the many opportunities and advantages that now presented themselves as a result of the merger. The challenge for the CWU is to build on and develop these positive perspectives and promote the benefits of the changes that have been made which are currently undermining the organisation. Indeed the CWU may want to develop a strategy that involves all staff more pro-actively in the new directions being taken by the union and the changes that are being made. (Delivering on Equality, 2000)*

The new senior managers, however, are committed to making structural changes which will go some way to cementing the merger:-

*So at the moment we are just in the process of looking again at our structure. We have just had a number of studies -- we have had an Equality and Diversity report, we have had an analysis of membership views by North London University, we have had a financial performance analysis which T has done and we have had a report done by Keith Ewing of Kings College, together with Linda Kelly which I have just got the first draft, it hasn't been*

## Managing by information

*finalised yet. So we're getting there I like to think a lot quicker since I have become General Secretary because of a number of initiatives. Some little things have happened to bring unity. We used to have two Education Officers, one was ex NCU and one was ex UCW. We now have got one Head of Education and Training -- we have just recently appointed L who joined us from Bectu -- and she is looking to integrate all the education to make it much more unified. So we are working on it. It has been painful, as all mergers are and you still get people talking about - - and I have tried to banish the terms even though I have just used them myself -- ex UCW and ex NCU -- because we will be eight years merged in January. It's a long time. Kids talk, walk and go to school in that period and we have not yet learned to talk about one union. (Interviewee B)*

### **Managerial tasks**

#### **Managing by information**

- 5.12. There is very little evidence that the CWU managers adopted any form of strategic approach to their communication role and some evidence to the contrary:-

*One of the problems here is that staff and officers have an expectation that if there is an issue, it will be dealt with against transparent theories and criteria and there will be consistency of decision making. And the Borgia court would have been more transparent. (Interviewee G)*

This is corroborated by the Equality and Diversity report:-

*The pattern of management seemed to vary widely with, for example, some managers having regular team meetings and supervision systems with discussion and consultation taking place, and other teams meeting very occasionally and with very restricted agendas. Methods of communication also seemed to vary greatly, with some managers attempting to "cascade down" what was happening in the organisation and at the NEC levels, but with others communicating very little in any consistent way. There were also strong views expressed by staff about the different styles of individual managers and the inconsistency with which different issues and problems were dealt with and resolved between different managers. Overall, and this was confirmed by discussions with some senior staff, the different departments in the organisation could be seen to be autonomous in the way that they functioned in that they tend to work "individually" with a particular departmental style. There appeared in general to be no particular corporate approach, style or even message that was developed across in the organisation in its day-to-day management. This does not mean that the CWU does not have strong messages and clear leadership from the top of the union. Rather, the issue is how the organisation communicates with staff in a consistent and regular*

## Managing by information

*way. Neither is there anything necessarily wrong with the differing styles of management, but again there are central messages and issues that staff need to be aware of, be involved in and as necessary be consulted upon - and here we are concerned with the issue of equality and diversity and the policy of the union on these matters. At present there do not appear to be the systems in place which ensure that consistent management input and information in relation to staff is provided. (Delivering on Equality 2000)*

In some unions, the rather old-fashioned practice of concentrating communication on the staff trade unions has been adopted but this does not seem to have been the case here:-

*There has not been that regular dialogue, a structured approach to industrial relations (Interviewee N)*

A search was undertaken of the use of the word 'communication' by CWU managers and in only one case was it used in the context of communication with staff directly and then it was offering an explanation of the difficulty of communication:-

*A business manager deals with employees in a situation where he is providing a service or a product and there is a clear line of communication. You do not have the other lines which operate within a trade union. What you have got is two roles which would run in tandem (Interviewee D)*

New management has begun to tackle this. A Senior Management Team and an Assistant Secretaries Forum have been established and the union's newspaper is now being sent to all staff at their home addresses:-

*If you can get people to buy in and have a bit more of a view. One of the things we introduced was, like, a tiny little thing, everybody who worked in this building never ever got the union's journal to their home address. Now the argument was that when the Voice comes out, it is put on everyone's desk and it is in the foyer and if you want to look at it, you can. Of course, you never read it in work. When you get it at home, people are more inclined to read it and the reason why I have done that was a lot of the staff said "well why do we want to get it at home"; but if we are losing 30,000 jobs, in financial terms that is called a revenue stream. If we only lose half of that, it's still 15,000 jobs or 20,000 jobs. That is 15,000 £2 whatevers. That is a lot of money and you've got to be aware of that. (Interviewee B)*

The Strategic Plan has also recognised the issue. In its Investors in People section there is an objective:-

## Managing through people

*We will communicate more effectively with our staff, in part by making "150" a regular bi-monthly publication. (CWU Strategic Plan 2002)*

### **Managing through people**

- 5.13. In line with other unions, the CWU has an objective of achieving the Investors in People standard:-

*Our objective is that the CWU will have a well trained and well motivated staff who understand the union's aims and their role in contributing to them and that this will be externally validated by the obtaining of IIP by January 2004. (CWU Strategic Plan 2002)*

Managers have critical comments to make about the state of people management in the CWU:-

*People management -- nobody really owns that. It's all over the place....I find it uncomfortable when I am dealing with staff that I know that, if I have identified with the point they have made, which is legitimate, my ability to pursue it for the staff I represent is not going to be very much on its merits. I'm going to have to deal with it as a political issue. (Interviewee G)*

*I hope that it (IIP) will lead to something of a culture change in terms of them viewing themselves as managers and what their managerial roles are -- that they will be much more conscious of their staff and start to develop them. (Interviewee K)*

But for themselves, some managers are thoughtful and creative:-

*In terms of the telecoms Department I believe I have very direct managerial responsibility for the cultural tone of that department. I take that responsibility very seriously. You know, like no raised voices, no swearing at staff, no aggression, all that. I expect people to exchange with each other on a very proper personalised basis. So I can have very direct influence over the culture and I feel responsibility for that....I do like to be very dispassionate when I am dealing with the staff that are on my floor -- that it does not matter about personalities or what I personally think about them. If there is an issue about child care, or wanting sabbatical leave, there is a consistency of approach. It does not depend on whether they smiled at me that morning. Okay, I can be a bit of a buffer for them but that's because I provide that on the telecoms floor. (Interviewee G)*

## Performance management

*We have four staff working on those and I will have to make sure each of those members of staff know what their role is and how they are going to deliver that role and provide them with support when necessary, guidance when necessary and also, I suppose, having then in for chats to say, well look, I'd really like things to be done this way rather than the way it's been done in the past. (Interviewee F)*

*In this Department, what we did is that we interviewed everybody on individual basis about their roles, what they thought they could do to make their jobs better. (Interviewee N)*

*As I've been here longer and got more confidence I have developed my own management style. So we have departmental meetings every month which almost no other department does. We have an annual appraisal which no other department does. And when I have a new member of staff I do a quarterly appraisal (Interviewee L)*

### **Performance management**

As this manager suggests, CWU does not have a corporate appraisal scheme. Performance management, therefore, is seen as problematic:-

*Because we haven't got appraisal systems - there are hardly any other organisations outside that wouldn't have had them - it means that it is very difficult to deal with performance (Interviewee J)*

*Right now, it's almost impossible to deal with somebody who is not performing well (Interviewee N)*

One manager looks forward to IIP accreditation when:-

*they will be much more conscious of the need to talk to their staff about their development needs and more difficult issues of performance. But none of that happens and it does cause all sorts of difficulties (Interviewee K)*

Another manager makes a loose connection between the fact that a member of staff has their office door closed and his ability to be able to monitor what is happening in terms of that member of staff's work, what used to be called 'management by observation':-

*It is quite obvious that some of the people who are sitting behind doors in their own offices do it because they are empire building, they are trying to make out that the tasks they perform are so complicated and high faluting and secure that they are surrounded in mystery and that they have to have their own offices for it.... There is one particular individual who works in the Finance Department and her door is constantly closed.*

## Performance management

*Constantly...She is doing a job of work in this Department but I need to understand what is being done and I need to question it because of the job it is (Interviewee N)*

The new General Secretary has some firm views about these issues:-

*I suppose the first difference is a thing that is easy to rebut but none the less it's often used -- oh, you're a trade union, therefore you should be a model employer. That's the first thing that gets thrown into your face but what the subtext of that is that we shouldn't have to be bossed about. My attitude to that is, this is a trade union, it's not a hippie commune. You can't just do what you want..... Now that is a bit difficult to manage. My only thing on that is that I don't see how you can do it other than by a strategic plan and I don't see how you can, and this is where there is real tension, do it without some kind of appraisal system. I just can't see how it can be done.*

And he believes that resistance to an objective based system, specifically here the Strategic Plan, is because people are uncomfortable with being held accountable:-

*I think the mistake that people make when you talk about a plan, if I say I'm getting out of that this morning and my intention is to run five miles and part of my run is blocked by roadworks and I run four and a half, your plan doesn't always go to plan but at least you had some idea of what you intended to do. And the main reason of course if you have a plan, people are accountable to that plan and are concerned about people saying, well what are you doing? -- I always think it's a bit like the description of work study. People say, oh my day's different every day -- every day my day's different. It's so different you wouldn't believe it. And when you analyse everybody's day, there is not that much difference. There is an amazing amount of commonality. So the main thing was, I don't want to have to have a plan because I'll be accountable and stuff like that.*

We have already seen that the meanings influencing managers in the CWU relate in part to their experiences of management and the consequent difficulty which they perceive in undertaking management roles, particularly those that involve making judgments about performance or conduct. This evidence is consistent with those observations. It is not clear which staff are being referred to in the above observation. The issue of staff having dual lines of accountability is more true in the CWU than in other case study unions because some managers are elected. It would not be surprising if they also enjoyed high levels of autonomy for that reason, though evidence for this did not surface. Either of these explanations would account for their resisting accountability within the management structure. But this would need to be researched further.



**Staff development**

In terms of staff development, the CWU does not have a strategic training plan. Skills training is provided in functional departments, for example for staff in the Legal Department on developments in the law, and this is often provided to staff by the manager herself. But access to training is not in any sense subject to clear principles and management training is non-existent.

*Whether you get trained depends very much on whether you ask for it. Okay, when you do you are likely to get it but it's very hit and miss. It is random. It smacks of lack of managerial direction (Interviewee O)*

*Unions just don't train for management do they? (Interviewee G)*

The lack of a strategic approach to training does not seem to be because staff are not interested in it:-

*You would be amazed at the number of our PAs who have done their IPD. I have two or three on this floor that I have been helping with projects. But they can't get anywhere here. So we have quite a lot of IPD trained people here. The staff are very keen on getting access to training so that will help but unless you get the psyche that says that we are going to run this organisation as an efficient unit on a transparent set of managerial principles and company values, it's never going to work. (Interviewee G)*

And, indeed, this lack of strategy in dealing with staff development was the subject of comment in the Equality and Diversity report:-

*Overall, it appeared that training provision is delivered in a fairly ad hoc way and is based on individuals asking for it and persuading individual managers to agree to it. There appears to be no strategic overview and development of what the kind of training that the organisation needs to deliver for its staff in order to make them more effective as part of the organisation. There is also no co-ordinated career development strategy running across the organisation. As stated earlier this potentially relates to the development of an appraisal and supervision systems that form part of an integral staff career development programme. A telling comment about training was made by a senior member of staff: "In terms of training and development the way it works is that basically whoever shouts the loudest gets on the training courses. In fact the union is very good about training but it is up to the individual to find the course, make the case for it and argue for it. However, in terms of systematic training for staff across the organisation, this does not happen in any consistent way at all." (Delivering on Equality 2000)*

## Teams

Staff development ideally arises from identified need arising from some form of appraisal or development review system so to some extent it is not surprising that CWU managers, without the tools for the job, do not usually exercise managerial responsibilities in the area.

### **Teams**

These management tasks are directed very much to individuals. The use of teams is more common in some trade unions than in others where they have sometimes been regarded as counter-cultural. One CWU manager felt that working in teams was difficult in trade unions:-

*First because many trade union people hold their position as a result of elections in which they have to contest their position, sometimes quite bitterly, with people who are or will be their colleagues. Secondly because of the pressure of events -- they spend a lot of time meeting managers, racing round the building, going to meetings and the idea of making time and space to sit down the colleagues I think is very difficult. And on the postal side, I keep referring to these very difficult cultures, the very phrase team working causes problems because for approaching a decade the Post Office has been trying to introduce a form of team working and most rank-and-file sorting and delivery staff have seen that as a way of breaking the union and increasing the power of the managers. So the very concept arouses suspicion. (Interviewee L)*

Some other observations, conveying suspicions within the union, suggest that these comments are substantiated:-

*I have an unofficial group that I sit down with of the senior administrative officers, the senior DGS, the general treasurer, the two DGSs, the Communications Officer and Head of Research. What we have to be careful of is that that it must not be seen as a caucus, looking at trade union policy or employer policy. It is purely and simply an advisory group to myself and other officers that require help, assistance and guidance from time to time. It is very much an informal organisation. It has no formal structure and although they take notes of things that we want to process, we do not have formal minutes, we do not have formal structures -- in actual fact we sit around in this room (Interviewee D)*

There is a certain amount of wish fulfilment here because other evidence made it clear that at the time of the interview, the Senior Management Team (which is what is here being described) had been dormant for some years. So the interviewee may have felt either that the interviewer wanted to hear positive news or else that he believed that he really ought to be holding these meetings. Later, a more formal Senior Management team was established but even this was not universally approved of:-

## Managing action - leadership

*One officer spoke to me a few weeks ago and made this sort of angels on a pinhead distinction; senior managers and the Senior Management Team. Which is a bit nuanced but I think I know what the person was driving at. What we've got is that we've obviously got the National Executive. Some of the National Executive and some officers think, why do you need a Senior Management Team? (Interviewee B)*

Individualistic traits became apparent even when the original Senior Management Team was meeting:-

*Though we started with good intentions for the senior management team, it was never conducted in the right spirit in my opinion. It became dominated rather than seeking opinions and contrary opinions tended to be squashed. Seems to me that if you have a senior management team you need to respect the views of senior managers and allow them to express their views. You need to give a sense of direction but on many of these issues you need to brainstorm through them and then gain their confidence in support. (Interviewee O)*

Many CWU managers talked about the teams they were part of, in their functions or departments. Many used the term more loosely, talking of the 'team of people' in the department without seeming to denote any formal team. Others had aspirations of meeting as a team more formally. So the impression was often there that teams were somehow a desirable thing. But, compared with other unions, there was no overwhelming feeling that teamwork was institutionalised.

### **Managing action**

- 5.14. As discussed above, in trade unions, the distinction between 'doing' and 'controlling' – perhaps between leadership and operational management – can be difficult to draw. This can be particularly difficult for a trade union 'leader' and therefore contrasting those roles is of interest. In the CWU, it seems certainly to be that the distinction is problematic at some levels:-

*When you have had predominantly sector based unions, you know, if you are the General Secretary of the NCU, you get involved in lots of industrial negotiations in telecoms and the same way postal; once you are integrated the General Secretary should not really deal with a great deal of industrial negotiations. It should be big picture stuff. You shouldn't get involved in the detail of admin. You should be pushing the union in the right strategic direction, checking every so often it's delivering against that and then having the big picture direction. So I think because D was the first General Secretary in the new structure he couldn't stop being an industrial General Secretary. That wasn't so much of a problem on the telecoms side because he didn't know too much on the telecoms side but of course he knew*

## Managing action - leadership

*everything on the postal side so a lot of his time is involved on that and I don't think that made them happy, although they can speak for themselves. When he did get involved in the administration, it was in the minutiae. It was very personalised, spasmodic, depending on the direction of the winds, the size of the moon, his hormonal balance at any one time. (Interviewee G)*

Others have different ways of expressing this:-

*Well, there is a difference between managers and leaders, I suppose. I try to see myself as much more a leader. My job is to give the strategic direction of the union, i.e. to set out, to think a bit further than the day to day managing the office, shoving paper and things like that. That's very much the job of the leader of the organisation, to have a bit of strategy, have a bit more thought. A little bit like being a football manager, is the best way I can think of it. You know, at the end of the day, you are responsible for the day to day decisions in the same way as poor old Peter Reid has found out this week, you can be sacked as well. I can be sacked, at the end of my term of office. So much more about giving direction, giving strategy and also getting people to think differently than the way they are thinking and moving out of things that are not working into things that should make the organisation work better. So I see it very much as a leader. But also as being a bit of an organiser, in terms of how we organise our time and place (Interviewee B)*

The situation is not helped by the public perception that anyone senior in a trade union is a 'leader' and this term usually being defined by reference to negotiating roles, as one manager mentioned earlier:-

*I think some of them see themselves as the leader and they've got there and the rest of you jump because I'm the leader. They see the leader bit, they don't see the manager bit. So I don't think many of them do. (Interviewee G)*

The boundary spanning nature of the role, at least at very senior level is expressed in a number of different ways:-

*It's a bit like being Prime Minister. The Prime Minister hasn't got a job. He has got every job. So if there is a war in Iraq he doesn't say to Jack Straw -- you're foreign relations, get on and deal with that. And similarly if there is a strike in the Post Office, a big one, I have got to have an interface at some point at some stage, and similarly with BT although that is less problematic. (Interviewee B)*

*You have to be focused on the organisation, to innovate, to find new ways of doing things, you have to keep moving forward, you can't stagnate, you have to accept that your staff being your*

## Managing action - leadership

*greatest asset isn't just something on a mission statement on the wall. You have to put that into practice. (Interviewee A)*

Innovation was mentioned in other contexts:-

*Almost everyone in the building has a PC, almost everyone has got a laptop who needs one so why can't we be an E- union? It's much more difficult in the Post Office because you are basically saying to the members "we are going to be an E- union so stop sending letters." That's a real problem. But we will have to deal with it. (Interviewee N)*

The strategic nature of the role was problematic in the CWU at the time most of this research was done:-

*I do share with them, although it's not written down, the vision that I have and how you fit in to the organisation. To formalise it is to make sure that senior managers are telling me what their vision is - and I'm not sure it's the same. I could be working against it- I don't think I am but I could be working against their vision (Interviewee J)*

A view which is corroborated in the Equality and Diversity report:-

*There appeared in general to be no particular corporate approach, style or even message that was developed across in the organisation in its day-to-day management. (Delivering on Equality 2000)*

But, as we have seen, strategic planning is now a reality in the union:-

*The plan is designed to ensure that everyone who works for the union is focussed on the union's priorities and takes practical steps to meet the union's aspirations. (CWU Strategic Plan 2002)*

Individuals within the CWU clearly think deeply about the nature of their roles and their different characters in an organisation where there is arguably more difficulty in defining the boundaries between action and strategy – between 'doing' internally and externally – than in many other organisations. But the data does not support any significant conclusions in this area, other than that the distinction between leadership and management, as in other organisations, is often not clear. The strategic planning process, however, is one which requires clarity and the Plan itself provides that. It would be interesting to re-visit the union to examine how this has affected these issues.

**'Legitimate' managerial actions**

- 4.15 The issue of stakeholder management, in terms of managing within the union's democratic structure, is complex within the CWU because of the number of officers who are themselves elected and in some cases have seats on the Executive Council.

*I think the relationship that I want with (elected) officers is where we are all working together and we have got loyalty to one another. That does not mean to say that you have got yes men. Unfortunately, what has happened with a number of the officers is that they have gone into the system of pandering to political groupings. (Interviewee D)*

Executive Council members in general are elected only for one year and, as discussed above, this brings its own problems. It was suggested that the time Executive Council members held office prevented them from taking a strategic view and also that they could lose the respect of employers by not being able to negotiate a deal in circumstances where a term of office was due to end.

These issues around representative rationality were discussed earlier. The issue here is how managers actually managed, given these governance frameworks and the systems of moral rules that influence their behaviour. It was suggested that practice had differed between partner unions:-

*I know I keep saying this, but I think the NCU were much better at doing that.(managing relations with lay members) That's one of the bits of their culture that we tried to bring into the merged CWU and I think it's working much better now. But it is horrendously difficult. (Interviewee A)*

An analogy was drawn with the public sector in approaching the task:-

*I think that (public sector) is one of the best analogies because you have elected members and the appointed staff. I think that because they employ large numbers you've got more clearly defined structures but there are some similarities there and sometimes the lay members will seek to interfere with the running of the organisation -- sometimes, even justifiably. This is a balance (Interviewee O)*

But frustration was expressed with the system and the potential constraints it imposed on managers:-

*In a business, if D said "right, from tomorrow there is no more paper in the building because we have not got the money", that would stick and it would have to stick because otherwise his integrity would probably be challenged and he would probably have to go. And the business would go under. In our organisation, if David says there is no more paper tomorrow and*

'Legitimate' managerial actions - stakeholders

*then the next executive meeting says, well that was a silly decision and we insist that there is not only paper but it is blue and it is very expensive, that decision, even though it is not theirs to take, they could take (Interviewee D)*

Similarly with Conference:-

*If D stands up in front of conference and says this decision for a new tier in the organisation is going to cost £2 million, we have not got it and it will bankrupt the union - in a business, that view would never get challenged. In our organisation conference can say that we want to spend that £2 million and your job then is to try and recover it from somewhere else. (Interviewee D)*

The consequence of which is that:-

*I used to love going to conference but I'm afraid I hate it now (Interviewee D).*

Perhaps this is a symptom of institutional conflict:-

*I think the generality is respect for the General Secretary's position. There is a lot of natural support but you have a constant battle within officer groups and within the executive council (Interviewee D)*

And it is certainly the case, as we saw in the story about substitution for officers discussed above, that boundaries are contested:-

*Sometimes there is a desire of the executive to actually try and run the administration of the organisation or to interfere with it in ways that are not always helpful. If you are managing a company you are managing a command structure; we have this democratic structure. At the end of the day if they don't like what you're doing they can actually act as the last Court of Appeal. It is a constraint and we have a very big executive -- it's like a mini conference -- and I don't think it's helpful. (Interviewee O)*

Boundaries relating to staff, in fact, are the ones which are most frequently mentioned:-

*Ideally the executive would have no bloody role at all on people issues and the administration of the union. They may have a corporate governance issue with relation to finance but to anybody who has a contract of employment with the union then it comes to how you manage those people. I would not involve the executive at all. It's a delegated function totally through the managers. That would be the first thing (Interviewee G)*

The new General Secretary, accepting that boundary management is important, has wasted no time in seeking to define the boundaries:-

## 'Legitimate' managerial actions - stakeholders

*The other tension is, of course, with the NEC, how they see their role. So on appointments, what used to happen until fairly recently, when we were appointing senior clerks they often had, say, the President on the selection panel, right. Now that doesn't happen any more because we are an employer. The people we are employing actually work here. The NEC members, whilst they run the union, they are not responsible for hiring and firing. That is clearly in the authority of the General Secretary and the SDGS and the personnel people. There is a bit of tension about that and they get a bit fed up sometimes when they see, like, if we're advertising a post. I think what some of them would like is they decide what post gets advertised and what post doesn't. My line on that, and we've had advice anyway, concerning the legal bit of it, is that it is clearly within the remit of the, like, the Chief Executive.*

The Strategic Plan which has been referred to several times in this chapter, is careful about boundaries. The Plan is 'available' to NEC members but the responsibility for drawing it up lies with the General Secretary and the Senior Management Team. The NEC is to be kept 'fully informed' and any policy issues arising from the Plan will be submitted to the NEC for approval. Boundaries between governance and management are thus clearly defined, even if they might at some time be the subject of contest.

And the Rule Book is generally not felt to be crucial in defining boundaries:-

*Sometimes the Rule Book helped you and sometimes it didn't. Rule Books are there sometimes for guidance; they certainly establish where the power lies and conference became adept at changing them on occasions.(Interviewee O)*

Although it may be that there are reasons for this which have their origins in power relations:-

*To some extent senior managers are the custodian of the Rule Book. If they had wanted to stand on the Rule Book and say "look at this; it may not be popular with you but this is what the rulebook says", I think we might have held the line on that. But senior managers themselves have found it convenient to play to their old constituencies, their old power bases.(Interviewee L)*

The same interviewee suggested that other issues were in any event more important for managers than the rules:-

*There has been a fantastic amount of time spent in trying to change the rulebook to bring the new union more together -- to get more issues at the centre, to limit the veto of the various*



'Legitimate' managerial actions - stakeholders

*constituent groups -- instead of addressing the cultural issues behind the resistance to changing the rulebook. (Interviewee L)*

But it has to be said that there does not appear to be, in the CWU, the feeling that one sometimes gets in some other unions that the elected members are a nuisance. This could be because the electoral culture is so ingrained that it is intuitively accepted – that representative rationality forms a moral norm which is deeply rooted; or it could be because there is no prospect of changing it – that managers exhibit resigned behavioural compliance. This is not to say, however, that dilemmas are not identifiable:-

*If the membership make a ridiculous decision, as they sometimes can, then, you know, from day one you are almost, even in a Freudian sense, seeking to undermine it. You may not be thinking you are doing that but you would think, how do I get out of this? You have probably faced it. We have all been there. But your job is none the less to say look, I don't think you should do that because of y. Now a good leader in my judgment, at the end of a particular period, the members will listen to that person over a period of time. Not always. And of course sometimes, and all conferences have this problem and all officers have this problem, you can spend six months on an agreement and come to a conference and one speech lasting six minutes destroys all your work. But that just goes with the territory, you know. (Interviewee B)*

And some managers exhibit a positive approach to the involvement of lay members in areas which they have not otherwise been involved in. Two examples were cited earlier; a senior manager involving lay members in hands on negotiations and the creation of new lay structures to examine financial matters:-

*I am the one who has to sit down with the accountants and make sure that we are spending the money in the right way, prepare budgets for the following year. I am now going to make sure that matter becomes the responsibility of the Finance and Admin committee. I do not see that as diminishing my responsibility but I think about it and more transparency in the union's finances and then you can place that in front of the NEC (Interviewee N).*

However, the actual management of that situation involves a very overt power strategy:-

*The detail that gets discussed at the Finance and Admin committee is whatever I decide. Whatever I decide to put to them is what we will discuss. So if I just go to the next Finance and Admin committee and say "not a lot has happened and here is a document about a branch in South Wales that wants to buy*

## Modes of management - styles

*property "and that is all that has happened in the last two months, then unless they are, like, on the ball or they haven't got a load of meetings to go to, that will be it. You have the ability, almost, to control the meeting by you determining what goes on it. (Interviewee N)*

It was suggested that some basic trade union skills were appropriate in managing these boundaries:-

*The real problem is how you manage the relationship with the executive. Looking back on it, probably, I could have done it better. It was a very politicised union with three factions -- left, right, and the clerical group. It was not an easy group to deal with. Nevertheless you had to deal with it and I suppose when I look back at the successes, those were that my political nous enabled me to find compromise solutions that were a way forward in reforming the union. (Interviewee O)*

*You can't pick up a detached set of rules and say that I know this will be the outcome for this problem or this issue. You have to go in to negotiate and like any set of negotiations it is where the balance of factors lie on any one day. (Interviewee G)*

In the CWU, therefore, there seems to be a more relaxed acceptance of the democratic structure and the obligations it imposes in terms of stakeholder management than is exhibited by some other trade union managers elsewhere. Boundaries are contested - they are in many cases clear in theory but unclear in practice - and strategies are adopted to manage them, both power strategies and skills learned from managers' core experiences as trade unionists.

### **Modes of management**

- 5.15. Earlier, there was discussion about trade union principles and how these were understood as relevant by CWU managers. Fairness (linked, as it happens, to firmness) and unity were two which seemed particularly appropriate.

Here the intention is to examine whether these principles are reflected in the ways in which CWU managers approach their managerial tasks. It has to be said that there are suggestions that some managers would have difficulty reconciling their managerial styles with any known trade union principles:-

*In the old UCW, and this comes back to the fact that they are not trained professionally, some of their management styles were quite bullying and oppressive. (Interviewee K)*

*People also know that I can be quite an uncompromising bastard and I ask no favour and give no quarter in the building. I am quite a hostile individual in debate but hostility does not*

## Modes of management - styles

*generally flow over to dealing with the staff. That does not mean I am an angel because I have my moments the same as anybody else. (Interviewee D)*

*Decisions tend to be taken by individuals with minimum consultation and then somebody complains that they should have been consulted, there is a row and you say "well, I didn't have time." And, I guess as a consequence of those effects, there tends to be a sort of personification of power, really, and that individuals mark out their own territory and are insistent that they make decisions within that territory. They then ward off anyone who is interested in expressing a view. They see it rather as a challenge than a help (Interviewee L)*

To some extent this is corroborated by the Equality and Diversity review which reported staff observations about the 'questionable attitudes' of a few senior officials. On the other hand, adopting a consensual approach is also mentioned by managers as being important:-

*I learned a long time ago that if you are 4' 11½", there's no point in screaming and shouting. You have to find some other mechanism. My style would be very different. (Interviewee G)*

*That's all fine and dandy but you also get the petty jealousies and all the rest of it. They are just things that you have to try and manage and try and pull people together all the time and some of that is down to trying to develop a style that is inclusive. (Interviewee B)*

In one case, this is linked to a more relaxed, theory Y, approach:-

*In this department we have always tried to have a fairly consensual way of running things....It is being fairly hands off. I have been quite happy to let staff, when the staff are doing a reasonable job along the lines that I want, particularly as we are coming from different backgrounds -- at the beginning of merger the word culture was bandied around frequently and I think people had different ways of doing things. My feeling was if the end result was what I wanted, I wasn't too concerned about how they got there so I tended to let people carry on and try and develop as we have gone along (Interviewee F)*

An inclusive approach was demonstrated in some departments by the way in which the Departmental Strategic Plan was formulated:-

*Each Department has to go away and draw up its own strategic plan on whether it is fit for purpose, what changes needed to be made to make sure that it was fit for purpose and we launched this at a meeting of the employees. And we told all the employees that they would all be involved. They all got a copy*

## Modes of management - styles

*of the strategic plan, they would all be involved in their departmental plans. Different departments did it different ways. For example, the two departments that I'm responsible for, Personnel, which is a much smaller Department, and Finance Department; the Personnel Department took themselves away for a day in an office and I visited there for an hour and we just had a sit down discussion around the table going, what is the purpose of the of the Personnel Department in this building, do we think we do that right, what changes do we think we will make, how are we going to go about that and everybody had their inputs-- not one dissenting voice, when we had done it that way. (Interviewee N)*

Another manager believes that listening to people is an important component of management style:-

*My philosophy as an individual has always been to try to take everybody's point of view and then try to find a way forward which is acceptable to all. (Interviewee M)*

The point was made that there was a lot of diversity in approach:-

*The range of managers now within this organisation is very, very diverse. From people who are very conscious of having to manage their staff, talking to them about employee development, setting out what they see as their aims to people who just see their management function as having to discipline and hand out work (Interviewee J)*

Some managers felt that the key issue was leading by example, getting in early, not asking staff to do anything that they would not do. The point was also made, consistent with the 'fair and firm' principle mentioned earlier, that seeking consensus should not mean that one shied away from difficult decisions:-

*I can't believe that we actually allowed our staff to say that they didn't want it (IIP). Which is another example of a quite pathetic style of management. We confused the idea of sitting down and talking things through with staff with the notion that -- oh, it's workers control. And then we abandon our managerial responsibilities.....All this desire to think that we have got to reach agreement, which normally I would agree with but I think that once you signal that if you don't reach agreement you will abandon it then you have abandoned your managerial responsibilities. (Interviewee O)*

There is, however, little overt explanation of the influences on management style, whether based on trade union principles or not. One attempt at explanation does refer to people's characteristics and why they imply a more consensual approach:-

## Conclusions

*I am always working for consensus, if you can get consensus. To be blunt, that wasn't D's style. It was much more than the force of personality style. My view on that is that that kind of style has just past its sell by date. It doesn't work any more in the world that we live. People now are much more grown-up, much more intelligent. And I'm not saying that from time to time you don't need a bit of that but generally speaking you have got to try and take people with you. That's what I try to do in terms of managing those tensions (Interviewee B)*

So there is a very mixed picture of management style in CWU, as well as insufficient data to see whether there is a link between the principles of managers and trade unionists and the way they approach the management of their people. Of course, there is less access to management training for CWU managers than managers in some other unions so it may be that these issues have just not been aired. As discussed above, however, the CWU now has a strategic objective to the effect

*that the CWU will have a well trained and well motivated staff who understand the union's aims and their role in contributing to them (CWU Strategic Plan 2002)*

and this will require many of these issues to be addressed. Once again, further research is required to see if they are and whether managers then perceive any links between their core principles and the way they approach their managerial tasks.

### 5.16. CONCLUSIONS

#### ***Trade Union Managers***

The situation in the CWU is affected here, as in one or two other areas, by the change in senior management during the research. The way in which trade union management seems to have been undertaken in the past is that those who did not want to manage passed that responsibility to specialists such as personnel officers. There is evidence that this was the case in the CWU relatively recently. There certainly seems to have been little institutional support for the practising of management, even though all but one individual managers accepted their managerial roles and sought to manage. The election of a new General Secretary and Senior Deputy changed the situation because this regime not only provided institutional support for management, but also prescribed certain compulsory elements of managerial activity, such as strategic planning processes. This was done despite the fact that it was recognised that not all those who would have to engage in these processes necessarily bought into the idea of management.

One particular factor in the CWU deserves note here which is the extent of election of those who might, in other unions, be appointed

## Conclusions

managers. There is insufficient evidence to identify this as the major factor bearing on whether managers do or do not accept managerial roles - indeed, many of those who readily accept these roles are themselves elected – but it is an issue which requires exploration.

### **Systems**

#### ***Resource distribution systems***

The CWU is a substantially centralised union and it is no surprise to record that its financial systems are centralised, incorporating an ability for central management to top up allocations for particular activities when required. Some functional managers, such as those contracting outside solicitors, seem to have clear frameworks; other functional managers, such as reprographics, do not. Those in negotiating roles have operational control of only limited aspects of budgets, such as meetings costs. This obviously raises issues of the interface with the democratic system, if the only way of controlling meetings costs is to restrict meetings, but this is not something which the union's new management is proposing to shy away from.

Lay members are being increasingly involved in budgetary processes and new systems are planned which will rationalise much of what is in place. The changes proposed, however, will represent a major change for the union; one which may prove more possible than otherwise because of the difficult financial position that the union has been in.

The allocation of physical resources was also a centrally driven initiative, at one point also becoming a national political issue in that the decision to acquire a new head office in Wimbledon became a contest between ex partner union representatives on the NEC. Although a relaxed approach was taken to choice of layouts in individual departments, the design of the main negotiating floors reflected partner union practice and contained partner union artefacts, the latter decision being explicitly tolerated by senior management. Communication with members about these decisions seem designed to forestall criticism about the resource implications of the move, concentrating therefore on efficiency, economies of scale and the building of the new union.

#### ***Systems relating to cognitive rules***

The two partner unions had very different traditions in the area of leadership predominance in that the UCW appears to have worked in a culture where the General Secretary had a great deal more influence than in the NCU, a more factional union where lay members contended for influence. In CWU there seems general consent that the General Secretary has significantly less influence than was the case in the UCW. The word 'partnership' is used but in the context of descriptions of lay members having achieved victories in what seem to have been zero sum conflicts. It is not clear whether ex UCW lay activists have engaged in these conflicts along with their colleagues from the NCU (insofar as these distinctions have present day relevance) but the

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culture seems to have moved in the direction of significant lay member control – lay members have accepted these degrees of power.

These cultural battles seem to have been perpetuated at staff level and, for a variety of reasons, the cultural environment seems to have been uncomfortable for staff. On the one hand they had not given up their old cultures, which may have been idealised; on the other hand their new culture, if it could be discerned, at the very lowest could not be described as people centred. Many managers influencing this culture seem to have progressed from conflictual negotiating experiences, with managers on the opposing side, into managerial roles for which they had no training and, perhaps, no understanding that training was necessary. Their experiences may well have contributed to feelings that dealing with staff indiscipline was difficult – that, if it really needed to be done, someone else ought to do it – and to the fact that the union had no systems in place for dealing with staff performance, with consequent lack of clarity about what managers were in fact expected to do.

### ***Systems relating to moral rules***

Managers in the CWU have not in general been forthcoming about how they define their trade union principles. They know they are there and fairness is the one which stands out, sometimes linked with firmness – most colourfully expressed in the view that a trade unionist needs to have the sensitivity of a butterfly and the hide of a rhinoceros. But managers, despite reservations about the actual detail of aspects of the union's democratic structures, such as annual elections and the need to define boundaries, express few negative attitudes to the systems of representative rationality in the union. These systems are extensive, involving frequent National Executive elections as well as officer elections and the absence of much criticism could be regarded as significant.

### ***Managerial Activities***

#### ***Deploying resources***

Within the framework of the new Strategic Plan, union managers have proposed a financial strategy which they propose to implement through vastly improved budgetary and financial control systems. To some extent, the strategy seems to suggest more responsibility for individual budget holders. If this is implemented, this will be a major change for a union which in most other respects is centralised. However, it could be argued that it is budgetary control rather than full budgetary responsibility that is being devolved. New lay member structures and centralised scrutiny of expenditure suggest that the centre may be slow to let go of its overall control of the system, especially whilst the union is seeking to overcome its financial difficulties.

From a corporate standpoint, there was no attempt to use the move to new premises to integrate the cultures of the merging parties, despite hinting that this was an objective in a video produced for members.

## Conclusions

Management of the consequences of the move was left to individual managers. Managers themselves seem to have been aware of the contribution which a strategic approach might have made and, with hindsight, were able to reflect on the process.

### ***'Meaningful' Managerial Actions***

#### ***Merger Management***

Although the Executives of the merging unions had listened to Lord McCarthy's advice to display generosity of spirit, this did not always manifest itself. Similarly, senior managers were aware of the cultural issues involved in the merger, but, in addition to issues concerning the head office space discussed above, engaged in little explicit merger management activity. Insofar as it occurred, it was the responsibility of individual managers. Even in 2002, seven years after the merger, managerial communication was seeking to discourage staff from engaging in discourse relating to old union cultures. The new management team has strategies for tackling these issues – including the implementation of the recommendations of the Equality and Diversity report which touched on these issues.

#### ***Managing by Information***

External examination of management processes reported little evidence of a consistent approach to managerial communication and managers did not identify this as a key task despite some engaging in communication processes. A commitment to improve this, as part of an Investors in People process has been made in the Strategic Plan, which implicitly recognises its importance as a managerial process.

#### ***Managing through people***

This is the subject of another commitment in the Strategic Plan. The evidence suggests that managerial practice in this area is at best inconsistent, despite some managers giving a great deal of thought to how they relate to their people. Connections between the idea of 'fairness', which provides some moral support for the way trade union managers engage with the world, are not usually being made. The idea that managing people to get the best out of them may involve some sort of sanction or monitoring, given the cognitive rules relating to the problematic nature of management, probably accounts for the historical lack of any systems to enable this to be done. This may also account for the lack of management training made available, although there is some evidence that staff development generally is possible, if not systematic.

Similar trade union experiences may have a bearing on the lack of comfort displayed in the concept of team working. This has been a bugbear for many CWU members for many years and that must act as a constraint on managers wholeheartedly embracing the language and practice of teamworking. Team meetings do take place, but they do not seem to be particularly common although the word is used in connections with groups of staff.



### ***Managing Action***

On the issue of leadership, there is a dichotomy in the CWU between the fact that senior management is principally drawn from the Postal side of the industrial fence and may find it necessary to become involved operationally in industrial relation issues in that area; and recognition of the importance of strategy, direction and vision. The distinction between these 'leading' and 'doing' roles does not seem possible to make, although the union is now becoming much more focussed on strategy on a corporate level.

### ***'Legitimate' Managerial Actions Stakeholder management***

As suggested several times, CWU managers work within systems of representative rationality with which there is little argument in principle. The issue for debate in most cases is the boundaries between the roles of managers and the roles of lay members. These boundaries – between conference and management; the NEC and management; and the NEC and Conference are contested. In the case of staffing issues, the General Secretary has obtained legal advice to clarify the boundary between his responsibility as Chief Executive and that of the NEC as the body to which he reports. This suggests that the Rule Book is particularly important, but this is not supported by managers generally. They do, however, engage in archetypal trade union behaviour – negotiation, political knowledge, power relations and the ability to find ways round uncomfortable decisions – in managing stakeholder relationships.

### ***Modes of Management***

There seems to be a legacy in the CWU of some unfortunate management styles deriving from partner unions. Untrained managers did not appear to reflect on their interpersonal behaviour in the light of their espoused principles. However, some managers recognise that being inclusive is a positive approach and the idea of seeking consensus, a core trade union skill, is in one case identified. Obviously, as in any organisation, the overriding impression is of great diversity in style but with a recent commitment to well trained and well motivated staff, the achievement of which will require some degree of people orientation in management styles.

These conclusions are now summarised in a way which relates them to Hales' (1999) model of management. It seeks to provide explanations for managerial actions from the systems and modalities which comprise the environments in which trade union managers work, as discussed earlier.

## Conclusions

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CASE STUDY – MANAGERS IN THE PUBLIC AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES UNION**

#### **About the Union**

- 6.1. PCS, the Public and Commercial Services Union, was formed in 1998 from a merger of PTC, (the Public Services, Tax and Commerce Union) and CPSA (the Civil and Public Services Association). PTC was itself a merger between IRSF (the Inland Revenue Staff Association) and NUCPS (the National Union of Civil and Public Servants). PTC had only had about 2 years of existence before the second merger took place. PCS instantly became the largest civil service union with over a quarter of a million members.
  
- 6.2. It was a controversial merger. There had been several previous attempts to merge and a previous attempt at amalgamation of civil service unions had been unsuccessful. CPSA NEC voted against continuing with the merger. This illustrated the principal area of controversy which concerned the power of activists. CPSA had a tradition of left wing activists dominating its lay structures, particularly its Annual Conference. Those fashioning the merger were given a legislative opportunity (because on merger rules can be changed without activist approval if they are supported in a ballot by the membership) to address this. They saw it as a major issue and conducted a campaign for the adoption in the new union of a set of aims and values. These included a set of 'principal' rules which could only be changed by ballot of the membership and which provided (inter alia) for a biennial conference (since changed), the biennial election of the National Executive and which also ensured that 'on any issue which the National Executive Council considers a matter of major policy', a decision of Conference would not take effect unless endorsed in a membership ballot. They went ahead to a membership ballot on the merger despite the decision of CPSA Conference. The members voted to merge but the merger did not take effect until after the conclusion of an unsuccessful court challenge by dissentient activists.
  
- 6.3. In the merger which created PTC, many members of the merging unions had remained in their old buildings. Some IRSF staff did move to NUCPS buildings with common services; there was some trauma both for those who moved and joined merged teams and those who stayed and felt abandoned. IRSF had a relatively modern building in Victoria. It was ring-fenced in resource terms for the Inland Revenue group because the old union had been worried about NUCPS's finances and did not want its principal asset thrown into the PTC 'pot'. NUCPS had a warren of old buildings in Southwark Street, near London Bridge. So although considerable thought was given to merger management activities (the unions worked closely together for 2 years before merger and IRSF brought their senior managers to Cranfield), the managers and staff did not physically move. Upon the creation of PCS, it was decided to move the whole union to the head office of

CPSA, a relatively modern, and under-occupied, office building immediately next to Clapham Junction station. The IRSF building was retained as a Learning Resource Centre but the ex-NUCPS buildings are being or have been sold.

- 6.4. Whilst the research was being conducted, there was a high level of tension around the relationship between the Joint General Secretaries, John Sheldon, and Barry Reamsbottom. It had been anticipated that the latter would become General Secretary on the former's retirement but rules were changed and an election was ordered. Barry Reamsbottom (who was not prepared to be interviewed) took early retirement but subsequently challenged this by legal action. He lost this. Mark Serwotka became General Secretary in 2002, but it was not logistically possible to interview him.
- 6.5. PCS has declared membership of 281,923 in the current year of which just under 60% are female. It has seven Regions in which paid staff are situated, but the regional structure (except in Scotland and to some extent in Wales) does not function as a component of the union's democratic structure. Some of the offices (for example Leeds) exist because there are major employers, in the form of Government Agencies, in that location with which the union negotiates.
- 6.6. The civil service unions have agreements that, in general, they will not compete with each other for each other's members. So there remains within this area a form of stratification in membership. Growth, therefore, must lie either in attracting more members within the public services where members continue to be employed or else within the private companies, such as EDS, which have taken over substantial areas of the public service and where substantial concentrations of former civil servants continue to be employed, many of whom have continued their union membership; or else by merger. The major areas of non-membership in the civil service are in ex-CPSA grades and in certain departments such as the Ministry of Defence.
- 6.7. **Interviewees:**  
Access was agreed very early but there were many hiatuses which meant that it was impossible to follow it up in practice. Eventually, access to some internal meetings was achieved and a list of possible interviewees was formulated including as many as possible of the very senior managers and what was, in effect, a random selection of Senior National Officers and regional staff; save that I tried to ensure that there were managers from each of the partner unions and as many women as seemed possible.

Interviewees were:-

Veronica Bayne, Senior National Officer (ex CPSA)  
Pat Campbell, Equalities Officer (ex PTC)

## Trade union managers

Alan Churchard, Deputy General Secretary (ex CPSA)  
Joan Easton, Personnel Manager (joint union appointment)  
Jill Evans, Senior National Officer (ex PTC)  
Mike King, Regional Secretary Leeds (ex PTC)  
Hugh Lanning Assistant General Secretary (ex PTC)  
Jim McAuslan, Deputy General Secretary (ex IRSF)  
Keith Mills, General Treasurer (ex CPSA)  
Dave Newlyn, Financial Officer (ex PTC)  
Gordon Patterson, IT Manager (ex CPSA)  
Eddie Reilly, Scottish Secretary (former DGS – ex PTC)  
Colin Sambrook, Senior National Officer (ex IRSF)  
John Sheldon, Joint General Secretary (ex PTC)

### **Trade Union Managers**

- 6.8. All of the interviewees in PCS accepted that they had a management role. Most were quite practical about it – even analytical:-

*I suppose if I added up my time I would probably spend about 50% of my time in a negotiating role for the high-level commitments that we have with the departments and managers. So I probably spend about 50% of my time on that. The rest of my time I spend on management (Interviewee M)*

In one case the acceptance was somewhat reluctant, arrived at by force of circumstances:-

*I believe it was probably only around about the late 1980s when really it was starting to dawn on us -- and at that time I was Deputy General Secretary -- that these were now big, big organisations that had to be managed and run in terms of the finances etc and I think a lot of us became resentful at the amount of time that we were being asked to spend on management. One because we thought, what are we doing sitting behind desks, tracing paper all the time, answering queries and all the rest of it. The feeling that that was not what we came into the movement to do produced a good deal of resentment and I think even yet, people of my generation -- I am 51 now, probably look a lot older -- still feel a bit resentful at the amount of time that the administration and management of the union takes up..... We were now having to deal with 150 or 200 sets of bargaining and put a structure out there. We then started to realise, well, that structure has to be managed, now, as well, not only in the region but also in relation to the centre or you lose all control over what you are doing with your resources. So all that, I think, started to force us to say, well, whether we like this or not, this is a key part of the job. (Interviewee D)*

The suggestion was that the role had been institutionalised:-

*We also use the terminology "senior managers" and "management briefings" (Interviewee N)*

## Trade union managers

and this is corroborated in management documents issued within the union. The new General Secretary issued a Managers' Action Brief in October 2002 dealing with issues surrounding a forthcoming professional staff seminar and in 2000, senior managers issued a circular to staff responding to external criticism of management in the union which commenced:-

*Please find attached a copy of the Management Plan - Senior Management's response to the report prepared by Michael Johnson of the Industrial Society. The report, which is circulated separately as SB.11/00, has been welcomed and endorsed by Senior Management. The Management Plan includes proposals on staff communications, a Member Focus Committee, and generating an environment of trust, co-operation and support (PCS Staff Briefing February 2000)*

The view was expressed widely that the role is largely accepted amongst the Senior National Officers in the union. This, it was suggested, had its genesis in PTC where a management structure almost identical to that in PCS was adopted:-

*National Officers are really important people in unions. They've got all their own little fiefdoms. So I'm in favour of delegating to them and then the buggers turn on you. So, we whipped them off to Templeton College. I'd got an old mate there, Roger Undy. I said that we had a problem here, with the NUCPS and the IRSF in that we can't get organisational synergy and we want to create a line of managers who actually manage for us and stop bugging about. We got the intellectual high command of him and MacCarthy on the case. We took them away for a weekend and the first question we asked them was the question you've just asked me. What is your role? To which, to a person, they said; 'well, we're negotiators, we're bargainers, we're propagandists'. To which my response was; 'you're managers'. 'No we're not; we don't want to be managers. We're politicians, organisers, propagandists, not managers.' To which my response was; 'well, who the hell manages your teams?' Well, what they wanted to do was to delegate all the bloody management across to the personnel manager. All they wanted to do was to do the things they were good at. Organise conferences, politics. They didn't want to manage. So we had two days of row, cat and dog about what their job was. And eventually, after another session at Templeton College we got them to recognise that unless they managed, this structure would disintegrate. And they then took control of the structure. And these people now want to manage. They spend between 50 and 60% of their time actually managing their teams whereas 10 years ago they spent buggery all time managing and whinged and whined about the personnel function, and that's very familiar. Now we've changed that culture. It wasn't by accident.*

## Trade union managers

*We did that because that was good management practice from our point of view. Now, they had insufficient training. We have a good training package together here. We work hard with our advisers, who are external suppliers, to try to get us a good training package. We're concentrating on that. People are taking it on board. When we interview people for promotion, it is clear what the job is. If you look at the grade description, the job description, of these people, the senior national officer, they will clearly indicate that management is a big function that they have to undertake. (Interviewee K)*

These final points, and the point about the importance of training, are shared:-

*I think they do. (Senior National Officers regard themselves as managers) Yes, largely because there has been a lot of effort put into training, I think and the real value of any kind of training, which is run by the Industrial Society, is that opportunity to just step back and think about your job and to think about what percentages of your time you are spending on different activities. (Interviewee N)*

And the point is made that acceptance did not happen overnight

*We set up a structure within Headquarters which makes it plain that at various levels people have clear, hopefully clear, management responsibilities, both for staff and resources. And I think that message is getting across. But like any big cultural change it takes a bit of time. (Interviewee A)*

But there is still speculation about some senior staff's commitment to their managerial roles:-

*As far as I can tell, from my position, I would say that all of the negotiating people who become senior managers do accept that senior management role and have bought into it. Then we have got the other side of the house, the more administration type of function, and again we have a senior manager in each part of that and I would say that probably about half see themselves as managers and half as doers. (Interviewee C)*

This, however, is not reflected in the qualitative data collected as part of this project in which the interviewees have talked coherently and often creatively about their roles, however surprised they might feel at having found themselves in that position.

As was mentioned in paragraph 6.4, an hiatus existed in PCS as a result of inertia caused by the relations between the Joint General Secretaries. Management seems to have suffered. A new training programme commenced with a series of courses on Member Focus that caused considerable unrest on the part of participants because

## Resource distribution systems

there was inadequate preparation of staff arising from it. This led directly to a report from the Industrial Society, as it was then, (November 1999) on staff views as expressed (and, from that, to a Senior Management Team facilitated session to seek to deal with some of the issues addressed) which (inter alia) recommended'-

- *Assign an important and urgent organisational priority to enriching internal communication channels*
- *Create an integrated environment of trust and support*
- *Institute an induction scheme for all new joiners with the first six weeks*
- *Increase communications as to status of any personnel initiatives*
- *Eliminate structural features or procedures that perpetuate the differential between two merged unions (Industrial Society Report on Member Focus courses, February 2000)*

As will later appear, management responded to this report in a positive way. However, any discussion of the practice of management in PCS needs to be placed in the context of these expressions of staff dissatisfaction at the way in which they were being managed.

### **Systems**

#### **Systems relating to distribution of resources**

- 6.9. There is a budgetary system within PCS which in many ways reflects the mode of operation in the public services which represent the union's main area of membership. The Financial Officer describes the process he operates:-

*We have been able to allocate enough within the budget to mean that although we do not give everybody what they have asked for and indeed we look at the things quite closely, it is getting quite noticeable now that they are not artificially inflating the bids. So we are able to agree far more now without any great difficulty than we used to be able to because they know that if they do get it wrong, there is money available that they can come back for. And we have built up that level of trust that we're able to say well, we will halve it all or knock 10% off. If they are making a reasonable case, there is a good chance they will get what they need, kind of thing. Of course, once you get to that stage, people behave reasonably themselves and they do look at whether they need to have 20 meetings of this committee. Will it actually do anything? If they think themselves, well no, they get it down to a more reasonable number and you don't have a discussion in the first place. So certainly it is me initially in terms of looking at how I think we should allocate overall sums of money. That then goes to the NEC to agree the global budget and then the bids that come in where all the amounts are not calculated automatically, or where they are asking for more than we have calculated automatically, will go*



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*through a subcommittee of the finance committee. So they do see all of them. What happens is that they come in, I usually look at them, come up with a figure that I think is reasonable based on criteria such as past expenditure, what is happening this time that is different from previously, whether it looks like they are artificially increasing the numbers the meetings or the frequency of meetings, that sort of thing. Then we have a meeting and I highlight particular things that I have spotted, advise on a figure that I think would be more reasonable. Probably nine out of ten of those they agree.*

There is, however, less obvious agreement than this would suggest. Firstly the system itself is subject to criticism:-

*In terms of the finances now there is a sort of bureaucratic budgeting system which is all a paper system which does not really work. You hear people saying this is my budget or that is my budget and it does not matter because it is all the same money. There is a full exercise of financial control which does not actually exist. There are all these rules and regulations which say that you cannot spend more than this or that amount without getting a signature but in practice I run the department and do things and from time to time and write a paper in respect of significant expenditure but that budget does not get adjusted or anything but there is no feedback or anything. (Interviewee E)*

The character of the system is also seen as problematic. PCS is substantially a centralised union. Its regional offices, as has been mentioned, are not the hub of democratic activity as they are in some other unions. Regional Officers are seen as 'National Officers in the Region'. There have been some attempts, despite this background, to devise a devolved budgetary system. Senior managers attended a Cranfield seminar on this topic. It did not however lead to much change – a Senior National Officer wrote that the Administration Manager wanted to devolve budgets related to things like post and photocopying and budget holders didn't want them; conversely, they did want some of the Personnel budgets – things like staff training and overtime – and the Personnel function did not want to release them. Consequently, it is not surprising that there is unhappiness at the level of management authority available over budgets. At national level:-

*In the Civil Service now you would have a budgetary regime and if I was running a local office, 45 people, I would have that budget and decide how to deal with it as I wish; I do not have that budget. I have a budget. I could spend as much of it as I want, but being able to vire between different budgets is not something I could do. On staffing, if I was running a local office now in the Inland Revenue, I could decide to reallocate my staff across the sections. Here, I don't really have the power to say 'we're overstaffed in headquarters 1 at present, I'll move a negotiator from there to Southern Region to cover a temporary*

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*blip. It has to go up to Personnel or up to the Admin side of things rather than me having those powers. So there is a tension there. And I think the Civil Service has moved on more than we have. We haven't, even in PTC and now in PCS, really adopted a model which empowers people and gives them the tools to do their jobs (Interviewee H)*

And also at regional level:-

*I think there is often a worry at times which is that the regions to an extent are looking for more control of the decision making -- for example at the beginning, overtime had to be authorised in London. Well, why should overtime be authorised in London -- you know about it -- why should you have to lift the phone? (Interviewee D)*

*I think it is ludicrous that you pay someone my salary and if I want to spend £10 on something I have to phone somebody in London to get it cleared. It's crazy. And if I want one of my members of staff to work overtime, I have to phone London and it authorised by somebody in London. I ought to be able to make those decisions. (Interviewee M)*

As was clear from the observation by the Financial Officer, lay members are involved in the budgetary process and issues of budgets supporting the democratic process were specifically raised. At the time the research was carried out, however, PCS was making a surplus. So there was not much question about making savings, nor complaints about the difficulty of being better resourced in staff terms; furthermore managers would not at the time have been exercised, as they are in some unions, about the effect that cutting expenditure might have had on the union's democratic structure:-

*Nothing succeeds like success and financially we are doing phenomenally well. Whatever anyone thinks about the merger and no matter what they think about whether it was the right thing or not, what you could not deny is the financial strength which it has given us. It is extraordinary. Since that has become obvious to everybody, that political interest has waned markedly. (Interviewee C)*

This would not be the case today; PCS's financial strength was eroded by a strike in the Benefits Agency and subsequent budgets have, it is reported, been the subject of significant angst. This process was not part of this research.

In terms of physical resources, PTC had occupied a warren of offices in Southwark and CPSA a relatively new building adjacent to Clapham Junction station. In addition, IRSF had a building in Victoria which had been ring-fenced for the Revenue Group which had been concerned about PTC's finances on merger and wanted to make sure that its

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resources were protected. The decision to locate PCS in the old CPSA offices was relatively uncontroversial:-

*The two unions prior to the merger operated within their own headquarters and regional offices and it became apparent on the merger that we had to have one headquarter and we had in addition to that to have one group of regional offices as appropriate to the new union. The decision was taken fairly early on by the senior officers and Honorary Officers in a meeting to consider Clapham Junction as being the new headquarters of PCS. This was sensible because it was the largest building in the combined property portfolio and, being a 1988 building, was by far the newest. So that decision was taken jointly by the Honorary Officers and the senior full-time officers. The decision was therefore taken at the same time that as and when the Soutwark properties could be vacated, we would sell them. (Interviewee L)*

It was reported that the Senior National Officers, fresh from accepting their managerial roles, were significant influencers of the decision:-

*They have become a very powerful body for change. I think that's wonderful. I mean, it's a bit of a pain in the butt because they are powerful people, articulate and all that, but it's really good now. So they said to us 'you can't manage in 4 separate offices, you must get the properties rationalised and get it done quick. We then can operate as a whole team'. So now, in less than two years we are in one office. In an office which was occupied solely by the CPSA. They must have been bouncing about. We have moved the biggest component of the merger into the smallest component's offices. Well, I think that's pretty skilful, myself. (Interviewee K)*

There were cultural problems to overcome, in general terms:-

*A very good example of one of these great, visible demonstrations is moving. In terms of staff, the whole process involved a fear of change and people do not normally like change, they are very wary, it is very easy to get into a them and us situation, they do not know what the job is going to be, they do not know about the terms and conditions, will they be changed, will they still have a job -- all these things and I think the whole course of bringing people together is a very visible sign of that. So it is good and bad in terms of doing something early enough to show that, right, it is happening, we're going to put you all together. It is a big symbol, choosing one union's headquarters to move staff into. Everybody is up in arms and upset. So I think there was good and bad in the process. (Interviewee E)*

And, in particular, for the CPSA:-

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*There is a resentment by former CPISA staff about people coming in. They see it as their building (Interviewee O)*

Though there may have been consolations:-

*It said CPISA on the front for a good 9 months. (Interviewee C)*

The system for allocating space within the new building was centrally driven, though there was some consultation on the layouts within that. Managers did differ on the extent of such consultation:-

*What we did really was to say 'well, we have to get x number in here' and we space planned the areas into quartets of desks, single desks, in the room and where we hoped to get, let's say, 30 people into an area, as long as it was not totally unreasonable we moved desks around until we did fit them in. Then we really sold them, saying 'that is where you will be' and that is the ideal layout as we see it. There were not that many options for instance they were not given the option of having the 2nd or 3rd floor or the north or south wing; they were told that that is the wing you are having and that is the space planning which will enable you to have the number of people you have in your area. So, no there was not a great deal of consultation. (Interviewee L)*

This does not entirely fit with the evidence from managers in general or with the experience of the researcher who attended several meetings on office location. But there were certainly some constraints imposed:-

*I was forced into an office, which is why I have got one of these, (indicating glass door) which was the only compromise I could get out of H at the time who said, "no we think that's wrong, national officers should have their offices, there will be an office for the negotiators, the support staff will have an office and so on." And I said that I wanted an open plan environment but I was told that I could not have it. So we ended up with this compromise which is not a very good compromise. (Interviewee B)*

This was a Senior National Officer; the same constraint did not seem to apply to functional managers:-

*I saw from day one the best way of getting an open approach, an inclusive approach, was to break down barriers and walls are the most physical representation of a barrier that there is. I have a job where I do need to concentrate quite hard on lots of occasions and I find it no problem whatsoever. I have just a little bit of screening and that is all that you need to be able to operate quite comfortably without any difficulty whatsoever. (Interviewee C)*

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It is not entirely clear whether the predominance of open plan working had, strategically, such a philosophical root or whether it was largely financially driven:-

*I think that the financial imperative became obvious -- that you did not have to do anything to the building if you just made it open plan. You could then get any number of staff in without any difficulty whatsoever. (Interviewee C)*

But there seems little doubt that ex-CPSA staff found it difficult that they were required to occupy open plan space in the building that they had occupied when the previous design had involved largely cellular space:-

*It is a big change moving from cellular space to open plan space and there was tremendous resistance to that, from the ex CPSA support staff as well as the officers. (Interviewee B)*

At regional level, the analogous system in one regional office had clear central constraints imposed but, after that, it was much more consensually managed:-

*Basically we set up a team, a project team, which I didn't take any part in that; the office manager took a part in. There were five members of staff appointed to the project team. They were charged with looking at what we required in the new building, what sort of accommodation and what the requirements were within it, what we want in terms of the Communications technology front and to look at processes. What processes do we currently run where we could run them more efficiently in a single office? Because we are all storing the same things in different buildings. So looking at how we can become more efficient in a single building. That has worked quite well..... They (Administration staff) wanted an open plan office. Some of the officers didn't. They had to be told that that was the majority view, that is what we're going to do. They wanted new furniture. They wanted it to be on a single floor, which we have achieved as well. And they wanted to have the sort of facilities like meeting rooms, which we will have, a modern IT system which we will have, a new telephone system which we're going to have. So in terms of general layout and what they wanted inside it, they are going to get that. I think they will love it. I think the officers are worried about it. They have not got these walls around them. It's amazing. So I just said to them, I don't care what your views are, I am going with the majority view of the staff and that is the way we're going to go. (Interviewee M)*

**Systems relating to cognitive rules**

- 6.10. The first issue conveying cognitive 'meanings' to PCS managers is their perceptions of how the union has altered, or is altering, in terms of the relationship between managers and lay members – can one describe any of the unions as 'member led' or 'officer led?' This is complicated in PCS because of the strife that took place until 2002 between the Joint General Secretaries and, later, between the General Secretary elect and the surviving Joint General Secretary.

*PCS hasn't made up its mind yet. There are many different things going on the moment. To be quite blunt, I'm not sure it's worth me saying anything at the moment. I'm sure you are aware of the background with what is going on in terms of court cases and elections and stuff (Interviewee E)*

This did not, however, prevent the same interviewee from offering his own 'take' on where the old unions sat:-

*In leaving Unison I had been interested in IT management and issues of organisations and cultures. I quoted Ourousof a lot in all my papers and looking at all the senior managers together there were two camps and I think two cultures that summed up PTC and CPSA. The CPSA approach was that this is all nonsense, just get on and do it, we're not having working parties or committees, we're not discussing this or that with debates, discussion or inclusiveness. The PTC approach was that we had better set up a committee to discuss this and have some lay involvement and get views on this and that. I think that came out quite a bit and certainly there were people who were navel gazing and blue sky thinking and a sort of cynical, this is all nonsense, approach. That very much describes the cultures. (Interviewee E)*

The idea that it is difficult to pin down PCS culture in this particular respect is supported elsewhere:-

*I think we probably now have across PCS got a huge range of different cultures in the different groups that are historical. I moved around different groups in NUCPS and each different bargaining group had its own way of working and different relationships between officers and lay people. I think we have a lot of diversity, probably, at the moment. (Interviewee G)*

But the diversity, it is suggested, has not been a benign diversity:-

*Both the previous unions I was a part of were the second category, partnership. Clearly with a General Secretary who was the General Secretary but not all power devolving from him. The General Secretary's view was that you were paid a lot of money to get on with it and he would praise you when you did OK and give you bloody hell if you screwed up on something. That has*

*been the essence of the conflict in PCS over two and a half years. Nobody would say that the CPSA was anything other than General Secretary centred and it has been a battle of cultures really between that highly centralised approach with the DGS having his use of language -- his use of capital letters -- corrected on a memo by the General Secretary. He was not impressed. Down to the approach that gradually PCS is definitely becoming which is more of a team led approach (Interviewee C)*

Nor a happy diversity in political terms:-

*This was a very difficult political merger because in a sense the ruling group on the national executive of PTC was, I would have described it as the majority being centre or centre left Labour Party. The majority of the ruling group in the CPSA I would have described as right wing Labour Party and some not even Labour Party at all. Also, two different cultures in the two organisations. CPSA having a culture probably best described, I think by James Naughtie once, as the Beirut of the trade union movement but very much one in a centralist dictatorship style whereas the PTC culture was one that was more open to a degree of -- you debate things with due respect and tolerance at your Conference as opposed to a sort of bear pit atmosphere of the CPSA; so there were two different cultures and two different political mixes that were there. (Interviewee D)*

However, there were suggestions that cultural perceptions were a good deal more complex than any of the descriptions so far offered. One interviewee was a joint union appointment immediately prior to merger and she gives some valuable insight into the cultural makeup of the union:-

*I think I very quickly realised that there were not just two different cultures, there were four because I would say that IRSF had a different culture, they were still at Victoria and although they had merged with NUCPS to form PTC, that had only been in existence for 18 months and they had not really merged. They were still a separate union down at Victoria. And then I think the regions have a different culture again which to me seems more near to the members really, more focused on the members and I felt the Victoria IRSF was more like I was used to in local government, really, with a focus on the customer. The PTC culture -- I mean the part down at Southwark -- which had been the NUCPS mainly although there were some staff, like the Director of Finance, for example, and the Head of Education who had been IRSF staff who had moved and become more integrated with PTC -- but the culture there was that we would try to be modern, that we would try to improve management and they were putting things in place but I felt that they were not very thorough in the way that they did it. It was all a bit slapdash and*

*a bit rushed and it was not followed up properly. I found that there was too much of a laid-back approach, too laissez-faire and there was a lot of absence, an amazing amount of ill feeling between staff and managers with a lot of staff being moved round the organisation when they became problems. Instead of being dealt with by the managers, they were moved on somewhere else. So that was the Southwark branch, you might say. At this site, when I came across here, although I did not really come across here properly until we merged, and here was a completely different culture. It was very oppressive to come into the building. You felt that you were being watched because there was a security person in the room. It was very quiet in the building, with no movement and no people coming and going. It was very silent as you walked around. There was just a general feeling of oppression and I think when I made myself available to talk to staff, I took an office and people made appointments to come and talk to me and quite a few people had stories about management being extremely unsympathetic and not wanting to discuss anything and with everything happening in secret, people disappearing from the workforce without any explanation, the whole area of secrecy and lack of information, nobody told anyone what was going on and with lots of bad information coming out of those interviews. I don't think they were exaggerating. So I was in a way forewarned about what sort of organisation this was, particularly in the case of a senior woman officer and she had suffered in the same sort of way that I later came to suffer so she told me what happened and I was well prepared. Other people had similar stories as well. So you could not really have two more extremes, I think, in terms of culture (Interviewee J)*

The general thrust of these observations is supported by the report by the Industrial Society on staff feedback on Member Focus courses held in mid-1999, whilst the move into the Clapham office was under way. An issue was identified by staff on the courses as 'culture and power of control has led to bullying and harassment,' the solution to which was identified as:-

*Trust. Let managers manage without unnecessary interference. Could then work in a secure and safe environment. Could share ideas and lead to a better organisation. (Member Focus Training – Analysis and Recommendations, November 1999)*

And managers, engaging with the idea of culture and its importance in influencing their managerial activities, reflect this:-

*There is an old management style which we're trying to change. That is management by fear. All of us know that. I don't know whether you are aware but we had an awayday to Eastbourne and that came out of that -- management by fear. This came out*



## Cognitive rules and culture

*of CPSA but of course it still exists within PCS. So we're trying to move away from that culture to one which involves encouragement, support and trust (Interviewee O)*

This can be done in several ways. First managers could open up the topic of cultural difference:-

*At all levels we get into the merger without the reality of saying that we're not going to have a culture like the CPSA. If the CPSA had that culture, if it had it, then let us talk about that, let us address it. Because we never addressed it, it was actually worse in the perception than in the reality. What I found at my team meetings, when you had eventually thawed the ice and got people talking and got them to realise that it was okay to say what concerned them. And it was, you know, can we get sacked tomorrow, if we are more than 20 minutes on a phone or we get a memo; it was the classic command and control structure with a hard cost driven basis. Nothing about what the outputs were so it was a one dimensional approach. And that was a really difficult culture but at least this diagnostic approach gave us something to latch on to and to actually open up the boil, you might say. (Interviewee B)*

Secondly, managers could take proactive steps to challenge what was perceived as unacceptable about particular aspects of culture:-

*I think when PCS was created there were probably more than two cultures but two prevailing cultures -- maybe three still because we still had two cultures in PTC, two predominant cultures, and then there was the CPSA. I think that in some ways those of us from PTC have been challenging the amount of controlling, hierarchical and fearful culture that certainly we perceived to operate in CPSA. I think we have been challenging it by rebellion in a sense by refusing to be a vehicle of (the ex CPSA General Secretary), refusing to behave in that way, breaking the rules, if you like, partly because we did not know what the rules were. We came into this building from the outside, with the Revenue very much new kids on the block -- we were the last to come -- so that there is a critical mass of people behaving diversely and differently. I have a sense at the minute that there is a freedom about the place that I have not experienced in all my previous incarnations. I think that is about the fact that at the moment there is no prevailing culture. There is nothing subtle or sledge hammer that you are required to comply with. I'm sure that when things settle down and we have a new General Secretary some new culture will assert itself but at the minute I think that we are off the leash so to speak. (Interviewee G)*

Thirdly, managers could take some formal steps to create new cultural values, particularly in the realm of management:-

*For the first time we are trying to describe the job (of Senior National Officers) and we are describing it as 20% hands on negotiation, perhaps being involved with the Chief Executives, the Permanent Secretaries of the bargaining areas to get a framework that sets a climate for our front line negotiators. We described it as 20% on management which would be called personnel management issues, counselling, coaching, mentoring - and the other 60% on what we described, to try and finesse the view that they are not managers, organisational responsibilities, which is sitting down on a one to one with the negotiators and working out job plans, which is management but is called something else for the purposes of agreeing (the ex CPSA General Secretary) into it. But it's the first time we've actually done that and described the jobs in those terms. It's not described in the rule book as you know. And we're trying to back that up with creating a culture of this, hence the Eastbourne venture with Cranfield and training with the Industrial Society who we've been doing work with on what's the difference between leadership and management and how you go about identifying training needs. So we are putting in a lot of building blocks to reinforce it by training. (Interviewee H)*

There was a suggestion that managers perceived culture as moving in opposite directions, depending on where they came from:-

*The ex CPSA managers don't feel like they have authority to do things but they have come from a culture where if you did not have authority to do it, you couldn't do it. Whereas I think in PTC we got to the point where if nobody told us we can't, we will. (Interviewee G)*

Individual experiences of managers are also significant in impacting on the cognitive processes of PCS managers. Managers who came from negotiating roles have particular experiences:-

*Certainly the level of the senior national officers here, below the senior full time officers, I think they understand, post merger, that managing staff is a very important part of their duties. I think that's quite a culture change, because, certainly prior to the merger, talking about CPSA which was obviously what I knew best, I think there was a culture, which went back many, many years, that the job of officials was to negotiate - the sexy stuff - biffing the management and extracting wonderful deals, all this kind of stuff. And managing staff and resources, if it came into the picture at all was an afterthought. They didn't really see it as a major part of their duties (Interviewee A)*

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Other managers confirm their experiences of managers as deriving from that environment. A functional manager, observing managerial behaviour, comments:-

*I think that the main problem is with the word manager or management because the trade union negotiator is always against -- well not always but generally speaking they are against what the management is saying. If the management wants to rid themselves of an inadequate member of staff, the trade union negotiator is there to defend the person. So when it comes to them being in the role of manager and they have an inadequate person that they need to do something about, they are reluctant to take it on. (Interviewee J)*

A Senior National Officer confirms from personal experience that management has a problematic character:-

*I think that is true (management being problematic). It is true because most of us have come through that apprenticeship route, of being an activist and then being on the National Executive and then full time officer. (Interviewee B)*

Another functional manager identifies what he regards as one of the consequences of this:-

*I mentioned the Masters degree I did a few years ago and I used a quotation from Alexandra Ouroussof in all the pieces of work that I did which was that trade union managers were uncomfortable with the concept of management. They had come to where they are through opposing management and were very uncomfortable with it. And what they do is they reward various things to throw some money at it. So as a consequence I think people's terms and conditions are generous in comparison to whatever job you happen to be doing in your environment. That does not get over the difficult issues of management and how you manage an organisation (Interviewee E)*

So some managers have difficulty adapting to a role in which they are expected to behave in ways that their 'opponents' have behaved throughout their previous careers. But others' experiences are not as direct as that. They feel that they are working in an environment where their management roles are undervalued – the cognitive rules of the game are working against them:-

*I think it's a fact that you get your Street cred from your bargaining role rather than from your management role. Some of the skills you need for bargaining are obviously some of the skills you need for management but there is a whole other sort of skill set which is not necessarily there and which is required in people's roles if they get promoted to a certain point. (Interviewee G)*

A view which is emphatically supported by another senior manager:-

*I think the biggest tension is the view held by a number of lay officials, and senior full time officers as well, that managing is not profitable time. To be worth, to be valued is delivering deals and it's even worse than that. It's also profile. It's going round the country and that's seen as being valued rather than management. So the big tension is in that management as I have described it is undervalued. It's not undervalued in job evaluation and pay terms because it is there but it is undervalued in terms of what gives you a name and a reputation within the union. It's not valued (Interviewee H)*

One manager offers some reasons as to why this situation, of undervaluation of management, might have developed:-

*It may have to do with whether full time officers are elected or appointed, that may be a factor and also the history of management practice in a union. As I said, we have developed over the years into developing a management structure so we are all far more conversant with that. Having said that, I would say that the type of characters who are full time officers who are by and large actors and prima donnas, that has a lot to do with their resistance. And if full time officers are that sort of character, they will stand up for themselves more, you know, and then there is a whole kind of political dimension to that as well. Who is giving this instruction? Is it someone whose politics you respect? What is their motivation for the instruction or whatever? So I do think that full time officers are far more likely to challenge that kind of thing. (Interviewee N)*

That particular manager, however, is of the view that things are changing:-

*We have just come later to it, really and with some resistance and suspicions. For example, management training, whether you need it at all or to the ideas like appraisal or team building and that kind of thing. But, you know, attitudes are changing. People are more accepting of the need. (Interviewee N)*

Managers have different views on the extent to which the undervaluation of management stems from the attitudes of full time officers, often described as being themselves resistant to being managed. :-

*I think it is the case that people don't like to be managed, they like autonomy and we're no different in that respect - but I suppose the difference is that trade union structures may have allowed for more autonomy than you would typically find in a private sector organisation because of all the accountability and*

*bargaining frameworks that we are familiar with. But I have certainly found post-merger here that there has been no great reaction against the idea that we should set up a new type of management structure that emphasises more the management process. I think there has been a general acceptance that this is something we ought to be doing. It is not universally the case but I think that most officials see the sense of it. I mean, clearly they don't want to be managed on a day to day basis and that's not our intention. The intention is to provide a framework of rules within which they can operate. So we're not seeking to, in a sense, tie them down. (Interviewee A)*

Similar experiences are reported from regional level:-

*I think one of the things that I noticed is that it is extremely difficult to manage a group of committed trade union officials because they see their own self motivation as being what keeps them going than they do not see that management plays any role in that. I disagree with that. I think that is something which you probably would not get elsewhere -- you would probably have people coming to work for you because they want the money but here we have people coming because they are committed to the job they do (Interviewee M)*

*My experience is that as I have started the process with people, they have begun to recognise that there is a value in at least sitting down and talking through what your objectives are, how we might enhance their capabilities and whatever, and people find that helpful. It is a struggle to get them to the meeting in the first place but I think that once they are there certainly in my experience here, with a number of the officers, they actually welcome doing it every six months (Interviewee M)*

Evidence tends to support the view that the situation is rather more complex than the stark characterisations in some of the literature would suggest:-

*As a manager myself, I think I have encountered a variety of different reactions from full time officers that I have been a manager of. From very much a positive approach to having a creative, developmental management relationship to maybe having a rather detached, defensive and individualistic, rather than directly hostile approach (Interviewee G)*

In managerial terms, therefore, there are cultural and cognitive forces bearing on the roles of PCS managers. This leads to their perceiving constraints which affect their ability to undertake their roles. We have seen that training has been commenced, although it has been criticised as not being experiential enough:-

*There is a huge fear around getting into the emotional agenda. I think the union culture is far more fearful of that than of management culture in the world out there. I think that that is what I found unsatisfactory about this training programme that we have just been through because it really was not experiential. To a large extent it was a mixture between theoretical discussion and bits of kind of practice. We spent a couple of hours doing coaching with each other, which was good, but I think I couldn't spend a couple of days on it. I think there is a lot of fear around most of the senior managers that they don't engage in that kind of way themselves (Interviewee G)*

And, arguably, it may not compare with training experiences offered to managers in comparable organisations elsewhere:-

*The major difference between trade union managers and managers in other sectors is that trade union managers are not trained in management even to the extent of going on short courses. A trade union official will probably only ever have done trade union functions and would not have had any defined management role before taking them over. Because of the context, such people will not even have come up through the ranks learning managerial skills as they moved up. (Interviewee F)*

In the initial stages, the lack of a body of knowledge about how to undertake the role of trade union management was certainly felt quite strongly:-

*I had no reference books to turn to for advice. I found that very scary, having to make up things as I went along (Interviewee H)*

Although there were some benefits from having confronted management in one's past career:-

*Many people gained experience from bad managers and therefore were in a position to know what not to do (Interviewee F)*

However, areas of constraint were identified around personnel issues, for reasons which have already been touched upon:-

*Do trade unions ever discipline or dismiss people -- well, very rare indeed.....Discipline and disciplinary enquiries do go on and do get dealt with but I think we are probably only talking about the most junior staff. I don't think it happens much above the secretarial grade. Perhaps the issues aren't there, I don't know, or if they are they are certainly not dealt with. I suspect that discipline is dealt with more than inefficiency. Inefficiency is*

*the one that unions, this union, would have a problem with identifying and addressing (Interviewee N)*

The personnel function has been updating personnel practices to try to put into place policies which would be familiar to other organisations, on recruitment and selection (providing for external advertisement of all posts), health and safety, grievance and a disciplinary procedure which does not allow early involvement of the General Secretary. The Personnel Officer shares the perception, though, that trade union managers are not comfortable with taking difficult decisions and believes that this is related to the trade union environment:-

*I have been very clearly trying to put these responsibilities back to the managers. But they are very reluctant to really get to grips with the problem and staff know that and they sort of think well this is a trade union and they are not going to dismiss me so it does not matter whether I turn up or don't turn up. So there is a sort of added element really*

Managers often do not perceive, however, that their responsibilities are the subject of meaningful enlargement in these areas.

*I can do nothing here apart from bits and pieces of things. We have even taken a backward step here in that they have gone from an honesty flex system to the clock in and out. So I cannot even give them a couple of hours on the flex. And to be honest, given the length of time of the working day you'll find it difficult to give them a couple of hours anyway because I could not cover the office. But there is just nothing.....It is even down to, things like domestic leave and such things which go to the personnel section. But I do not feel empowered. It is a much maligned word but I do not feel empowered. I have to sneak it. (Interviewee B)*

This is a view that is supported elsewhere:-

*There must be more letting go and letting us manage. There isn't at the moment. That is one of the difficulties. (Interviewee O)*

*That is the only constraint I feel, that there is not enough authority delegated. I accept that there have to be checks and balances and no doubt there would be. I think that being out of London is better because you do feel less constrained. I'm usually able to take what risks I want to take. I make sure that the person in London is going to back me if I have got a problem. (Interviewee M)*

It may be that the undervaluation of management, the cultural difficulties in picking up the responsibilities fully or the experiences in the field influence some managers rather than others:-

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*It crystallised for you different attitudes between those who wanted to have the resources and the power of the resources to do something and those who were quite happy to have the personnel section and the accommodation section because they had got somebody to moan at. (Interviewee B)*

The issue of lay member involvement might also be a factor:-

*The personnel role is, I think, limited because of lay involvement in the democratic structure and the number of people who might be involved in decision-making, particularly appointments and the whole political influence there. I think you can't be purists in personnel practice in trade unions. It doesn't happen. (Interviewee N)*

This point is made by others in different contexts, first in terms of perceptions of the decision-making process as a whole:-

*I think that what you get is more political control and managerial control in that you cannot just go off on your own and negotiate a contract for this or spend money on devices that you have evaluated. There is a whole bureaucratic control and process. It all comes back really to the politics again and the political nature of the organisation where you either start going round the official channels creating proposals and going to the HO management team with this and then getting a paper presented to one of the committees or you do it the back door route, you do all your lobbying beforehand and say that I have got this great idea, why don't you and I work together and then go through the organisational process. You cannot suddenly say that you want to try out these personal digital organisers and see if that is useful and then organise a roll out programme. You are running through treacle a wee bit (Interviewee E)*

Secondly in terms of possible political consequences of taking decisions of a controversial nature:-

*I think there is always going to be a concern, whether it is in a trade union headquarters or a regional office or whatever, that if things get to a stage where staff take the view that they are going to have to take industrial action, trade unions as employers are then in the public domain and that can be extremely damaging for the individual trade union and damaging for the trade union movement. So trade unions as employers are always going to feel under a degree of pressure to avoid that at all costs (Interviewee D)*

It is clear that cultural and experiential factors have an influence on the way in which PCS managers undertake their roles. In terms of the



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consequences of the merger, these are easily discernible. There are also feelings of disempowerment; these, however, are rather generalised rather than pointing specifically at issues where there might be felt to be cultural inhibitions such as managing performance. These issues might become clearer when boundary management and representative rationality are discussed, as they are below.

### **Systems relating to moral rules**

- 6.11. The issue here is whether there are identifiable principles influencing the way PCS managers undertake their managerial roles, particularly in the area of people management. One senior manager identified issues of mutual protection as being significant:-

*We are trade unionists and you have to be able to defend your decision on some sort of trade union principles. I mean I hesitate to use that but that's the language of trade unionism. I never know what trade union principles are but they are there. Somehow or other, you don't have to write them down, there is a principle which says that we will band together collectively to protect each other. Inherent in that is a principle. It's not a coward's way out; it is in fact a very difficult part of the managerial process but I'm sure it's the right way to deal with it. (Interviewee K)*

Another mentioned fairness:-

*I think for me it was a basic notion of fairness and unfairness. I always had a tremendous interest in equality and women's positions -- partly my upbringing and the time I grew up through the women's movement in the Seventies and early Eighties. So that was my consciousness, if you like. And I think my early exposure to work being interviewed for the civil service, it must have been around 1972, where the first question on the civil service interview panel was "what were my intentions about getting married and having children" -- why should they employ women, you know. Which you knew instinctively was completely horrible. So I always had that interest. I then became involved as a lay rep quite early on and I suppose when I was involved in the union, that kind of focused my interest in equality as well, if you like as a subject. So I have, if you like, an instinctive feeling about fairness (Interviewee N)*

The same interviewee, moving from her personal values system, identified what she felt were the values of the union:-

*The values systems of the union -- you know, not supporting any force in society which fosters divisions and promoting the interests of minority groups (Interviewee N)*

A definition which clearly chimed with her own values. But personal value systems could take other forms:-

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*One of my values, deeply held, has been this open approach -- being truthful, not manipulating information, sharing as much of it as I can (Interviewee G)*

In the context, this could be regarded as a subset of 'fairness' – appropriate behaviour in a value driven organisation. A similar context is evident from another statement:-

*Fairness is important. Making certain that all the elected people feel that they are getting a good service from us. (Interviewee O)*

And the theme of openness is reflected in this statement:-

*I think we recognise that if the union is going to prosper, then we need to take account of other people's views (Interviewee A)*

The idea is introduced by another manager with the general thought that, in effect, one should manage in a way which reflects members' expectations – that, in effect, it was consistent with their values:-

*Although there are very often people working in trade unions who are not political activists, who are members of staff or whatever but who associate with the ethos and the principles of the trade union movement, your daily job, no matter where you work in the union, is to a greater or lesser degree involving you with what the union is there to do, which is to serve the interests of members and you would not want it thrown at you by a member of staff that the way you're treating me - if this was one of your bloody members what would you be doing? ... There are times when you have to, despite the highest standards that you would apply to how you dealt with a member, also apply to your own staff. (Interviewee D)*

However, the same interviewee was in no doubt that this did not mean that trade union managers had to be a walkover:-

*In a sense, I have always taken, despite everything I have said so far, a very clear management line that management does have to manage, whether it is in a trade union or elsewhere because you are dealing with big business, multi-million pounds of income, members' money, the only source of income that we have, apart from any investments we may have, and we have got in our union probably in the region of about 350 to 400 staff in total whose futures are at stake. (Interviewee D)*

There is evidence here of value driven approaches to management within PCS and of values which will impact on the people whom these managers manage, although there is no obvious unanimity around the details. The democratic structure of the union represents another context in which management activities are undertaken. What moral

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rules are discernible from the systems of representative rationality within the union?

One manager points to the achievement of consensus as the important factor:-

*You really have got to have a consensus if things are going to work. It's no good us trying to pursue a certain path of management style that is going to be opposed by the people at the top of the union. They do have some power at the end of the day. (Interviewee A)*

Another manager has a similar approach in a different, regional, context:-

*We are managing to find a good deal of consensus about how we move forward both between the two groups and within the political factions, which is helpful. So that involves getting streams of people in pubs for hours trying to convince them of a certain point of view (Interviewee M)*

Partnership is another idea articulated:-

*Senior lay officials have got facility time available and the skill is to involve them in that decision making process and make them run in partnership with senior officials. That's the trick. (Interviewee K)*

And facilitation was another idea:-

*I think what I am trying to do , and I have tried to do more and more, is work with the executive in a way that I offer them leadership but I am not telling them what to do. I am facilitating them in the process of hopefully taking ownership of the product (Interviewee G)*

In that spirit, the same interviewee took a positive and principled approach to involving lay members in her work:-

*I was amazed when I took over pay bargaining in the Revenue that it was done entirely by full time officers. My first pay round in the Revenue was me and the negotiations officer head-to-head with management, no lay involvement at all in the bargaining process and then I had to come out and front it up with the executive. The second year I said that I want some lay people involved in this process and the rest of the officers looked at me as if I was mad -- high-risk strategy! And we did it and it worked really well and this year I have been the only full time officer in the process with one of the executive working very closely with*

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*me and a big team involved as well. This is a sort of example of assisting the culture. (Interviewee G)*

But such values are not necessarily shared:-

*They (activists) are viewed, I think, either as absolutely critical to keep on board through to their being a waste of space and having to work round them rather than with them. (On that continuum) I would like to be in the middle but I suspect I am rather nearer the end (Interviewee B).*

There are two particular characteristics of PCS which require attention in this context. The first is that there is a high number of stakeholder groupings prescribed in or arising from the Rule Book. As with many other unions, this includes groups set up with the intention of facilitating the involvement of 'disadvantaged' groups, such as black members, gay and lesbian members and women. It includes also occupational groups and positive steps have been taken to involve them at various levels. One manager describes how this works:-

*We have a number of those covering a range of equal opportunity type issues - ethnic minorities, women, disabled and so on. But also on conditions of service issues, such as the human resource agenda, pay policy and things like that we have forums which bring together representatives from all the groups within the union. We are fairly liberal and relaxed about who comes to these. It's not something which is too tightly defined. And then if you look at the regions, certainly in Wales, which I'm responsible for, we've set up a Wales Committee which has representatives from all the major Government departments which have staff in Wales which meets about three times a year to discuss matters of common interest, particularly the extent to which those common interests can be progressed through the Welsh Assembly. And we have a separate forum for organisations which are either in the private sector or fringe bodies which are distanced from the Government to some extent. And that again meets about three times a year. We find these are very useful opportunities for two way interchange from the centre to the various organisations we have and back again. And it's a reasonably effective way of making sure that people who are key players at different levels of the union understand what the union's trying to do and have an opportunity to influence it. (Interviewee A)*

Philosophically, one manager tries to explain the principles involved here:-

*You have identified (many small) bodies with elected people running the organisation. That's a lot isn't it? And inside each of those there'll be separate groups that want servicing and*

*different demands being placed on them. Inside every Group Executive, say the Customs and Excise Group, you've got high paid, low paid, executive grades, non-executive grades, blue collar, white collar you've got all of those tensions inside each elected group as well and I suppose that you pay attention to the constitutions. Make sure that the constitutions are not too rigid so that people feel comfortable with them. So each of those .....bodies has a constitution carefully matured to make sure that they feel comfortable with them and flexible enough to suit their circumstances. That sounds really good doesn't it; it's really good management speak. It's got an element of truth in it but they've got to be able to operate their own constitutions in such a way that people feel comfortable with them, that people don't feel excluded (Interviewee K)*

One of the important things here is the institutional constraints on lay member activists which were built into PCS when it was formed. The unions produced an Aims and Values statement, reflected in the new Rule Book which aimed to make the union 'democratic and member-centred':-

*You, the members, will have the final say on all the important issues facing the union. We want as many of you as possible to play an active part in the new union, including attending branch and workplace meetings. But we know that many of you cannot attend meetings because of work patterns or home commitments. Therefore:-*

- the new union's rules will make provision for all of you to be consulted in secret ballots before any major changes to your pay and conditions are agreed with your employer*
- similarly you will have an equal right to vote in key union elections and on major changes to the union's policies or rules (Building a New Union February 1997)*

This latter provision is unusual and constrains the union's Conference from taking certain decisions without a membership ballot. On the other hand, it was argued that it empowers the members:-

*That's exactly why we've got this new union Rule Book. And it's really quite exciting. I'm really excited about what we've done. I think it's brilliant. I'm comfortable with it because I can see a role for conferences. I can see a role for these...executive committees. I want to delegate to them, I want to give them power and responsibility, it's part of the democratic process. So I'm comfortable with this. Whereas a lot, actually think aims and values is an excuse for ignoring conferences. Well, I think it's the opposite. That's why I campaigned for it. I'd have rather had the status quo. I want to give people more power and more responsibility and delegate it down, and trust them. Now the argument is, is it a left or a right wing agenda, which is a*

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*wonderful discussion over 8 pints of bitter. I've never been able to get to the bottom of it myself. But I don't think it's a right wing agenda. I think it's a radical agenda to give power to the members. That's all I want to do, to give power to the members. People can say that's a left or a right wing agenda. You can pay your money and take your choice, but it's pretty radical stuff. You can trust them. They are well-organised, well-educated people. What's wrong with us? (Interviewee K)*

It was not clear at the time of the research – and it is certainly not clear now when the new process has resulted in the amendment of some of the Principal Rules – how far these new values were shared:-

*We have a Rule Book that marginalises Conference. Which is deeply saddening because Conference should be something positive and have something to contribute and something that people go away from feeling refreshed and ready for the next period back in the branches. We've got so caught up in the politics here, between the Executive and the Honorary Officers, that actually Conference is a bit inessential. There are certain rules they can change, they can make certain decisions, they can call for certain things, but under the Rules they can't actually make those things happen (Interviewee H)*

*At the present time, it is inevitable that there is a huge war going on between the Executive Committee, which got elected on the back of aims and values, Principal Rules, a member-centred union and the lay delegates who are still saying 'Conference is the primary decision-making body, the Parliament of the organisation' which I don't believe is the case. It never was the case. And so inevitably you are going to get 'yah, boo, sucks.' (Interviewee K)*

PCS is a fascinating union in these areas. The systems of moral rules influencing managers in the management of their relationship with the democratic structures are so unusual, so controversial with many activists – even with the new General Secretary who now celebrates the regaining of activist control by the replacement of biennial conferences with annual ones – that it is not surprising if managers express a variety of views. They do, however, think seriously about the issues and about their roles, even if their ideals of what constitutes 'widespread membership involvement in the representative process', and how that should be operationalised, differ. As will be seen later, this will affect how they go about the task of managing the boundaries between the various stakeholder groups.

### **Managerial Activities Deploying Resources**

- 6.12. In the discussion above about PCS's financial systems, there was no mention of monitoring performance. The systems seemed rather

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centralised and comparatively undeveloped with plans to devolve further responsibility to budget holders stalled.

Nevertheless, the union has engaged in planning processes for some years. In 1999 it produced a Management Plan, shared with the NEC, to which was annexed action plans for senior managers. None of the nine strategic objectives were financial with the exception of one which talked in general terms about maximising membership. Objectives for individual managers mentioned the union's financial objectives but there was no indication that these were linked to the Plan.

In 2001, the union produced an 'NEC Plan', the name of which was changed by the NEC because it didn't like the word 'management'. This is a more professional job but in itself it does not present any financial objectives. The Financial Officer, however, presented to the NEC a paper which was designed to cost and seek finance for the achievement of the objectives of the Plan. It contained a schedule indicating whether the proposals had no cost implications, were within existing budgets, were to be costed to the Campaign Fund or were part of an allocation made specifically for the Plan.

Finance, it will be seen, was not integral to the planning process. There is no indication that the budgetary system was to be changed, except insofar as some of the finance for raising the union's profile was to be allocated to regions - but:-

*Clearly we will have to create some controls to ensure that each region is using the funds to meet PCS' overall objectives. (PCS Plan – Additional Costs, May 2001)*

Although, therefore, the expenditure would no doubt be monitored (indeed, in the Management Plan this was a duty allocated to the Financial Officer) there is no indication that systems are planned which will incorporate performance monitoring and managerial prioritisation. The only indication that this might be contemplated was the Cranfield seminar on devolved budgeting, already referred to, the conclusions of which were not actioned. There is obviously consistency here, even if it presages tensions in a union which has decentralised to some extent to deal with the decentralisation of Government Agencies and the establishment of the Scottish and Welsh Parliaments:-

*Because our structures have been based on the regions being essentially bargaining units, that (dealing with a wide range of regional issues) has never happened out in the regions to that extent. I think that the regions in our union will now become gradually closer to the regions in other unions and therefore the business which would be dealt with at our Scottish Committee will gradually become more like the business which gets dealt with in the Unison Scottish Committee but I mean, essentially you have got a tremendous tension in there with the NEC seeing*

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*themselves elected by all the members and wanting to control everything in the union just now and they are even more like that because the stuff that used to be national bargaining, pay, major conditions of employment, is all swept away from the NEC. (Interviewee D)*

However, some principles could be identified relating to the deployment of resources within the union:-

*It is often said by the larger groups that the smaller groups get more resources pro rata and I am sure that's true. That's what we have unions for. When push comes to shove, you are able to manage these groups because you come back to them and say; 'it is right that smaller groups, of perhaps lower paid workers, get more of our resources because we are a trade union. It's one of the advantages of managing a trade union that often you can go back to the first instincts of why people join trade unions to help you to manage the organisation as well. (Interviewee K)*

A principle that was acknowledged elsewhere:-

*The role of a union manager does involve relationships with different groups and clusters of members for example through the equality network. This is almost an issue of "seeing fair play" almost an arbitrator role. For example, it is very easy for the largest group of members to dominate. One of the functions of union managers is to say "what about that group of members" - for example small groups like coastguards or foresters whose voices would otherwise not be heard. This is a protective type role. (Interviewee F)*

And which other managers honour in the practice:-

*We have got one large group in particular in the team and in a way it is ensuring that they do not get all the staff doing the work for that one particular group. That's in a way the way our work is dished out at the moment, ensuring that doesn't happen. The allocation of work to the various officers, to make certain that even the smaller agencies have got the time. I expect the officers to allocate their time fairly and I leave it to them to do it. (Interviewee O)*

*I think the explicit managerial approach was that when we first became PCS, the ex CPSA side very much did it in terms of "that works out at so much per head". I thought that was wrong because there is a whole host of reasons why so much per head does not work. So it came out of my head that I thought we had to get them away from this as a way of looking at things, which I have done. I suppose that the consequence of that is that the*



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*smaller groups get more per head for the reasons I have outlined. (Interviewee C)*

An observation by one manager, however, suggests that the practice of these values may be more difficult to discern at times:-

*In terms of the power we have, I don't think it is a regional/central division; it is rather about the big battalions in the union. Last week, the first time it has happened, there was a gathering of the presidents and chairs of groups and national branches and one of the things that came out of that was from the smaller areas who said that it was all very well if you are in the Benefits Agency. If you are in the Revenue, PCS may be delivering for members there but in our little area where we have only 1000 members, we're not getting the same service. There may be a division there. (Interviewee G)*

But another manager affirms that principles of minority protection in resource allocation are in fact widely shared:-

*It was not too difficult for me to be able to say to them, the 90,000 who dominated everything physically, intellectually, financially, to say to them; 'the photo printers are in real trouble, privatisation, low pay, all those things, we need some resources to campaign'. Resources were made available. For every small group, you were able to argue that they need the help of the majority. The coastguards. Not one union in its right senses would organise coastguards. 400 people spread, by definition, on the coast of this country, are just not an economical unit. You'd just leave them alone. But we organise them and therefore we cross-subsidise them. Who in their right minds would organise Metropolitan Police Traffic Wardens? One thousand who are always getting whacked on the head by irate motorists. They have accidents, incidents at work twenty times higher than any other group. They need the cross-subsidy of a larger organisation and it is always given. It is never questioned. That's just two examples. (Interviewee K)*

So this is an issue which exercises PCS managers. When it comes to the allocation of physical space, this is an issue in respect of which managers display significant awareness, particularly in the light of cultural issues arising from the merger. There is not a great deal of evidence, however, that the move to Clapham per se was used as part of a strategy of creating a new culture, partly because explicit merger management was something that PCS found great difficulty in agreeing on until some time after the move had taken place. But some thought was given to that:-

*One of the things we did was to try and structure the way we put the staff together. We did try to make sure we had a mixture of staff from each part of the union. It did not happen everywhere.*

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*Some departments tended to be mostly PTC or mostly CPISA but that was one thing we tried to do. (Interviewee J)*

And at Regional level, one manager had taken a highly proactive stance:-

*One of the first things I decided I had to do was that because we were in two separate buildings, and we still are and it will not be properly right until we are in a single building, I took a deliberate decision that some of the people working in the CPISA building move into here and some of the people from here moved into there. And that worked. People mixed socially anyway because we used to have quiz evenings or whatever where the two offices would mix. That forced people to mix in a working environment as well fairly quickly. (Interviewee M)*

At national level, there is evidence that bringing functions together did have benefits in terms of cohesion:-

*It was a catalyst. It reinforced the pace a bit. I think in parallel, and I think it was one of the things that I argued in terms of membership systems and the importance of having one system in and data merged, was that that also acted as a catalyst and forced the pace at which departments could merge. In fact, you could not have done it any other way because they go hand in hand. So if you were forcing there to be one membership system, there had to be one Membership Department. You could not have one department split over two sites working on different systems. So definitely the physical aspects like, in my respects, the membership system but like the building also reinforces that (Interviewee E)*

And also in terms of its symbolism:-

*Then there is also the closeness to the General Secretary, the actual physical proximity to those offices, which actually does make a difference in how people see you and in your formal and informal contacts as well. (Interviewee N)*

However there were two issues that stand out in looking at managers' perceptions of the importance of physical space and its deployment in the new union. The first relates to the fact that the building in which the new union gathered was the former CPISA Head Office.

*There is a resentment by former CPISA staff about people coming in. They see it as their building. (Interviewee O)*

*Whether it was a good thing, I'm not totally sure actually because it took quite a long time to get over the "this is our*

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*building" syndrome. Maybe if we had just sold the lot and moved en masse somewhere else (Interviewee C)*

*Initially there was a feeling that it was their building and not ours. We were coming into their building. (Interviewee B)*

One manager thought that this was something which was not a problem for long:-

*Initially in the CPSA, inside there was a feeling that these people were taking over our building, all the things that you would expect; within a month or so that all settled down and people were meeting in the canteen (Interviewee E)*

Or that it applied only in certain cases:-

*The suggestion was made some months earlier that some CPSA people thought that their building had been "invaded" but this remained only where groups had not been colocated or mixed, for example print and distribution. The Finance Department has moved into open plan space and there was very significant change. The bargaining units were the first to be colocated and they were mostly working together. The most threatened people were the oligarchy of the CPSA. (Interviewee F)*

But others have very different views:-

*Coming here, one party's culture is seeping out of the walls and permeating and causing tensions. I have told them all, the Senior Management Team. I feel like an intruder, coming in here. I feel talked about behind my back as being someone who came in and set up here. (Interviewee H)*

And there is confirmation of the fact that the issue was raised after the event:-

*There have been one or two people since saying well maybe it would have been better if we had bought somewhere new, realised the Southwark estate, realised Clapham, which is also a freehold building, and bought somewhere new, so that people all came, as it were, freshly arrayed to the feast (Interviewee L)*

The second issue which was plainly felt quite strongly was the impact, in terms of culture and working methods, of the increased use of open plan office space. In one regional office, there was particular enthusiasm for what it could achieve:-

*That's what we saw it (open plan) as. It would help cement the team. We would get over some of the different practices as well*

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*because they would different practices in the two unions about how we carry out the work. (Interviewee M)*

But there was no less enthusiasm at national level:-

*I saw from day one the best way of getting an open approach, an inclusive approach, was to break down barriers and walls are the most physical representation of a barrier that there is (Interviewee C)*

And it was suggested that this was a positive policy on the part of many senior managers:-

*It was a conscious decision based on the role of the Senior National Officer, the importance of making sure the Negotiations Officers work as a team, and the support staff understanding the teamworking approach Inevitably it led us into a debate about open plan and the nature of it. (Interviewee K)*

There were discussions about office layout, many of them in the context of merger, though managers were concerned about perceived inconsistencies in space allocation. It does seem clear that PCS managers recognise the strategic role in the allocation and utilisation of physical space and physical structure in a variety of ways - its role in building the new organisation and the cultural issues likely to arise. There seems also to have been a perception of the potential, as they saw it, for open plan space to bring staff together and to enhance teamworking.

### ***'Meaningful managerial actions Merger Management***

- 6.13. As with all the case study unions, the merger took place some time before this research commenced. Turmoil, however, continued at the activist level and rarely showed itself in other than fleeting ways during the research. One felt rather like the unfortunate Dr. Petworth in Malcolm Bradbury's novel 'Rates of Exchange' where revolution may or may not have been taking place in the country of Slaka, to which he was paying an academic visit. He could only speculate from symptoms, including changes in language, fables and the fleeting whiff of tear gas outside his hotel. Apart from that, academic life proceeded normally.

Of course, the research was not about politics or activist dynamics except insofar as these interfaced with the union's management, such as the relative influence of lay members and managers:-

*In PTC the lay members on the Executive were lobbying very hard for an increased role for lay members and that's what happened. It wasn't and isn't the experience of CPSA and I'm not sure that we have resolved that culture clash (Interviewee N)*

## Merger management

*There was certainly in PTC and its predecessor unions a culture of considerable lay involvement, probably not different in many ways from the culture that existed in NALGO. I mean, that does bring about what we used to call creative tension between senior full time officers and NEC members to what extent the lay involvement is there, which is a problem that, I think, still exists in PCS. The CPISA culture on the other hand was for their President and General Secretary to decide what was happening and then for the others to come on board with that. So many ways it at times proved difficult. It proved less difficult for CPISA to come in with a united position that it did for PTC because the PTC were involved in a genuine debate on its side of the merger committee about what rule should go in, how rules should be changed etc, which at times made it difficult for our side, as it were, to hold its position because we had that different way of operating in the two unions (Interviewee D)*

Reference was made earlier to the 'huge war' going on between the Executive and Conference. Some light on the situation below that was offered by one manager:-

*The true test of the union's democratic strength is in the Groups; that we have the Group Conferences and executives on an annual basis delivering the pay and rations. That's the true test of the democratic process. The other is an add-on actually. No, that's not true, it's just me getting carried away. The biennial conference is an extraordinarily important test of whether we are winning the aims and values argument. We're not with that layer. But just below that, with the same people for goodness sake, they're all the same, we've won it there. But it's not with huge rows with the elected executive committees there. Well, there are big rows but they are different in scope. The different atmosphere in the Land Registry Group Conference is noticeable. And yet the same people come to the biennial conference and yet it's just as though it's a completely different organisation. (Interviewee K)*

The point here, however, is that although many managers are working assiduously with elected members, it is very difficult to discern a process of merger management as it applies to senior elected members. Many of them may well have been working together in a spirit of generosity, but that is not obvious.

At management level, there was a deal of unhappiness at the way things were managed:-

*It was appallingly badly managed, I think, this merger in the sense that the involvement of the senior managers was all happening at the top of the shop and we didn't get the opportunity to know our opposite numbers to work with. Unless*

## Merger management

*you knew people that you bargain with or knew them socially there was no process of bringing together people -- managers bringing together the staff, involving people. It was very nightmarish in some ways in the early days. We were quite protected from the worst of it because we were still over at Victoria. We did have to work hard not to develop a fortress mentality. (Interviewee G)*

There was a good deal of comparison by ex-PTC managers between the way in which the merger that created PCS was handled, compared with the management processes that were involved in the merger that created PCS:-

*I don't think we handled the merger of PCS very well at all as a whole and a large part of the reason for that was that we did not do the kind of things that we did in PTC of getting the managers together in advance. When we created PTC we had the Cranfield event, we had a joint weekend at Templeton College which I think was actually quite fundamental in making the PTC process quite smooth and H initiated a teamwork training event for myself and the people that were going to be working with Hugh in the areas that he had overall responsibility for. All those things set up a momentum that I think gave as a positive feel that we were going to make it work. And we got down even to the staff meeting each other in PTC. They were fairly large and unwieldy gatherings but at least it enabled you to meet your colleagues. (Interviewee C)*

The Templeton College work was referred to earlier. The Cranfield event was initiated by IRSF for their managers and seems to have had a significant impact in enabling managers to look at themselves:-

*In IRSF the officers and the majority of the Executive were one and the same. We went to Cranfield, our officers, before we had finished as IRSF and we looked our paradigm and we realised that, gosh, we've been flattering ourselves, but we just got on together. We did do things, in controlling part of the Executive, that were outrageous and it's happened here, now, in this organisation and I see now why it's outrageous, but we did it because we were so close. We never really thought about the issue and there wasn't a conflict there. (Interviewee H)*

IRSF does seem to have handled their side of the PTC merger in a thoughtful way. Their understanding of how their staff might be feeling led to an unusual decision:-

*We did a good thing which we didn't repeat in PCS because we were not able to persuade folks to do it; when we merged with NUCPS every IRSF employee got a minimum of half an hour's counselling time and that was excellent. Even people who were*

## Merger management

*very stubborn and cynical about doing that valued it. But it was about one person in the end that did not pick up that half an hour. And some others picked up more than that. And that was incredibly helpful in moving us individually forward. (Interviewee B)*

Some efforts were, however, made to cause staff to reflect on the past and future, though no other evidence suggests that this was a major organisational initiative:-

*We also tried to get all the staff involved. We had some PCS induction days. We carefully grouped the staff in a careful mixture of Inland Revenue, NUCPS and CPSA and outsiders as well and we ran a whole series of induction days through the first summer. At that time we tried to get people to say what had been positive and good about their previous organisation, which they wanted to continue into the future, and what had a negative and bad and they wanted to leave behind. We want to be able to say to people that we are in the organisation that it is built on what was here before, there are good things that we want to continue. That was quite useful. It gave us good insight into the whole organisation and brought out the issues which I have described you. They came to light through those courses. (Interviewee J)*

There was a suggestion that staff were influenced by the inevitable rumours that occur in situations of major change:-

*The gossip was that the two General Secretaries did not speak, there were splits on the National Executive, splits among the senior lay officers and so on and to an extent that was true. That percolated down through the organisation as inevitably it would do. So it reached a situation almost that if one person said this the opposite camp would say no just because of the person saying it and nobody is always right and nobody is always wrong. So there were good ideas and good intentions on both sides of because of the divides we were never going to get a common approach. So we sort of agitated for a senior managers meeting which we had and which was pretty dire. In the building, top table, very formal, nobody really felt comfortable about saying anything; the one thing that was pushed for by us out of the meeting was some sort of residential event and that was a long time coming. It actually came on the back of the Industrial Society diagnostic report. (Interviewee B)*

Ex PTC managers had some explanations for some of the difficulties:-

*We had also come with experience of a PTC merger two years earlier and an awful lot of effort was brought into it in the run-up to that merger, to make it work, to do a lot of joint working so*

## Merger management

*that it would be a smooth transition and we didn't have it with this merger. There was a resistance to doing that, I think. My impression was that CPSA partners were dragged kicking and screaming into this merger and thought that they were creating a bigger CPSA whereas my experience from previous mergers was that that just never happened. If you were not going to have people feeling really disaffected, you had to do a lot of ground work to allay people's fears. So it was a very difficult time in the early days. People saying, in the usual way, this is not the way we do things and, everything has changed -- we are doing it all your way whereas we were doing it in a completely different way from any other union so that put people's fears into perspective. And I think also from the CPSA they didn't have that line management structure that had been developed with more autonomy to the senior managers in decision-making so that was a bit of culture shock as well because that was something that was imported as a sensible way of doing business in a very large organisation. You couldn't centralise all the decision-making. That was a big culture shock for people. (Interviewee N)*

Ex CPSA managers did not corroborate this, although the lack of a process is mentioned:-

*I think it is a very interesting area, the management of trade unions, the terrible reputation that they tend to have in terms of trying to manage processes. There was quite a lot of work.....so I was expecting lots of working parties and meetings with colleagues and so on and really it did not happen with the PCS merger. Prior to the members' vote, the whole process was in some confusion. There did not seem to be any clear goals or outlines or anybody really driving the whole process (Interviewee E)*

And another from CPSA suggests that she took initiatives herself to try to manage the position:-

*Right from the very start, before the merger happened, we were just told who we would be getting in the team and it quickly had to be identifying those individuals because...the bargaining team which I jointly manage, is really sort of 50/50 of the two unions and so the first problem was that we were in different locations. It was getting first of all the officers together who were initially identified before the support staff and sorting out what we were going to do because the other thing that we were given was what work would come in but we were left to decide how the work was going to be done between the officers. So there was a lot of, initially, setting the team up. So that was a totally new area of work for me -- setting up a team right from scratch with people that I had not worked with before and then getting*



## Merger management

*support staff, of which only one had worked with me before. So it was quite a challenge getting to know individuals and also ensuring that we worked as a team. So we immediately introduced team meetings with the officers. Then when we were given our support staff, almost immediately getting everybody together and having team meetings and talking through how we would work, what sort of service level was to be provided from the different offices and how we would try and manage that. But it meant really a totally different role for me because it was managing people, which I had not really had to do before. (Interviewee O)*

The suggestion that people were informed what they would be doing and told to get on with it is supported from several other sources:-

*I remember being told that I was responsible for IT, this is who you will be working with, draw up a two page paper saying what you want to do and when you want to do it. So it was very much a back of the fag packet approach to work. (Interviewee E)*

Including at regional level:-

*Well I was told that I was going to be manager of the office, that in itself created a problem because a very good friend of mine and someone who saw herself as my equal suddenly saw me as being paid to do a job that she thought she should do. I had to manage that. (Interviewee M)*

And it appears that other managers took proactive steps to try to manage the process of assimilation of their new teams:-

*During the period of January to March the manager, say the Director of Finance, had staff in Southwark and here and he was over in Southwark and he would be coming and going between the two buildings. He would encourage the staff to move as well by making visits and helping people to get to know each other.*

*Some of those working in Southwark came over here before they started working as a team because I wanted them to feel part of the team (Interviewee O)*

Though some personal difficulties were identifiable, related to differences between partner unions:-

*One of the most difficult structural things for this merged union, PCS, was what we were going to do about equality and equality structures and it was almost to be the very last thing that we did in terms of putting rule books together and setting up structures. Which is quite interesting but I think because the unions came from such different perspectives on equality and had such*

## Merger management

*different structures and ideas in place that equality was kind of seen as maybe a bit dangerous and subversive. Which I think I wish it was. So from a personal perspective that was quite a difficult time, about the amount of focus that equality would have within the merged union. (Interviewee N)*

The one area that there was a positive comment about was the creation of staffing structures which, in some mergers, can take a long time:-

*Certainly, there was a lot of work that took place on staffing -- in fact, if you're going to take one issue that was actually dealt with earlier rather than later, it was staffing, getting structures in place. That was something that took an awful long time in Unison (Interviewee E)*

As mentioned by one of the interviewees, a facilitated senior management event was held at Eastbourne in April 2000, one of the managerial responses to the Industrial Society report referred to earlier. In this session, despite its having been held two years after merger, initial working groups were defined by their old union membership. Some of the conclusions reflect managers' perceptions that the merger management process, insofar as it can be identified, was not effective:-

- *A number of features emerged from the pre-merger groups, principally a common understanding of the problems and a broadly similar vision of the kind of union PCS should be. The "old tribes" are not as far apart as they may have suspected.*
- *On the other hand there was an honestly self-critical recognition that the management of the union leaves much to be desired. For instance, decision making is slow and cumbersome and too many decisions are made at or near the top rather than where the problem is.*
- *It is clear that internal friction and conflict are absorbing considerable time, energy and other resources, distracting the*

## Managing by information

*same resources from critical bargaining, servicing and organising activities.*

- *Internal tensions will have adversely affected the performance of the PCS officer cadre and support staff with the consequence of a poorer service to members.*
- *The role of the General Secretaries remains a critical problem. Lack of agreement on roles is exacerbated by differences in managerial style and, frankly, open personal antagonism..*
- *Even if there were only one General Secretary this issue will not be resolved. There is clearly a need for a GS role that is more strategic, trusting, delegating and rules-based and less personal, particularly in the way management decisions are taken (Report on PCS Senior Officers' meeting, April 2000)*

### **Managerial Tasks**

#### **Managing by information**

- 6.14. Some evidence of lack of managerial communication has been presented above. The Eastbourne meeting was robust in its criticism of managerial communication:-

*The need for more extensive communication is clear. There is a danger in these things that everything is always charged to "more communication" when often the problem is not that people do not communicate, but that they do not agree. We think that here there are some areas of disagreement but many areas of consensus where more communication would be beneficial. It is interesting to note that more communication is included in all the Final Session Groups targets (Report on PCS Senior Officers' Meeting, April 2000)*

In the regions this perception may not entirely be shared:-

*Badly as a union. Better in so far as the office is concerned in terms of taking staff along with us, in terms of what they felt they wanted, having influence on the type of it on accommodation we took, having influence on the way that it was fitted out.  
(Interviewee M)*

But rather than there being interview data about communication or lack of it, managers hardly mentioned the topic at all and there was precious little material on the subject to code. There were suggestions that it had improved, after the session at Eastbourne:-

*One of the good things that came out of Eastbourne was that each of the senior secretariat are now meeting with the senior managers that they manage. I think all of them are doing it. I report to J and we had met once and have plans to do that regularly so there is another channel of communication. I don't know what is planned in terms of all of the senior managers meeting together. It certainly was a big shift doing what we did at*

## Managing by information

*Eastbourne but I don't think that it has really been picked up and built on yet. (Interviewee G)*

And by improvements in Information and Communications Technology:-

*Because we have not had meetings of senior managers and I think in the two bargaining unit areas, the ones that the two DGSs run, they have only just started having regular team meetings -- getting them (regional staff) down to talk about those kind of things. And I know sometimes they feel out of the communications loop. It is improved, probably in the last six months also because they had gone on the same e-mail system as we are. There is better electronic communication now and they get some of that. (Interviewee C)*

And, possibly because communication has taken time to set up, alternative, informal methods have been initiated:-

*Going back to the issue of the unofficial sites, where you will apply to join and give your e-mail address and then you can take part in debates. It is quite interesting because I know lots of people in lots of different factions who have joined this site, not necessarily at headquarters. It is unofficial in many ways but a lot of people participating in it are NEC members and senior officers, they are debating and exchanging views on the General Secretary elections and lots of stuff, contentious issues. The left is using it, Trots and different political factions and the right wing and there is lots of washing dirty linen in public. That is quite an interesting development, taking place outside the official systems but also because internally people are using it (Interviewee E)*

Nevertheless, as suggested by one interviewee, after Eastbourne, communications may have improved. Senior management issued a staff briefing in which there were several commitments to change:-

- *Many senior staff have introduced team briefings and these are being well received*
- *The DGSs and AGS have introduced regular one to one sessions with senior managers and we trust that you are doing likewise with your own staff.*
- *The DGSs are sending senior managers updates on NEC discussions and have held or are about to hold programmes or updating sessions with senior managers in each of their areas of responsibility . (Senior Staff Briefing, July 2000)*

In the report of the Senior Staff Seminar held in October 2002, there is no reference to communication, either as something which has improved or requires to improve. Further research would therefore be

## Managing through people

required to establish the position today. On the evidence gathered, it was not an area in which managers were accustomed to identifying as one of their key tasks, though they were more likely to identify the consequences of lack of communication, particularly during the merger, as a problem.

### ***Managing through people***

- 6.15. Alone amongst the four case study unions, PCS has expressed no intention of seeking Investors in People status, nor was that mentioned as an aspiration by any of the PCS managers interviewed. However, values statements were made about the importance of managing people. A former General Secretary was particularly emphatic:-

*That's a clear role of the Chief Executive, to get the best out of people that you employ and that's what we try to do. Can't manage without that.*

And other managers are similarly enthusiastic:-

*I think that the similarities are in people issues. You're going to get exceptional ones, good ones and bad ones that in the middle there are a lot of people who have got a lot more in them. If you can release their potential..... (Interviewee B)*

*Love it. In my official union job I get quite involved on the training courses we provide and I love that. I love watching people develop and the skills people can develop through unions through lay activism. It is so under rated, wonderful people at quite low levels to can do public speaking and can have meetings with senior managers all those things which initially they tell you they could not possibly do. Wonderful. (Interviewee N)*

*That is very much my way of managing. Full consultation and involvement. (Interviewee O)*

In a smaller operation, at regional level, people management is similarly central:-

*I have to very much take the approach of saying, you have to be, especially in this kind of operation in (this region), a people manager. You have to not only talk to your officials and staff directly.....If the staff aren't motivated and aren't working well together, you are 50% away from giving anything like an effective service even if the rest of things are top notch. So I think a lot of it is down to people management and it is the way you behave towards your staff, while still keeping some degree of distance to deal with difficult problems when they do come up so you are not just being seen as -- well you're my pal and you should do this. You spend a lot of time with each other, often times that are quite tense and quite fraught when ballots for*

## Managing through people

*strike action are on or things like that. One member of staff has got a domestic difficulty or some other problem in their personal life to deal with and everyone in a small operation has to find a role to play in how they are going to deal with that (Interviewee D)*

One manager has learned the importance of people from experiencing poor management:-

*I have always found that if you treat people as intelligent human beings, you involve them in decisions, objective setting and that kind of thing they buy into it and become committed to it and it works basically. My observation from the outside of watching others manage badly is that they do not involve their staff, they did not involve the managers below them, that kind of thing. Everyone operates in the dark and it doesn't work very well at all (Interviewee C)*

Making time to manage people in a busy life is seen as important, even if the balance is not ideally achieved:-

*The pressure tends to be just to focus on the bargaining rather than making time for the people. I do make conscious effort to make time for doing sort of one to one stuff with people. I like doing it but I find that I don't have enough time to do it is much as I would like (Interviewee G)*

Delegation is seen by some managers as being a particularly important aspect of people management:-

*My idea is to give these people real power and authority (Interviewee K)*

But there is disagreement about the extent to which this has actually been achieved:-

*We haven't.....in PCS really adopted a model which empowers people and gives them the tools to do their jobs (Interviewee B)*

And in one case, delegation to bargainers, in the context of their being in charge of their 'patches' is felt to have gone too far so that, in trying to rationalise bargaining arrangements between the union and (say) EDS, it is difficult to convince staff that they should let go:-

*We've delegated too much and let the bargainers get on with it and trying to get them out of it is difficult.....We've let it go too far and we're not having any strategic input.' (Interviewee H)*

The values of these managers do appear to be exerting influence in the direction of recognising the importance of managing people sensitively, even if there are criticisms about the extent to which, overall, the

## Performance management

union's managers have been able to practise those skills. One particular facet of people management is performance management.

### **Performance management**

Dunlop (1990) asserts that the measures of performance of trade union officials are the votes of the members. And this point has been made, in a slightly different way:-

*As far as accountability is concerned, the democratic/lay structure in fact judges the outcomes of senior managers' work who are therefore exposed all the time to criticism of their work. So there is, contrary to what some people say, a direct, immediate system of feedback. (Interviewee F)*

There is, however, no formal system for obtaining this feedback. The usual belief is that this is particularly difficult in trade unions and that point was certainly made:-

*I think you could say that they are trade unionists and therefore they represent the underdog and therefore do not want to take action, I suppose. They would have absented themselves and done a negotiation and the problem would not be thought about until they came back to the office the next time to find that things are not been done. (Interviewee J)*

As was the suggestion that performance management in a trade union is difficult not in principle but in practice:-

*I think the area where there is the most difficulty is in terms of performance measurement..... If you went to a manufacturing organisation, how many washers you have made is a very easy performance measure. It is easy for salesmen to see how many sales they have made. Even when you get down to some of the areas that we deal with, they have pretty clear performance targets in things like the Inland Revenue and places like that. That is easy to come up with, sort of thing. And they have been able to devise those sorts of measurements, primarily driven around the issue of performance pay. This was obviously a big thing with the last government. I think it is much more difficult to identify those sorts of things, measures, in negotiations because you are never free to do what you want because you have got the other party there who have got the money that you are after. You sometimes get the most fantastic results for the minimum amount of effort and other times you have tried everything in the book that you have not got the results that you wanted. Now there must be a way of measuring that performance, but I do not know what it is. I am absolutely certain that nobody else in PCS does. So if anyone ever comes up with an idea on that, that will be tremendous and I would certainly like to know (Interviewee C)*

## Performance management

At least one manager has endeavoured to answer this question at one level:-

*Making certain that the people we service, our members, (our members in a more general way as well, our customers) get a service from us. So it is ensuring that there are people here in the office for example answering telephones, that everybody knows and understands how many people should be in the office, support staff, and it is setting standards. Once the standards are set, I'm quite happy to walk away from that. (Interviewer O)*

Some managers value one to one meetings with their staff. In fact, PCS did introduce a development reviewing system which may not always have been welcomed by staff:-

*We had a reaction (to development reviews) to begin with because the staff were very nervous about it. They did not quite know what it meant so it was a question of reassuring staff that what you are doing is in their interests. I found it very useful because it allowed me a chance to sit down and talk through not just their development but to find out more about their background and what work they had done. I also used it on performance as well. I don't think you can do it without talking about strengths and weaknesses and I used it to do that. Nothing was written down formally on that. I just felt it would be wrong not to say, well, I think you could improve in this area or I find that you have strengths in this area or weaknesses in that area. I think it is right to do that. (Interviewee O)*

This point was made by another manager:-

*I am involved in a semi appraisal scheme. We do not have a formal system but we do have a system of training and developing staff so I spend some time interviewing them.....If you are (it is almost a bit subversive, really) talking to people about their training and development needs, then you have to talk to them about areas of weakness. So it is almost a back door appraisal although the discussions you have would be confidential in the sense that they would not be in most organisations' appraisal schemes and wouldn't be recorded centrally. What would be recorded centrally would be the outcome and recommendations on training (Interviewee N)*

One senior manager suggested (although he was the only person to do so) that objective setting linked to corporate objectives was being developed:-

*There's a reluctance on the part of some officials to see themselves as managers and you have to keep reinforcing the*



## Staff development

*point all the time. We're doing it in a number of ways. One of these is setting each of these senior national officers objectives which are management-based and not just objectives linked to, say, the bargaining agenda. (Interviewee A)*

Other experience was that the managers did have particular difficulty in managing a formal performance management scheme:-

*We tried in the IRSF, we started to make it run, to bring in a performance management system. We linked performance pay to it because our members were doing it, we should have it, was the thinking. And because it was such a small organisation we all bottled the judgments that should have been made. And everyone became exceders and marvellous and the bloody pay bill went up. Something else always came along on the day of having a session with someone that was more important. So it never became really a tool that a manager could use to shape management behaviour. ...The same thing happened in PTC and I thought it was from the top, when we had two General Secretaries, Clive and John, that we tried to bring in a management system there, a PDR, personal development review system, and it was meant to happen between those two and the senior team, the DGSs, who were meant to get their job plans and then cascade it throughout the organisation. It never got past us. The meetings that we were meant to have with them; I had one and the telephone went and it was curtailed and I never got beyond that. The discipline of having those systems is just lost because the organisation contrives to strangle them (Interviewee H)*

This supports the first citation made in this sub-section, to the effect that some trade union managers tend to shy away from making judgments on their colleagues. We have seen how cognitive rules stemming from the experiences of organisational members influence the willingness of trade union members to take disciplinary action and this is consistent with that mechanism having operated here. However, things may be changing in PCS. One of the action areas arising from the professional staff seminar in October 2002 was:-

*Better development of existing staff including a mentoring system, perhaps via an appraisal system (Building a Better PCS, 2002)*

### **Staff development**

This carries an implied criticism of PCS's systems of staff development. We have seen how a development reviewing scheme is in place and training was undertaken to enable managers to undertake it, with mixed results:-

*We have had training for it and a number of people have been trained but on the course that I was on we decided as course*

## Staff development

*members to set up our own little group to see how we all got on. We had that meeting recently, three months after the course, and very few on the course had done anything at all. So it is very slow. (Interviewee O)*

This is confirmed at regional level:-

*I know we have tried a number (of development review schemes), none of which have got off the ground. What I try to centre it around is that the meeting is primarily about how we can enhance your skills and, in talking about how we enhance your skills, what are we trying to achieve in the next six months or so and how can we look at that six months and beyond in terms of how we can develop your skills. And then if we have got a pro forma, we fill it in. It is a year's plan in terms of development for the individuals. Which I get the impression that not many people are filling in yet. (Interviewee M)*

The rationale for a development reviewing system is that staff training and development is provided in response to needs identified as part of the scheme, as the last citation suggests. Certainly, the first interviewee quoted above saw that as her responsibility:-

*Some of the team, when we opened up our new print and distribution in Wandsworth, had already been on a visit there so that they knew how other parts of PCS worked. It was entirely up to them. Someone wanted to know about finance. So I organised a day in finance. Another wanted to know about research so I organised that so it is not just training courses. I would describe it as development work. We have plans for trips to the trade union side, where the elected members tend to be, to see how they work. So there is all this encouragement. That is how I see my job. (Interviewee O)*

There are certainly things going on:-

*I'm sure that you were aware of some other things that are going on in PCS at the learning centre. I sometimes get the terminology mixed up but I know that there is lots of training and education resources and staff development resources being made available (Interviewee E)*

However, there is no evidence that career development training is being provided. It is an aspiration:-

*We're trying to encourage them to train and to get qualifications. We do not have a training policy as such. We have a draft one which we work to in that it is not been formally accepted yet and that is encouraging people to get on and do qualification courses. (Interviewee J)*

## Staff development

The majority of available training, however, seems to be menu driven rather than related specifically to identified needs:-

*We ran customer care training. We ran about 17 courses all through last year looking at what service you were giving to your members... About three of them were for managers (if they all turned up when they were supposed to turn up you could cover all your managers but unfortunately some were very reluctant and would never come for various reasons) and since then we have done some leadership training and we have dealt with specific skills like recruitment on selection. We could do a lot more and hopefully we will. (Interviewee J)*

One manager defends himself in respect of his non-attendance:-

*The priority is people not saying to me, "why weren't you at that meeting with Jack McConnell that took this decision or Andy Kerr that took that decision or whatever?" "Oh, I was on a course at head office, it was very good." I mean, that would be the lay people's response to it but the staff at headquarters, Personnel, that are trying to do the job and bring people up to standards are saying "well, this is unacceptable, you have not been on this course, not been on that course." (Interviewee D)*

It will be noted that some of the training provided is managerial. In fact, the researcher is aware of the fact that one day seminars on managerial topics have also been provided in PCS by arrangement with Cranfield School of Management. So a body of such training has been made available. In only one case is feedback available on it:-

*We have recently been through a programme of training that was targeted at managers. Very lowest common denominator stuff actually but I guess that process in itself identified us as managers....It was all run by the Industrial Society. I found it personally extremely frustrating because it was just not what I needed or wanted. Part of it I could see that maybe this was the place to start. We had two days of what was management/leadership training and certainly for me it was not that. It's interesting in itself that it was called management and leadership. There was training and development, staff recruitment and selection procedures. (Interviewee G)*

The same manager has taken her own initiative:-

*I have a consultant, a coach, that I'm paying for at the minute -- and J is still humming and hating about whether PCS should pay for it, worrying about setting dangerous precedents. ...My consultant costs me £32 a week and it is such a good investment. When you go to outside training, it can be brilliant,*

## Teams

*life changing, fantastic -- I'm not rejecting the notion of outside training. It can be good. But it is expensive when it is provided by professional organisations -- indeed, when we have professional trainers coming here. To meet the experience of having somebody working with me a one-to-one has helped me make a much bigger shift in terms of how I do things, how I feel. ...One of my values in all that I try to do, and my consultant is helping me a lot with this, is about being authentically me. Not wearing a shell, not posturing, owning when it is difficult, not pretending that I have all the answers, not being defensive when people are critical, not taking it personally when people get angry, being a real human being, that sort of thing (Interviewee G).*

It is the case, however, that managers in PCS are having the opportunities provided to undertake some training for their managerial roles. In the event that there is now in place a training and development strategy and that training and development needs are identified as part of a development reviewing scheme – or even an appraisal scheme if the objective of the 2002 seminar has been picked up, then it would be interesting to look again not only at the development of managers' skills but also at the extent to which, if at all, these have impacted on the experiences of their staff.

### **Teams**

At various times in this case study, managers have used the language of teams. It has been suggested elsewhere that in some areas of the trade union movement, the idea of teams is counter cultural. One manager implied that this could have been the case in some areas:-

*We set up the structure of team meetings which was unknown in the CPSA. We always had team meetings but people from the ex CPSA were very agnostic towards the whole question of team meetings. But I had to be fairly firm, particularly with the officers, in making it clear to them that they were required to attend team meetings, because they saw them as something they could opt out of. I told them that they had to be there. Actually that helped people then to realise that they were having a discussion amongst each other. We also, in order to help the process, set up a team building event which the Industrial Society ran for us. It was in a hotel so it took people away from the office for two days, all of us, and stayed there and that worked very well. People came back from that even better in the team than when they went there. (Interviewee M)*

Furthermore, senior managers do not seem to have operated coherently as a team:-

*It doesn't work particularly well as a team. We're not particularly joined up at present. We tried to instigate a series of fortnightly*

## Teams

*senior full time officer meetings but that has fallen into disrepair. They were badly attended at the start and they got worse since (Interviewee H)*

This is despite their strategic espousal of the idea:-

*We have cascaded the team working process right the way down the organisation, with limited degrees of success but that is the plan (Interviewee K)*

But, in general, reference to teams was overwhelmingly positive and full of aspirational language relating to team building and maintenance.

*There has been a great drive towards team working and team working works in open plan areas more successfully than it would in cellular offices where you are cut off and close the door and you are in your own little area. So team meetings team working, sharing of information, sharing of workloads, sharing of the general concept of PCS I think has improved considerably as a result of that. (Interviewee L)*

*I operate very much on a team approach. There are three teams in here concerning three different areas which are pensions, accounting and then processing all the payments and income and expenditure. Each has got a front-line manager and they operate very much as a team with me as the captain, if you want. So that is very much the model of management that I follow (Interviewee C)*

One manager reports putting an enormous amount of effort into building the teams in his unit:-

*Maybe it goes over the top but what I end up doing is holding a range of team meetings -- full team meetings, officers team meetings, commercial sector team meetings and so on. So on Monday my day is taken up by meetings of the different teams and so on. We keep it free. We have just done it now because we have had a number of staff changes. We will get a facilitator in and just review what we are doing and how we are doing it so that we can move on again and try and do things differently. And then also for the negotiators and the organisers and for the PAs/office managers. Weekly is an exaggeration; probably fortnightly -- it depends who it is. If we sit down and there is half an hour kept in my diary and their diaries -- what to do, what do they want to talk about, what do I want to talk about. That takes a lot of time but it has been worth doing. (Interviewee B)*

And methods of developing teams involved perceptions that openness, in different respects, was an important value:-

*To try to get them to open up and talk and to be positive about the merger and working in the team. So it was giving them the time. Certainly I worked on the basis that they would suggest how they wanted to work and that in a way was how it happened. So, for example, when they came together after a year, when they came together to work they had been used to working in certain offices. And it was asking them "how do you want to work." (Interviewee O)*

*In the end, the key was to make team meetings important because of getting information that they would not get otherwise. One other thing I did was to say that I will tell you what I know and I will be open and honest with you and if it is confidential, I will still tell you but you have to respect that confidentiality. And the first time you don't I will stop telling you. And we decided that we might as well have a gossip at the team meetings, which is often much more fun anyway. So you will hear the gossip and hear the information. And the attendance has got better. (Interviewee B)*

Team meetings were seen in this case as an important part of managerial communication, something which, it was suggested earlier, had not been effective throughout the union.

The language of teams was used positively and easily by managers in PCS, both in formal and informal ways. At senior level, the lack of an adequate strategic team, no doubt for reasons rehearsed earlier, was something to be regretted, even if there was criticism of some team meetings for poor management and lack of relevance:-

*There is again the pretence of teams and structures. We get together with H. There are eight of us. And the meetings are appalling. There is no benefit. We get nothing out of it. I do not come away with a list of things to do. There has been no discussion about projects. It is the political nature of the managers and with how H operates. He actually operates on a one-to-one basis but does the team meeting thing. All the real work is in a one-to-one with H where he sets out his ideas and your views and we discuss them and that works find. But then there are these team meetings that go on all day - the Head Office management team. (Interviewee F)*

### **Managing action**

- 6.16. In PCS, as in many parts of many organisations and particularly in trade unions, there are debates about the difference between leadership and management (in Mintzberg's (1994) terms between 'controlling' and 'doing'. At the highest level, this can be seen as ensuring that the union reflects some of his objectives:-

## Managing action - leadership

*That's called the leadership part of the Chief Executive. My job isn't just to run the union. My job is to take it somewhere.  
(Interviewee K)*

Trade union leadership in these terms is a concept which is almost certainly understood, within and without trade unions:-

*Taking the union somewhere.....managing an idea, a crusade.  
(Interviewee K)*

However, in PCS there have been courses for managers discussing this very subject:-

*They discussed it on the leadership courses, the difference between leadership and management and management tended to be the harder side, the figures and the budget, forward planning and so on and leadership tended to be the softer side, involving staff, communicating with them, training and I suppose what we are looking for was a balance between the two.  
(Interviewee J)*

But there are different emphases given to each of these concepts by different managers. One distinguishes between two faces of leadership:-

*One is a leadership role in respect of the team here -- the full time officers, the support staff and the lay people. It involves developing and supporting people, delivering the product and then I have a very significant bargaining role of my own. I suppose there is a fourth bit which is a leadership relationship with our elected executive. I think that is leadership rather than management, I suppose. There is a rather fine line between leadership and management. It is struggling to find a balance between those different aspects (interviewee G)*

Another attempts a definition which is slightly different from that evidently arrived at in the leadership and management courses, implying that the distinction is to some extent qualitative:-

*I think that good management is leadership with a very light touch on supervision, if you like. Bad management is very heavy on supervision and no leadership whatsoever (Interviewee C)*

And one manager sees management and leadership, it seems, in exactly opposite terms to the way in which it was perceived by those attending the Industrial Society courses:-

*I am sure the initiative one could take is for the management side of the leadership role to click in and say "how do we develop that person? Why have we got them just working in that role? If they have got that skill, why are they not recruiting? Why*

*are they not doing membership services or doing personal cases?" (Interviewee B)*

It would be surprising if, in this or any other union, it proved possible to gain agreement on the distinctions between these roles. It is, of course, probably more confusing in trade unions than in many other organisations. PCS is interesting in that the issue has actually been addressed and debated but the debate does not throw much light on the extent to which trade union 'leaders' are engaged in 'doing' roles because of their visible status. This contrasts with, for example, the CWU where negotiating roles are to some extent retained at high level. PCS's structure was designed to seek to secure devolution of those roles.

In undertaking 'doing' roles, though they are difficult to extract from the data, it was suggested on occasion that lack of a culture in which innovation was welcomed and in which managers felt free to experiment stifled initiative:-

*He (a previous General Secretary) certainly encouraged me -- do that, take the risk and you will fall on your face a few times and occasionally you will get a smack but generally speaking you will come up with some good ideas. And that is what we are missing. I think we are missing it in the trade union movement. In a way, that is what has been refreshing about New Labour; at least they have taken some risks. You look at trade union leaders at the Congress and it is the backside of the nation and I feel very sad about that. So we are lacking that sort of innovation, very much so. (Interviewee B)*

Another senior manager from the same background is more cautious about this:-

*We weren't able to think out of the box as much as perhaps we should have done. We had some outsiders that came in, like L, who came in who didn't have that sort of Civil Service management - more supervisory than management - training that we had in the Civil Service and she would do things outside the box and that brought tensions a bit like 'don't do that sort of thing.' The ability to think outside the box. I feel that we have actually gone backwards (Interviewee H)*

Despite that caution, the move from 'doing' to being strategic is something in respect of which some excitement was expressed:-

*An interesting thing is that I had a recent meeting with H and he said how I needed to take a more strategic role and be less hands-on and I said, yes, these days I write more papers than I do SOL programming. It's something I have increasingly enjoyed, having your vision of where you want to go. (Interviewee E)*



## 'Legitimate' managerial actions - stakeholders

Although the choice not to undertake 'doing' roles may be related to capability:-

*Nobody does the blue horizon stuff; that is they think the time it takes is too much but I worked with C in IRSF. C was great at the blue horizon stuff but he was crap at the day to day stuff. He did not need to do the day-to-day stuff because there were other people in the organisation but he was terrific at the blue horizon. (Interviewee B)*

There is little further data around this issue. PCS managers were addressing in detail their managerial roles and this may well account for their lack of attention to their action roles, or the distinctions between them and the roles in which they were required to innovate or to undertake hands on tasks.

### **'Legitimate' managerial actions**

- 6.17. There are, as has been rehearsed, particularly interesting issues around the issue of stakeholder management in PCS because of the way in which the Principal Rules have restricted the power of Conference to take certain decisions, conversely offering more power to members who vote in ballots. This is posited on the view that activists are not always representative of membership opinion.

Given this background, one would expect that the process of stakeholder management, managing in particular the various components of the democratic structure, would not be straightforward:-

*I would have thought that my style would have led me into priorities of managing the union as an organisation, a democratic organisation that the members themselves want to participate in, this organisation that you've got responsibility for. So I would have thought my key role is to make sure that I have good relationships between myself and the senior elected officials. Very difficult. That's a managerial task in which it's crushingly difficult to find out what the priorities are. It is extremely difficult and if we are looking at the problems, the problems are associated with interpreting the wishes of senior lay officials who in the main, in our union, are themselves managers of fairly large organisations or potentially managers of large organisations. They are managerially trained and understand about setting objectives and priorities, project management. (Interviewee K)*

As expressed, this view seems to describe a setting which would be familiar to managers in the public sector or in a democratic voluntary organisation. And, indeed, this was an analogy which was drawn by a functional manager:-

'Legitimate' managerial actions - stakeholders

*It is very similar. The housing association had its committee and obviously you have got councillors in local government. There is no greater deferral to lay members here (Interviewee J)*

But this probably does not describe adequately the complexity of the relationships:-

*There should be a healthy balance in the organisation between the lay structure, which is accountable terms of its election -- these are the senior people elected by the members and so on - - and the full timers who are the employees and see themselves as the professionals. And on the one hand the lay people can never be as professional as the full timers because we're here 100% of the time, and we get paid for that and the full timers actually need the lay people to just make sure that what they're doing is still on the straight and narrow and we have not lost sight of the members outside the hallowed ground that we can occupy if we are not careful. But what has happened in this organisation because of the splits amongst the full timers is that the lay structure has assumed, I would say as a full timer, a disproportionate power. Decisions that I think the management, the full timers, should be taking are taken by the lay structure. And I think that is inevitable when you have got splits. And equally I suspect that goes the other way, if you have got political splits on your lay structure and your full timers are cohesive, then I suspect the scales tip the other way. We are tipped on the lay side at the moment (Interviewee B)*

This view is echoed at a more senior level:-

*I am frustrated by the fact that it's very competitive amongst the senior officers and because the contours of the land that we have to battle on are set by an Executive who look for different signs of virility that we actually end up operating in the contours they set and not what the contours are for the organisation. I think that I feel very concerned that the organisation is heavily into blame. Looking at things 'why has this gone wrong' not as learning experiences but as someone to be summoned. Full timers are looked on to have all the answers. Part of the childishness of some of the lay officials, the Executive, is that they say they want to take control but when things get bloody tough they don't know what the answers are. It is expected, partly as a virility sign, that the full-timer will sort it out. For a full timer to admit that I don't know the answer is unheard of. So I feel frustrated that people are not able to express uncertainty, not being able to say 'I don't have the answer' - any answer as long as there's an answer - so sharing vulnerability is not something that is in our lexicon at all. (Interviewee H)*

And this lay member approach is supported, albeit in rather more benign terms:-

## 'Legitimate' managerial actions - stakeholders

*Where lay members get feedback that something has gone wrong which involves the interface with members.....then they do want to become involved. For example, there was lay member interest in whether to set up a PCS Direct service and also in the range of membership services which are presently being tendered. Lay members skim across the range of management issues and take an interest in things that impact on members. Where things are going well, there is no significant pressure. (Interviewee F)*

It is clear from these observations that such frustrations or concerns raise all sorts of issues about managing the boundaries between the lay structure and trade union managers. These boundaries can take a number of forms. The first is the practical issue of managing the relationships:-

*I think that in CPSA there was probably too much involvement in the day-to-day running of the office by senior lay officials which I never see as part of their function. The General Secretary allowed that interference, which I think is wrong. Now in PCS there isn't that direct involvement -- it is not obvious to me. Yes they are involved in appointments and things like that which is different and I have no problem with that but whether somebody should be moved, for example, from one office to another or change their duties, I do not think that that direct involvement is appropriate in a bargaining area. You may want to consult when you are changing officials but I am talking about something more serious, about changing people's type of work or where they move to and getting involved in that sort of thing.....I'm happy to work along with elected members and I have been an elected representative myself before I became a full-time official but I think we have our own roles in the bargaining area or in the union, wherever we are. My role is making recommendations to committees, theirs is taking a decision and telling me what is acceptable and what isn't. We have clear roles and the running of the team is certainly my job and not that of elected people.. (Interviewee O)*

The second involves issues about political and power relations between managers and lay activists:

*Coming to this organisation - well, going to PTC first of all - this was very much lay run. The officers thought the same, that was their paradigm, that they were primarily a political grouping, the NUCPS officers, but that was breaking down because the lay officers were against that and were wanting to exert themselves. And then they merged with CPSA, which was a full time officer run union or a full time plus the senior lay officials with the other lay officials being voting fodder frankly. I suppose that was a*

'Legitimate' managerial actions - stakeholders

*caricature of how the IRSF was so it's typical Burns to see yourself as others see us. I saw in CPISA what we actually were in the IRSF. So there were a lot of tensions there, contradictions about how you run professionally in a political organisation. We haven't decided how we should run and I feel constantly suffering, pulled into a siding on a political basis. I see decisions that should be made professionally, practically, properly managerially based decisions that we're not taking because it doesn't square with what the political thing is to do. It's very frustrating because you feel your morals are diluted. You don't feel true to yourself....I find it very difficult to manage this. The tensions are that you make bad calls, you make bad decisions, you do things for the wrong reasons or you find a way around it, or you try and work with the groupings and rub up with them and offer them something in return for them giving you something to deliver a vote through a committee or whatever. You start to lose sight of what the right thing is to do and you start to make the political decision before you make the professional decision. That's what I find. As part of it I fear that if you're not part of the majority, or if you stand out against something that is wrong, you'll be marginalised so that there are huge herd type instincts as well. Trying to find out which is the leading zebra in this bloody herd you can't find it and it seems to create a life of its own without anyone thinking then rationally about what the right thing is to do and all decisions being taken from a perspective that is very unclear (Interviewee H)*

One functional manager expresses the view that:-

*I suppose largely I am sheltered from that in that my position and I don't choose to change. It is not seen as a political position. I don't feel that in the decisions I make or on the committees I serve that I have to wear a political hat. (Interviewee L)*

whilst admitting that he was not able to take an optimum decision on disposal of one regional office in a town where there were two because:-

*it was a political decision that two should be retained at least for a while (interviewee L)*

The General Secretary at the time of that particular decision confirms the truth of that observation:-

*I think it goes back to the original discussion we were having about politics and personal ambition interfering with the decision making process. It's a perfectly good example of how unions used to not manage their processes, why we were poor at it, why people still consider that we're carthorses or luddites. It's a perfect example of that but luckily it's the only example.*

## 'Legitimate' managerial actions - stakeholders

Another functional manager had experienced something similar:-

From my perspective there were political difficulties because my biggest issue was what is going to be the membership system, an integrated membership system as soon as possible because that was key for the organisation to be able to function and to conform to legislation on industrial action ballots. There would be an election process very soon after testing day, a set of elections so you had to have a system to handle that. But then it became a political issue. So the whole aspect of trying to develop the strategy to work together to build the new union met its first obstacle in deciding which system we were going to use, how we were going to implement it and decide (Interviewee B)

The danger is expressed succinctly:-

*I suppose the danger is interference by elected people in a trade union in the managing of staff and in a trade union it is perhaps changing in policies – politics – the political side of it. The politics within the union can have an impact on the managing of the job which makes it difficult (Interviewee O)*

One particular political influence is identified by a functional manager, reflecting on the appointments procedure which PCS introduced which provides for open advertising of all posts:-

*Now we have in place procedures where we do behave like any outside organisation, but there is a reality, when you look at the appointments that are made, that depending on the political complexion, because it is the lay officers, particularly at senior level, that are involved in appointments, they will appoint people of their own political persuasion. That is the reality of unions, I think. (Interviewee N)*

We have seen above one manager who has unwillingly become involved in trades off to achieve his managerial objectives. At regional level, managers identify their strategies for managing these situations, both in terms of achieving an objective:-

*Sometimes you overstep the balance on both sides and then you'd step back and bring it back together again. Undoubtedly, as a senior full time official, you have powers that people perhaps might not realise that you have got in terms of influence in higher places. In the main I try not to use that to thwart the wishes of the elected representatives. If necessary, I would. So I think that the balance is that they understand my role, I understand their role and we seek to make sure that we can proceed in a way that we can all agree with. It is not always possible. Sometimes we fall out, it just has to happen, and if I feel strongly about it I will use my influence elsewhere. I will*

'Legitimate' managerial actions - stakeholders

*make sure that the view I have is the one that gets carried through (Interviewee M)*

And, more benignly, in offering political advice – in understanding the political realities:-

*Very much the key question in this -- because my view has always been to lay people, for Christ's sake don't stand in the way of this. What you have got to do is to control the direction of it and you won't be able to do that if you stand in the way of it. If the answer is no, that's a national union matter and we are the NEC and all that, then what will happen is that discontent will fester, lay officials and full time officers will get fed up with the position and you will then have an explosion at conference which will say, do this. And then you won't have any control over it. (Interviewee D)*

An aspiration shared by a functional manager at headquarters:-

*You need to be aware of the organisational politics to be able to be successful. All organisations have office politics and I think trade unions have them particularly and so you have to operate, I think, at that level (Interviewee E)*

The union's Rule Book defines aspects of its governance in that specific roles, powers and obligations are conferred on different stakeholders. To what extent does it offer assistance to PCS managers in their boundary management? One manager is highly positive on that front:-

*I find myself referring to the rule book all the time in ways which quite surprise me because I think that if you are going to set rules which, if you like, define the values systems of the union -- you know, not supporting any force in society which fosters divisions and promoting the interests of minority groups - you have in your policy work to keep referring back to that, not just write some glib equality statement which is written in the rule book and then go and think that you have done it but to keep referring back and make sure we are doing it and using it. And there are some other useful structural things in the rules, for example proportionality on the appointment of delegations which I have challenged the National Executive on several times and now they do it. There is also in the model branch constitution a rule book which suggests that it requires the setting up of a branch Women's Advisory committee and I have to keep reminding people about that. There is a legitimacy to what we are doing and it is grounded in the rule book. It's part of the principal rules and, if you like, that is why we do what we are doing and here is the authority for doing it. So, yes, I find it quite useful (Interviewee N)*

'Legitimate' managerial actions - stakeholders

Another manager finds the Rule Book of practical help:-

*We take decisions at times where, for example, we identify what constitutionally we have to do to meet certain timetables. We would do that first. We will have a look at the other work and see what can be left and explain to those people that we will do that because it has a lesser priority than somewhere else.  
(Interviewee O)*

And a former General Secretary confirms that it was his specific intention that the Rule Book should be the defining force in determining his own sphere of influence:-

*I think that the role of the Chief Executive does depend on the union structures, hence we worked very hard to get this new union Rule Book. I think to a large extent, the Rule Book of PCS reflects my personal commitment to how you organise unions. I know it's a bit of a circular argument and I understand that. I don't quite know how you get out of it. But the argument that we had about the aims and values of our union is instinctively my own personal agenda about how you run unions which is that politics of the Chief Executive involve the public profile versus the administrative hand. So the union Rule Book, during the process of change, does reflect some of my personal commitment to it well, that's what you have a General Secretary for, for goodness sake.*

Another manager is not convinced that the Rule Book is much help in practice:-

*Ultimately, actually, this is an interesting point about where does the power lie? That is the huge tension that is in the organisation at present. The Honorary Officers, the senior lay officers, say that the power is theirs; the Joint General Secretaries, or at least one of them, says that the power is with him to make the decision, as the head of the paid staff, which is a description in the Rule Book. But I think the Rule Book is unclear. It's unclear on staff, for instance, whether the NEC can decide that such staff will be employed. 'Staff will be employed on such terms and conditions as they should be' but ultimately it's the General Secretary according to the Rule Book who'll decide where they are placed and make the appointments. It's the union that makes the appointments, not the lay officials because they can change at 4.00 this afternoon when we have the election results so I mean there has to be some permanency. It's where the professional decision lies - I don't think it's professional myself but it bangs up against the claim of power by the lay officers so that you have this tension. (Interviewee H)*

## 'Legitimate' managerial actions - stakeholders

In fact, every other manager seems entirely agnostic on the subject, offering no indication at all that the Rule Book is a matter exercising them in their managerial roles within this political environment.

In that environment, as has been seen, there are actual and potential conflicts. Trade unionists, one could hypothesise, would be familiar with conflict and be in a position to exercise core skills. Already cited is an observation that one manager, unwillingly, has adopted a negotiating approach in order to succeed:-

*You try and work with the groupings and rub up with them and offer them something in return for them giving you something to deliver a vote (Interviewee H)*

In fact, within PCS, the evidence does not exist to be able to arrive at the conclusion that these skills are apparent, however intuitively one might feel that they must be. One manager expresses the role of instinct:-

*It's kind of instinctive..... I think it's just an experience thing. I've grown up with it. I have been part of it. I have watched it mature. So you have a feel for it. It's at this end of the fingertips, what you can do and what you can't do and not to push it too far. You can't push that sort of thing too far or else it really does backfire. There is no formula here. I do think a lot of it depends on not going too often, not over-egging the pudding, making sure that people trust your instincts and their instincts are they feel that you are part of them. (Interviewee K)*

Another manager identifies some pure committee management skills as the way she approaches the issue:-

*My experience of union structures, you work with committees, committees always play "catch the full time officers out"..... You have to be so well prepared and so many jumps ahead. It is to do with the dynamics of committees, I think, as well, apart from the union thing. That's what the game seems to be..... I would not say that there are conflicting demands, there are just pressures from different sources. I suppose part of my role is to stop my committees running away with themselves. This is what union officials do generally, isn't it, we have to give the bad news: no we're not doing this, no we haven't got the time or the resource to take on these ideas. (Interviewee N)*

So boundaries in PCS are contested, vigorously in many cases. Managers often find the interface with the democratic structure difficult and understanding and having strategies for how to manage within the political system seems to be a key skill. But the Rule Book is generally not at the centre of their boundary definition and core trade union skills, of negotiation and bargaining, are not central to how PCS managers perceive their approach to managing in this environment.



**Modes of Management**

- 6.18. Set out earlier were some of the values espoused by trade union managers, derived from their experience as trade unionists. Fairness, unity and openness were amongst those identifiable. Here the intention is to examine the way they manage and any possible sources for their espoused approaches.

The first issue identified is that management style tends to reflect the experiences which managers have acquired from their partner unions:-

*Then they looked at the different styles and you've got your autocrat, of which there was a good example in the CPSA and then you have got the laissez-faire approach, of which you had a good example in PTC and they need to be somewhere in between. (Interviewee J)*

*In terms of style, this tends to be rather historic and cultural. Managers tend to follow the custom and practice of the union they came from which in the CPSA was largely command, in the IRSF was charismatic/inclusive and in the NUCPS had been rather a fractional/command type approach. It tends to follow ideas of good practice in the civil service. (Interviewee F)*

It would not be surprising if managers' styles related in some way to the cognitive rules arising from their previous cultural experiences. They also, again unsurprisingly, are influenced by more personal characteristics:-

*I think that's (appropriate management styles) a very difficult thing to prescribe because there are some officials, I think, to whom -- we all think it comes to us naturally and it depends what view we take about ourselves -- but there are some officials like that where it is quite a natural thing for them to do. That happens to be their personal style of how they deal with people anyway. It is a very, very difficult thing. I mean, you can train somebody to play football but you can't train them to be Pele at the end of the day. But there is a certain standard, I think, which the employer, in terms of the union, has to set. (Interviewee D)*

*I'm not sure that you can stereotype management style. If you're in the people business, people are different. Somebody will come along and do my job after me, but do it differently because their style will be different and they are just different people. (Interviewee B)*

Two managers were prepared to hazard a view on an appropriate style in a trade union:-

## Modes of management - styles

*In a union, an open style is the only style even though for the Chief Executive it is more difficult because more decisions are challenged. (Interviewee K)*

*There probably are key things about being open, trying to involve people try to get people on your side. (Interviewee B)*

But many managers were more comfortable describing their own styles as they saw them:-

*Developing the staff and ensuring that they are receiving training and development and that they know what is expected of them and also encouraging them to be motivated and take a wider interest in the union. (interviewee O)*

*I suspect to go the extra mile to help people is probably more to do with my personality and style anyway, whether or not I was in a union.... I am quite easy going really. I like to think of myself as an enabler -- that's a bit of Myers Briggs, really, isn't it. I like to give people the opportunity to develop themselves and do things that they think they can't do, which in a traditional sense we might have thought involved work beyond their grade and to give people those opportunities to try different things. (Interviewee N)*

*I have always got an open door. I always like to think that people will come and talk to me but I also seek to influence people by talking to them (Interviewee M)*

*It involves developing and supporting people, delivering the product (Interviewee G)*

This did not always chime with how other managers saw colleagues behaving:-

*I would have thought that there was a tendency to autocratic or benevolent dictatorship. The strong leader type, the decision-maker. But then, I think there is quite a number of different styles. There is the bureaucratic style, the decision by committee as well and again I think it reflects different areas that unions are recruited from. Particularly here because I think that there is this clash of personalities and clash of styles and culture in the two unions (Interviewee E)*

*It is command and control. Somebody else takes the decision (Interviewee B)*

In 1999, when the Industrial Society reported, management style was mentioned as an issue to be addressed; issues raised then included managers passing on criticism rather than praise, poor attitudes

## Conclusions

towards work colleagues and the communication issues which have already been discussed. Whilst this was earlier than the majority of this research and pre-dated the institution of the PCS management training programme, it suggests that (as, it must be said in many organisations) there is in practice a variety of management styles. At the same time, many PCS managers plainly have the aspiration of managing in ways which reflect positive attitudes towards people and the union itself is providing training to enable managers to be more aware of how this can be achieved.

### **6.19. CONCLUSIONS**

#### ***Trade Union Managers***

There is evidence of the battle that went on within one partner union in which senior officers in negotiating roles developed to the point where they accepted managerial roles and subsequently became significant managerial influences. As far as managers in the other partner union was concerned, there was no similar addressing of this issue. It continued to cause conflict at a facilitated senior management event at Eastbourne in 2000, despite managers from both unions identifying managerial activities which were required to build the new union.

The union does now use the discourse of management and training is provided for management roles, something which several managers identified as being key. In their old unions, managerial tasks were often delegated to specialists because there was no institutional support for the managerial role and no systems to support it. Managers moved their positions as a result of senior management initiatives based on the idea that, without professional managers, structures which devolved power from the General Secretary, recognising that they were now in a much larger organisation, would collapse. The size of the new organisations does seem to have been a significant factor in creating awareness that managerial tasks had to be undertaken.

#### ***Systems***

##### ***Resource Distribution Systems***

PCS is still a substantially centralised union, despite the devolution of bargaining to the regions. Its financial systems reflect that, although there is pressure from regions, particularly from those that interface with new governmental structures such as the Scottish Parliament, for more devolution. A seminar was held about this topic in 2001 but there was no agreement on how this should proceed.

In other ways the system seems to be centrally driven in that virement is not within managers' prerogative and significant expenditure has to be the subject of special reporting, budget or not. Lay members are involved in these processes. This reinforces the centralised nature of the system. Since the research was carried out, PCS has had financial difficulties so it seems unlikely that there has been less centralisation subsequently.

## Conclusions

Systems for allocation of physical resources were also centrally driven, even if the decision to move to the former CPSA building did not attract at least overt criticism when it was taken. Central prescriptions were made about location of functions and about the extent of open plan space, which was substantially a space availability, and therefore financial, decision even if many managers willingly assented to such layouts because of the effect it would have on working practices. However, there was no attention to the consequences of different layouts on the staff already in the building – or of the failure to display the new union name for months after Vesting Day.

Regionally, different factors were relevant but, certainly in one region, much more consensual practices were adopted in planning new space and joint working between partner union staff had been adopted from the start.

### ***Systems relating to cognitive rules***

Within the evidence collected in this project, there is a vivid description of the cultures of the old unions and the task for the union in confronting the manifestations of these in setting up the new union. This assessment is made by someone who was new to the organisation, having been appointed jointly just before the merger, so it gives the evidence added credibility. There was a suggestion that, for those used to deriving authority from the power of the General Secretary, there were feelings of disempowerment; whereas for those who came from an organisation where authority derived from authority systems, often involving lay members, this was not a perception.

However, PCS was in such a state of turmoil, at least until the second half of 2002 after this research had been completed, that it is not possible to make any substantive conclusion about its position in terms of membership participation or leadership predominance. The one thing that can be said is that the General Secretary does not enjoy the level of authority enjoyed by the General Secretary of the former CPSA so to that extent, the union must have moved somewhat towards some form of potential partnership, if conflict can be minimised. Presently these are contested areas.

In the meantime, the level of conflict had a significant impact. Staff sought trust from management; some managers sought to challenge what was identified at a senior managers' meeting as a culture of fear. Managers themselves, however, were working in an environment which, despite widespread acceptance of the need to manage, did not necessarily attach value to the practice. One could speculate that myths and stories were about successes over civil service managers rather than about successes of PCS managers so that such attitudes had a relationship with the historic role of trade unionists in confronting management; some full time officers, used to doing this without too much central direction, may continue to be sceptical. Some managers

## Conclusions

see constraints on their ability to manage deriving from the trade union context, either because systems are not geared up, either practically or culturally, to enable them to tackle staff behaviour or because of the political environment in which they work.

### ***Systems relating to moral rules***

The predominant value identified by PCS managers as influencing their behaviour is that of fairness. Trade unionists do seem to be aware that there is something called a trade union principle but to be less able to offer a definition of it – the idea, as expressed by one manager, that they were there but you didn't have to write them down. This person had identified mutual protection as the principle which came most easily to mind – mutual protection in the face of unfairness, one might speculate. Similarly, openness, listening to people, treating people as one would want one's members to be treated – these all have a similar overtone.

The principle of representative rationality is one which is of particular interest in PCS because of aspects of the genesis of the union, where activist power was limited by a process of balloting the membership. This has caused continuing conflict at activist level and it would have been surprising if this were not reflected in some of the views of the union's managers. On the other hand, the same Rule Book has facilitated the setting up of large numbers of advisory groups, forums, committees in which membership views are sought and some managers are positive about these and about the very process of involving lay members. It seems unlikely that shared values about the systems of representative rationality of the union will emerge until the conflicts still engulfing the union are brought to a consensual conclusion.

### ***Managerial Activities***

#### ***Deploying resources***

PCS has never established a systematic link between objectives, finance and budgets. The budget preparation process may genuflect in the direction of objectives but the system is not holistic. As we have seen, there is no shared view on the devolution of budgets and the whole approach, therefore, is consistent with the centralised nature of the system.

One feature of the system that is, however, evident is the way in which managers express notions of 'fairness' related to the protection of minorities in the deployment of resources and the extent of attention which they receive. Whilst this may not always have been evident on the ground, those who addressed it were highly committed to the principle.

In deploying physical space, there was an attempt to mix partner union staff, even if there were no concomitant corporate managerial activities which might have supported that. Individual managers undertook their

## Conclusions

own, in some cases. The issue of the move of the whole union into the CPSA's former head office was not something which was given attention at the time and it seems only retrospectively that this was seen as having created cultural problems, for both sides, even if the suggestion is that these may have been short lived. But there do appear to have been positive attitudes to the contribution open plan space could make to staff working together, even if the driver for these decisions, at national level, were related to space allocation rather than to culture.

### ***'Meaningful' Managerial Actions***

#### ***Merger management***

A consequence of the lack of agreement on the character of the new union was certainly a factor in the lack of any recognisable merger management except when induction programmes were made available to staff moving into the new head office. Joint training commenced quite some time later. This was something of particular difficulty for managers from PTC where considerable effort had been put into the process of merging the NUCPS and IRSF – whatever their views about the success or otherwise of those processes, managers were aware of what could have been done in PCS. Managers were in some cases left to get on with their new roles – but several did take up the challenge of creating new teams and staffing structures were agreed relatively early to facilitate this.

#### ***Managing by information***

Managerial communication did not figure in those terms in managers' descriptions of their key roles and it seems clear that for the first couple of years of the new organisation it was not satisfactory. After the Eastbourne meeting, however, there is evidence that it improved, in the sense that senior managers began to have one to one meetings with their staff. There is no evidence about whether that translated into an effective managerial communication strategy taking in the staff at large though the mechanisms for one to one meetings, in the form of the development review system, were available to them.

#### ***Managing through People***

PCS managers are aware of the importance of managing people in an appropriate fashion and many express their attitudes in enthusiastic terms. There is some suggestion that, in the union as a whole, this has not gone far enough – this from a manager who felt he had particular success in empowering people when he was a manager in the civil service. On the other hand, there is no formal system of performance management and some feelings that this would in principle be difficult, either because trade unionists had a problem judging people adversely or because of the difficulty in measuring performance. Those, however, who were enthusiastic in using the development reviewing system believed that it was difficult to discuss development needs without discussing performance and the scheme served, therefore, as a means of addressing performance issues openly.

## Conclusions

Arising from development reviews, staff development is made available. Some managers went to some lengths to distinguish development from training and to make arrangements for development experiences to take place within the organisation. Management training has also been made available, based, however, around a menu of centrally provided courses rather than necessarily arising from development reviews as such. Some managers had received training when they had managerial positions in the civil service so there is some trained management within the organisation.

There does seem to have been experience, in CPSA, of a less than positive attitude to team working based, perhaps, on the premise that teams stopped people doing things. But team working is something about which managers in PCS are positive and considerable effort has been put by individual managers into team development. An example of poor team working, at senior management level, seems to be explicable by its formal, top down character; other examples of positive team working seem to have been participative and bottom up.

### ***Managing Action***

In PCS there has been considerable discussion about the difference between leadership and management. On the training courses where this occurred, a traditional view emerged – that leadership is the ‘soft’ side and that management is the ‘hard’ side. But at very high level in the union, there was a concentration on the visionary side of the role. This does not necessarily match because the fact that one has a vision does not automatically mean that one is equipped, in whatever fashion, to achieve that vision. Other managers raised qualitative issues, either relating to people or initiative – creativity. There is some distinction between ‘doing’ and ‘controlling’ – doing the blue horizon stuff – but, in general, no meeting of minds about what trade union leadership was all about and the extent to which it included hands on roles which perhaps leaders in other organisations eschewed.

### ***‘Legitimate’ Managerial Actions***

#### ***Stakeholder management***

As in several other areas, the interface between management and the lay activist structure is affected by the conflict within the union. Managing relationships is a difficult enough task when such conflicts do not exist and there appears in PCS to be competing stakeholder claims of influence which have not been resolved and which are having a significant impact on the way managers are able to undertake their managerial responsibilities. Some managers have clear views about where boundaries should be drawn and within their own sphere of influence, such as the relationship of individual elected members with team operation, boundaries can be drawn and managed. At higher levels, though, this does not seem to be the case and managers often sound rather helpless in the face of managerial issues, as they see them, becoming part of a political process.

## Conclusions

The PCS Rule Book has been important in defining boundaries between lay activists and ordinary members and in facilitating structures to involve lay members. Those structures, and the minority involvement which some of them involve, are of utility in defending minority interests but, to most managers, the rule Book is of little practical importance. Management is sometimes down to instinctive understanding of the environment and to skills in managing the structures and relationships within them.

### ***Modes of Management***

One of the most central discussions at the Eastbourne senior managers event in 2000 was management style, specifically the management style of one of the General Secretaries. So it is an issue that managers have addressed and several people, maybe because of this experience, relate management style to experience in partner unions. Managers do not express a consistent view, either about styles in the union or their own styles but insofar as views are expressed, they tend to the 'softer' side – openness, developmental and supportive. It is, however, clear that there is a variety of styles within the union, reflecting a union which has yet to cohere fully around standards and modes of management.

These conclusions are now summarised in a way which relates them to Hales' (1999) model of management. It seeks to provide explanations for managerial actions from the systems and modalities which comprise the environments in which trade union managers work, as discussed earlier.



## Conclusions

## CHAPTER SEVEN MANAGERS IN UNIFI

### *About the Union*

- 7.1. UNIFI was formed in 1999 by the merger of the Banking, Insurance and Finance Union (BIFU), the National Westminster Bank Staff Association (NWSA) and UNIFI, formerly the Barclays Bank Staff Union. BIFU had been by far the largest of the three unions and regarded itself as the union for all finance staff. As suggested earlier, however, it was not growing and it saw merger as the only way to achieve that. The election of Ed Sweeney as General Secretary undoubtedly had an influence on that and he went round other unions which had merged to gain intelligence about the issues. Given the enormous changes in the finance sector caused particularly by consolidation of Banks and de-mutualisation of other financial institutions, there was little alternative, in achieving a strategy of growth through merger, to forming relationships with staff associations which proliferated in the sector. This immediately raised problems for BIFU because they had always regarded staff association members as 'not real trade unionists' and tackling this attitude was always going to be a problem. BIFU was not ideally placed, either, for integrating merger partners. One of the reasons that it had not attracted merger partners in the past (unlike, say, MSF) was because it had insisted on complete integration so that corporate trade union policies, arrived at by members in a variety of different organisations, would apply across the board. A change in this approach proved vital and, as we shall see, company autonomy in bargaining matters proved to be a cornerstone of the merger.
- 7.2. The National Westminster Bank Staff Association had, for the first time, appointed a General Secretary from outside its ranks in 1996. Rory Murphy very soon told the union that it had to change or die and he very much led the strategy of merger. He was convinced that the days when a small staff association could benefit from a cosy relationship with the employer could not last long and he indicated that, if a merger strategy was not pursued, he would not be staying long. The Barclays Bank Staff Association, which changed its name to UNIFI and was subsequently known as 'old UNIFI', adopted a more cerebral, less personality led approach. As mentioned earlier, it sought a report analysing the state of the industry which led management to a conclusion that it should seek merger with MSF. This was overturned by its Executive which sought the three way merger with BIFU and NWSA. For the staff associations, particularly NWSA, the idea of a three way merger was important because it meant that BIFU would not automatically be the dominant force within the new union.
- 7.3. As in all merger negotiations, there were ups and downs. One of the most significant was when Paul Snowball, the General Secretary of old UNIFI, left the union and was replaced by Bob Drake. This was

generally portrayed as having been on health grounds but there was a great deal of criticism about the union not punching its weight in the negotiations and he was described by one of his former staff as having been 'out to lunch'. From this, the conclusion seems fair that he was removed in the way that senior managers in unions are often removed – by being made an offer he couldn't refuse. Bob Drake became after merger the Chief Executive of Uniservice Ltd, the membership services company which is a subsidiary of UNiFI, though now a substantial minority shareholding is held by UIA Ltd, the mutual company deriving from the former NALGO Insurance Association. Bob Drake retains, however, a place on the Senior Management Team of UNiFI. He, in common with Ian Maclean, was elected; old UNiFI had a wider electoral practice than the other two unions. Ed Sweeney and Rory Murphy agreed on a division of responsibilities after the merger which broadly involved the former running the union, with the title of General Secretary and the latter running the bargaining side of things with the title of Joint General Secretary. An election was held for both of them, on a joint ticket, in 1999 and they were elected unopposed.

- 7.4. As mentioned earlier, UNiFI decided early on that it would retain its three head offices. This decision was taken principally in order to reassure the staff of the two smaller unions that they had a future within the new organisation and would not be swamped by BIFU. The intention was that the three offices would be retained for three years and that, in the interim, a working party would look at a new head office for the merged union. The decision to close Bournemouth before the three year period was therefore somewhat painful and, because of merger negotiations with Amicus, there has been no further progress on the establishment of a new UNiFI head office.
- 7.5. UNiFI has a declared membership of 158,733 in the current year of which just under 39% are female. At the time the research commenced it had 210 staff. Although a pledge of no compulsory redundancy had been given, NWSA had a system of secondment of staff from the Bank and many of these secondments were terminated on merger. The union has 8 regional offices. The staff associations did not have a regional structure and so the regional system was inherited from BIFU. The offices have, however, been rationalised since BIFU's time and location of one office has been changed from Salisbury to Bristol. In 1992 there was a proposal to close the Leeds office but this decision was overturned by UNiFI's annual conference.

### ***Interviewees***

- 7.6. A preliminary meeting was held with the Joint General Secretary to discuss the project and he made some suggestions about possible interviewees. These were not followed entirely but broadly the same approach was taken with this union as was taken with PCS.

Interviewees were:-

## Trade union managers

Gwyn Bates, National Secretary (ex NWSA)  
Sandy Boyle, Deputy General Secretary (Glasgow – ex BIFU)  
Dai Davies, Communications Manager (ex NWSA)  
Bob Drake, Chief Executive, Uniservice (ex UNiFI)  
Robin Haggett, Assistant General Secretary (ex NWSA)  
Bill Howlett, IT Manager (ex NWSA)  
Geoff Luton, National Officer, Education (ex BIFU)  
Rob McGregor, National Secretary (based in Teesside) (ex BIFU)  
Iain Maclean, Assistant General Secretary (ex UNiFI)  
Pam Monk, Research Officer (ex BIFU)  
Rory Murphy, Joint General Secretary (ex NWSA)  
Alan Piper, Deputy General Secretary (ex BIFU)  
Ed Sweeney, General Secretary (ex BIFU)  
Peter Thorn, Administration Manager (ex BIFU)

### **Trade Union Managers**

- 7.6. All interviewees in UNiFI accepted that they had a management role, some, though, more emphatically than others:-

*I definitely see myself as a manager. I have no doubt about that whatsoever. (Interviewee B)*

*Yes, most definitely (Interviewee H)*

Some suggesting that they became managers to some extent involuntarily:-

*Well, by accident or design I am. I am the lead official within the largest section of the union, I have five other full-time officers, paid officials of the union who report directly to me and a further 8 staff who are seconded full-time from the employer I deal with, the Royal Bank of Scotland, and I am responsible for their performance and their management. So whether I like it or not, I am. (Interviewee L)*

*I think I view myself as a trade unionist who also happens to do a bit of managing. So it is at that end of the spectrum. (Interviewee G)*

Interviewee L, it will be noted, is a negotiating officer. So is Interviewee H. It is interesting that those with negotiating responsibilities were no less positive about the existence of management responsibilities than functional managers:-

*I had my own negotiating responsibilities but I was also responsible for running the national committee, making sure that was OK and as I have described to you earlier they were hard taskmasters certainly in the early days to keep happy and to keep informed. So yes, I took that to be a management role. (Interviewee H)*

## Trade union managers

*I do see myself as a manager. What's my role? Well, first of all I decide the structure of the section, processes, procedures, standards and I also allocate duties and responsibilities and I keep a fairly loose level but I do monitor what the senior officials are doing, the national officers. I also see it as part of my job making sure we have got the resources to achieve our objectives and targets. (Interviewee F)*

However, as in some other unions, confidence in one's own role did not necessarily mean confidence that others necessarily shared the view that they were managers, though there could be contradictions:-

*I would say that the only people who regard themselves as managers are me and S and T (Interviewee A)*

*(Regional Secretaries) regard themselves as managers because they are given a specific job. (Interviewee A)*

*Heads of Department (see themselves as managers). That's about it. (Interviewee D)*

The General Secretary, however, was more confident:-

*Myself, R and S and A. Every National Secretary, in my view, has a managerial role. Every regional organiser who has staff underneath him or her has a managerial role and then I would go so far as to say that even head office functions such as education and learning all have managerial roles. We have said that the management of people, the management of resources and the management of issues are things that we have to do*

The extent to which managers have actually accepted their roles on the ground is, of course, most capable of being understood by asking the staff. In the case of UNIFI it is fortunate that the Investors in People assessment of July 2000 contains quotations from staff which are of some interest. Some relevant ones in this context are set out below:-

*"My manager is very supportive. She lets you work things out for yourself, but is there to take responsibility if things go wrong"*

*"Senior managers are approachable and have created a no blame culture which allows us to learn from our mistakes."*

The Assessor found that most managers were seen as accessible and supportive. All this tends to support the view that management roles are not only accepted in the union but that managers are taking them seriously. Investors in People status was awarded as a result of this assessment.

## **Systems**

### **Systems relating to distribution of resources**

- 7.7. There is a budgetary system in UNiFI which seems to be in a state of flux. The Financial Officer explains:-

*For the last two years at least, ever since the new union was formed, the budgeting has been centralised. In old BIFU it used to be devolved up until two or three years before the merger. I would send out pro formas to all the budget holders asking how much money do you want next year, they would come in common be reviewed by myself and by the Finance Committee and by the Management Committee and endorsed by the NEC, along with the process. This meant that the budget holders had an input which admittedly was slashed right back because of the financial constraints. The last two years of BIFU and the last two years here, the situation has been such that we have not done that. There has been no point because the funds available have been so limited that it would have been a waste of time, quite frankly. So they have been told how much they have got to work with. In old BIFU I used to send out monthly report to all the budget holder saying this is your spend this month, cumulative data to this month and it is the budget. And I related it back to the pro forma which they had completed saying what they perceived the year-end position to be. I didn't then control it, it wasn't controlled but it was all monitored and the figures were available. Controlling a committee's expenditure is, you will appreciate, very difficult. Short of saying "you can't meet again" and I can't recall BIFU ever saying to any committee that it couldn't meet any more just because we had run out of money. What we are doing now, and we are in the process of setting it up, is a new finance system which we have introduced within the new year which is actually putting information on the Internet so that each manager can go into his own bit of the Internet and pull up his budget position and fill in required information on that and just send it back to the server and the server automatically shoots it into overall sheets for my attention. It is in the process of being done. It is at least six months down the line before the first one actually works*

So the system managers work to was one in which they had budgets but to which they had little input before being told what they had to spend. The General Secretary gives a little more detail about the system:-

*We are making people accountable for their budgets, to a large extent. They cannot control the salaries but they can control their committee costs and their meeting costs. There has to be a fair amount of discretion on that. Nobody knew that the Royal Bank of Scotland and NatWest would come together so there is no point in saying to both those National Secretaries "you have*

*exceeded your budgets." Quite rightly so. They are in the middle of a huge maelstrom. So you have to have that sort of flexibility. There is one way of doing it. You can either have £10 1/2m which is Ed's budget -- so I control everything -- or you break it up. So we have broken it up. I had to get to a position, and it is not yet in our objectives but in a year or so's time when we are a little more settled, to go back to a sort of star chamber, exchequer sort of discretion on what the budgets should be where people would make a proposal about their budgets. We used to have this system in old BIFU except that some people would do it particularly well and some people would do it on the back of a fag packet and that really used to brass me off. I was in charge of much smaller units and I would have it down to the last penny. Some of the bigger units just said "we'll have £35,000," just like that. I happened to think it was stupid. That is a process we want to go back to, I think. We are setting budgets for them but there is not at this moment in time much throughput as to what they need. We are in the middle of a learning process. RBS/NatWest is our biggest combination with 40,000 or so members. It is huge. But their budget is not based on subscriptions from 40,000 members. What I have made quite clear is that if we go to a budgeting exercise there is no question of people saying that they are the biggest and they get the most. That is my only reservation about introducing it now. I have decided to wait. We did think about doing it but we decided to wait. Especially since we have Barclays and NatWest as two huge dominant forces in this new union and we have not moved the offices around. So the barons are going to say, hold on a minute, it's just like three unions joined together. So we are keeping the finances central. And I would like to get to it within a year. That is an objective I have set myself. People are not feeding into their budgets so there is no ownership at the moment.*

In the absence of ownership, it is not surprising that concern about the system was voiced:-

*My only involvement was the submission of a budget for training for my section and I was awarded anything I asked for, mostly on the basis that I had actually taken the trouble to submit the thing and try and explain what I wanted. So from my limited experience it doesn't appear to work very well. I'm not saying that I researched it terribly well but I did actually do some sums and thought that this would probably cover what I was actually planning to do whereas others either forgot to put it in in time, or whatever and so had figures knocked down. And they may well have researched more than me or asked for more, I don't know so it isn't terribly scientific from what I can see. For my particular section, which is building societies, I had opportunity to input into what their budget for the year would be other than that*

## Resource distribution systems

*somebody looked at what we had spent last year so that I could have no more than last year and I thought that would probably just about do. And I have been told what I have got. But I do not feel as though I had any influence at all in that. That does worry me about the organisation. It is not financially stronger and people talk about how worrying it is and how we've got to get it sorted out but nobody really seems to be doing anything about it. Maybe they are and I'm just not in the loop, I don't know.....I get a monthly or a quarterly report and I can see what I spent but I'm not given the impression that it will be terribly serious unless I have spent it all within the first three months. It will really be a case of, well this is it. To be quite honest, limited influence and limited concern because nobody seems to care that much (Interviewee H)*

One manager had a more philosophical point:-

*I do not believe that generally it is treated as a business. You can see it wherever you go. You can see it in people who ask me for computer equipment. They say "I must have a new laptop". So I say "I'm sorry, I have not got the budget." "We need them, we have got to have them." "Well, hang on a minute. We have not got the money.....Have you got the budget for it?" "Oh no, I haven't got the budget for it. We thought you'd have it." There seems to be a feeling that actually we don't have to run this as a viable proposition. We don't have to make money but we do have to survive. (Interviewee B)*

Lay members are involved in the process of allocating resources:-

*The F & GP makes most of the operational decisions on the amount of resources that are available. It is a political judgment. If it's big dough, people like the Executive have got to be aware of the amount of money you are likely to be spending. And basically get their approval for it or make sure they understand it. That's a constraint, that's the basic one. We have to refer to the shareholders. (Interviewee A)*

And it will have been noted that managers have already made the point that there are issues concerning the democratic process involved in exercises of budgetary control. The General Secretary identified the ability of budget holders to control their meetings costs (whilst emphasising that there needed to be flexibility) whilst the Financial Officer (who also stated that meeting costs were the principal item in the budgets for the various institutions) said that he didn't remember anyone ever telling lay members that they could not meet. One manager is, however, more comfortable with this process:-

*I am not too worried whether I get a favourable response if I say to somebody "you realise that it is June and you are three-*



## Resource distribution systems

*quarters ahead in that you have spent three-quarters of your budget; how do you plan to get through the next six months on three months money?" And why are you there at this stage and if not you're going to have to sort it out because there is no more money". That's the type of thing that I think is different. And I think that then that individual has the responsibility to square it with the lay structure, saying that you cannot have meetings called at the drop of a hat because the budget will not stand it. That does not mean that we will not allow you deviation but that the case has got to be made. And it's not just because -- oh, I've run out of money. So I think that this is an example where I think that the management side's key (Interviewee O)*

UNiFI has experimented with on-line meetings rather than face to face ones. However, when this was explained, there was no mention of resource savings having been an incentive for such a development – rather that it had produced a more effective example of lay democracy:-

*That committee has become virtually virtual. They met yesterday but it is only the second time they have met in over a year. We are featuring online work, why don't we try and make this committee virtual?..... I can get a better debate on an online basis, with more contributions, I get a more measured debate.... It is a pain in the arse, though, because it takes a lot longer. (Interviewee G)*

In terms of physical resources, as was described above, UNiFI decided to keep open the three offices inherited from partner unions. There was virtual unanimity that this had been essential:-

*I was able to say that we will be able to make you certain promises, having gone through mergers before, it was pretty easy to determine what needed to be said. So it was on that basis that I was able to say to staff here, and we presented it as an NWSA initiative, that we would have three head offices and we would not do anything with the three until at least three years. That meant that everybody could sit back and breathe a sigh of relief, because people are quite short-term really. Once they had sat back and breathed a sigh of relief, we could get on with the merger instead of getting on with the merger through the letter box of "I'm going to lose my job, the office is going and so on." That became a crucial decision to be taken and in the end we trusted each other. (Interviewee N)*

And over and over again managers made the same point about the importance of the decision to the merger process, in particular for the smaller unions:-

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*It was vital because of the concept of the merger of equals. I mean, the whole merger would never have got off the board at all if that had not been the main push. (Interviewee H)*

*Our perspective was that on paper this is a merger of equals, we had to be able to punch above our weight to be able to achieve equality. It was a bottom line really at the end of the day. (Interviewee D)*

*If BIFU had said that as soon as we merge we are going to close down two of the three, unless we were closing down this place, the merger would not have gone ahead. (Interviewee K)*

*I think the big problem that they had was that I couldn't have put up an argument for the head office to have been in one of the existing three buildings. That, to me, would have been completely wrong. Because if it had have been in Raynes Park, because it was the only building big enough, and there was a big enough problem with its appearing to be a BIFU takeover anyway, then all that would have done would have been to have done that. Even now, two years on, people still referred to Raynes Park as HQ. And I make a point of saying "I'm sorry, which HQ is that? My understanding is that there are three." Oh yes, and they don't like it. They don't like it. And that would have made that just a much, much worse situation. (Interviewee B)*

Although there may have been slightly more practical considerations as well:-

*Keeping the three head offices was about stability- it was about staff essentially. That's an important factor. To have effected an office move of any description is the quickest destabiliser of staff of any description. The political decision and the management decision is on the basis of saying 'we can't do anything about the head offices because it will screw the merger up because it will completely destabilise the staff.' That's essentially why it was. (Interviewee A)*

One interesting aspect of the allocation of physical space in UNiFI has been that, with the exception of two functional departments, open plan space is not generally seen as appropriate. Functional managers speak first:-

*I'm about to knock out half a dozen walls at Raynes Park and make one big open plan department. Our people just don't talk with one another. They just don't talk, simple as that. They could be doing something hugely important and nobody else knows what's going on. And then find that another person has*

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*been working on it as well. The two of them don't realise that they have been working on the same thing. (interviewee B)*

*I have to say, going back many years at BIFU we moved from old offices into here and we had long discussions about pros and cons of having an open plan office for the research officers and whether there should be individual offices and it is very difficult really to know which way is best. Both have merits. But we went for this model and people can usually find a quiet space somewhere in the building if they absolutely need it. I think if I was doing it again I would do it the same way because I think that the interaction is valuable. It is easy for me to say because of course I can get away from it. (Interviewee J)*

Other UNiFI managers express rather different views:-

*We had the usual debate about whether it should be open plan or not. My view is that trade unions don't lend themselves to open plan working. Call centres do because you're all doing the same sort of work. (Interviewee A)*

*Mostly they have gone for the cellular arrangement, rather than open plan.....I think it is positive. I mean they are in and out of each other's offices, of course, all the time. They are within ten yards of each other. But I think we have got our own space and personally I've always preferred it that way -- well I have never worked in open plan so I would not know what it was like. I just knew intuitively I would not like it (Interviewee F)*

On the other hand, despite criticism of existing offices (the City of London office, for example, was described by the Joint General Secretary as 'shitty'), a senior manager believed that demonstrating to staff that they should occupy high quality accommodation was important:-

*In the Leeds office - they say that little things mean a lot and they probably do - I got the specification off the back of a lorry, to be fair. I said to this bloke - 'good stuff, isn't it?' Little curtains sealed inside glass - it's expensive. I think it was an over-order from another job but whatever. We got them a good spec. I just went in there and said 'OK, right, get in the car and we're going down to IKEA.' Leave all the crap in the old office, bought them cups, kettles fridges, they choose the cups. They also decide to consult on who gets the best natural light. The people who get the best natural light are the people who have to stay in there the longest. Officers by and large have to put up with what they put up with because they are paid more money and they are not in the office every day of the week. (Interviewee A)*

Whilst this system for allocation of physical space is unusual, in context the strategic thrust of decisions arrived at is clear in that it was designed to enable merger to be delivered.

***Systems relating to cognitive rules***

- 7.8. Here we look at whether in any way managers perceive that the union has altered in terms of its status as 'member led', 'officer led' or 'partnership.' With characteristic certainty, the Joint General Secretary gives his answer.

*NWSA was undoubtedly General Secretary led. There is no question about that. Where is it now? It is partnership now between joint general secretaries and NEC.*

If one were to try to seek a consensus, it would be that the two smaller unions were officer led and that BIFU was member led; also that UNiFI is less member led than BIFU but also less officer led than the two smaller unions. But there are many levels of complexity behind these statements.

In unions where there is high officer influence, managers often make use of the word 'trust':-

*I think NWSA, its members and the people that worked for the organisation had a great deal of trust in each other. (Interviewee H)*

*My perception was that the lay people trusted the full time officers and allowed the full time officers to do whatever the full time officers felt was right. They gave them far more freedom than we see now in Unifi. The executive council, comprising the lay people, made the decisions and that was it. Their involvement from many practical viewpoints finished. Even in the management committee that met monthly, there were no great controls exercised by them over the General Secretary and the other full time officers such as myself so it was very much -- you used the expression of the General Secretary running the show -- that was very much it, in my perception. (Interviewee M)*

For one of these managers, the new climate, involving lower trust, was a real problem for her:-

*The lay membership in BIFU were much more powerful and they are much less trusting of the officers and that is one of the things, the major thing that I found difficult when the merger actually happened and I became the lead officer in the NatWest section in the new union. That I was constantly questioned or I felt that people were checking up on me and I had never come across that before. And I took it very personally and I had quite*

*a hard time over it for the first few months because I couldn't believe that we weren't in this together and could trust each other. I think in the main it was down to a few key individuals who were driving things from within the old BIFU and to many ex BIFU members it was also a breath of fresh air, that they had got a different culture coming in as well. So whilst it was a huge problem to overcome, once you had broken through the barrier it became a lot easier. (Interviewee H)*

Another manager had also adapted well:-

*Even the distinction between lay people and full time officers -- there was not that divide in old NWSA. At the monthly management committee meetings, the full time officers and the lay people that comprised the management committee got together, we all sat around the table together and there was no distinction. We were all in it together. But now there is a distinction between lay people and the officials and I do believe that it is right to say that they have a far greater say in the running of the organisation, clearly. If we are talking about the NEC, the President who is very involved. I don't generally attend NEC meetings but we have got the Royal Bank group national company committee, the NCC, and there the chair, the vice chair, the lay people, -- demanding is not the right word but they are responsible for the running of the Royal Bank group in a far greater way than lay people had been in old NWSA. Is that a bad thing? I don't think it is (Interviewee M)*

These managers were all formerly in the NWSA. Those coming from old UNIFI had, however, very similar perceptions:-

*I don't think there has been any doubt that the old Unifi was a union which had historically been led from the front by the senior officials. That is not to say that there was not lay member involvement. The lay members' attitude when I first went to Unifi -- it was then called BGSU -- was that we hire these professionals to do a job and unless there are some very convincing reason otherwise, we let them get on with it. The job of the lay officials was to monitor progress and ask questions and give a steer where they thought that that was required. And although that sort of relationship eroded over the 16 years or so that I worked there -- quite properly so in my view, in fact I encouraged it because I felt that it was potentially unhealthy.....nonetheless even at the point that which we merged, I don't think there is much doubt that the culture in the old Unifi were still one in which the full time officers had a substantial influence on decision-making, partly because we were elected. We were elected as well so we had a democratic mandate the same as the lay members. (Interviewee F)*

*In the new union, and certainly in the old BIFU my perception is that it was completely the other way round. We used to say that the General Secretary of BIFU could not scratch his arse without asking the executive whether it was all right. And I personally think that that's gone far too much the other way. As a result of the merger I suspect that the ex BIFU people probably feel that the power, the influence of the lay members has been reduced, and no doubt it has but it is not all that evident to me. They still want to manage everything. They seem frankly to be incapable of taking a strategic view about our industry and providing clear direction on what strategy should be and leading the full time people to get on and do it. Of course we should be accountable. I have been a trade union official for nearly 30 years. I grew up with it. And we should be accountable but being accountable, holding us to account and interfering with what we do are two quite different things. I think that's one of the issues that we are still frankly trying to resolve within the merged union.  
(Interviewee F)*

But, although expressing similar view about old UNiFI, another manager takes a more sanguine view of developments in the merged union:-

*The old UNiFI certainly was an organisation for many, many years where the General Secretary was the centre and I always remember a conference where there was a new representative and he stood up and said "this is my first meeting and I have spoken to x who used to be a representative and he told me just to do what the General Secretary said." And that probably summed up the organisation as it was then. The organisation grew up as it needed to and it actually changed at a time when the number of managerial people on the executive committee diminished and the number of younger, non managerial people, came on who were looking for running the union their way. They were people who had contact outside. When we joined the TUC and they started mixing with people who actually believed that they controlled their unions from a lay perspective, they sought to bring that degree of lay participation more and more into a union. I have to say that that caused conflict on some occasions because it was anathema to some, who had been in the old union, and equally some of the people just did not want to change from what it was. But it had to go that way. So the union became more lay dominated. There was a time when there was an uneasy stand-off but I think that in general terms, after going through that stand-off when we got a new General Secretary who thought that he was going to proceed the way the old General Secretary had, found out that he couldn't. Then there was an acceptance and a partnership between the two.  
(Interviewee C)*

*The big fear from the staff was that BIFU was perceived as being a union which was totally dominated by its lay people. What the President or the Vice President said was law. That they ruled the roost and that in itself was not an attractive proposition to many people who saw it as an unnecessary interference in the way they did their jobs. The first transitional National Executive Committee confirmed the worst fears of many of those people. Officers were summoned to appear before the NEC -- "have you anything to report"; "no." "Goodbye." They had spent a day struggling to get there. But I have to say that very strong management and a President who is of a different mind resulted in the whole structure and the whole attitude and the whole way of operating moving more towards the partnership model. I think that in the length of time the union has been in existence and particularly after the transition, which was only in May this year, it has worked quite well (Interviewee C)*

The reference to the President is particularly relevant because when, in May 2000, UNiFI reduced the size of the Senior Management Team, it invited the President and Vice-President to sit on it; the researcher attended a meeting of this body in October 2000.

BIFU managers seem, not unnaturally, to be less censorious about practices in their old union and comfortable with changes in the new one:-

*I think it was very much member led and I think there was a degree of the dynamic between the members and the officer corps was an interesting one and a difficult one. I think that has changed and I think that has changed significantly. I think it has also partly changed because of the position that the union finds itself in although the union still is very centralist in its approach. The power is concentrated very much at the centre and whilst we have industrial autonomy in the sense that the National Executive now cannot directly interfere with what I negotiate and what my committee negotiates, they still hold the purse strings. So if we wanted to plough a particular furrow that required a particular degree of expenditure, it is to the National Executive that I have to go. When I say "I", the National Committee, there is autonomy up to a point. But I do believe that the overall relationship and the way in which the union formulates policy and executes policy has improved and I think that is largely to do with the influence of the two other organisations on the existing BIFU structure that was in place. (Interviewee L)*

*I think in BIFU the position was definitely that it was lay member-led albeit that senior officials had some influence, but it was definitely lay member-led. There was a bureaucracy that was there that in many ways stifled the national Company*

*committees which operated in the various institutions. Each unit had a national company committee, like Barclays etc. Now these in our view were stifled because there decisions had to be rubber stamped by the executive. The fact that these committees now have autonomy is in my view a huge improvement. So the decisions are taken within the broad policies set down by conference. The problem with BIFU was that BIFU was living in an era that no longer existed. BIFU was living in a position where its annual conference would determine policy on a wide range of negotiating issues but it was no longer central collective bargaining for the industry. We were down to employer bargaining. And there hadn't been for many, many years. Now the old BIFU of course would mandate because you would go in and talk with the banking federation and that would determine the terms and conditions, that would determine the pay rise etc. That has long since gone and we are really into the law of the enterprise culture. We negotiate within each individual company now and they are totally separate and totally autonomous. And I think that the new union reflects that. And I think that's a very positive step (Interviewee O)*

And one manager has a more down to earth example of changes which he perceives as having occurred:-

*If there's any shift in the way the old BIFU operated which belies the fact that this has been a BIFU takeover, it is this. (Company Committee autonomy) It is a massive change. The old BIFU would discuss things. They once had a discussion about whether we would have a finger buffet or a fork buffet at TUC reception in Blackpool. (Interviewee A)*

The suggestion of the ex old UNiFI manager, that ex BIFU managers saw practices moving in the direction of more autonomy seems to be supported by these views. These issues relate to ways of working, relationships and the 'feel' of the organisations involved. One would, therefore, expect them to perceive these issues in cultural terms and to find the new culture more amenable than some managers from the other unions, who perceive their authority as having been to some extent eroded. Some managers, as we have seen, have expressed their perceptions in cultural terms and there are other examples where they have done this:-

*I don't think that the two cultures -- actually there are three cultures and I think, in fact I know, that the old NWSA culture was much more strongly allied to the old Unifi culture than the BIFU culture -- and yet it's the BIFU culture that still in my view pre-dominates. That's not too surprising given that numerically they are just about dominant. (Interviewee F)*



## Cognitive rules and culture

*I think in the main it was down to a few key individuals there were driving things from within the old BIFU and to many ex BIFU members it was also a breath of fresh air, that they had got a different culture coming in as well. (Interviewee H)*

So cultural issues were a factor in the cognitive processes of managers in UNiFI. Individual experiences will also have impacted, in particular the experience of dealing with management on the other side of the table:-

*I think that there is a culture of unions whereby we're there to represent our members and I think that there seems to be this culture that we can't be managers because those are the people who, day in day out, we are criticising. (Interviewee O)*

This is a view which is commonly expressed by managers in other unions. There is a feeling in UNiFI that management has problematic features but not quite in these rather polarised terms. It seems to manifest itself in more individual circumstances:-

*I think there is inbuilt resistance from the people who are meant to do the personal development plans with their staff because we don't treat them as managers at any level. There are loads of systems but there is that inbuilt resistance anyway. For the people who are having personal development plans done, what is the fucking point? How does this help me? So you get that because in the main their backgrounds are not that. Their backgrounds are that they have come to work for a trade union in their thirties after they have been active or whatever, the classic recruitment shape (Interviewee G)*

The point about personal development plans is, in fact, not supported from the Investors in People assessment findings, which were earlier than this interview, suggesting either that the interviewee had a very different perception or that the PDP process had broken down to some extent in the interim:-

*All interviewees had PDP discussions with their line manager. In all cases training and development needs were discussed and, where necessary, training actions agreed. Both managers and staff commented on the benefits that the personal development planning has brought.*

- *"The PDP process is very good. It provides the opportunity for me to discuss with my staff where they want to go and to help them to develop personal goals" (IIP Assessment July 2000)*

However, other managers share perceptions that management has problematic features:-

*I think trade unions are often very embarrassed to manage. I think certainly going back to BIFU, not immediately before merger but back awhile, it really was a dirty word, it really was embarrassing. Nobody managed anybody, you know. We can keep all our trade union principles pure if we don't manage. And also, I didn't join to be a manager, I joined to be a researcher, or whatever. And I think that culture has changed although there are still those around, and those in what I would call managerial positions, who still operate in that way (Interviewee J)*

The same manager conceptualises one aspect of this issue in terms of the undervaluation of management:-

*There are others who I think see it (management) as a bit of a luxury and a bit of, not really a waste of time but of course you can fuss about with that but if you were doing this real job like I'm doing, then you would not have time for that. And probably an inference that you must have time to spare because you spend some of it on management. But that would probably be said less to our faces these days, I suppose (Interviewee J)*

Managers seem to believe that there have been significant changes in this area. In that, however, may be some element of (as one manager put it) cynicism about some aspects of management, it is interesting to try to discern managers' perceptions of the attitudes of full time officers, often portrayed as particularly resistant to management. And here, some UNiFI managers do seem to recognised this phenomenon:-

*I think it is very prevalent, (FTOs' resistance to management) particularly if you try to manage how they conduct their work. And I do not believe that that is really our job. I think our job is more to ensure that they operate within the parameters that the union sets, not on how they go about negotiating with the employer (Interviewee O)*

To this manager, it is the type of management that is important, rather than management itself, a view which is supported by others:-

*UNiFI have had to break down some of the old values that a lot of people operated under. So there were in my experience areas who believed themselves to be almost autonomous from the rest of the union. Officials who would say "well I don't care what they tell us, this is the where I operate in my area, my members think I'm wonderful and marvellous and I deliver and I've got the best negotiating record." And I suppose that what we have been able to do, being a new union, is to bring everybody in and say that the philosophy we want to preach is one gang, many teams. It is delivering what the union wants. How you deliver it is down to you but never forget that you do have an accountability and you do have a responsibility. (Interviewee C)*

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.....sometimes in graphic terms on how management actually takes place:-

*Yes, that's right. They don't like being interfered with. They don't like unnecessary interference which compromises them in the sense that they say that what you're actually doing is questioning my ability because you're interfering. We don't do that. You won't necessarily wait until they have got a problem or want some direction. There is an assumption that they are paid the dough they are to do the job they're paid to do and to get on with it. Most of them are quite capable of doing that. Well, what most people want is at the very least a neutral corner. I keep myself above all that - a neutral corner to run to. So, hold on a minute, I'm clear about this. Or they'll come in and say 'I'm doing this, I'm letting you know I'm doing it.' Fine. Now that's responsibility transference. What they are actually saying is that they've dumped the can on my desk and I choose whether or not to pick it up. So most of the stuff's OK anyway. Sometimes they walk out of here and I think, fucking hell, what are we paying him £35,000 a year for (interviewee A)*

But it is fair to say that, although several other managers recognise that this is an issue in the union, others have not found it to be the case:-

*We have certainly not found any (resistance to being managed). I think we may have had had there not been a voluntary redundancy programme. There would have been people, (obviously the more senior ones, with longer service, tended to go) either who worked on the same level as J who may have been difficult and there was also another member of the department who went for the post so there may have been some difficulties there. But we haven't had any. We try and make it so that day to day it is fairly hands off management and that secretarial staff and officers have a degree of autonomy about their priorities and which things they initiated. They understand the objectives of the department and the restrictions on the department. (Interviewee J)*

Again, the type of management is seen as important here, something which is identified elsewhere:-

*It is a question of trying to balance that and getting them to see that there are organisational objectives and processes which need to be observed at the same time as delivering services and benefits to members. I think on the whole that works and I have to say that I have found little or no difficulty in persuading my current team of officials to accept the organisational objectives and the managerial objectives that have just gone through some weeks back in the PDP process. We have got a business plan*

## Cognitive rules and culture

*against which we then look at individual contributions, targets and all that sort of stuff, not all of which are about delivering benefits to members but are about doing things more effectively. (Interviewee F)*

And one manager sums the debate up succinctly:-

*I've yet to find an example where someone has said 'I want to be left entirely alone to do what I want to do and I'll manage that.' (Interviewee A)*

All this evidence bears on the particular context of trade union management and some of the cognitive rules of the game. Some managers perceive constraints in terms of the acceptability of management, either to peers or to staff; others are less exercised about those particular constraints. But what other constraints, if any, do managers in UNiFI perceive? In the area of personnel practice, there are seen to be issues:-

*There is no philosophy, is there? There is no culture. I can't remember the last time we managed somebody out of the organisation in a disciplinary sense. Just can't remember it. You have to punch the General Secretary in the nose.....The code itself is perfectly good. It's the culture. Nobody will take it on board. Now whether that will change in the future because the senior management team feel less constrained on staffing matters than they have ever felt, I think, because they have closed two regional offices and one of our three principal offices and there wasn't as much shouting as they thought there would be. Since the merger there are not the same rules and procedures surrounding our appointments, advertising of jobs, that there were before the merger, certainly in BIFU, so they have more freedom to act in those senses. Maybe that will translate into, when people are not very good at their jobs, they are helped to improve and, if not, they are out of the door. (Interviewee G)*

The constraint identified here is perceived by other managers:-

*I suppose the other thing is that it's cultural, isn't it. We are a trade union, we don't sack people and we don't even threaten it. As far as I'm aware we don't even use our elaborately prepared grievance or disciplinary procedures. It is all there but I don't know why it is never used. I think what happens is that the staff know that intuitively and the kind of co-operation that you might expect from service departments who are supposedly there to help me get my job done is, frankly, sub standard and I wouldn't pay them in washers, if I were hiring them in. (Interviewee F)*

Performance management is identified as a particular constraint:-

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*The culture is not in any way towards performance of staff. Those ideologies - I don't happen to believe - we used here to have what we termed an appraisal system. And it was almost blasphemous to say that we appraised our staff. And they were involved in this appraisal system. Now, you can very easily not appraise people at all under the current situation. There are PDPs. The PDPs are not about appraising unless you decide by are going to be. PDPs are -- well would you like to do that, well that will be very nice, yes that would help your future, it won't help us at all but it would help your future. (Interviewee B)*

There is support for the view that this is a constraint but with less emphasis on the ability of trade union managers to deal with the problem:-

*If all things were equal, if there was a degree of resource, then there are not in principle things that you can't do as a manager in a trade union that you could do elsewhere. But I think it comes down to resourcing. It also comes down to conditioning and culture. For example, management of performance would be something that a lot of trade union officials would find a great deal of difficulty with but in the reality, it isn't impossible to construct a performance management system that takes into account the vagaries of the job that we do. (Interviewee L)*

Managers who are concerned about the inability to manage performance tend also to be somewhat critical of some of the union's staff:-

*At 5 o'clock you get knocked over on the stairs in the rush going out. I have to say, not with the group of staff that we have. It is unfortunate but I have eyes in my head and I see what goes on. People taking long lunch hours, coming in late, going early, taking advantage really. Which is fine except that it is at the members' expense. They are paying hard earned money to pay our wages and maintain our building. I would not say publicly but I think we are selling them short. (Interviewee F)*

*The sickness procedures that are currently in place have allowed individuals to have as much as 10 or 11 months sickness every year the year after year and still be paid. It's crazy. Absolutely crazy. (Interviewee B)*

One particular criticism is unusual in that it is directed to the competence of younger members of staff rather than older ones, who are usually the ones pinpointed for recidivist attitudes:-

*The younger group of people I think we have a real problem with because we are not taking in the best crop of working people.*

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*What we are taking in, in the main, is the best crop of people who work in trade unions. This means that we are choosing from only half of the working population. In effect, we are not joining from 6 million, we are joining from 5000 activists. So the gene pool is not altering at all. (Interviewee N)*

Another concern is not directed to quality of staff so much as to the quality of aspects of management:-

*There is not a lot of support for people trying to manage. It sort of happens, magically. I think trade unions are getting better that there is still a feeling that people are placed in a position and they sprout skills. (Interviewee J)*

Despite this, there is no identifiable perception that lack of training affects the ability of managers to do their jobs, possibly because a culture of staff development has been in place as a result of the journeys made by UNiFI and BIFU before it towards Investors in People status.

There is, however, a perception amongst some managers that lay member involvement does constrain managerial behaviour. It is not always, though, seen in negative terms:-

*Although you could say that the democratic process is a constraint, I would not classify it as that. It is part and parcel of the job. To be a good manager you have to manage that. You need to understand that and if you can't manage it you can't do the job (Interviewee E)*

Managerial perceptions here range from the specific:-

*I think in terms of a trade union, sometimes you think that in all honesty you wish that it was full time officials who appointed staff and not the lay structure. (Interviewee O)*

*The thing that stops me managing the way I would want to manage is the interface with the democracy. And also the interface with the staff bodies. (interviewee N)*

to the mildly frustrated:-

*The political process is used for everything, isn't it? The most minor of changes and then we wonder why we can't run the trains on time. (Interviewee G)*

to the rather antagonistic:-

*It seems to me that they all have their own agendas to work to but I think that is just the nature of lay people working in unions*

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*anyway. I think half of them have got a chip on their shoulder and I think the reason they have got a chip on their shoulder in many cases, should I say this, because they have probably not been very successful doing what they have done. Where they have worked. And they have found one way of becoming a bigger fish in a pond is to get involved in the trade union. That is not the case with everybody, it is definitely not the case with everybody, but when you look at committees and see what happens all the time and I just felt that they were losing sight of the big objective, passing around with some pedantic things that were just daft. And hidden agendas were just unbelievable. (Interviewee B)*

Issues of representative rationality and boundary management will be explored later. Cognitively, some managers perceive that the lay structure impedes their managerial roles, slows down decision making and makes managerial activities more problematic. This is by no means a generalised view. It has, however, been possible to identify a range of cultural and experiential perceptions which cognitively impact on managers in UNiFI and can be expected to influence their managerial behaviours.

### **Systems related to moral rules**

- 7.9. Here it is intended to examine whether there are sets of values or principles which influence the way that managers manage in UNiFI. In one case, commencing a discussion on this issue provoked a singular response:-

*My view is that if you want to be a priest or a nun, fuck off to a nunnery. If you want to be a social worker, train to be one. If you're going to be one, be a good one. Don't work in the trade union movement. It's not a calling - we have people that seem to think it's like an alternative to the church. I'm in the trade union movement - they waft it about their middle class dinner parties sometimes- she works in the trade union movement, he works in the trade union movement, look at him, what do they do. It's not a calling. It's a business arrangement. We exist because businesses exist. We are economic organisations. If you want to be a politician, join a political party. (Interviewee A)*

This response, though eminently quotable, was not typical of the expressed views of managers in UNiFI. As did some managers in the CWU, one expressed the value of fairness, but not on its own:-

*I've always adopted the view that I expect managers to be hard, I expect them to be fair. (Interviewee O)*

Another explicitly linked his values as a trade unionist with his approach to people:-

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*I think it is based on values and it is based on how they would genuinely want to treat people, generalised of course. I think sometimes lay structures want you as a manager to behave in one way when you are dealing with their employer but not necessarily when they are the employer and they want you to behave as an employer. They sometimes get the edge of their role very blurred. They cannot see sometimes why they need to apply the same principles to the people that they have a responsibility for and they put you under pressure to deal with those situations accordingly. So I think there is a difference. Hopefully it or comes down to treating people the way you would wish to be treated yourself. (Interviewee C)*

This is supported by the UNiFI Business Plans of both 2000 and 2001. which commence with a statement of the union's strategic ethics. One of these is:-

*To practice what we preach in respect of our own staff and others with whom we work. (UNiFI Business Plan 2001)*

Two other of these ethical statements relate to other aspects of the welfare of people in general, suggesting that the union is aware of the link between management of people and the welfare of people in general.

Another manager felt very deeply about this issue:-

*It sounds a bit trite really and I suppose there are probably those personal principles in the way that you do that that both made it that you have chosen to work for a trade union and also influence your style of management. You are not going to go for a style of taking everybody down the disciplinary route every week. We do a lot in nurturing people and exercising those kind of values which are part of working for a trade union. Certainly, my management style, I think. (Interviewee J)*

*I think it comes down partly to the values again, about valuing the individual and it probably comes to crunch time if there are problems or difficulties with a member of staff's performance. I think as a trade union manager you try harder for longer than perhaps you would do elsewhere. Having said that, I have colleagues who have not done that but I think that would fit in. And apart from that it would be the kind of pressures on the organisation, whether you are making profits or whether you have got to balance the books. That kind of imperative is different. I think it is that if it came to crunch time, it would be handled differently. And the values that you would be working with -- diversity and things like that, I think it would perhaps be a more tolerant environment. (Interviewee J)*



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Another manager takes a highly principled view of her role but a rather different approach to what that means in terms of management:-

*The reasons why people work for a trade union are usually different to what they are working for a profit making organisation. The difference is incredible from that point of view because you normally work for a union because you have some sort of principles or some sort of beliefs rather than, you know, you're out to make a career for yourself or that it's going to be new power and going to bring you more money or a yacht or whatever else, you know. There is just that fundamental difference for starters. I think the unions try to manage in the way that business manages at times. They set the structures up because they think that it is the right thing to do and then they don't follow them through. I mean this organisation has got Investors in People but I don't see any benefit from that whatsoever in an organisation like this because in the main people do things the right way because of their general beliefs. (Interviewee H)*

And openness and consistency are seen as important:-

*I think it is important for people to be seen in demonstrating those (values) and not hiding behind other people's responsibility. We make a decision, we stick to it but at the same time if the decision is perverse, we admit it and you have demonstrated a degree of pragmatism. People are looking for, obviously they are looking for consistency but they are also looking for a degree of security in the decision. You know, if I get a decision from this person, it is going to unravel in a period of time or is it going to be taken back on me. And I think that good managers can demonstrate that that is not going to be the case. Bad managers -- well, bad managers are bad managers. (Interviewee L)*

The General Secretary, looking at the union from a strategic viewpoint, highlights a whole basket of ethical concerns which he believes it is right for the union to adopt, in its dealings with its people but also with the outside world:-

*Yes, there is (an ethical dimension). From the start I made it clear that we were not talking about compulsory redundancies. We may have a voluntary process but they would be no compulsory redundancies, and we stuck to it. It was very difficult but we stuck to it. Including some of those who wanted to go but I said that they would have to stay because we needed them. We will not do business with people who are not basically sound. The company Uniservice which we have inherited from the old Unifi through the guy who is now in charge of it, Bob Drake, we have put through a complete ethical process. So we*

## Moral rules and trade union principles

*do not involve ourselves with private medicine. We have abandoned all that which the previous organisation used to do so we have that ethical stand. We will not deal with other organisations that we think have dodgy ethics. We have put an ethical process into our mission --the actual statement of what we are all about, what are basic aims are about.*

UNiFI managers are not, like so many other trade union managers, specific about their perceptions of what trade union principles actually are. There is, however, some evidence of approaches to management derived from attitudes towards issues such as fairness, openness, consistency, honesty and social responsibility, supported by ethical statements in the union's Business Plans. We need now to see whether it is possible to discern moral rules in their attitudes towards representative rationality, given that a strategic objective of the union is to:-

*widen membership activity and participation in the Union's decision making process (UNiFI Business Plan 2001)*

There has been some discussion earlier about lay members as a constraint on managerial behaviour. The point was made that this was not a generalised view. This does seem to be the case. UNiFI managers point out perceptions of potential problems with the lay structure:-

*There is a danger I would see in having an organisation that is more lay member led. With the officials, one hopes you have the right officials in place because there has been a rigorous selection process. The lay people, with the election process that we have, I fear sometimes the members vote for them on the strength of a pen portrait -- they may not know them too well. I think the dangers of getting the wrong lay people in key positions is greater. Not that I have got any specific problems. I just see the dangers. (Interviewee M)*

And some unpleasant experiences:-

*Early on I went to the national executive committee meeting. They were making unreasonable demands. For example, they wanted a high profile media campaign on this subject and they wanted it to be just switched on, and maybe switched off, but more importantly there was an element of if something didn't go right then it was the Communications department's problem. I went there and said "well hold on a minute, you may think that but what about this, and this and this?" I'm into the stage now where I think that it is more of a waste of time going because they have got out of the habit. It was quite tough early on because all the comments you got were negative. You may have produced one million pieces of paper but one was wrong*

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*and therefore..... But I think that we got away from that a little bit. (Interviewee H)*

*They directly interfered, in fact they sought to put a stop to progress on the partnership agreement, for example in Barclays which is why I made myself extremely unpopular with the Executive despite the fact I was a member of the Executive -- because my election in the old UNiFI carried over the first year in the new union -- so I was a member, and a vocal member but the same time I was an official and I had to give my reports to the Executive the same way as everybody else's. A curious position wearing two hats. They organised against the whole thrust of the partnership deal. There is absolutely no doubt that when it came to the presentation of the Barclays report, they were all there. You could see them, they all had their scripts and their questions and their points of order and their references back and their rule this and rule that, all attempting -- it might only have involved half a dozen people on executive of 35 but you know as well as I do that that can be extremely effective. (Interviewee F)*

UNiFI managers make significantly positive and constructive observations about the process of managing in a representative organisation:-

*We have national committees in both of those organisations of about 12 to 14 or 15, something like that. I believe that we have collaborative relationships and again we work together. (Interviewee H)*

*To be fair, the real management of that lies with the lay structure because it is up to us professionally to ensure that the President and Vice President are totally au fait with the situation. They have got to be the ones who say "no I'm not going to take that." And we're working very well in that respect. That was a terrible problem in the old BIFU but it is no longer a problem. (Interviewee O)*

*My role I think here's in some ways as a facilitator. You have the staff, the full time officers, or with roles and responsibilities. You have the lay structure of the union who have their agenda, their priorities and sometimes those need to be brought into one (interviewee C)*

*There is no substitute, I don't believe, for having committees of the lay people who will give up their time to sit on committees and who will tell you the real concerns. So I use the committees greatly and that is how I see my role. If you were to ask me my real priorities it would be, number one, ascertaining the concerns and the wishes of the membership. (Interviewee M)*

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Positive statements are made about developing lay members:-

*My role there is quite different because again it is more about coaching and supporting the members of the committee have go out there and do the work because I can't interface with the employer. So it's a coaching role with them, if you like. (Interviewee H)*

Also about enhancing the democratic process by the use of information and communications technology:-

*I can get a better debate on an online basis, with more contributions, I get a more measured debate. I told them yesterday, they didn't realise that they had had an extensive debate about one particular conference course that we run and should we accept, when the NEC has said you can only have 30 people on this conference course and we have 43 applicants, how do we split those down to 30, was the debate. So it went on for a long time and it went on electronically and you got every possible view and slice of what these people should represent, coming to conference; should it be one per section or should it be based on activity before and what we view as potential activity after. (Interviewee G)*

And also about the value of the various representative channels to ascertain members' views:-

*Essentially I am in a unique position in basically knowing, or supposedly knowing, what the members are thinking, what the union's internal democracy is thinking and how we're actually going to execute it on the ground and then also directing the office to do that. So if you imagine those communication channels, they are three communication channels but they flow back the other way as well. So, no, I don't have a conflict, I don't see a particular conflict in that. I actually believe that I am able to do my job a lot better. I am able to do my job because I have those three areas of responsibility. So I can have, if you like, an overview of what is happening elsewhere because my officers tell me and I have to direct them on certain issues. Obviously I need to know what the members are thinking because I'm going to be advocating their stance to the employer. And then obviously also managing the overall relationship between the employer and trade union because obviously what we are thinking and what they are thinking can be some way apart on occasions. (Interviewee L)*

For almost every manager in UNiFI, relationships with elected members have changed since the merger that created the union. It is not surprising that there are differing views of that experience. But the

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evidence appears to be that managers recognise, as was said by an interviewee in an earlier section of this chapter, that managing the lay structure is part and parcel of the job and that if you can't do that, you can't do the job. This is a practical statement but it suggests that most managers perceive moral rules influencing managerial behaviour that include a positive approach to representative rationality.

### **Managerial Activities Deploying Resources**

- 7.10. Earlier, there was a discussion about UNIFI's financial management systems. These were substantially centralised with meetings costs being the most significant item delegated to managers responsible for trade union functions and operational budgets made available to functional managers with purchasing responsibility, such as the IT Manager. Monitoring was something which was being developed as a new system was being created.

However, there was no mention by managers of financial systems being linked to the union's corporate objectives. These are contained in its annual Business Plan and managers are tasked to produce departmental business and training plans which accord with the corporate plan. However, although targets are set in these Plans, although several of them are timebound and although achieving effective financial systems is a strategic objective, these Plans are not Business Plans in the normal use of the word, incorporating financial plans to support business objectives, or even indications of where finance would be required in order to meet the objectives. One manager describes what the process means to him:-

*It is a question of trying to balance that and getting them to see that there are organisational objectives and processes which need to be observed at the same time as delivering services and benefits to members. I think on the whole that works and I have to say that I have found little or no difficulty in persuading my current team of officials to accept the organisational objectives and the managerial objectives that have just gone through some weeks back in the PDP process. We have got a business plan against which we then look at individual contributions, targets and all that sort of stuff, not all of which are about delivering benefits to members but are about doing things more effectively. (Interviewee F)*

Beyond this, there is no evidence at all that the union is seeking any form of system to link financial provision to corporate objectives, nor to monitor expenditure against them. Priorities have been identified but, whilst this means that some activities will not be pursued if they are not priorities, this particular tool for managing the process is not available.

There has been discussion about moral rules influencing trade union managers in their behaviour and, in particular, their approach to 'trade

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union principles'. In that there is some evidence of a general belief in 'fairness', these have potential relevance to resource allocation activities.

From a strictly financial point of view, one manager makes a strong statement on the subject:-

*That is one of the reasons why in spite of one of two people wanting it, we have stood out and won on per capita budgeting. I know how much would come in from each of them but that's not generally available for the very specific reason, that the small people obviously are costing us money and there would be attempts to marginalise them. So I hope it never does. It's one for all and all for one (Interviewee K)*

Practitioners on the ground make similar points:-

*In terms of the number of members and in terms of subscription income, you could not operate a system where that has to be self balancing. So certainly, the resources are disproportionate in various ways. But you have to service those members. They are going to become a Unifi member, you can't discriminate against them and say, well, look, the service for you will not be quite as good as those people elsewhere because of whatever. I believe that wherever they are, whoever they may be, whatever their problems are, you have to service the membership in a consistent and a fair way. Collectively and individually. You talked about fairness. That is something else which may not be part of your brief but it is so close to my heart. (Interviewee M)*

*Sometimes you had to lay those trade union principles on the table and say, look, they are as deserving of the resources as anybody else. Yes, pound for pound it is going to cost you more to service them than somebody who works in the Branch retail network. But the new union has a far greater understanding of that. (Interviewee H)*

A similar view is expressed by a functional manager at headquarters who also indicates the complexity of making decisions on priorities and how she would seek to approach this:-

*Trying to say what has priority in that area is very complicated. There are clearly some easier values issues but they are all very rule of thumb. Generally the things that affect a greater number of people rather than a lesser number of people -- having said that we would certainly not say that Nat West has got more members than this building society, therefore their work takes priority. So it only works so far and there probably are a number of rules or guidelines that you have in your head as to how to balance them. You kind of work it out over time. Again, it*

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*comes down to communication, managing expectations and delivering, really. If you can do that, then you can keep them all happy. (Interviewee J)*

The deployment of physical space in UNiFI was undertaken in the context of the decision to keep open all three old union offices, albeit that the Bournemouth office closed in 2002. Because of this decision, it is not surprising that quite different problems were identified in UNiFI than those identified by managers in other unions. The problems were not so much of cultural integration of staff working together but seeking to build the new union in a situation where working together was impeded by spatial factors. It was suggested that the three year timescale for retaining the three head offices was itself a culturally related decision:-

*I suppose unconsciously we have given ourselves three years to bed the structure of the union down and de facto the culture of the union. (Interviewee N)*

There were attempts culturally to reinforce the message that the union had three head offices and that Raynes Park was not the de facto headquarters, as the Joint General Secretary explained:-

*It was incumbent on them as managers to make sure that they went out of their way to move out of the bailiwick that they were used to. Ed, Bob and I had to show that and that is why we had meetings around the place. We would go to Haywards Heath. It is a pain in the neck sometimes but this building knows today that it is important because Rory and Ed and Bob are here (in Bournemouth) and the President is here and the Vice President is here. There are not many people here but it permeates through the system*

The comment earlier in this chapter, however, that some people did not like being reminded that there were three head offices gives the impression that in practice, after merger, there was some ambiguity in the process. This is supported from elsewhere:-

*Of course, the first thing that I did was to come along and say to people that it did not make any sense at all that we're occupying two buildings in Haywards Heath and that since there is going to be a gradual migration away from Haywards Heath in terms of the industrial side of the union, it made sense for us (Uniservice) to be in one building, not only in terms of us being under one roof but from the economic point of view -- we're renting one and we owned the other. So I suppose very easily I put a little bit of pressure on some people and they all saw the logic of moving up to Raynes Park a little earlier which enabled us to move here very quickly (Interviewee C)*

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And there was another illustration of the problems caused by split site working despite agreement on the original strategy:-

*There have definitely been problems with the old NWSA and old Unifi staff feeling part of the new organisation because of the remoteness from Raynes Park. That is a real problem and there are bits of animosity remaining but that is because they don't see each other. I mean, I meet my fellow officers at various times but the office staff don't tend to. That has been a bit of a problem. There have been some attempts made to improve that situation but I think that the geography always gets in the way to be quite honest. Yes, you can hold a meeting, whether that be a union meeting, a clerical bargaining group meeting or whether it's a social event or whatever but that has not really worked. (Interviewee H)*

A view which was substantiated from another source:-

*I think it didn't blend the cultures quickly enough because the day after the merger, the people who came into the office were the same people who came into the office the day before the merger. This office was still BIFU. In Bournemouth it was still NWSA. All right, we were putting headed notepaper out which said something different on it but the cultures were still different. I think they still are different. Whether that is a good thing or a bad thing it remains to be seen but certainly I came up here on day one and had real difficulty changing the culture. (Interviewee D)*

A problem was also identified at regional level:-

*I went to an office just recently, it was an old BIFU office, and I was horrified because there were BIFU posters on the wall in the office. And I wanted to reach up and pull them down. But clearly it identifies to me that there is someone in that office who it is not actually on board in terms of what the new union is all about. And that is where you identify that there is more work to be done (Interviewee C)*

Several managers, however, were positive about the results of the process:-

*I have found it to be harmonious to a great extent. I found that most people accepted it fairly readily. There were a few who went out of their way to be welcoming. I think two only I could regard as having shown any sort of hostility on a personal basis. So in general I found it to be harmonious. All those who have seen other union mergers and have been around more than I have tell me that it went extraordinarily well, the inter reaction between the three sets of staff. (Interviewee M)*



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*It probably hasn't assisted in achieving the kind of cohesion that we might want. But on the other hand we are only two years into the merger and I think that in that sense we have made remarkable progress, despite any impression I might otherwise have given! No, I do think that we have made a lot of progress. (Interviewee F)*

There is no indication that, in UNIFI, managers felt that an approach of valuing the cultures of the old unions was at all appropriate, perhaps because they were so evident in the three buildings anyway. A solution for the problem of lack of cultural integration was, however, offered from several sources:-

*I believe that there should be a new office. That's my belief. Because I think you would still end up with the situation of the Raynes Park takeover, even now two years on. (Interviewee B)*

*I have a view that there should be one head office damn quick. My next main view is that it should not be at Raynes Park simply because Raynes Park is not easy to get to, it is too much a symbol of BIFU, because this organisation is still too much like BIFU. Secondly, it is just not a nice place. So my view is that there should be one head office very soon but it shouldn't be there. Now, that is easy to say but not easy to achieve because we have people involved. We have got staff and it has to be in the southeast, it has to be within travelling distance of the majority of the support staff at work there at the moment because they are in the majority. (Interviewee H)*

*We should relocate centrally. That is, somewhere other than here (Raynes Park). This is a dump and it is not worthy of our aspirations as a national trade union. I mean, I know there are lots of options about whether you develop the site or whether you lease it back or all that which I have not gone into but I think we should have a central office where all the full time officials are employed. (Interviewee F)*

Several managers were location specific, believing that the new office should be in Basingstoke. But one pointed out the difficulties that now lay in the way of achieving such an aspiration:-

*I think there should be a new office but with all of the possibilities of merger and everything else I don't think that is a viable proposition so my view would be that actually we would end up staying as we are (interviewee M)*

This, indeed, has proved to be the case. And the continued existence of cultural stresses and strains is illustrated by one account of views

## Deploying resources

expressed by some staff when the decision to close Bournemouth was taken:-

*One or two people are saying that, well of course, Bournemouth was always going to close anyway. I don't think that was necessarily true. Following the merger, we transferred all the membership down to Bournemouth, all the membership records and people looking after the membership records, membership was Bournemouth, negotiations was Raynes Park and teams was Haywards Heath. Which was a nice split between the three offices. So I would argue with those people. If there had been some covert decision all the way along that Bournemouth was going to close, we would hardly have transferred the membership there post merger. (Interviewee M)*

Earlier, reference was made to open plan working. It appeared from that discussion that there were differing views about its utility and no sense that there were cultural issues involved in this form of organisation of space, particularly in terms of cultural integration. However, the Joint General Secretary did express an awareness of the potential importance of layout of office space in terms of its ability to convey cultural messages:-

*When I went to Raynes Park and I was going to have an office in Raynes Park, people were making coffee in the corridor. And I said "that is just not on." So we had a kitchen made. The stir that went round the office. And I was sharing an office. And people said "aren't you going to have an office?" And I said that I did not care who was going to use it. But the old BIFU management structure was very much that if you are a negotiating Officer, you are male, predominantly, you have a secretary and you have an office and that confirms your status. So management is very much about flattening status in some respects, in getting people to understand that there is not an apartheid in the workplace. If you are a member of staff you are just as important as if you are a negotiating official, or the most senior negotiating official whoever that person might be.*

Even though the decision to keep open the union's three head offices invited a scenario of retention of old union cultures, managers had different roles in UNiFI. They sought to convey the message that the union was new and that the old unions had gone by seeking to maintain the proposition that the union had three head offices. This seems to have had mixed success but the awareness of the cultural implications of the decision, and beliefs about the importance of finding some solution to perceived problems, seem to have been as high in UNiFI as in any other merged union.

***'Meaningful' Managerial Actions***  
***Merger Management***

- 7.11. The merger that created UNiFI took place later than the mergers of the other unions where this research took place. The union agreed a period of a year, until May 2000, which was a 'transitional period' which inhibited the process of merger management:-

*We went through a transitional period and during the transitional period the ability of senior management to do anything was restricted because everything was part of the merger document - certain tablets of stone would be there and the sacred cows in each organisation were there for a period of time (Interviewee O)*

After that period, however:-

*What we set out to do was really to look at a way in which we could end, and end quite quickly, the culture that said that someone belonged to BIFU, NatWest Staff Association or the old UNiFI and get into the mindset that said that it's Unifi from now on and that's what prevailed. (Interviewee O)*

A view about which there are other opinions:-

*I think the complication for some people is that some of the old BIFU cultures are still in the ether and we are trying to kill them in order to create a new culture for the organisation. You get people harking back to the days when we did things this way. Well, so what. Just because we did this way does not mean that it is right. We have cherry picked some of the best practice. And we still are trying to ditch a lot of old practices and develop new ones (interviewee E)*

*I'm not convinced that some of them don't think they are still BIFU. And that's a problem. That's a problem. ( Interviewee B)*

Other strategic actions were undertaken to try to cement the new organisation, particularly in terms of its becoming the core of a new grouping of finance sector unions by guaranteeing the autonomy of company bargaining:-

*Convincing people of the autonomy that the constitution allows the national committees. Convincing people as to why the constitution was actually constructive in that particular way and the advantages that we believe it brings. Not least saying to all the other 30 organisations operating in finance that if they join UNiFI then they can enjoy a degree of autonomy. And then, I suppose, actually policing that in saying to people "well, you might want to interfere, you might think that you are the ultimate policy-making body or decision maker in this process but, sorry, that is not the way it is." (Interviewee C)*

## Merger management

Other structures were also the subject of management attention:-

*We worked very closely together on thinking through what other things we could do in the course of the merger. Three aspects really. One was to try and think ahead to put in some structures that sorted out the disjointedness of the way that we worked within BIFU in terms of the fact that we almost had three circles. We had a management circle locked into the executive committee, locked into the management of that part of the democracy. You had a regional structure which was not really connected with that and you had a service structure which was also not connected with that, and bugged all strategy in the middle. So we thought that we would try and do some work in the course of the merger to try to make people think about this (Interviewee G)*

This was one factor in leading the union to focus on project management as a way of getting staff to work together, which will be discussed later as a managerial activity but which did have merger management factors in the thinking that led to its institution.

In NWSA, lay members had been told by their General Secretary that they must change – or lose his services:-

*If this merger doesn't happen or if this merger happens in such a way that you are unhappy, then you will get the opportunity every six months to say no to it. And I will go. Because if you are not prepared to merge, if you are not prepared to move forward and change, I do not want to work for you.*

As lay members from a small union moving into a large one, it would not have been surprising if they had experienced a certain amount of culture shock. One senior manager, formerly of NWSA, realised this:-

*I suppose making sure that the national executive committees of the two smaller unions were given as many rights or as much rights as the PEC of BIFU. It was a big leap for some of our people to go into this new national executive committee where they had never had any involvement really with trade unionists who did not work for Nat West or Barclays in the case of old Unifi so they were given a lot of opportunities. Some of them have done great things as a result. (Interviewee H)*

Interestingly, there was a converse concern relating to BIFU lay members:-

*What we had to do, and it was the responsibility particularly on the BIFU officers, was ensuring that the focus of the union didn't*

## Merger management

*become concentrated round Barclays and Nat West (Interviewee L)*

There is little data on the topic of merger management as it applied to UNiFI lay members. At management and staff level, however, a number of proactive steps were taken in the smaller unions. In old UNiFI, the managers looked at change and merger management:-

*The executive committee had used a guy called B. F. to deliver a number of seminars to them as part of the process and one of those on change management -- how to handle the relationship with Barclays Bank which was changing quite dramatically following the industrial action and how to put it back on an even keel and hopefully delve into the future. So we decided to extend that to the management team and Bob did a series of training courses for us aimed at equipping the people in how to identify the traditional responses to change, how to deal with them, how to involve people etc (Interviewee C)*

In NWSA, similar training was commissioned, as its General Secretary explained:-

*The programme was called Techniques for Change, it was at Gatwick and the guy who did it was called David F. David was important for a few reasons. One is that he was very experienced in change, that goes without saying, and we were trained in change management techniques. Secondly, I knew him. Thirdly, and most importantly, he was at that time an ex trade union official and is now back as a trade union official working for MSF. So he actually understood the issue of trade unions as well as being an expert in change management and what I was very anxious to do was to have someone who understood our peculiarities. A lot of companies did not understand the constraints that trade unions work under because of their structure and because of their ethos. But David understood all that. Because David knew me,, he was able to say "this is everybody else's change management training, Rory, you don't get involved. You are the sponsor of the change, you do not get involved. You let me deal with it. You stay out of it. You can be there at the beginning and you can be there at the end, but you don't get involved." And I was a bit nervous about that because I'm a bit centralist in the way that I approach things. I wanted to hear what was being said and how it was being said and the structure of it but David convinced me that it was going to be done, it had to be done properly. If there was an issue there, it had to be got out. There was no good covering it up. So I did it and I'm not sure that I would have taken it from many people that because I knew David personally and trusted him, because he understood trade unions and was clearly an expert in change management, it seemed to me that if he was*

## Merger management

*telling me that this was the route to go, then that was what I had to do. So that was quite a challenging few weeks for me. I think that the senior managers in particular found it a bit difficult because they knew that I knew David and they also knew that I was committed to this course of action, whatever they were saying to me and whatever noise I was making, I was committed to it. But as it worked out, it was the most significant event in the run-up to the actual negotiations for the merger because what came out of it very clearly was first that they were very clear that I was committed to the change and that I would drive the change through and so in that respect would be seen as the champion for change, it confirmed that they were absolutely solid that if something was going to happen, I was the best person for the association in leading that to make sure that the association was not swamped or disappeared and that thirdly they felt that at the end of the process, it was the right thing to do. So some very, very positive outcomes came from that*

NWSA, he explained, subsequently extended this training to the staff:-

*Having got that united front with senior officers, we put the staff through it because they were very nervous as well and that the end I was able to say that we will be able to make you certain promises, having gone through mergers before, it was pretty easy to determine what needed to be said.*

Only one (NWSA) manager mentioned any of these events when discussing merger management but did so in positive terms:-

*We had a change management course that was very good, it was a good day that we did (Interviewee B)*

Although the General Secretary himself pointed to a success:-

*If I said to them, for example, "well, we need to have rules that mean that we will not have a rules revision conference for at least three years", before that change management training they might have said "well, what is this all about? This is not how we do it." Having gone through the process, they were able to say "yes, that seems to make sense. That's fine." So there was a trust there*

There were, however, particular difficulties for the staff of old UNIFI. Management of the union had formed a view, following receipt of a report from Cranfield, that merger with MSF was the most appropriate step for the union and the staff had been prepared for this. When the Executive decided something different, it became a particularly challenging management task to motivate the staff to accept the prospect of the three way merger which eventually occurred:-

## Merger management

*All the management team went through change management training to assist them in achieving this and I have to say that given the democratic process that we went through, every person then threw their weight behind the new merger process. For the ordinary staff, that was somewhat difficult for them to contend with, having been told that a particular route was not be contemplated, that route was going to be their saviour and is actually going to benefit them. It took quite a bit of convincing. For the management of the organisation it took a lot of thought and a lot of hard work to convince those people firstly that they should stay and secondly that, in staying, they should believe the managers who were saying that this was the right way forward. (Interviewee C)*

Within the new union, there is a diversity of views about how the aspects of the merger had been managed and what was the right thing to do, suggesting that the corporate approach was perhaps not as developed as the old union managers might have intended. From the top, though, there is some satisfaction:-

*We prided ourselves on being able to get people to talk together, to get people to mix in projects, for example. By and large, the quality of people both in old NWSA and old Unifi was good. And quality in BIFU was good. Obviously, there were some people that you would not give the time of day to because you inherit some people, you do not choose them. We have had some people who have not gelled well. We have had some people who left us because they could not hack the change. They preferred the voluntary redundancy programme and we let them go. We told some people they could not go because we needed them but others we said that if you wanted to go, go (Interviewee E)*

This statement gives headline news rather than specifics about the approach to merger management. The view is, though, shared from a very senior level:-

*Everything about Unifi has been pretty smooth. It has been remarkable really. There have been a few little problems but they are minor. So changing the way that we operate and the people that are doing the operating became intertwined and became very important. And it shook the tree a bit – people seeing that things were not sacred and that they were going to alter and change. And changing the culture is important because if you do not change, you die. It is very simple to me. But how it changes is difficult for some people to cope with. (Interviewee N)*

The same interviewee articulated another aspect of his approach to change:-

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*I am a big believer in the chaos theory. It is a very important concept to me. Because I have enough examples around to show that you have got to take chances, you have got to be able to move out into areas that we are not sure about. My philosophy is that it is okay to step into the dark, it is okay to take a step into the unknown because we are all together, we are holding hands so you are not going on your own. Now if we decide that we want to go behind a particular line and that line proves to be unfruitful, then we have lessons and reasons for dealing with that as well. (Interviewee N)*

This idea, that it was good to create an environment in which people could learn from their mistakes, was given by another senior manager:-

*It's like the civil service - we can't possibly do that because the members wouldn't agree with it. Well, how do you know? If you just got out a shovel and actually did it. We've gone down that road now. Got a few more risk takers - there's not enough risk takers in the trade union movement because traditionally there's no cover given to them. We worked on the blame culture. If we changed the background music and said 'it's OK to take risks, let's go down that road and see where it takes us'. Sometimes it may lead us down a blind alley. Like kids - when you've got kids. When your kids are small they say 'what's round the corner, Dad' and you say 'I've no idea, let's go and have a look.' (Interviewee A)*

Some reservations were evident about what was attempted in terms of merger management:-

*I think with hindsight some of the things that we tried to put in place in terms of the project way of working, some of the structures that we thought might come out the other side in terms of strategic thinking were probably a bit too ambitious in some ways because in hindsight they were never going to last effectively through the merger. You were never going to get people to manage properly. You needed to do a really concerted attempt after the merger, as it were. They wouldn't last. (Interviewee G)*

And a rather different strategy was outlined:-

*Some of them found it difficult to settle. I knew that. If you've got them by the pay packet, their hearts and minds will follow. That's why I concentrated on the terms and conditions. The terms and conditions quite seamlessly drove away all the politics. (Interviewee A)*



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However, individual managers found ways themselves to manage the situations in which they found themselves. One had to manage a personal situation in working relationships:-

*Early on there was a little friction with somebody who was in post in one of the other unions who had aspirations of the senior job. So that has been managed reasonably carefully. We thought we had come to a compromise but in the end we found that it wasn't working and she decided to up and leave anyway. That was one of the difficult areas because it was having an effect on the rest of the people as well. I was quite willing to compromise in terms of what we did, the roles and responsibilities that we had. It worked for a while but I think it was the nature of the person rather than the roles themselves that caused the problem. Apart from that, it's fine. We are becoming more business orientated every day, I think, which is what we need to do. (Interviewee D)*

Another sought to bring staff together across sites:-

*I had a couple of team meetings. The problem was that on the two sites, this one ran all right but on the two sites, if I actually took the whole team out of a site, there was a danger they would have no computers because the maintenance level that was required was so high that you couldn't afford to take all your staff away. Therefore you couldn't have a meeting of all your staff. Now we did have a meeting of all the staff. We had two. Last week I had another because we have now effectively wound down completely the one computer, the old computer at Raynes Park so I was able to take the 5 staff at Raynes Park to meet the three staff at Haywards Heath. (Interviewee B)*

*I have a really strong belief that you do have to get people together, to get them to work together. I mean, I would have loved to have run some time management sessions with them. I would have loved to have run some project sessions with them. Those are the sort of things I'd like to do that we will do but at the moment, you can't take people away if all of a sudden 30 people stop work. (Interviewee B)*

In one department, the manager found the process exciting:-

*That was quite a challenge but it was exciting too. It was a new union and a new research Department. (Interviewee J)*

She described some of her tasks:-

*We discussed with the General Secretary as part of the interview process how the research Department would fit in. We were then asked to come up with plans on how that would*

## Merger management

*happen and we discussed them with Ed and Rory and agreed it and we then had to implement that. That was a huge task. The first priority, we decided, was that we had to get the right people with the right skills in the right places. We did not promise anything outside the department until we knew that we could do that. So there was the question of some staff going on redundancy, others seeing what their expectations were, trying to work out the best of each of the schemes of research that there had been before and add in some more (Interviewee J)*

*There was a delay while some people left but we were allowed to replace those people in different functions and get the skills of the new people up and running. It was a great period of change and uncertainty so there was kind of reassurance. We built a team of new people in when we needed them are obviously we were a year behind in doing that. (Interviewee J)*

*Well first of all it was building a team. This was partly about bringing on individuals but it was also about relationships within the team and initially, because we were doing a lot of training, John and I initiated and directed a lot of things, kind of top down within the department. What we have tried to do, very consciously, is to try and set that down and change the balance of it with that (Interviewee J)*

Meanwhile, some in senior management had their own pressing concern:-

*The discussions went on for hours on what our new titles would be. I was not very popular at the meetings because I had listened to so much and said "look, there are not far short of 200,000 members out there waiting for some sort of service out of us. We have now spent upwards of 2 hours talking about what our new titles could be. I couldn't care less. You can call me office junior if you want to. Just give me a meaningful position in the new organisation and you can call me anything you like. But can we please get on." And I was isolated. But no, this was very important, that we got the titles right and it was an issue that the others in the room clearly attached far greater importance to than I did. But it was as a result of all that and possibly as a result of my little spat that we have ended up with all these titles that we had in the old organisations. (Interviewee M)*

Despite the insufficiency of data on how a corporate approach to management of the merger was managed on the ground, the IIP assessment of July 2000 made a number of findings, based on staff feedback, which indicate that some success was achieved:-

## Managing by information

- *The merger and the assimilation of staff into the new union has exceeded expectations. This has in large part been due to the democratic and open approach adopted from the start. Even before the merger staff from the three partners were brought together to share experience and to discuss the vision and mission of the new union.*
- *The identification and cementing of a sense of common purpose has been greatly helped by further staff gatherings and the adoption of project management as a clearly defined mode of operation within UNiFI. This has maximised staff involvement in tackling and finding solutions to the major operational problems.*
- *The Union's mission, to give members an improved service and a better deal, provides a clarity of purpose for all its staff. (UNiFI IIP Assessment, July 2000)*

### **Managerial Tasks**

#### **Managing by Information**

- 7.12. The assessment cited above gives the impression that high levels of communication pertained within UNiFI. Indeed, the annual Daventry gatherings of staff, which will be referred to below in the context of project management, were very positive contributions to communications. The researcher attended a staff meeting in Bournemouth in March 2001 at which the Joint General Secretary used the occasion to communicate with staff on strategic matters such as the outcomes from Daventry, falling membership and merger strategy. He also said, at a fringe meeting at the TUC in 2000:-

*It has been said that, "most leaders die with their mouths open!" If we look at ourselves I think we can all see an element of truth in this. We, as leaders, must be able to communicate the direction of our organisation's development, and the reasons why change is necessary and why change is occurring the way it is, effectively both inside and outside the organisation. This communication also necessitates leaders listening to both employees and members. Preferably this should be 'dynamic listening': Asking questions all the time and not attempting to provide all of the answers. (Brief for UNiFI fringe meeting, TUC, Glasgow September 2000)*

The union's Business Plan, incorporating mission, strategic objectives and key targets are circulated to all staff annually. And, of course, the personal development planning system is intended to involve communications on an individual level.

Some managerial practice is consistent with this approach: \_

## Managing by information

*I will probably have a weekly chat -- because we kind of split the staff; although we manage them they report to one or the other - with my staff individually, just to say, what happened this week, what are we working on and we jointly decide whether that is worth spending time on, or "well we have had a lot of queries on that; do you think you should do a general thing about that?" Or, "well, hang on, we have got that coming up." And the other side of the deal is that if there is a problem, then they tell us as soon as there is a problem, whether that be relations with another member of staff or a deadline that they are not going to hit, they tell us and we try and renegotiate it. If it can't be then I think they kind of know the strategy for dealing with that. And having the backdrop of the PDP for their personal development and knowing what interests them and where they want to be going, then part of the equation about what were they will do or what they want to initiate, that'll be a factor that will be taken into account in that. So they will understand that they know that we will back them and we will support them and we will be very visible in disseminating information downwards generally. We have the research Department meeting where we all get together, we will talk about what we know about merger plans or whatever, or finances -- we will bring that there and there will be an open and frank discussion. So there is communication and there can't be too much of it in all sorts of forms and in all sorts of ways. They know that they can come to us any time.  
(Interviewee J)*

One manager recognises the need for communicating meaningfully with staff but acknowledges his own personal difficulty in achieving that task:-

*I find to my surprise, I have to confess, that I'm not a natural communicator. I mean, I don't go out and keep everybody involved, advised and up-to-date. I'm a little bit secretive and I suspect that that may be because of the pressures on my time. I'm here late on in the evening, and whatever and I just try and get things done. If I had a bit more time I suspect I would spend more time as they say walking the job and just listening to what people have to say. I do build in to the way we do things regular staff meetings and briefings and all of that and I do listen to what they have to say and I do change ideas or directions taking account of people's input and their practical experience.  
(Interviewee F)*

However, other specific references to managerial communications are almost exclusively in the context of those undertaken in the partner unions immediately prior to merger; for example:-

*We used to have regular meetings of our regional organiser base but we also brought in our staff seconded reps on that as*

## Managing through people

*well. And the prime topic of conversation generally was about how the merger was progressing, what was happening and it was a communication link on that basis to get them on board. Talking to them about their fears because there were some employment problems on the basis that the number of them were seconded from the bank. So we had to get over that but we got E and R and the personnel people along to talk to them and it seemed to work OK. I mean, there were still people who were not happy but in terms of the communication process it worked. (Interviewee D)*

In one case a manager referred to the practice in his old union, though it did have a team briefing system, of communicating with the staff through their trade union:-

*The other channel of communication was, I guess, through the staff's own trade union representatives. The staff in the old Unifi were represented by the GMB and we had a formal structure, negotiation and consultation meetings which latterly I used to lead for the management side of the old Unifi. (Interviewee F)*

Although, therefore there is a body of management practice in this area, managers tend in general not to highlight this task as one of their key responsibilities as trade union managers.

### **Managing through People**

7.14. UNiFI has achieved the Investors in People award. Some of the feedback from the assessor has already been quoted; two quotations from staff which reflect the very positive nature of the assessment report are:-

- *Over the last year a real effort has been made to involve all staff. We can praise the Senior Management Team for this. Our contribution is recognised, our views are taken into account.*
- *If I asked a few years ago I could not have said that clerical staff identify with the Unions objectives. However, as a result of the IIP initiative I can now see how our work contributes. (UNiFI IIP Feedback Report August 2000)*

Furthermore, the union retained a strategic objective relating to IIP:-

*To maintain Investors in People status, with staff being offered every encouragement and opportunity to fulfil personal development (UNiFI Business Plan 2001)*

Investors in People does not guarantee that people management in an organisation will be beyond reproach. It does, however, provide a benchmark of good practice on aspects of people management and a standard against which, therefore, organisations can match their performance. In addition, it is only a snapshot. It is perfectly possible

## Managing through people

that standards can rise and fall, like investments. It is, however, evidence that at the time of the assessment, UNiFI performed the relevant aspects of people management to the prescribed standard. And it is possible to identify managers who are positive about the process:-

*I think if you came back this time next year, Mike, I would probably say that this (PDPs) was the most important management tool, that is what I'm thinking at the moment. (Interviewee N)*

*We have got IIP and we take that very seriously. (Interviewee K)*

*I think that it is good that the organisation has it. ....Personally (I) felt it was a very important thing, no matter how widely it was initiated and whatever, that it would bring managerial stuff in and it would allow good practice in and encourage it in other areas (Interviewee J)*

Another manager related the process very much to being able to get better feedback from the staff:-

*One of the reasons for banging on about IIP was to try to get some sort of assessment about whether I was doing the job or not. Do I inspire confidence? Am I trusted? Do people think that I do not talk out of my arse? Do people think that when I am approached I will sit down and evaluate what they are saying, how they are saying it, what their problems are; whether they are full time members of staff or members? Can I make that assessment? Am I also prepared to say that we have got this wrong? That we have to change. (Interviewee E)*

Another used the system to structure his approach to meeting his staff:-

*I think the IIP thing has been very useful as well because what we do on that is that I tend to build in two formal interviews a year and two informal. The two formal are down that the annual period, looking forward which would also be looking back and then the six-month review as to where we've got up to. In between these I would have three monthly informal chats -- not necessarily producing notes which would go in the individuals personal files but just -- how things are going, what are the issues, how are things resource wise (Interviewee O)*

On the whole issue of people management, managers can be identified who regard aspects of it as very important:-

*It is a case of treating people like adults. If they have messed up on something, they very rarely do, they will come and they*

## Performance management

*will say what we can we do about it and what can we do to make sure that it ever happens again and how are we going to sort this one out, that kind of thing, and we will deal with it (Interviewee J)*

*I manage the relationship with my staff. That's the top of my list of duties and responsibilities. I manage that relationship. They know that. Everybody else knows it and they know how I want the relationship to be managed. I'm very firm that that is under my control. (Interviewee F)*

And also enjoyable:-

*I do (like management). In some ways it is a thankless task because I don't just manage. I am not just a manager. I am also the lead negotiator and I am also responsible for the overall relationship between Unifi and the Royal Bank of Scotland group. So I can be kicked from all sides. But it is something I do enjoy. I do get a degree of satisfaction of leading a team. I know that's probably slightly status conscious as well but it is something that helps, is a motivating factor for me, that I am leading from the front and also the fact that, on the whole, we have a happy team (Interviewee L)*

One manager gives her feelings about the way she is managed:-

*Nobody interferes or checks up on what I'm doing. I feel trusted. (Interviewee H)*

One manager offers his own 'take' on why people may not be checked up on:-

*If someone buggers off and I haven't heard from them for a while, I'll go looking for them because I wonder what they're doing. In a trade union, the one thing that is evident is that you soon know when someone's doing something. It's harder to find out when they're not doing something. The feathers come out of the hen house, don't they, sometimes - oh there's a bit of activity there. That's all right (Interviewee A)*

### **Performance management**

Evidence here suggests that managers in UNiFI take their responsibilities for people management seriously. There are managers, cited earlier in the context of managerial constraints, who are sceptical about the PDP process, in one case because of its lack of contribution to performance management. One UNiFI manager believes that union officials have nothing to fear from a performance management system and uses his own system to link obligations to employers who are strategic partners with work which is necessary on the union's part:-

## Performance management

*We impose a service level agreement, certainly on the officers themselves to say that you have got a series of action points from each and these have to be dealt with but in addition to that we say to the employer, we have asked you for x, y & z and we expect you to provide us with a response to that within a finite period and if we don't, then we will escalate that. (Interviewee L)*

However, it would be fair to say that UNIFI managers do not see performance management as something which takes place to any extent in the union. Certainly, the PDPs are not seen as contributing to this:-

*A meaningless exercise. We set objectives which are set in a way that they will be achieved. He even suggests words. I remember the last meeting; he was not happy with one or two words that I used because it might mean that I would not achieve the objectives if we used the words that I did. (Interviewee M)*

The same interviewee explains the consequence of this on the management of performance:-

*If we have somebody who is underperforming then going through disciplinary procedures and perhaps leading to dismissal is bloody difficult. It takes a lot of time, it takes a lot of heartache, it takes a lot of courage. It is difficult. We often blame the employers for taking what we then call a soft option in not proceeding with disciplinary proceedings. Perhaps somebody who is bullying one of our members. That is the classical one. So we often blame the employer for taking the soft option in disciplinary proceedings and as in so many areas, I believe, this union, if it was to look inwardly, is doing exactly the same thing itself. (Interviewee M)*

Another manager makes a different comparison with external organisations:-

*Well I wouldn't necessarily say that it (PDP system) works from that point of view (setting objectives) if that is the way it is supposed to work. But apart from that helping you to achieve things within the year, it has no material effect on the individuals as to whether they achieve them or not. Which again is probably a difference. Most organisations and companies now have some form of performance based pay which we don't have any type of at all so it's really only for making sure that we are all pulling in the right direction (Interviewee H)*

A particular difficulty with the setting of standards is identified:-



## Staff development

*I'm going to meet really, really big resistance with one of the big changes that we are bringing in in the next six to eight weeks because we are bringing in a piece of software that will log and monitor all support calls and I'm going to refuse to accept any support calls over the telephone unless the computer that they are complaining about is not working. And all calls with then go through this system and be prioritised and we will actually set service standards. Service standards! You can't do that sort of thing! We're going to set service standards and we're going to say that if an individual reports a problem with a terminal and there is no other terminal available within their immediate area, then we will attend to it within x period of time. And there will be a set standard.... but now I'm being accused by one individual, it's big brother isn't it. You're going to be able to see how much work I'm doing. Well, I am yes. It's a great shame, isn't it!  
(Interviewee B)*

A similar thought can be articulated in slightly more cynical terms:-

*How do you appraise, in management terms, in a trade union? Half the staff are field staff and then dealing with the world outside rather than the internal world. Probably from the General Secretary perspective, or the senior management team's perspective, there is probably another year of undetected crime is the appraisal system and even when we have tried to put in even twice a year, meeting staff, and talking about what they are there to achieve and all that kind of stuff, it is actually just hearing what A or E said about us. You have had a good year because I have heard nothing about you, is often the system, isn't it? (Interviewee G)*

### **Staff development**

So this aspect of management does not seem to be the subject of much activity by UNiFI managers and there may be particular difficulties here, influenced, one would speculate, by some of the cognitive rules outlined earlier. One would expect, however, in a union which has been awarded Investors in People, that staff development would be the subject of a greater degree of managerial action. Certainly the union's IIP assessment suggests so:-

*The commitment to staff development has been translated into effective action. Regular personal development reviews and active support for those under training is now the norm rather than the exception. (UNiFI IIP Assessment July 2000)*

There is, in addition, a Training Policy forming part of the union's Business Plan, specifying a budget set for training, indicating that training and development needs should be identified during PDP interviews and referring to a guide 'How to get the best out of Training and Development' which had been placed on the intranet. This

## Teams

suggests that staff development is bound up inextricably with the PDP process, which may explain why few managers refer to it as a separate activity. One manager relates how, in one department, staff development planning arises from PDPs:-

*Research do theirs properly, four times a year. It becomes that sort of development plan. (Interviewee G)*

Managers who are cynical about PDPs also tend to be cynical about staff development:-

*When you are talking about personal development -- well I mean I've made a joke about it. I am a senior sailing instructor and I would love to become a coach and I would love to do that, please, I would go on one of those courses, it will be very good for my future development. I have had people saying "I want to learn Access". And I have said "why do you want to learn Access? You are never going to use it. It is of no benefit to us." You can go on and on. Sailing instruction is at the other end of the of the thing. I just don't think that it is focused enough (Interviewee B)*

*Other areas it just gets in the way or it is a chance to give you a little present, you know. You can get away for a week somewhere, you know. Two days with Tony Grundy or whatever. (Interviewee G)*

There is, however, a suggestion that management training is not taken seriously enough:-

*There is little management training goes on and I would not necessarily like to get into a debate about whether we need that. I suppose we would do really. But again, having come from, having got to a relatively senior position when I worked for Nat West, you had management training experience, both formal and informal (Interviewee H)*

But, in the main, managers regard the personal development planning system as a given and its outcome unremarkable in terms of thinking about their managerial roles, even if there are suggestions that it may not in some areas be observed to the extent expected. They do not generally refer to their own training, except in project management.

### **Teams**

This particular subject, involving the setting up of a large number of project teams in the union, was a strategic objective in UNiFI and makes discussion of teams within the union of particular interest. Setting up the teams had a number of objectives:-

## Teams

*The other thing that we've introduced recently is a project management culture into the union. And I think that that is enormously beneficial because (a) it gives a focus for a task and (b) very, very importantly it says that that's task will not just be the responsibility of management -- it will be the responsibility of whoever is on the project team. And I think that that builds and bonds in a far greater way if people get the idea that they have ownership; a belief that they are important and that they have a role to play and that they are treated equally within the project. I think that's a very useful way to take things forward and I think that these things have all come about in recent years against a background of the IIP culture and what we were looking for. (Interviewee O)*

This seems to have been an idea that originated during the merger campaign:-

*One of the things that we started talking about during the merger was a different way of internal working, a project based way of working, so we started to work in teams. And that did break the church and state in terms of the region, the organisers' role and clerical staff role. So that was the kind of third leg of the roadshows. And we put together for the first time teams at work cross regional, or between institutions and regions, to become the merger teams. And they were allowed more freedom to print their own T-shirts, create their own dynamic around their own patches and we also at that time did the first analysis of where our members were in any meaningful terms..... Our objective when we went into the merger was to try and get people working together and working in teams, all this cross boundary stuff. The pips that I have and the stripes that an organiser had, not that. Just trying to make them work together and share information. Impossible in a trade union, I know, but we do try. So that was what we set out to do. And there was an overwhelmingly successful campaign for the merger. I think with hindsight some of the things that we tried to put in place in terms of the project way of working, some of the structures that we thought might come out the other side in terms of strategic thinking were probably a bit too ambitious in some ways because in hindsight they were never going to last effectively through the merger. (Interviewee G)*

The union organised staff conferences in Daventry in 2000 and 2001 and it was here that strategic project teams were formed and to which they reported back:-

*We've gone through a series of projects from a big conference we've had in Daventry. From that we then formed up all our staff into project groups and gave them things to do. Some of them have come to a conclusion and this is basically a summary.*

## Teams

*We've got 12 groups and group 12 is the group of death - the Senior Management Team. Every project has got a project co-ordinator, a project administrator so we talk to the co-ordinators and we say 'how is it progressing - what do you need?' Out of the 11 projects, 3 have corpsed, some have been amended, some have gone on really well, including producing stuff like this (paper on organising). That's one thing it does but part of our job is to get them into the method of project working and de-mystify it. Project management is a management tool which, if it is used by the Royal Bank, can mean redundancies because they are looking at their business and saying 'well we don't want to run it that way any more, we want to run it differently. - we don't need these people in that place any more and we can't move them so we're going to make them redundant and that's it.' So, forget the results that occur which we're fighting against in the union to achieve job security, look at the method. Why do you think employers are successful, boneheads? Because they do that sort of thing. And what we do? We sit on our fannies waiting for the pile of shit that comes through the door and say 'well, what do we do with that, then?' It's simply working in an organised way with a start, a middle and an end. And you can't have a negative outcome. It can only be positive. If you learn it was a pile of crap, well at least you've learned that. You don't do it again or you amend it. We're beginning to get them into that mode. But that takes time and one of my jobs as a senior manager, together with G and P, is to just keep on and on about it. So whatever we do, we call it a project group. Now I've got National Secretaries or other people coming in and saying 'I want to set up a project team to look at our membership records.' So instead of one person getting lumbered with it and then the blame culture taking over which says 'you've failed'. (Interviewee A)*

So project teams were not just related to achieving the specific aims of the projects, they were intended to impart a whole new way of working, involving staff at all levels. This is supported by the comments of the Joint General Secretary at a staff meeting in Bournemouth in March 2001:-

*People would be involved whether they were familiar with it or not because they could bring new ideas to the project group. R did not want anyone to opt out. Unifi would pay expenses wherever the meeting was held. If the staff had ideas of things that were wrong, he wanted to hear about it. They knew more about it than anyone else. The young members here knew more about how to get young people involved than other people in the union. He did not want any cynicism. Cynical views would be cut out. They were not acceptable. The union wanted all staff to be involved in the management of the union. Grade was irrelevant (Note of UNiFI staff meeting, Bournemouth, 2 March 2001)*

## Teams

At that meeting, reference was made to 25 projects and this is supported by the notes from a project co-ordinators' meeting in July 2000 where there were reports from 11 project teams and the establishment of a further 15.

So this was a very substantial exercise on the part of the union which resulted in significant outputs, such as a substantial guide to organising on Greenfield sites. It was suggested during 2002, however, that the impetus had been lost:-

*The project management style of working, of getting different groups of people from different parts of the organisation together who under normal circumstances wouldn't have got together was an excellent idea and it died. It was one of those things that had a shelf life of less than 12 months. And again it was something that some officers were more enthusiastic than others about. And again, either we do it or we don't. And it was a case of, well, we'll see. Project management was an initiative and then we moved on to something else and we had another set of priorities that we had to address and deal with again, it goes back to the absence of strategy. (Interviewee L)*

Further research would be necessary to establish the present situation but, for the present, it is sufficient to identify project management as a significant corporate initiative, to achieve staff working together, thus to facilitate the integration of the new union and to achieve recognisable products. It denotes a positive attitude to team working in general within the union. One manager found a particularly innovative way of building her team:-

*It is interesting. Last year we did a day out here for the department as a team event. We have made up a garden of the local children's charity. The idea that came from one of the research officers who thought we ought to do this and J and I discussed it and said that, well, this is something that has come from them so let's go with it and let them organise it and support it. And when we discussed about what was the need for this and why people wanted to do it, really the answer came back that it was that they almost wanted to celebrate the team. We are not that often physically together -- we have some people in Bournemouth, some in Bristol, some in Cardiff, some in Glasgow and people here and it was the sort of thing where everybody could be together and celebrate being a team. That was really quite rewarding for J and I. So they do work together and they do support each other. (Interviewee J)*

And several managers drew attention to the importance of teamwork to their work:-

*I very much took the attitude right from the start that there was no way I would even have accepted the job or done it without knowing that I could turn to them the support and help, which I did. They came up with many other suggestions and ideas about how we took things forward and I adapted them and implemented them and put my own staff in as well. It was very much a team and we used to have regular team get togethers even though we were not in the same place, we would have regular get togethers and plan for the national committee meetings and so on together. It was very much a team -- I could not have done it the other way because their experience was vital. (Interviewee H)*

*There are a number of roles. One is to get a team working together, which is difficult because they are operating in different areas and whatever and there are huge pressures on us to deliver communications generally. But to get a team working. There was not a team working environment here before. Everybody was in their little slots and they went home when they had finished their work, and that sort of stuff. There wasn't any shared responsibility. So we've been developing that (Interviewee D)*

This is one area where some of the cynicism reported earlier is not evident and where managers seem to be comfortable with ideas of working in teams and even, as quoted above, 'celebrating' the team.

### **Managing Action**

- 7.15. We have seen that trade union managers are seen publicly as trade union 'leaders' and there is a debate about the extent to which they should be seen to be 'doing' – managing action – as well as leading. So the distinction between leadership and management becomes a relevant issue. The Joint General Secretary offers a summary of the essential attributes of trade union leadership:-

*I believe we can therefore summarise the key issues for the leadership of modern trade unions as being innovation, communication and motivation. (Brief for UNiFI fringe meeting at TUC, Glasgow, September 2000)*

Having reached this clarity, the Joint General Secretary uses the word in interview in what seems to be a rather different way in distinguishing between 'leading' and 'doing':-

*But I could not let him be the lead officer because he is not a leader. He is very much a doer and a very competent, excellent doer. I also wanted to make sure that in the union, in the merged union, that we had a senior woman in an industrial position so G was the obvious person to do it. So that little cameo of change had to be thought through*

## Managing action - leadership

He also describes his own journey from 'doer', negotiator, to someone who rose above that responsibility and the circumstances in which he arrived at this new role:-

*I took the decision in October 1998, as it was clear that the merger was going to happen, although there were some troughs when we thought it might not, that I would start to back out of dealing with Nat West in anticipation of the merger eight months later. That caused a bit of a stir, not only with my management committee and executive but also with the officers and staff here because the role of the General Secretary had always been to negotiate and to be the lead negotiator with Nat West. But it was very clear that if we did merge, that is not a job which I would be doing in the new union and we had to have somebody in place because I wanted to make sure that the Nat West person, a staff association person, was the lead officer in Nat West. So I took a step back.*

In that he suggested earlier that, to be the lead officer with the Bank, one had to be a leader, perhaps he saw both roles as having a leadership content, despite the first one having a high 'doing' responsibility.

He said at the Glasgow meeting that 'innovation' is a key issue in trade union leadership and he does use the word 'vision' in his interviews:-

*What I want to do is take initiatives but initiatives by definition, in my view, of things which people have not thought about anyway and my job is to be visionary for them.*

*That's where my skills are. It is combining, if you like, the wreckage of something to try and build something up. In building something up, you have to have a vision of what that building is going to be like. If you can convince people along the line with you, all well and good but I am very clear in my own mind that you start off on day one that you are the only one.*

He seems to have an image here of the lonely leader, thinking great thoughts with which he must inspire the 'led'. One manager singled out his innovative character for comment:-

*We have found him very supportive. He is very prepared to be innovative so that has allowed us to do things with some members of staff probably would not be countenanced elsewhere in the union that we have gone with it and he has been there to sponsor it. (Interviewee J)*

## Managing action - leadership

Sadly, it is not possible to test his assertion of the importance of communication or motivation to him because these do not feature in the data from his interviews – only in his TUC address.

Another manager suggests that it is in dealings with the members that 'leadership' is distinguishable:-

*As the leader (I mean, I'm really don't like to use that but you are regarded by the membership as the union leader) then I would attend meetings with our equivalents of shop stewards which are called the Jointly Accredited Reps, JARs, who are jointly accredited by both the employer and the employees and that is on a regional basis around the country. In addition to the national committee, we also have other groups of members who are particularly responsible for different parts of the bank, like the branch network, the cashiers, the support areas, the IT function so we meet with their representatives and I also deal with members on an individual basis (Interviewee L)*

Another manager appears to equate the leadership role as being decisive with the members:-

*The other thing as a manager on the trade union side is on the leadership side, is actually being potentially outspoken and saying to people "well, you might have the most glorious vision of what you have to do but hang on a minute -- we are actually, whether we like it or not, talking about a business." A trade union is a commercial proposition. It may not be like a normal commercial organisation which shareholders etc but it is a commercial organisation and it has to take business decisions, sometimes based on the resources it has got. Sometimes the leadership side actually needs to be exceedingly strong in saying -- well we can do that but we can only do it if x,y and z happens. (Interviewee C)*

Elsewhere there is a belief that leading people has a relationship to strategic management, particularly in terms of clarity of purpose:-

*If you are the Senior Management Team and you are being pulled every way by different responsibilities and all the rest of it, the ability to manage strategically is somewhat limited. The problem is that you end up trying to please everyone and leading nobody at all. (Interviewee L)*

This discussion reveals that although the Joint General Secretary has thought seriously about the role of the leader in trade unions, there is no common understanding amongst managers in UNiFI about what it comprises, how it relates to the management role or the extent to which a trade union leader engages in managing action whilst, for example, seeking innovative change.



***Legitimate' Managerial Actions***

- 7.16. We saw earlier that relationships with the democratic structure had changed for almost every manager in UNiFI because of the merger and the different types of relationships that existed in the old unions. It also seemed clear that managers had, in general, a positive attitude towards representative rationality. Here, therefore, we look at how those relationships are managed – how stakeholder management, in this respect, is practised.

In one case, this is done in a way that seems untypical:-

*When you look at committees and see what happens all the time and I just felt that they were losing sight of the big objective, passing around with some pedantic things that were just daft. And hidden agendas were just unbelievable. Everything was slowed down in particular by one individual who wasn't in this case a lay person, he was actually in this case a full-time employee of one of the organisations. But because that person was trying to feather his own nest and get his own things sorted out, he was able to block this, block that and block everything else. And I just thought, well, he needed a good kicking.  
(Interviewee M)*

The idea that the structures can produce unrepresentative results is not one that was commonly expressed by managers in UNiFI. Referring to one of the old unions, however, there was one expression of it:-

*When I went to the NWSA and said that we should merge with Unifi and BIFU, I think the vote was 72 against and one in favour. I was slaughtered, absolutely slaughtered. We did a poll of our seconded reps and jointly accredited reps and the answer was that no way should we merge. We did a survey by the Institute of Manpower Studies and it came back that the members wanted it. And that confirms to me that the some extent the activists have got have a vested interest in keeping it the way it is and are not truly representative of the rank-and-file members. So we have got to have a technique to make sure that the reps are more representative of the members or for the members to get more involved in telling the reps what they want. If we had listened to our reps, we would not have merged.  
(Interviewee N)*

The same interviewee is of the view that working relationships with the lay structure have tensions in them that perhaps would also have existed in the sort of situation described above:-

*One of the issues that I have found with the Executive, and I have not been on one myself, is that there is an innate distrust of full time officers. If you're on an executive or you are on a committee of any type you never think you get all the*

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*information. You are never actually sure that you are getting it all. It builds up a distrust. I find that hurtful. (Interviewee N)*

A view which is supported in a rather more colourful way:-

*What we've tried to stop the Executive doing is to say - look. It can cost you up to £50/60,000 to keep this officer in the field. If any of you have just been to a local fete and seen an Aunt Sally set up, we've just set up the most expensive Aunt Sally you've ever seen. This guy's costing you £50k so you can throw wet sponges at him. Is that a good use of his time and our money? I think, no it isn't. Executive members will sometimes want to exercise power and some of the most vulnerable targets can be the full time officers. They can be accountable to the Executive so they can sometimes present an easy target. We keep reminding them we do not cause the problems in the industry, we are not the employers. It's Barclays Bank that cause the problem which we're trying to deal with in the best way we can, trying unsuccessfully. So this person's not there to have a pop at because you happen to have a particular burn under your saddle about it (Interviewee A)*

However, relationships are not generally portrayed as conflictual as a matter of course:-

*In terms of the union there is no doubt that the relationship of the moment on the Finance and General Purposes Committee between the lay activists and the senior management team is better than I think it has ever been. (Interviewee O)*

*The relationship seems to be quite good but I have got the feeling now where I do not think I have to go every time because I don't think there would be that blame culture again and also because there are a number of NEC members who phone me up and ask questions or find out what's going on rather than pull the power base at the NEC. There are still some who won't and you still get questions when you could have sorted it out quite happily and they think they have got something on the full-time official and will have a crack at it whereas they haven't got the full picture and go down in flames but I think the relationship's quite good. It's quite a constructive working relationship. (Interviewee D)*

One manager describes what seems to be something of a partnership, at least in his own case:-

*It is a very informal relationship. I am one of them but I have more time on the job than they do, is the kind of approach. It is not stratified like some of our committees. In some committees I think you'll find that the full time official is the servant and is*

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*treated as such. I haven't got that sort of relationship but then in the main they are NEC members, I know that quite well, I have known them for a long time, you know, that kind of stuff. You get that unique kind of relationship around the training stuff, don't you, you see them grow, you are influential in their lives (Interviewee G)*

One manager has a practical strategy for managing relationships which involves being open and clear about what can and cannot be done in response to stakeholder demands:-

*I think making clear to the research officers what we feel the priorities are and saying to them that it is okay to say no, which is actually one of the hardest things to inculcate. If they are in committee and everybody is saying "you can do this, can't you?", if they feel that it is clearly not within their remit -- because that is the other thing, that sometimes research departments get work on the basis of "well we don't want to deal with this, let the Research Department to do a report on it", kind of thing -- to be able to stop that kind of work. They can say no and they are clear that if they are unhappy about what they are being asked, then they refer that person to J and I. I think they feel confident in doing that.....If we can and if we think it is appropriate, then we will say yes or we might say part of it, we will do.....So we may say that normally we would do this but we just haven't got it or we can't do it within the timescale or whatever. Most people are reasonable about that. I think if people know what you are going to do for them and when you are going to do it and they know you are going to stick to that, then they are usually quite accepting. (Interviewee J)*

This manager also took on a developmental role in respect of the lay structure by organising a new system of workshops at Conference and accepting a developmental role in respect of lay activists who would run them:-

*I have mentioned the work we do at conference. We are still developing the role of the NEC, that is the longest part of the merger, I think, but they clearly have a policy-making role and at most of meetings we would have policy papers and suggestions for the ideas going to the NEC. And there are the other spin off things -- I had a meeting the other week because the members of the NEC will be chairing these discussion groups even though we have set them up and done all the work. So we will be working together in that kind of way. (Interviewee J)*

The same interviewee has, however, a clear view on saying 'no' to members, as distinct from activists, even though in headquarters there was a regret elsewhere that managers don't talk to members enough any more:-

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*We also have a policy that we will not take phone calls from members. There are two reasons for this. One is that there are resource issues which would not allow some of our other stuff to happen the other is that we actually think that they are better serviced going to the relevant part of the organisation. (Interviewee J)*

These thoughts connote a clear approach to the management of boundaries between managers and the lay structure. In unions, one of the most common issues here relates to staffing and this is something which featured in managers' observations:-

*Sometimes they will try and lay down mandates which say we must have x - officials out all recruiting, that's an order. Well if they gave that order, we'd have to do it but we manage without because staffing matters are not matters which are allowable for discussion at the Executive Committee and/or Conference. You're not allowed to discuss it. That's a matter between the union's Management Team and the GMB as a formal structure. That's how it's managed, basically. (Interviewee A)*

The same interviewee also has a clear view of how potentially conflictual relationships should be defined:-

*What I don't approve of is full time officers ganging up against the membership because that's not their job. Their job is to work with the membership and I very much encourage that and not to say well, it would be OK if it wasn't for the members. These bloody members, if they don't want that, they want something else. Well, of course they do. They're paying your wages. That doesn't mean they can order you about from day to day - go and get the coal, feed the cat, that sort of stuff. But they've got a call because that's what they're paying their union for. (Interviewee A)*

One manager relates his approach to interfacing with aspects of the political structure:-

*I think my job is to ensure that, wherever practicable, logic and commonsense prevails and not political dogma. And fortunately at the moment the ultra left influence in the union is not very strong. A few years ago there was a core of Trotskyist elements and we did have problems. And it is difficult to weigh up if that is a managerial role or whether it is just the gut reaction which says that you close ranks so that every time the head comes above the parapet you kick it. That's effectively the attitude that prevailed with me in respect of the Socialist Workers Party and Militant. I just saw them as a danger to our democracy in terms of how they operated. In the union at the moment it is not a*

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*major problem at all. I would seek to operate as openly as we can with the lay structure and talk through that in the early days, particularly the key players (Interviewee O)*

But, in UNIFI, the principal area of conflict mentioned by managers relates to the principle of autonomy for Company Committees. This was something that was not the case in BIFU and it was not an issue with the other two old unions because they each dealt with only one employer. It is an area where elements of the lay structure have sought to regain ground and where a management response is required:-

*I think that now it is easy to manage. The National Executive role has diminished and there is a far greater degree of autonomy now. But there are still one or two individuals who wish, having lost arguments in a national committee, to try to bring it to the national executive. To be fair, the real management of that lies with the lay structure because it is up to us professionally to ensure that the President and vice president are totally au fait with the situation. They have got to be the ones who say "no I'm not going to take that." And we're working very well in that respect. That was terrible problem in the old BIFU that it is no longer a problem. (Interviewee O)*

The issue does not just arise in connection with negotiating policy:-

*One of the national company committees in its autonomy has decided that it will hold its own company conference. So of course those who are, as it were, not of the thought that we should have other than one annual conference were saying that we know where we can save money -- we will stop them having their annual conference. So we had to point out to them that we could not do that. Enshrined in the rules for a period of time is the ability for them to have it. (Interviewee C)*

Another manager believes that the battle has been won:-

*If it is a strategic issue - a classic would be the autonomy of National Company Committees. We've had that battle with the Executive and that's been won, basically because what we said was 'we hate to remind you of this, chums, but that's what the punters voted for. It's in the Book they voted for. So don't come to us with democratic stuff.' (Interviewee A)*

In fact, Conference in 2002 reaffirmed the rule conveying this autonomy. But it is not surprising that, because of the importance of the rule for the union's operation, UNIFI managers expressed on many occasions their belief that the Rule Book was important in the process of managing boundaries in aspects of their stakeholder management:-

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*They ground their way through the Rule Book, which is important. It's important as a marker because it just says, this formalises why we exist (Interviewee A)*

*Convincing people of the autonomy that the constitution allows the national committees. Convincing people as to why the constitution was actually constructive in that particular way and the advantages that we believe it brings. Not least saying to all the other 30 organisations operating in finance that if they join Unifi then they can enjoy a degree of autonomy. And then, I suppose, actually policing that in saying to people "well, you might want to interfere, you might think that you are the ultimate policy-making body or decision maker in this process but, sorry, that is not the way it is." (Interviewee O)*

*We have to comply with the Rule Book and we have to comply with UNIFI policy as set out at the annual conference but that is that. We have no interference from the NEC into how we conduct our industrial relations and the same goes for the other institutions., the national Company committees in Barclays and Lloyds etc. and that was absolutely crucial, the autonomy for the national Company committees in each of the institutions. (Interviewee M)*

*One of the things for which I take credit in the negotiations leading up to the merger was insistence on a new rule in the merged union's Rule Book which preserved autonomy on industrial relations issues for the national company committee. Needless to say, I flogged that to death (Interviewee F)*

Another manager finds the Rule Book important for another reason:-

*The rule book is a help to me in any area that I deal with at the moment because it's there in black and white that my members in small organisations have got the same rights and as much call on the union's resources as anybody else. (Interviewee H)*

Only one manager expresses a more cautious approach:-

*I believe that the rules and constitution of the trade union are important but I do not believe that they are a stick to be beaten with. I think that the constitution and rules of a trade union cannot cover every aspect of our lives. We ensure that the structures that we set up abide by the constitution and the rules and we obviously recognise that the supreme governance of the union is the Conference and a policy that they lay down and all the rest of it. But as far as I am concerned, we submit claims to the employer, we don't deliver ultimata. That's not what we are about. It is about the art of the possible and, again, I come back*

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*to the point -- is it in the interests of the trade union, is it in the interests of the members? (Interviewee L)*

This latter sentence expresses this particular manager's criterion for the resolution of conflict amongst stakeholders within the union. The importance of having a strategy in the area of company autonomy was emphasised by one manager:-

*The responsibility for those who are in that sector, both from the lay and the full-time structures, in the national company is huge. Huge temptation not to get involved in any other structures and to plough their own furrow and therefore continually to antagonise those who have a different view. Balancing, managing that, the potential for tit for tat because there are some things that they have to come for approval for and therefore the potential is that each time they come and ask for something the answer is no. Which is again not going to achieve the aim of harmonising and unifying the organisation. (Interviewee C)*

There are two other approaches which managers identify. The first is something of a political strategy:-

*I think you go back to what you want to achieve out of each exchange. What is the purpose of it anyway? It is almost that you decide how, in the nicest possible terms, you are going to manipulate interest groups to achieve that. (Interviewee G)*

The second may involve deploying something of a core trade union skill in managing stakeholder conflict:-

*My role I think here's in some ways as a facilitator. You have the staff, the full time officers, or with roles and responsibilities. You have the lay structure of the union who have their agenda, their priorities and some know those need to be brought into one. Sometimes there is huge potential for conflict, particularly when you start looking at things like money, budgets, priorities, the way you go. So facilitating in terms of trying to bring those two parts together. (Interviewee C)*

Boundaries in UNiFI, therefore, are contested. Some are unclear. But effort in this area has tended to be dominated by the potential boundary conflict between the role of company committees and the role of the NEC and the management of this has been an issue, both for very senior managers and also for those managers who have negotiating responsibilities within the union. Unusually, managers find the Rule Book of particular importance in helping to manage the situation – simply because this rule was such a corner stone of the new union that its defence and literal application become a strategic responsibility of management.

**Modes of Management**

- 7.17. We saw earlier that some UNIFI managers expressed ethical values concerning their trade union work – including ones such as fairness, openness, consistency, honesty and social responsibility. Here we examine the way they manage and whether there are any links with the values expressed earlier.

At the top of the union, managers are prepared to be specific about their management styles:-

*The style of management that I hope I employ is quite inclusive. I will talk and discuss. I will say "well, I think we should do this what do you think?" It is time-consuming but I am a great believer in the fact that you don't do things in great haste..... You need to consult and you need to talk to people about it and maybe that is a measure of the management style, if you want more proof, of probably the style that I have got. Nothing ever comes back. I seem to get, not my own way but all the things we do seem to flow. It takes a while and on occasions you say Christ why can I not do this on Friday and get it done on Monday but probably that's another difference in the nature of the person management. Because it is a people orientated organisation -- we don't make things, we don't make widgets -- output is difficult to measure so being so people orientated it is difficult not to have to do the people thing at the outset. I do not think that I could be a manager in a factory that made widgets. I'm not sure that would be my style. Probably that is a different management trait -- I should have answered that at the outset. I'm sure I could espouse the theory but I am not sure that I could manage the plant. Simply couldn't do it. I think it would be a different job (Interviewee E)*

His colleague sees him slightly differently:-

*One of the difficulties that we have had is the differing management styles, particularly between (Interviewee E) and I. (He) is much more hands on. So (he) will read every paper whereas I will tend to delegate it down. (Interviewee N)*

He describes his own management style in different terms from his colleague:-

*I think the environment dictates tremendously what the management style will be. I'm not saying that we are in a position of crisis management but we do need a pretty firm approach to management. We don't need benign, keep it running as it is management. (Interviewee N)*

In fact, quite a few people do express fairly benign views when asked about their management style:-



## Modes of management - styles

*Fairly relaxed. I don't like confrontation either and fortunately I don't have it because my staff are very good. So I can afford to be relaxed. (Interviewee K)*

*Laid-back, I think. I like to give people responsibility for their own actions. I let them get on and do things. They do need support and I try giving them that support. The management style is laid-back and frustrating. (Interviewee D)*

*I see myself as a facilitator (Interviewee O)*

*Relaxed. Sometimes too relaxed and perhaps guiding as much as anything. I very rarely get to the stage where I say "you will do this". That's not my way of doing things. It is through leading and actually doing what they are doing. I'm really not a hands off manager, I am a hands on manager. Sometimes too much. I know I don't delegate enough but that's improving. (Interviewee B)*

A more deliberately people centred style is described by one manager, but with a harder edge:-

*Well, all managers like to think that they are consensual. I like people to feel that they have had an opportunity to influence the decision before it's made but once the decision is made, I do expect them to get on with it with the minimum of whingeing and I don't have a lot of sympathy for whingeing (Interviewee F)*

There seem to be gradations of firmness in the approach to managing people. This ranges from a style where the manager lays down clearly what he expects:-

*I think there are different styles. I know that certain of my colleagues believe in a more belligerent form of management. I believe that we are employing people who have a certain skill set. I believe that I think it is important to understand the skills and abilities of individuals and basically let them get on and do their job and then to provide a support mechanism. I have not, I don't issue directives to the staff who work with me in my section. There is an understanding of what is required of them and where problems arise (and problems invariably do) we resolve them as quickly as we possibly can.....I believe that the style and the approach to management that I adopt is about problem resolution but within the parameters of -- there is a job that needs to be done and I expect it to be done. (Interviewee L)*

to one in which the objective is avoiding confrontation:-

## Modes of management - styles

*It would be very easy for me to upset the staff, that would be no problem at all. I could do that quite easily. But if we do that, we will kill morale, they won't work for you, they'll go stubborn, they'll sit on their bottom, they won't say anything, they'll walk around with pieces of paper doing fuck all all day - dumb insolence, it's called in the Army. Trade union officials are expert in doing fuck all. You know that. So they'll only work if they think they're getting something out of it. And that may not be individual reward. It might be that I'm getting something out of this because I like working, I like being in the trade union movement. I like putting on members, I like us being more successful. So why aren't you looking at it that way and not that way. So I think the style is not to be confrontational. (Interviewee A)*

With the proviso, however:-

*I referee more things - I should wear black shorts really - it's like a doctor's surgery in here some times. What I do as a manager is to say that it's your call, you sort it out and if you can't, come to me and I'll sort it out. (Interviewee A)*

On the subject of whether there was an appropriate management style for trade union managers, there was little agreement. Several managers thought not, one believing that flexibility was important for any manager:-

*I think the trade union in my view is no different from any other organisations. If you seek to manage it one way you will come unstuck. I think the whole thing about management and management skills, perhaps the greatest art of management, is flexibility. Not necessarily flexibility of the work but flexibility of the mind. Not just to go into a piece of work with a mind set that says that it must be done this way. If you can see something being done another way that's beneficial. You need to accept if necessary that you're wrong. That you're not always right and that you can learn each day things that you expect the staff to learn (Interviewee O)*

*I think there is a need for a range of management styles in any organisation. To classify them as I remember them in the old days is bad but I think that it would be a dull organisation if everybody managed a particular role, function or people in the same way (Interviewee C)*

Whilst one manager was prepared to express a view on the question:-

*I suppose it has got to be consensual, hasn't it? That has got to be an appropriate management style. Why do I say that? Because of the amount of interest groups that you've got It's not*

## Conclusions

*enough, it's not highly regimented, you can't tell people what do. It's not the style of the organisation. (Interviewee A)*

Trade unions are often criticised for managing consensually and failing to achieve things, often by people who do not fully appreciate the issue mentioned by this manager. There are different styles in UNiFI but most of those described are on the consensual side of any continuum, reflecting, by accident or design, a degree of people orientation.

### 7.18. CONCLUSIONS

#### ***Trade Union Managers***

There is full acceptance within UNiFI that those interviewed have a managerial role. However, perhaps displaying a lack of confidence that the message had spread as far as all those undertaking trade union roles, some reservations were expressed about whether all but a few senior people shared that acceptance. This illustrates the fact that, maybe in all trade unions, the concept of management is new enough for managers to perceive that it may need to carry with it some form of health warning.

#### ***Systems***

##### ***Resource Distribution Systems***

UNiFI's systems are centralised. This does not seem to be a matter of high policy but merely that it was deemed necessary on merger to retain control of the finances. BIFU's budgetary systems had, it was reported, been devolved prior to merger. UNiFI has been in some financial difficulties for some time and has embarked on what it calls Project Recovery in order to try to turn things round. This would also indicate that central control of finances would be likely to be required, as in any example of turnaround management. And, as in any example in an organisation where people do not 'own' a system, there are reservations expressed about its efficacy.

Lay members are involved in the system through a committee of the NEC and it appears that the principal element in many budgets is meetings costs; an interface with the democratic system which has implications for how lay members carry out their representative functions.

Physical resource allocation takes place in the light of the decision to retain three head offices in the union on merger. It is a shared view that this was essential in order to deliver the merger, though some destabilisation might have occurred when the Bournemouth office closed in April 2002. The layout of space allocated has, after the initial organisation of function after merger, been at regional level. More than in most unions, there are managerial views that the type of work undertaken in trade unions (except in functional spaces like Communications and IT) lends itself to cellular space rather than open

## Conclusions

plan space. This is not wholly shared but the emphasis is different from that in some other unions.

### ***Systems related to cognitive rules***

UNIFI managers perceive their union to operate as a partnership between managers and lay members. They come to this, however, from different traditions; from staff associations which exhibited high General Secretary influence (maybe decreasing over the years) to a trade union which was well known for the interventionist nature of its lay members. That lay members still exert an unusual degree of influence may be illustrated by the fact that senior lay members are members of the Senior Management Group.

However, as in many areas in UNIFI the symbol of lay member influence, or lack of it, is the principle of company committee autonomy. This automatically limits the power of the NEC and sets out a very clear boundary in its influence. Some managers, particularly in the light of their partner union experience, are still unhappy that lay members have too much potential for control; others, from BIFU, believe there has been a substantial change in the direction of managerial authority.

But there are ways in which management itself has problematic features, based on people's experiences on trade unions and the expectations of trade union officers who 'do not like being interfered with.' It may not be valued; or else trade unionists may be 'embarrassed' to manage, taking into account that in partner union days the concept may not have been given any credence in some unions. Some managers have found these factors a problem more than others and some believe that the issue is not necessarily the acceptance of resistance to management but the nature of management that is offered. However, there is a view that management of performance or conduct is particularly difficult in UNIFI, several comments on which suggest that this is a cultural feature of the union rather than the effect of any deficiency in the systems themselves.

### ***Systems related to moral rules***

With one exception, UNIFI managers who expressed a view about their core trade union principles related them to relationships with people. They talk of fairness, doing as you would be done by, nurturing, openness, consistency. One manager, as so many do, talked about trade union principles as though they assumed that the interviewer knew what they were but without specifying them further.

These principles also seem to extend to relationships with the lay structure. There are significant examples of managers who find the lay structure constraining. Some managers also point out problems, potential and real, with the structure. However, in most cases, even where this is done, they seem to believe that things are improving or basically satisfactory. Some are very positive about their relationships,

## Conclusions

which include coaching and supporting lay members. So positive and principled attitudes can be perceived in UNiFI towards the union's systems of representative rationality.

### ***Managerial Activities***

#### ***Deploying resources***

UNiFI has for many years – as evidenced by its Investors in People accreditation – had systems of setting corporate objectives. The annual Business Plan, Training Plan and Investors in People strategy are related to other objective setting processes elsewhere in the organisation. But these plans do not have financial components in that it is not possible to see how they carry forward into resource allocation. Subsequent to the completion of the research, the Joint General Secretary was asked about this and he said that this link did in fact exist. In explanation, he sent a copy of the latest Business Plan which, although much more specific in terms of targets, still did not contain overt financial and budgetary links. What the organisation does, it is deduced, is to have regard to plan objectives when setting budgets without the financial aspects of Plan proposals being built into the Plan. Protection of minority interests in resource allocation, however, is something of which managers are aware and in support of which values arguments, particularly that of 'fairness' are expressed.

In terms of allocation of physical space, this was of course different in UNiFI in that the three head offices were retained. Yet managers were concerned about the cultural issues involved; the fact that they supported the allocation decision did not mean that they did not seek to manage it. There did not, however, seem to be a corporate impetus for this to be done, except insofar as senior managers organised Senior Management Group meetings at all three offices in order to demonstrate their strategic importance. Individual managers sought to manage the situation, even in cases where they were physically separate from other parts of their team. They recognised the constraints but accepted them as an inevitable part of a strategic decision. Several of them felt quite strongly that there should be a new head office as soon as possible, something which has not proved possible in the light of financial difficulties and the prospect of merger with Amicus.

### ***'Meaningful' Managerial Actions***

#### ***Merger Management***

The most significant feature of cultural cohesion on merger, at least for the smaller unions, was the principle of company committee autonomy. This was a bottom line demand from those unions and they were also faced with the highly significant change of turning from unions dealing with single employers to one dealing with many employers. Both of these unions engaged in management of change training for managers, which in the case of the NWSA was extended to all the staff. This seems to have played a significant part in the management of the integration of the three organisations, particularly when the

## Conclusions

principle of company committee autonomy and the retention of the old union offices could be used as symbols of the continuance of aspects of the old organisations.

The other corporate component of merger management strategy was moving to a project management style of working. This is discussed elsewhere but part of its rationale was to bring staff together across grades and locations and getting them to work together. Beyond that, individual managers managed the process, in one case with a great deal of enthusiasm and creativity. There was not any evident corporate strategy for these levels of merger management but there is external evidence that it had a good measure of success.

### ***Managing by Information***

UNiFI has a personal development planning system which involves regular meetings between staff and managers. It is not universally observed in the spirit but it must have been at one time in view of the Investors in People accreditation, of which it is a corner stone. And there is evidence of senior management support for the system. Staff meetings are held in many places, as the researcher observed personally.

However, managerial communication strategy is not discussed in those terms and managers do not discuss communication in those terms, even though their styles of management, nurturing, for example, will depend on honest communication. Managers do not identify their communication role as one of their key tasks. This does not mean that they do not communicate; merely that it is not in itself a cognitive focus

### ***Managing through People***

This chapter explains the limitations of the Investors in People process. Nevertheless, the evidence in UNiFI is that managers do have a people focus in their management tasks, whatever other reservations they might have about systems to support the process. One system in particular about which reservations are expressed is performance management. The Personal Development Plan system is seen as an unsatisfactory vehicle for the purpose and staff are portrayed, in one case, as resistant to being accountable for the achievement of set standards. Indeed, there is a view that it is difficult to set these anyway, in the case of negotiating staff.

There is evidence, however, that the Personal Development Plan system has been successful in setting frameworks for staff development and certainly the union's annual training plan also suggests that this has become institutionalised, though not without the odd bit of cynicism. It is not clear, however, whether there is a great deal of management training being provided, despite one senior manager attending a major programme at the London Business School.

## Conclusions

Teamworking in UNiFI is something that, as mentioned earlier, has been a corporate initiative, particularly in the setting up of the new organisation. The initiative has involved staff from across the union working together to achieve specific outcomes – some of which have been particularly impressive. It has not been wholly successful and there are suggestions that it has fallen by the wayside but it has been a significant component of life in UNiFI and has given responsibility to staff at all levels, including women in secretarial grades who were given responsibility for many aspects of team working. It does suggest, too, that there is a positive approach to working in teams within the union, for which there is evidence of imaginative managerial actions.

### ***Managing Action***

The Joint General Secretary of UNiFI expresses some interesting views on the nature of leadership and on his own progression from 'doing' to 'leading'. He sees trade union leadership as involving innovation, communication and motivation – all, one could suggest, on the 'soft' side of the role. He also uses the word 'vision' a number of times, imputing a strategic focus. This at least is a coherent attempt to identify what the subject is all about, even if it is not an exclusive definition. It also brings together internal and external roles to some extent.

Other managers point to the external relationship, with the members, as being important, something which is implicitly included within the Joint General Secretary's observations but in a more generalised sense. Nevertheless, it is not possible to identify a consensus around the ideas.

### ***Legitimate Managerial Actions Stakeholder Management***

Despite a small number of reservations, managers in UNiFI seek to manage their relationships with the lay structure. There are perceptions that lay members themselves do not value them but they see relationships as improved and improving and something to which they can contribute. Some managers can define clear boundaries – for example relating to the lack of power for lay members to become involved in staffing matters.

However, the boundaries most often referred to by UNiFI managers relate to the autonomy of company committees and for this reason the Rule Book, which defines those boundaries, is flagged up as an important component of management in the union. In a sense, this issue transcends other boundary management tasks and provides a focus for UNiFI managers in their relationships with lay members.

### ***Modes of Management***

UNiFI managers describe styles of management as almost exclusively people centred – inclusive, avoiding confrontation, supportive, facilitating, consensual and arbitrating. Some of these descriptions may

## Conclusions

support a suggestion that managers in the organisation are more comfortable with the soft side of management than the hard side – thus that the lack of performance management may be more related to cultural than system issues.

These conclusions are now summarised in a way which relates them to Hales' (1999) model of management. It seeks to provide explanations for managerial actions from the systems and modalities which comprise the environments in which trade union managers work, as discussed earlier.



## Conclusions

## CHAPTER EIGHT MANAGERS IN UNISON

### ***About the Union***

- 8.1. UNISON was formed in 1993 by the merger of three public service unions, COHSE (the Confederation of Health Service Employees), NALGO (the National and Local Government Officers' Association) and NUPE the National Union of Public Employees). As mentioned earlier, it was, and still is, the largest merger in UK trade union history and the merger was a process of extreme complexity.
- 8.2. The three unions were very different. NALGO was primarily a white collar union – formed, in fact, originally in 1905 to campaign for pensions for very senior local government officials. It retained in membership a proportion of senior officials and in 1980 had led a dispute seeking comparability pay for local government staff which led to a settlement giving 18% at the top and 9.5% at the bottom. Its membership had peaked at around 750,000 in the 1970s and its losses in membership had not been catastrophic, probably because privatisation had not hit administrative, professional and technical staff as hard as it had blue collar staff. NUPE was primarily a blue collar union and, although retaining a membership on merger of over 500,000, it had suffered both loss in membership and income which caused a financial crisis in 1991. The two unions were fiercely competitive, not only because of the few overlaps which occurred (since NUPE had in membership a number of white collar staff, often because they wanted to be in a union which was affiliated to the Labour Party) but also because of their approaches to trade unionism. NALGO activists tended to see NUPE, which had a powerful and visible officer corps, as less democratic than NALGO, something which caused major problems when local branches amalgamated some time after merger and ex NALGO activists largely took control of the structure. Both unions organised in local government, the National Health Service (NHS) and the utilities. NALGO organised in addition in transport and was virtually the sole union in Electricity.
- 8.3. COHSE by contrast was largely a one industry union, with its origins amongst mental health nurses in the NHS. It had originally turned down the opportunity of joining merger discussions but eventually did so in 1990, at which point merger discussions re-commenced. It had obviously competed with both of the other unions in the NHS but it was much smaller than the other two unions, even though it was an equal partner in the negotiations.
- 8.4. One particular issue worthy of note is that NALGO had many more staff than either of the other unions. At the time of merger, it had in the region of 1300 staff, whereas NUPE had only around 400 and COHSE nearer 100. NALGO had several large central departments and very powerful district offices, as it called them, with significant lay structures built around them. This was obviously to have a significant impact on

merger management because NALGO staff dominated to such an extent.

- 8.5. Merger clearly took place some time before this research commenced. However, merger management issues were still visible and interviewees usually had no difficulty talking about them. As mentioned in Chapter 1, managers had set themselves a 10 year task to build the new union from a cultural point of view. This task was made more difficult when, in 1994, UNISON suffered a financial crisis which led to its implementing a major voluntary redundancy scheme in the autumn of that year which led to hundreds of staff leaving the organisation. In many ways this was more traumatic than the merger itself. It is said that it reversed many of the efforts which had been put into change management up to that point and probably contributed to the length of the organisation building progress.
- 8.6. In 1994, UNISON embarked on a project to set up a new head office for the new organisation. Three buildings were shortlisted and firm negotiations commenced. However, Annual Conference of that year, in an emergency debate, instructed the NEC to cease negotiations. In consequence, decisions were made to close the old COHSE office as a head office (converting it to a regional office) and to split the staff between the NUPE office in Woolwich and the NALGO one in Kings Cross. The closure of the COHSE office in Banstead was painful and led to the former General Secretary of the union being accused of betrayal. Few people who had to switch offices were happy. In 1999, when head office staff had reduced to under 1000, all central staff were located in the old NALGO office in Kings Cross.
- 8.7. UNISON has a declared membership of 1,272,700 in the current year, of which around 73% are female. It has 13 regional offices, dealing with a good deal of devolved bargaining – for example with regional utility companies and Trust employers in the NHS. Regional lay structures, very much in the ex NALGO tradition, are in existence in these regions. However, only one officer, the General Secretary, is elected.

### ***Interviewees***

- 8.8. The strategy with UNISON was to attempt to interview all of the most senior people at national level. One identified person was about to take maternity leave and so was not available. It was considered important to interview the Regional Secretary in Scotland because the perception of national managers was that Scotland was 'different'. There were only three female Regional Secretaries so one was chosen, on the basis of who responded first to an e-mail. The final Regional Secretary was chosen because he was at UNISON head office when another interview was being arranged. In terms of gender and partner union origin, the overall approach was the same as PCS.

Interviewees were:-

## Trade union managers

Bob Abberley, Assistant General Secretary (ex COHSE)  
Valerie Broom, Regional Secretary West Midlands (ex NALGO)  
Lucie Hyndley, Communications Officer (ex COHSE)  
Karen Jennings, National Officer (ex COHSE)  
Mike Jeram, National Officer (ex NALGO)  
Maggie Jones, Head of Policy and Public Affairs (ex NUPE)  
Dave Prentis, General Secretary (ex NALGO)  
Matt Smith, Scottish Secretary (ex NALGO)  
Keith Sonnet, Deputy General Secretary (ex NALGO)  
Steve Tasker, Finance Officer (ex NALGO)  
Allan Taylor, Assistant General Secretary (ex NUPE)  
Liane Venner, Head of Services to Members (ex NUPE)  
Malcolm Wing, National Secretary (ex NUPE)  
Nick Wright, Regional Secretary East Midlands (ex NUPE)

### **Trade Union Managers**

- 8.8. All interviewees in UNISON accepted that they had a management role. This stemmed right from the top in that the General Secretary stated firmly:-

*I see myself as the Chief Executive. I was talking this morning to Frank Dobson about the Health Service and foundation hospitals and the subject came round to management and I pointed out that I managed 1500 staff and a budget of £120 million and a big part of the work that I do has got to go into managing that organisation. I do see myself as Chief Executive of the organisation as well as the external face of the union.*

Acceptance could be enthusiastic:

*Oh, very much so. Yes, I see myself as a manager and I take it very seriously. My reputation stands or falls as a competent officer on how well my team do and so I can't just go off and make barnstorming speeches if I look behind and (my) Department is a shambles and nobody knows what they're doing and they're producing second rate work. So, first and foremost I'm a manager and it's much more important in a sense that the other 30 odd members of staff in this Department are performing to the best of their abilities than that I am, in a sense.  
(Interviewee J)*

*Very much so and particularly in the last couple of years because, under D's General Secretaryship, he has tried very hard to make Regional Secretaries part of the functioning of the union, which had not happened before. (Interviewee K)*

Several other managers pointed to the extent to which the General Secretary was emphasising their managerial roles and asking for structures to be set up which depended on their performing as managers. But acceptance could be slightly surprised:-

## Trade union managers

*Most of the time I do. I'm still slightly gobsmacked, like a lot of people, I think. You go into a job -- I always wanted to be on the national negotiating side and when I became a National Officer, many moons ago in NALGO, in a sense I thought I had made it, you know. That was what I wanted to do. But I was aware, I think you couldn't help but be aware, because people started coming into your office and asking you things. Can they do this, what are we going to do about that and they ask you not should we put in this claim or how are we going to deal with that, they started to ask you personal things and issues and then you sort of realise you have got to fill in forms and so on so that there is a slightly wider dimension but I certainly think in my early days it was -- you know, that was the sort of 10 percent type role. You ticked a leave sheet or if somebody looked a bit off you would ask them what was wrong and then get out of the room as quickly as possible before they told you. But, as you know, because you were instrumental, we did start to think more deeply about our roles as people managers and the need to manage the organisation and its resources. I think now, from where we have gone into Unison and so on, probably over the course of a year it varies from week to week but is probably more like 50% of my time, even more, is spent in the management role (Interviewee L)*

It could be to some extent involuntary:-

*Unfortunately almost wholly, now. That's a very important point. I guess it's not just Unison in that sense but when I became a divisional officer of NUPE in 1979, just as the winter of discontent started, before that I was a fully engaged operating officer with area responsibilities and so forth whilst being a deputy divisional officer with a degree of management experience and if you asked me to put a percentage on that I would say that 5% of my time was managing. As a divisional officer it was probably 80% of the time still heavily engaged in collective bargaining and representation and so forth and 20 percent managing. Now, 10 years on into Unison, as a manager in Unison at regional level, leaving aside the other functions I have nationally, it is 95 percent management. (Interviewee M)*

Or ineffective:-

*If I saw myself as a trade union manager I should preface that by saying that I was an ineffective trade union manager. I am not sure that managers in trade unions have a great deal of effect (interviewee A)*

One manager suggested, however, that there was a management ethos that had developed since merger:-

## Trade union managers

*One of the real benefits of Unison was, right from day one, there was a focus on management which probably didn't exist, certainly in COHSE or NUPE and probably, to a limited degree (although there were people like yourself who were in NALGO who argued this) in NALGO. It felt to me that part of the new culture we got was a willingness to see ourselves as managers and for this to be a professional organisation and in the early days that did obviously cause some tensions -- like, can we call it the Senior Management Team? And all that stuff. So, definitely a senior manager. (Interviewee B)*

One manager explained why he felt that this may have come about:-

*Because of the size of the organisation, the responsibilities placed on management, the excellent initiatives the union is undertaking in relation to IIP, all the issues relating to IIP, staff development, organisational planning, the budget issue, all those things that an organisation with a turnover of £110 million should be doing and are now beginning to do and we are beginning to understand that it requires very professional management (Interviewee M)*

The researcher himself was credited with a role:-

*Certainly I was one of a number of which H was one and you were one that straight away wanted to make sure that this was a big organisation and that it had to be professionally managed (Interviewee B)*

One manager pointed to personal factors influencing the development of her managerial role – the existence of a role model and a life changing course she attended:-

*One of the things that helped me to change my view of it was -- this is going to sound a bit sycophantic -- was when B started managing me because she manages in a very coherent and clear way and I had never really experienced that before. Never really experienced being managed. So I think that was part of my problem; I didn't feel like I had very good models and so although it was slightly uncomfortable for me to be managed by somebody else and somebody outside the function, .....first of all I thought that was quite strange but in fact I found it really helpful and it certainly helped to clarify things. (interviewee G)*

*And then, I think, the thing that made a real difference, actually, was I did a course at Cranfield, you remember, a year or two ago -- a couple of years, I suppose -- and that just completely changed the way I thought about things, really (Interviewee G)*

## Trade union managers

And another manager has been conscious of his approach to management changing with experience and learning:-

*I think my approach to management has changed. M characterises it that you have to think like a manager, not like an employee and it is something that I think I do automatically now. I also remind other people to do it as well. National managers, I would occasionally say that you have to think like a manager not like an employee and that demands a very different sort of thinking and sometimes, often, it requires thinking about the impact of your decisions on other people and the fact that you are consuming resources in area that are less important than other parts of the organisation (Interviewee H)*

There appears to be little disagreement that anyone in UNISON with any form of managerial responsibilities will see themselves as managers:-

*Anyone who has a management responsibility would see themselves as a manager in Unison. (Interviewee B)*

A view that at national level is shared but about which there may be some confusion:-

*There is a whole group of people who are basically Senior National Officers in the Service Groups, for example, who are called managers' and go along to managers meetings but don't mostly really have a management function, because they are senior officers. So I think their experience is very different and I think they would say -- some of them I think are quite keen to try and develop an actual sense of themselves as managers and a management role but have the classic problem that they are actually expected to do a Senior National Officer's job most of the time if not all of the time and therefore finding it very difficult to make time for management, really. (Interviewee G)*

At regional level it has been, perhaps, more of a struggle:-

*Yes they do.(see themselves as managers) They do now. I mean, it's been a struggle and it's taken some time and some see themselves as managers more than others but, yes they do. They do. (Interviewee O)*

Which is perhaps continuing in some places:-

*I think the trouble is that has not percolated down below the level of Regional Secretary within Unison and that is one of the big problems we have about managing generally. (Interviewee K)*

## **Systems**

### **Systems relating to Distribution of Resources**

- 8.9. Referred to above was the fact that UNISON had regional offices and regional lay democracy structures with some significant responsibilities. One would, therefore, expect that any budgetary system would involve allocating some responsibility to regional managers at the very least. The Finance Officer explains the basis of the budgetary system:-

*Unison's approach in budgeting now is what are our objectives and priorities that we want to carry out next year and beyond next year and therefore we ought to be budgeting for those objectives and priorities and not because we have done something for the last 20 years we would do it for the next 20 years. What is it that we are doing that is something to do with those objectives and priorities and we will commit our money to do that, and it is starting a long that road. So your resources ought to be allocated on that sort of basis.*

*Managers throughout the organisation will make decisions on spending through the budget setting, however that goes, and I am happy in terms of devolution to be able to say to managers, if at the start of the year you want to spend £1 million on this and halfway through you decide you have to spend half a million on that then fine. It is a decision you have made. What I don't necessarily want to have to do is get involved in virement and going to committees. You make judgments on whether -- don't spend it for the sake of spending it, if you only needed half a million in the first place, then fine. If you do need a further half million to spend on something else, you make that call. I am not going to look over your shoulder*

The General Secretary explains his approach to this:-

*Budgets are very important and devolution of budgets is important. We want to devolve more responsibility to the regions so that they take ownership of what they are spending -- but the other side of the coin again is that you have got to make sure that the budgets are in line with the income. We have been a little bit lax this year so we are trying to pull back on that, but in a different way to what we have done before where we have slashed budgets by 10 percent. What I have asked for from senior managers is that I want to know what development areas they wanted for next year, that they think are essential, and how much they think it is going to cost and if we as a Senior Management Group believe that these development areas are worthwhile doing, we'll endorse some of them that we can do and we will ring fence the budget for that. And then the rest of the budget has got to come in underneath it. So you are concentrating on your development areas to let the organisation grow. So we are trying new ways of doing that. So finance is*



## Resource distribution systems

*very important, objectives and priorities are very important and getting consistency of management across the union is vital to us.*

He refers to objectives and priorities. This is a system of setting the strategic objectives of the union with the intention that the union's activities will proceed in accordance with that prescription. The process, the General Secretary says is inclusive:-

*The one thing that we are working on very, very hard is setting objectives and priorities for the union. We started last year. Again, it is something that we brought in after I became General Secretary -- not just that we have NEC priorities but what you do, the process is important. What we do now is to involve all the different stakeholders in the union in drawing up the priorities.*

So UNISON has financial systems which are, in their conception, highly structured and which the union seeks to link to its corporate objectives so that resources are in theory made available only where they can be shown to contribute to their achievement. The system is based on devolved budgets, as one might expect, in which virement is sometimes permitted. Very senior managers do not themselves have budgets but are responsible for budgetary strategy (subject to lay member involvement, discussed later):-

*Yes, (allocation of resources is a role) in a strategic sense but not operationally. I don't have a budget (Interviewee B)*

Although some flexibility seems to be possible:-

*One of the first things I did when appointed was -- we didn't have enough printers, we didn't have enough photocopying machines, the photocopying machines were constantly breaking down, we had two printers for all the staff up here -- so I immediately got printers in. We had no laptops for the staff, I immediately got laptops in. (Interviewee D)*

Allocation of resources to lay member groups was, in at least one region, highly structured:-

*What we ended up doing with all of them was set up a service level agreement when them to define what they would get, how they would get it and how we were able to resource that. So sometimes we do deal with them individually but we are quite clear the resource that is going to be available to them (Interviewee K)*

And the system seems to be supported by management information, as the Finance Officer explains:-

## Resource distribution systems

*It is my role to provide timely and meaningful financial information to the NEC and the Finance and General Purposes Committee so that they can make informed decisions. I also have to keep all my colleagues who hold budgets, about 35 or 40 of them who are budget holders, we need to supply information to them about how their budgets are running so that they can warn them if they are going to over spend. Beyond that I supply all sorts of information to people as and when they want it.*

So UNISON's systems seem devolved and formal and there is little direct criticism of them. In terms of physical space, at national level, the first decision after merger had been to set up a project team to seek a new headquarters. This resulted in a recommendation to the NEC, which was approved against serious opposition, to negotiate in respect of three buildings, one in London Docklands, one in the City of London and one in Islington, the latter – only about a mile from the former NALGO head office, being the favoured option. However, the first UNISON conference in 1994 instructed that negotiations cease. The researcher has his own cultural analysis of that decision, gained as participant observer, but that does not form part of this research. However, this decision was regretted:-

*On the other hand, we didn't have that much choice. Well, of course, we did. We could have had a new head office, Mike, as you well know. We could have all been in one place from day one but there you are. (Interviewee J)*

*During the merger process people who I know who worked for private companies, like Price Waterhouse, who had gone through a merger said whatever you do avoid having a split head office. They said always have one. It makes life so much easier. And I think that's true. (Interviewee E)*

As was the way it was reached:-

*I think they (ex NALGO activists) were clearly trying to achieve the preservation of Mabledon Place, not necessarily all for the same reasons. It was immensely symbolic. The lay members took a number of decisions over a period of time that we were going to have a new union, we were going to have new structures, new this, new that but we were not going to have a new head office. We were effectively going to take a decision which meant one of the head offices of the partner unions was going to be the head office. I think there were a lot of people motivated by that. I think, to be honest, AJ was motivated by that. I think he worked actively to retain Mabledon Place. (Interviewee A)*

## Resource distribution systems

Because of the lack of a new head office on Vesting Day, a decision was taken to set up a management suite in the City of London where senior managers from all three unions would be based for at least a proportion of their time. In practice, senior managers did not generally use it for the original purpose intended:-

*I was very sad that Holborn Towers did not succeed. I thought at the time that just to move the GSs and DGSs was a recipe for failure. All the people they worked with were in different offices and they were never going to give up their own offices full-time to go into Holborn Towers. Everybody they worked with was working in a different office. And I think at least the AGSs should have gone in there if not some others as well. It would have been difficult to work out how far down the structure to go but we never had that debate and the DGSs really didn't move in there at all. Everybody used the first excuse they could just to drop the idea. I think it was sad that that was a failure because with the abolition of Holborn Towers it was inevitable that we were going to go into Mabledon Place. (Interviewee A)*

Although one manager was rather more well disposed to its operation:-

*I suppose the only thing I would say was that the Holborn initiative wasn't brilliant, it had the idea of bringing the senior officers from the three unions together and was at least a step forward in terms of providing some coherent leadership. So I don't blame the people for doing that, given what we had, which was three different head offices. I think it was probably quite a good thing to have done but it didn't solve the problem of people feeling that there was a hierarchy and gearing their allocations of physical space to where they were in the hierarchy. (Interviewee J)*

There are some coloured descriptions of the consequences of the decision to allocate head office space between the two old offices:-

*Well obviously for us it had fairly drastic kinds of practical issues in that it is not ideal to try and communicate an organisation's thoughts and wants and desires when you are miles away from most of it and therefore from having access to people and it was very difficult. So obviously there were huge practical problems but I think more importantly it had a huge impact on people's feelings about the organisation.....I think the other thing it did was that it made -- and I have to say I do still feel this in Unison and I'm not sure whether this is true in the sense that it already was the strategy -- but it felt to us as though we were regarded as a function that was not core to the union's key work. (Interviewee G)*

## Resource distribution systems

*It held back our progress enormously, I would say. I think any organisation underestimates the importance of space and how you allocate space at its peril. Undoubtedly the different buildings had different cultures and personalities and different takes on the merger and it is particularly true, I think, of the Woolwich people who for a whole host of reasons felt that they had been dumped in Outer Mongolia and that nobody really cared, not only about them as individuals but about the function they were responsible for. (Interviewee J)*

*The fact that we were split up, it was dreadful. The effect of that decision, that we didn't move into one head office, it had a debilitating effect on the union for many years, first of all alienating staff who had to move, perhaps unnecessarily, long distances across London and secondly it meant that functions which should work together were working separately. (Interviewee C)*

An idealised solution was offered by one manager, who nevertheless had an opinion about why it had not been possible:-

*With the benefits of hindsight, we should just have moved into a new building on the first day of Unison. Having said that, I don't think we would have got Unison if we said we were going to move into a new building because you have to carry staff with you apart from anything else and as a key stakeholder in the merger, if we hadn't carried the staff, they would not have been a new union. I think all the staff in the three unions would have lobbied heavily against moving into a new office. It was difficult enough to persuade the NUPE people that they were not going to move to Mabledon Place on the creation of the union. (Interviewee A)*

There were decisions taken much later in the merger to rationalise regional offices so there is some data on the effect of this. At this stage, one would observe that the systems for allocation of space on the birth of the union were not seen by managers as ideal. This evidence, all gathered some 9 years after merger, show how the allocation of space is still a key issue with managers in UNISON. It is one which, they appear to believe continues to have importance for the management of the organisation.

**Systems relating to cognitive rules**

- 8.10 In UNISON the issue of the status of lay members versus officers and managers was particularly complex for a range of reasons. First, the three unions were, however one described them, very different. Secondly, because of those differences, there were so many stereotypes in the minds of organisational members that there is the danger that by recording views about the way things changed, one might merely be perpetuating stereotypes. One manager illustrates that point:-

*The mythology at the time was that NALGO was in the hands of activists and officers were running round as committee clerks and NUPE, you know, it was the iron fist of officer control and lay members never got a look in. COHSE were somewhere in between. I suppose like all stereotypes and generalisations there was a bit of an element of truth in it but I never felt that it was as extreme as portrayed (Interviewee L)*

However, the following tables seek to encapsulate the principal evidence from managers in the three old unions. The reason for presenting so much detail is simply because there is so much relevant data.

## Cognitive rules and culture

NALGO on NALGO	NALGO on NUPE	NALGO on COHSE	NALGO on UNISON
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We had a kind of pretence of lay member leadership (Interviewee O)</li> <li>• I always felt that NALGO had a good partnership between full time staff and lay members, where lay members' professional expertise could be played into an issue and officers could take it up. (Interviewee L)</li> <li>• If you go back to NALGO days, you had, perhaps, people with some of those skills who were senior managers in their own workplaces who could bring those skills into NALGO. (Interviewee N)</li> <li>• NALGO had a partnership with, a sort of slightly arms length relationship with lay members. There was a full time cadre who acted on behalf of, as you well know, the lay side and didn't see themselves as being the major policymakers in any way (Interviewee K)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The NUPE people that I spoke to did, I suppose, strike me on occasions as being rather less inclined to take lay member views on board ought to have almost a suspicion of lay members that lay members would be up to no good or whatever. That wasn't universal. (Interviewee L)</li> <li>• NUPE and COHSE rather saw themselves as being different and had a higher respect, actually, from the lay side. I suspect also that they were much more able to influence who the lay side people were. I think some of them were hand picked by the full time organisation. (Interviewee K)</li> <li>• Their argument was that they represented low paid members, particularly from NUPE, and that there was a particularly different role for NUPE full time officers than there had been for NALGO. That's what they argued. (Interviewee E)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COHSE did seem to strike me as very much into the professional health mode. A lot of their officials had a health background so a dialogue of equals. That is not to do down NALGO and NUPE but I think there was a more structured sort of relationship. I know Albert Spanswick had been a nurse. I know most of the COHSE officials had come from a nursing background. There was probably more synthesis between staff and lay members. (Interviewee L)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Now, I think, generally in Unison I am quite positive about that because I think we have moved to a position where there is acknowledgment that we do have a role and putting forward issues for policy consideration, even making recommendations and being quite forthright in terms of the direction we think the union should go in. I think it's much better and more open now and I think it's more accepted within the union. (Interviewee O)</li> <li>• I think gradually as we have developed more into Unison, personally I think people have seen the value of partnership working with the lay members. I think on occasions it is slightly manipulative but that is sort of the nature of political organisation. (Interviewee L)</li> <li>• It is very similar to what it was in NALGO. I think the way we function -- if it is on a continuum from 0 to 100 and you start with 0 at no lay member control and 100 is where everything is dealt with by lay members, in terms of where we are, it is much more in the top quartile towards the NALGO side than it would be anywhere else. (Interviewee E)</li> </ul>

## Cognitive rules and culture

NUPE on NUPE	NUPE on NALGO	NUPE on COHSE	NUPE on UNISON
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We certainly didn't use the expression "member led" in NUPE. I would say that in NUPE our General Secretary and the Deputy had a very strong and good relationship with their Executive. I think there was a lot more trust and I think the NUPE Executive were far more inclined to delegate responsibility to their officers (Interviewee J)</li> <li>• I was always quite clear in NUPE what my authority was. I knew what I could do and what I couldn't do. It's a bit difficult to describe that in abstract terms from a distance but I felt that I carried the confidence of people and of lay members as well as senior paid officers because everybody knew what you were doing and what the boundaries were and what you are expected to do and provided you delivered within that, people let you get on with it (Interviewee A)</li> <li>• In my last conference as NUPE National Secretary, officers spoke, two of us, as many times as lay members spoke. There were 26 of them and again there was an expectation that if things went wrong, the officers got the blame. The officers answered for the committee in a way. (Interviewee H)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NALGO was a bigger union and from the outside looking in it had a bigger bureaucracy and a more interventionist NEC. It was sometimes a bit frustrating where on the negotiating team we could get things cleared much more easily, we could get an earlier decision out of them that it seems at times you could get out of NALGO. (Interviewee A)</li> <li>• The view of the NALGO senior people, the senior Unison people from the former union, the dominant, was basically that we are accountable to conference as lay members, the officers aren't accountable. You've only been around six weeks and we don't think it is appropriate for you to answer for the committee. That's a matter for us. (Interviewee H)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This year at the health conference, bear in mind that the dominant culture in health is COHSE and NUPE which was much more a less prominent role for lay members in both organisations (Interviewee H)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Things are more formal now. There isn't that sense of love and trust and.....we're all in it together. Maybe that's partly because we are such a big organisation.. In NUPE our Executive was 26 or something. They could pick up the phone...and have a word with (the GS) personally and he very much had a personal relationship with all the members of the Executive. Hard to replicate that in such a big organisation now. I do miss that. (Interviewee J)</li> <li>• Coming into Unison, the shared zone, that grey area, I still think that is enormously big and some people have got their blindfolds off but there is still a lot of areas where you can't see your way around it. I think that...who controls and rules is more a question of personalities than any carefully thought out executive type structure. (Interviewee A)</li> <li>• Partnership working is more than, in fact, just a few words. Applied rigorously...it has been a significant benefit. I see it is now in the context of the kinds of relationships we have, the real trust that exists, the ability in fact to reach decisions which you know then are going to be supported. That's a real strength. (Interviewee M)</li> </ul>

## Cognitive rules and culture

COHSE on COHSE	COHSE on NALGO	COHSE on NUPE	COHSE on UNISON
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would put COHSE as, if 1 was lay member led and 10 was full time officer led, at about 6. So a very relaxed relationship, that is the important thing between full time officers and ourselves. (Interviewee B)</li> <li>• I don't think we had nearly as direct a -- well, it was a different relationship. We didn't have a direct reporting relationship to any lay member committee in COHSE. You weren't expected to provide reports on various levels of activity but on the other hand in some ways, and I am sure other COHSE people would say this, we did have an easier relationship with lay members. It was a friendly relationship and certainly one based on, from my perception, the fact that they did regard you as a professional officer doing a job for them and they were quite pleased about that. Quite happy to argue about different aspects but they thought you were trying to do a good job for them. (Interviewee G)</li> <li>• In COHSE it was a very centre left organisation and there was this kind of respect of officers (Interviewee D).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I did find it quite strange in the early days of the merger talks that there were certain sections in both NUPE and NALGO, particularly NALGO, who found it strange that full time officers and people were, like, socially together. (Interviewee B)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would suggest that if you took NALGO as being the most lay member led and NUPE being the least lay member led, even in NALGO in Health the relationship between full time officers and lay members was different from what it was elsewhere. (Interviewee B)</li> <li>• I think that this is by far the most - I don't know, democratic? I'm not entirely sure that it's democratic - - participatory organisation I have worked for. I have friends who worked for a number of other unions who are astonished at the degree of lay involvement in all kinds of areas. (Interviewee G)</li> <li>• I think it's more democratic. I think that in the past, the officers and particularly -- well, I don't know about particularly - the professional officers but my impression was that we led, we were the experts and though there was a democratic structure and there were lay members that sat on committees which endorsed policies, really we were the people that were developing those policies. That isn't the case now. There is definitely a healthier partnership and, I think, far greater accountability for the democratic processes (Interviewee D)</li> </ul>



In looking at managers' perceptions of what are clearly cultural differences, it is interesting to see echoes of the findings of Ouroussof (1993) on the cultures of the three old unions even at the distance of over 10 years – the centrality of discussion in NALGO, speedy decisions in NUPE and informality in COHSE, for example. The characterisation of UNISON also has cultural components - the notion of 'partnership', embraced by many of these managers is one which relates to (Inter alia) values, ways of working, 'feel', orientations and identities of the union. These issues, involving relationships with lay members and the consequent degree of autonomy of managers, were always at the centre of cultural preoccupations in these unions and so it proved here. One particularly interesting development of the idea was the suggestion by several managers (from all three old unions) that lay members in NUPE, seeing the extent of lay member involvement in NALGO, themselves moved in the direction of more power and influence that they experienced in their old unions:-

*My perception was that NUPE, if they had a strategy it was fundamentally flawed. It was merger at almost any price, probably with the belief that the sort of the full time officer cadre had a lot of influence with the lay members and therefore they would be able to achieve their objectives once the merger took place by getting key full time officer posts and the lay members would follow, which of course didn't happen because their lay members, like everyone else's, changed their view and weren't any longer prepared to -- moved into a different culture. (Interviewee B)*

*I have been surprised at how much some of my colleagues in the other two unions have actually adapted to the system and actually followed it much more than I would ever have done in NALGO. (Interviewee E)*

*I guess the culture, I think, that emerged was one of stronger lay input, lay leadership. We know all of that but reflecting on the changes that took place at the time, I guess shortly I would characterise it as NUPE lay members saying "I like that, I want a bit of that". And it was about senior lay members with much more influence, a perception of lay members with much more influence in NALGO than they necessarily had in NUPE. (Interviewee H)*

UNISON managers use the discourse of culture to discuss many features of the union, articulating cognitive 'meanings', even if it is this particular feature that seems of particular significance. We saw earlier that one manager had expressed the view that, on merger, UNISON, had developed a culture of management. We look now at the extent to which individual experiences have impacted on managers' perceptions of management and its significance within the union. Strongly in the perception of two managers:-

## Cognitive rules and culture

*I think management is a pejorative term, or was, in trade union circles. Until a few years ago management, you would spit, wouldn't you? Unions didn't manage their resources. Management was something that you spent your life opposing. (Interviewee H)*

*I think that's a traditional view of a trade union official to management because we have always dealt with a manager in an adversarial way. In some way we blame them for doing something to our members and that's why we are involved and our whole psyche isn't geared to management (Interviewee C)*

One manager explained how her previous experience in her former union had influenced her:-

*People have all sorts of baggage and it's certainly true to say that in NUPE we weren't encouraged to think of ourselves as managers, certainly the head office staff were not encouraged. In fact, (the GS) thought the word manager was a dirty word and we weren't allowed to use it -- and some others still thought we were managers regardless of that. But lots of people didn't and they weren't encouraged to think like that (Interviewee J)*

This was articulated by one manager who felt that things were now different:-

*But there really has been a tendency that trade union representatives, trade unionists, are not managers and that the idea of management is somehow flawed. Nine years into Unison that is now changing (Interviewee C)*

Certainly UNISON has used the language of management for some time. In 1997 the then General Secretary, Rodney Bickerstaffe wrote the foreword to guidelines for UNISON's development review scheme which included:-

*Helping staff to develop their skills, knowledge and abilities to the full is a central part of the role of all Unison managers. Development reviewing provides an opportunity for managers to meet on a regular one to one basis with their staff to fulfil this responsibility. (UNISON Development Reviewing Guidelines, 1997)*

And senior managers have publicly informed the union's staff of their roles:-

*The role of the senior managers is to*

- *assist the General Secretary in the development of organisational strategy and planning to achieve*

*UNISON's internal and external objectives and priorities.*

- *co-ordinate functions and activities across the union to ensure effective campaigning, integrated working and efficient delivery of key services to regions, branches and members.*
- *work to build UNISON's public profile and external influence.*
- *communicate the work and achievements of the union to our members and staff;*
- *ensure regular communications with staff and between managers and staff.*
- *provide effective mechanisms for developing staff and involving them in decision making.*
- *develop good management practice.*
- *develop performance, standards and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.*

*The senior management group in partnership with the lay leadership, aims to*

- *deliver an organisational strategy which ensures that resources are deployed to achieve the agreed core priorities under UNISON's six objectives*
- *ensure that the ability or opportunity to recruit and retain members is reflected in all our work.*
- *develop the commitment and potential of all staff.*
- *ensure that equality and anti discriminatory considerations underpin all of the work of the union.*
- *develop UNISON's public profile and external influence.*
- *ensure that the needs of members and activists drive our work agenda and not the internal bureaucracy.*
- *ensure that as far as possible the national head office will be strategically focused with operational work and the necessary resources devolved to regions and branches.*
- *keep central overheads at national and regional levels as low as possible so as to maximise resources deployed on providing direct services to members.*
- *deliver the introduction of a system of performance management, with service standards and indicators so as to monitor and evaluate whether resources are being deployed efficiently and effectively (UNISON's Senior Management Document for staff, managers and lay members. Undated)*

## Cognitive rules and culture

Despite this, the legacy of experience in undertaking trade union roles is still felt to be a factor in some cases:-

*I think there is a residual sense that (which I suppose is a reflection of feeling about management overall) the role of trade unions is to defend workers against management and therefore it is sort of awkward for the organisation to be on the other side of the fence, if you like and I think that's true in the relationship with the staff trade unions and it sort of seems to veer between, you know, everybody trying to be all partnershipy and then getting back into a sort of quite conflicty situation. But I don't think it's easy to be very honest about it because the organisation doesn't like seeing itself as both an employer and a trade union. I think certainly the lay member side feels that conflict quite sharply. (Interviewee G)*

One manager explains this in another context:-

*I think Unison is at a point of engaging with the whole issue of standards and performance indicators. Then, the difficulty for trade unions is often the language because, you know, a lot of managers have been on the shopfloor, trade union officials. They know the political arguments against performance related pay, why appraisal doesn't work, you know the cynicism from the workforce about various trendy management initiatives. So there is a lot of that to overcome, for ourselves as well and I think the biggest thing for management is still trying to get the tools to develop staff and while the union says it's a priority, a political imperative, that drives us. And its finding space, and a balance, between the two. (Interviewee F)*

As we have seen, however, some managers, though not all, have been able to achieve that balance:-

*I think it is probably very varied across different parts of Unison. That is my impression. We had the management development courses recently. The one I went on was mostly for regional staff, which was really interesting because it meant you actually met regional managers and they seemed to be completely variable. Some of them were kind of like -- what? Management? -- and others were kind of fantastic, really impressive in the sense that they didn't just have development reviews, they had six weekly one to one discussions and they had sort of performance management, they had appraisal techniques, one region was using a kind of social worker model of supervision (Interviewee G)*

Where difficulties exist, one manager believes that this may be due to inadequate conceptualisation of the issues:-

*It is very simplistic to say, well I am a worker and that is the employer and therefore we can never agree and I am the workers' representative and I have to deal with the managers to overcome problems, therefore I am not a manager. But because there has not been a management culture in the union, in terms of how they manage resources and deal with people, it has been fairly ad hoc, people haven't made the leap to think, well I am representing the workers on one hand but I am also managing resources on the other. And I have always wanted, when I did my trade union role, to deal with competent managers because we want to deal with somebody who knows what they are about and you can reach an agreement and you know it will stick. And so if I am a trade union official and I want that, I would expect the staff that I am responsible for in dealing with their representatives on a day today basis to see me as a competent manager (Interviewee E)*

Some staff, notably field staff, may be having difficulties:-

*Officers who negotiate and organise members spend most of their time attacking managers. Most of their time is undermining managers or challenging managers decisions. So I think it is the point I made some time ago that to manage is a pejorative term, it is almost a term of abuse. That has been tradition, I guess but I think probably more significantly in the past most of these people are outreach workers, they are on their own without supervision with a patch that they are responsible for, they vary in terms of their enthusiasm. Some are very committed and do 70 or 80 hours a week and find it's a bit rich for someone to criticise their performance. I mean, it is difficult. If you work your socks off and your performance is criticised, you take that very personally. I mean, I would take that very personally. (Interviewee H)*

The General Secretary agreed that there had been resistance to management, not because the management was necessarily bad but because there wasn't any. Staff, it was suggested, had in some cases been 'sub-contractors'. In one region, resistance manifests itself in the way staff accommodate to teamworking:-

*There is kind of an individualistic culture, not just amongst ROs but generally amongst staff that working in a team was seen as being synonymous with being managed... I think it manifests itself in some of the ways I was saying about those are the ones who just can't bring themselves to say to their manager -- is it OK if I have my leave next week? -- whether or not our terms and conditions provide for that or not. So they would either say nothing or say I am having leave next week. It makes some of them quite confrontational, really, and not accept instructions. (Interviewee O)*

## Cognitive rules and culture

The same manager has a realistic view of the effect of management on field officers' work:-

*I think it has.(reduced autonomy) It's not reduced the autonomy in the sense that people can still manage their diaries. So if they want to call in Sainsbury's on the way home at three o'clock they still can and there's nothing wrong with that. I think that what some people were worried about was that they would have to account for every minute of their day but in terms of the autonomy we have not really got this quite right and this is one of the problems I mentioned earlier. (Interviewee O)*

However, very few other managers perceive resistance to being managed as a problem:-

*I would say that if you take head office as a whole, it is very much declining for people -- only to the extent that if you asked me or any other manager at head office, we could name you the 20 people who fit into that category. We could all name the same 20 people whether they were in our departments or not. They are kind of the obvious suspects, the usual suspects and there are some people who are, who believe themselves to be free spirits, who came in to work for this great movement of ours and will not be told how to do things (Interviewee J)*

*They may not use the word management but they certainly want it, and they can see that to have an efficient organisation you've got to be managed. (Interviewee B)*

*We have had lots of resistance by members of staff accepting that they had managers. That is beginning to change and as we are getting newer people coming in, they accept it and they actually relish it, you know. They do want somebody that they can go to but the other side of that is that they have got to be accountable for that. (Interviewee O)*

One manager explains how this issue should in her view be approached:-

*I think there is a greater need to reassure that management is actually a bonus, rather than a means of stabbing people in the back, a difficulty to be overcome. (Interviewee F)*

This constraint might, then be overcome. Other constraints are perceived by managers in UNISON, often those related to personnel practices, particularly related to discipline:-

*Disciplinary sanctions nobody wants to get into, there is no tradition, as you know. You tolerate all sorts of misdemeanours*

*and then use that to get rid of people. That has been the pattern in the past. People have got away with blue murder. But there have been instances where people have gone too far and they have gone. (Interviewee H)*

One manager thinks these views may be over-stated:-

*I think the one most people in Unison talk about and would talk about if they were discussing with managers outside the organisation, if that's not getting too hypothetical, would be about what are perceived as constraints on personnel management, I think. If you get a group of managers in Unison together, they will say things like -- well, you can't tell anyone to do anything and you can't use disciplinary procedures, you can't do this and you can't do that. I have to say, I really think that's overstated. It's obviously a perception and it may have been the case more in the past. I think it's not true now. You know, I think it is pretty clear. I think the concern has always been that you wouldn't get senior management support if you initiate some kind of difficult disciplinary procedure, for example. I don't think that's the case. I think in Unison disciplinary procedures probably are used as a last resort but that's not necessarily a bad position to be in (Interviewee G)*

Lack of support from senior management is stated by another as a perception held by some, though, as here, she did not share it. Another manager, however, believes that such perceptions may be an excuse:-

*Meaning that if we had a problem with staff, for example, I think sometimes managers will find excuses not to deal with a member of staff or to deal with them perhaps in a very friendly way. I think that we should be sharper in dealing with them. I am not saying in a ruthless way, you are out, you are sacked. I think that is the wrong policy elsewhere when that happens. I think there are steps that we should take, such as counselling staff if there is a problem, discussing with them what is causing difficulty they may be experiencing from a work point of view. What I do think is that we don't do it quickly enough all sharp enough. We let things drag on at times here (Interviewee N)*

Speed in dealing with personnel issues is also raised as a criticism in another context:-

*Some of our personnel policies frankly are ludicrous. Some of the opportunities that people have -- I'll give you a classic example in here. We are going through it just now on a bullying and harassment case. The impact that has on the entire office for something that can spin on for two years and then is bound to be verging on the vexatious when no one is willing to do something about that -- when I say no one I mean, I think,*

## Cognitive rules and culture

*national colleagues take a harder line on some of these things -- it's frustrating. (Interviewee K)*

Many perceived constraints are recognised by managers as being similar to those experienced by managers in other sectors – time, resources, stress, for example. Two managers felt that the quality of staff was an issue for them:-

*Well, we have got this general problem where there are a lot of people who are cruising. If you have been in the job a long time and you can do it with your eyes shut -- and what I always say in a different context is that my worry is that we may miss the revolution when it comes because we are so used to it never happening. (Interviewee B)*

There was some reference to performance management having been an issue, but in the context of a wider historical malaise:-

*There has been quite clearly a lack of management discipline in all the unions, a lack of recognition that people are in managerial positions and so we have not had a process of very clearly identifying objectives for the organisation and we have had no record of performance management and we have had a somewhat less than satisfactory approach to management and financial information on which debate decisions (Interviewee G)*

Sentiments that were shared in rather more cynical terms:-

*There is no effective management there, you know. We just kept pissing into the wind all the time. I never knew whether I was doing the right thing or the wrong thing, I could never achieve anything. (Interviewee A)*

Very few managers in UNISON articulate the lay member structure as being a constraint on their management, other than in some specific circumstances:-

*You might know what the General Secretary wanted but to be able to deliver it was difficult because these people were actively briefing against him. With some lay members it was almost a badge of honour to defeat the General Secretary. You can't manage an organisation like that. (Interviewee A)*

Lay member behaviour is an issue in another sense:-

*The full time officers, as I was saying before, they use judgment. And they are not always right. Many times they can be wrong but the lay members will remember when they are wrong and not only bring it up with the full time officer who was wrong but bring it up at regional level, bring it up at national level, and it's*



## Moral rules and trade union principles

*very, very easy for the bad side of people to be spread round and not the good work that they do. Working for an organisation which is democratic does impose certain constraints on you (Interviewee C)*

The idea that politics, in some senses, requires managerial awareness, was put in a different way:-

*I suppose, in a political organisation, as it were. I think we are always -- are we going to upset the lay members, how will this play. (Interviewee L)*

A practical example of how one particular issue affected managerial action was offered by another manager:-

*We have about 350 people working here, perhaps a few more and when I sort of look at the numbers, given what people say I can't see us reducing it very much, not unless we have a major outsourcing, which is one of the constraints that we actually have as managers. We could certainly outsource a lot more functions than we do -- for example cleaning -- but I can't see the NEC agreeing to privatised schemes. (Interviewee E)*

It would be unrealistic to believe that lay member dynamics do not feature in managers' perceptions of how they managed. There is, though, little evidence that they perceive them as constraints. As one manager put it:-

*I am not using the term constraints necessarily in a negative way because I think that it is positive that we are a democracy. (Interviewee O)*

### **Systems related to moral rules**

- 8.11. First we must examine the values of UNISON managers and the extent to which they imply sets of moral rules influencing how they manage. The most common idea expressed by these managers is that of fairness:-

*I am absolutely clear that I want to be a decent and a fair manager and that everything I do is ensuring that the staff here can work to their best. (Interviewee D)*

*I think one is, I do, the middle managers that I work with, the team leaders that I work with certainly do think harder than people would in other organisations about what is fair, whether people have had their say, that kind of thing. (Interviewee G)*

*Oh, we are great democrats, aren't we? That's why we get involved in the trade union movement, because we did believe in*

## Moral rules and trade union principles

*fairness and democracy and you can always see the other side of the argument. (Interviewee J)*

One manager believed, as did interviewee J, that fairness should go hand in hand with firmness:-

*They want fairness and the equity but they also want the compassion and the hardness. (Interviewee E)*

There are related values such as openness:-

*We are the first people to complain about lack of consultation and abuse of process so I think in that sense, that is the way we would want to do things, involve people and talk to them. (Interviewee L)*

Also inclusion and control over one's environment:-

*Our values as a trade union are all about people in the workplace being included in decision-making, having a say over their working lives and I think as a manager of staff, you know, looking at the staff side of the job, we ought to apply those values to our own staff. (Interviewee O)*

The same manager referred also to the protection of minorities:-

*An integral part of our values is to look at the interests of groups who are excluded by not being part of the majority (Interviewee O)*

At very senior level, values were linked very much to the organisation's people:-

*Personal belief about how the organisation should be managed.... I actually believe I understand how our key people work and what they are feeling and how they react to things...It is value driven; that's how I think the organisation should be run. (Interviewee C)*

Amongst UNISON managers one can thus discern fairness, equality and justice as values impacting on their managerial roles, as well as related values such as openness, inclusion and involvement. An assertion that moral rules of this kind are significant is supported by the managerial objectives cited above which talk (inter alia) of good management practice, lack of discrimination and achieving staff potential. We look now at managerial approaches to representative rationality.

One particular observation is an outlier in terms of the values it seems to signify:-

## Moral rules and trade union principles

*The really big advantage of working for an organisation like (T, a firm of solicitors) is that there is none of this lay member crap. It's not there; it just doesn't figure. They don't understand. You talk to people in T and they don't know really what you're talking about. They have got no experience of it. Actually trying to manage in an organisation where there isn't any of that is actually quite refreshing. (Interviewee A)*

We saw earlier that UNISON managers tended to talk of partnership when describing the working relationships between managers and lay activists. Their attitudes seem to be broad commitment to that ideal together with an awareness of areas where the ideal has not been achieved or, if it has, where it could be improved:-

*My own values, my identification with the union's values lead me to be very sympathetic to and supportive of partnership working. But because there are these grey areas which lead to things blowing up and having confrontations about things, it does make you a little bit hesitant about the partnership working, more than my natural inclination is, you know. So where you say, let's share all of this, I want your views and everything, you perhaps do a bit less of that than you would like to. You try and get things a bit more sorted before you go to people to talk about things. Because you might find that for some sort of bizarre reason, something gets knocked back. I'm thinking about the service standards stuff we have been doing. You might have a couple of lay people who are in leading positions and, maybe because of their own experience in their workplace, are not into service standards and can knock that back -- which is perverse, really. (Interviewee O)*

*I am generally supportive and proud of the fact that Unison is a participative organisation. I don't always think that the participation is at an appropriate level and I realise that what is appropriate is your own opinion from your own viewpoint. (Interviewee G)*

*By and large -- I think you used the word partnership before and by and large there is a kind of broad partnership approach with which everyone is reasonably happy. (Interviewee J)*

One manager is positive on the notion of accountability of managers to the lay structure:-

*I think you are more accountable when you are challenged and I think that it ensures that there is no imbalance in the power. It can be testing, of course and very, very difficult at times and there are unnecessary wranglings that go on but nevertheless*

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*you definitely have to make sure that you are performing to optimum (Interviewee D)*

Another believes that sometimes the ideal is affected by pressure of demand:-

*Sometimes although you think you are in partnership and you should all be going in the same direction, and by and large we are, sometimes, particularly in Finance, maybe when push comes to shove you have got conflicting demands coming forward about -- we need to get this sorted out, we need to get that sorted out today etc and I'm saying, well, we can't do everything here. (Interviewee N)*

Reflection on the relative stakes of lay member and management stakeholders results in an interesting debating point:-

*I would always say -- and in bars I do say sometimes -- that actually we have got more, those of us who are employed, at stake in this organisation than lay members do because at the end of the day, if Unison goes down the pan they can join another union. If it goes down the pan, we have lost our jobs and therefore we are much more concerned about being an effective organisation, positioning itself well with the decision makers, the government, than the lay members do who are sometimes more concerned about political purity and their ability to get re-elected, although I do understand that. (Interviewee B)*

Earlier, describing the operation of partnership working in UNISON, one manager expressed the view that it was on occasions slightly manipulative, though that manager emphasised:-

*I mean manipulate in its most positive sense, if it does have a positive sense. (Interviewee L)*

There are echoes of this view, by a manager who is philosophically very much committed to an inclusive approach:-

*Some of the time I think the relationship is not always very honest because I do think that, as I say, you spend time learning to manipulate your committee and I do look around at senior managers and see that those with the best committee manipulation skills are often the ones who are most successful organisationally because it is, not a trick but a process you have to learn to manage. (Interviewee G)*

UNISON managers thus see problems, potential and real, in the systems of representative rationality as they operate in the union. Most evidence, however, suggests that there is at its lowest an acceptance of systems which involve forms of partnership – at its highest,

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philosophical commitment to such an approach. Below there will be discussion of what this means in terms of stakeholder management but here we have a view of some moral rules which may impact on that process.

### ***Managerial Activities***

#### ***Deploying Resources***

- 8.12 Earlier there was discussion about UNISON's financial systems. They were described as formal and devolved and there was also reference by the General Secretary to the importance of objectives and priorities. In fact, UNISON is seeking to plan its operations around these objectives, an intention which includes financial operations.

However, UNISON's objectives for 2002, agreed, as he says, by the NEC are in themselves difficult to plan budgetary systems around:

*Objective 1: Increasing recruitment and retention to build organisational strength and maximise income .*  
*Objective 2: Supporting members at work .*  
*Objective 3: Providing effective campaigning and policy development to build UNISON's profile and influence*  
*Objective 4: Improving services to members .*  
*Objective 5: Building member participation and ensuring effective servicing of lay structures*  
*Objective 6: Developing the union's infrastructure and services/managing resources effectively (UNISON's Objectives 2002)*

Despite this, units within the union have developed Business Plans to accord with these objectives. The East Midlands region plan says, for example:-

*The Plan will also guide the allocation of Regional resources, both staff and financial. Finally, it will form part of the means of accountability of all staff, through the Regional Secretary, to the Regional Committee and NEC. (UNISON East Midlands Operational Plan 2002)*

The West Midlands Region has a similar document which also diagrams sub-objectives and sets targets for particular activities, such as :-

- *90% members to have accurate records*
- *30% employers to send subscription information electronically*
- *95% Direct debit payers to have accurate records (UNISON West Midlands Operational Plan 2002)*

In this region, the system is even carried through to the level of branch organisation with a team plan for the B team containing action points

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mapped against plan headings. There are national performance indicators for recruitment which are applied through this process. The Regional Secretary here says that:-

*I am objectives focused. When I write my report to Regional Council now, I am using the objectives as headings. I am trying to move towards reporting what we are achieving in terms of our operational plan. That's my aim, that those reports become quarterly reports on the operational plan. If we are all signed on to that and the things that flow from it, that helps with the demands.*

So UNISON is making a concerted attempt to integrate its objectives and priorities with its management and budgetary systems. It is intended that the system will provide criteria against which spending proposals can be judged. This may be difficult:-

*The discussion that I was having.....before you came in was that (the Finance Officer) said, well, we have got a problem because we are just going through the budgetary making process and people are bidding for about £16 million extra work, all good issues, initiatives, over and above what we are likely to have available as new money and I don't see any willingness, he said, for the organisation to make the difficult decisions to say, if we are going to do this we're going to have to cut other things that we do..... And I said to him, well, what we have got to do, what I want to see is those 6 objectives, what different initiatives are we going to be taking as an organisation to achieve it and how much it's going to cost and we make a judgment about what we think are the important parts of that, what we are going to spend our money on; so we want to spend that and then how we going to cut back on those other areas?.....It is starting a process within the organisation so that they do start making those difficult decisions.. (Interviewee E)*

And despite the assertion of the General Secretary that:-

*The other thing that we are trying to learn is to say no*

one manager is not convinced that this is likely to give fruitful results:-

*For instance, we have got objectives, we have got priorities but when I ask, can you tell me one thing we have stopped doing as a result of having these, nobody can ever tell me. (Interviewee B)*

Another manager sees another area of possible weakness:-

*The area that we are still weak on is to monitor and assess where we went (Interviewee L)*

## Deploying resources

This does not stop regional managers, for example, applying these disciplines within the lay structure:-

*I have a very small finance committee at regional level that now receives bids from all of the lay committees and will not approve money for the local government service group's work in 2002, for example, unless they see that work defined and a very clear link to the organisational plan, as we were saying earlier (Interviewee M)*

Earlier, another Regional Secretary made the point that she saw the system as helping her, in her dealings with lay activists, managing demand. A national manager, however, does not think this is being done strategically:-

*The fundamental problem is, one, our performance management doesn't result in us stopping doing things and therefore all we are doing is trying to get what we want to do to fit the new structure -- and that won't work. And that's because, going back to my earlier thesis, we are not managing demand and we can't go on increasing our demand without increasing our resources and you can do that various ways. You can either cut demand or you can increase resources or you can get more efficient. What we have been doing over the last ten years is trying to use our resources more efficiently and only that. We have not concentrated on reducing demand. (Interviewee B)*

There is no further evidence either way on this issue. What is clear is that UNISON is seriously attempting to relate its resources to its objectives. Does it, however, deploy resources in ways which reflect the ethics and principles its managers profess – the moral rules of the game? One manager relates the principle of minority protection to the objectives and priorities system, intended to ensure that resources are deployed on an issue-driven basis:-

*In an organisation like Unison we know that the big battalions, or the big service groups, are more powerful than the small ones and that maybe the white collar interests are more powerful than blue collar interests, manual workers or the big groups of members are more influential than small groups of members -- of course that is a risk that the powerful parts of the organisation will consume a disproportionate amount of the union's resources or will be overlooked in the process of consultation and engagement. So that is a risk but again coming right back to this question of the new approach. I mean, the new approach is that we have a set of objectives and priorities that everybody signs up to. And in signing up to those objectives, there is a very expensive process of consultation. We haven't got it right yet but you have got a time frame, a timetable, that enables all*

*the different parts, big and small of the organisation to influence the outcome of the process. Their influence is always going to be smaller and so, you know, if as an organisation you've got a limited number of objectives and a limited number of priorities, there is a big question about how you can meet the needs of minority interests inside the organisation. But some people would argue that that's what management is all about. It is about the allocation of scarce resources and if we try to meet everybody's needs and aspirations, then we're going to fail and the big decision, the big challenge is, you know, -- again an example. There are 13 national officers working in health, there are seven in local government. I'm talking about National secretaries, Senior National Officers. Why is that? Does that reflect the needs? Does that reflect history? Does that reflect the influence of that part of the organisation inside the wider organisation? Is that better lobbying on the part of health and local government? It needs to be explained in a more rational way than that. Yes? How do you change that? Where traditionally people who work in there don't work in there. So all I'm saying is that these are hugely important management decisions and they also reflect -- they are not just management challenges and issues but they also reflect the power of stakeholders. You know, the ability of parts of the organisation to lobby effectively. How do you introduce some fairness? And it maybe that having a transparent way of allocating resources that is open to scrutiny, which can be justified against the objectives and priorities, won't change anything. You will still have 13 and 7. But at the moment it's not the product of a rational set of criteria. But Transport is always going to struggle to command the same level of resources and priority as Local Government (Interviewee H)*

This somewhat complex stream of consciousness suggests the existence of a debate about how to use resource allocation systems to achieve some degree of fairness, some way in which overall objectives influence management decisions rather than stakeholder power. The issue is tackled by other managers similarly using Transport, UNISON's smallest service group, as an example:-

*It's trying to make sure that they do get the appropriate level of service. Because they're smaller than Energy or Water it doesn't mean to say that we just write them off. One or two of my colleagues have said, why do we bother with Transport, de da de da de da. And I say, look, my analogy has been that the patient's in intensive care and my job is to keep them functioning. When I am told to switch off that machine, I have to switch it off but nobody has told me to at the moment and, if I am asked for my assessment of the patient's condition it might be my view that the machine should be switched off. But it is a wider discussion than that, you know. I think, again, ethically*



## Deploying resources

*when we take people's money, this has always been the sort of NALGOish thing hasn't it, -- if we take people's money in exchange for sort of saying, we will give you a service, then we should give you a service. (Interviewee L)*

*I would be very conscious of the Transport group, because they would get the support for being the smaller group. Local Government can take care of itself anyway. If there was a feeling that the Transport group was being picked on unfairly ... (Interviewee E)*

Another manager takes a more practical, but still issue driven, approach:-

*The criteria I adopt are what are the implications on Unison financially. In other words, as a general rule I would follow that and so it is not necessarily a case of who shouts the loudest gets served first. It is what is important, what will the impact be in not doing something on Unison and Unison finances. The impact of dealing with something. (Interviewee N)*

Another manager, already cited, emphasised that her core values included the protection of minorities and that this impacted on her actions. There is some evidence, then, of ethical criteria being applied in resource allocation decisions.

There was discussion above about the systems for allocation of space on merger and the practical consequence of those decisions. Managers saw this as a significant issue. In the earlier discussion there were some references to cultural issues connected with the building of the new union. Two managers made the point that staff located in Woolwich felt undervalued, which is a cultural perception. Perceptions that there were ulterior motives for the decision also seem to have been common:-

*There were lots of people who were saying that it was part of a political agenda, that this had nothing to do with efficiently locating departments. It's about making a point. There were lots of people who were saying that there were wider agendas, they didn't have anything to do with efficiency or effectiveness, they were part of scores being settled. (Interviewee H)*

And feelings of undervaluation were sometimes shared at regional level:-

*The problems with Castle Gate and Sherwood Rise were firstly that the Sherwood Rise staff felt themselves to be second-class citizens on the basis that one was on the outskirts of Nottingham and the other was smack in the middle of Nottingham with, in fact, access to all the tasty shops and all the rest of it and the*

## Deploying resources

*staff clearly, in fact wanted to have improved social and domestic facilities at their doorstep, unlike Sherwood Rise. Sherwood Rise was the old NUPE building; Castle Gate was the old NALGO building and there was always the sense of have and have nots in the context of that sort of relationship anyway. (Interviewee M)*

Somewhat surprisingly, however, in a union where managers use the discourse of culture in discussion of their managerial activities (a search revealed 47 coded passages of text from 13 managers), practical considerations of people being separate tended to dominate the observations of national managers:-

*Well, it almost goes without saying that until we were all in the same building, more or less, or at least within the same location (because we still have Welfare in the NUT), until you did that it was incredibly difficult to build one organisation. (Interviewee B)*

*Initially it did not have an impact on me greatly because I was dealing with Local Government and that was based here and it made life slightly more difficult trying to get in touch with Communications, or something but it was liveable with but when I became the AGS after the functional review was implemented, being responsible as a manager for dealing with people in Woolwich, I was quite conscious of the fact that there was a sort of them and us view with most of the NALGO people who worked here and went down to Woolwich were pissed off and angry with the organisation. (Interviewee E)*

*Well, it did have a huge impact, there is no doubt about that. I mean, the fact that Communications were at Woolwich and Education and other parts of the organisation. I mean, Communications was probably the biggest problem. Not being able to walk upstairs or downstairs to engage in an informal way with that expertise... There is no doubt that even with the advent of technology, it was a major problem (Interviewee H)*

At regional level, however, language was slightly different:-

*There was unfinished business in that we had the Stafford sub office which was left there and that, right up to last year when it was closed (because that was one of my objectives, to close it) it was still like a former NUPE sub office, you know eight years after the merger.... One of the motivating factors in terms of closing the office (was) this horrible sub office culture that had developed up there which I didn't like (Interviewee O)*

*Having said all of that, we still, in fact, found that for whatever reason there was a massive problem about attitudes in relation to the Sherwood Rise end of things. So that was a cultural thing*

## Deploying resources

*that we had to overcome in the first instance and then in succeeding years. (Interviewee M)*

And in all three regions in respect of which data was gathered, there was a policy of mixing staff from the old unions to achieve cultural integration.

*Very early on I did a bit of shifting around -- a bit uncomfortable for people -- I moved people around. Perth was the COHSE office, Edinburgh for NUPE and here for NALGO and I moved people around so that I put officers from here in Perth and Edinburgh and brought some others in here. I mean, it was a bit contrived, if you like, but it was to break that down. (Interviewee K)*

*One of the things that I did from day one when I got the Regional Secretary's job, was to move from Sherwood Rise to Castle Gate, not because I wanted to shop at Boots next-door but because politically that was important and within months to start the engagement of moving staff between the two buildings (Interviewee M)*

*We did have a policy of mixing people from former partner unions in terms of allocating people, although we didn't have the teams then. It was more around service groups that there was a definite decision to try and get mixtures of people and also to get people to do work that was sort of counter cultural -- say some of the COHSE people who only had a Health Service involvement to actually go out into Local Government. (Interviewee O)*

In London, staff were centralised into the old NALGO building, which was not one that was admired to any great extent:-

*We do of course blame NALGO for it but I don't think we think, oh God, this is the sort of place NALGO would like to work. It's dreadful. We might have done at the beginning. Probably did at the beginning. Because ironically, I know Woolwich was way out in wu wu land but it was actually quite a nice working environment and it did have a much flatter structure. You know, the departments mixed a lot more and you had much more of the sort of healthy working environment where people went in and out of each other's offices and bumped into each other in the canteen which was massively used, whereas it doesn't happen here. You know, you look at the other union mergers and you think, oh no, they are making exactly the same mistakes that we made in not forcing people to come together. (Interviewee J)*

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Another manager makes the same point but links it to rather wider considerations:-

*I do think also that everybody being in Mabledon Place and (two managers from the former NALGO getting the two top jobs in Unison) -- slight feeling of, you know, that NALGO are winners really. I don't think that's quite fair in terms of what they are trying to do but I think it has a slight feeling of that if we are not careful. I think certainly would have been much better if it had not been in this building for Unison. I think it would have helped to make us feel like a new organisation which it doesn't always. (Interviewee G)*

On the other hand as one manager commented above, the centralisation of staff in one office did have benefits, despite the problems perceived by these managers. That same manager gives the impression that decisions on layout of offices were not strategic but were motivated more by practical considerations of how to get people in pre-determined space:-

*I am a person who manages by walking about so I was around. It wasn't crucial because, well you know, we started on the first floor, we moved to the fourth floor, the space was tight -- not as tight as other places -- shared offices but one of the things, the reason why probably we did not have a big problem was because we had a group of people that did it. (Interviewee B)*

His successor in that space was not very impressed, although she was very positive about the contribution that physical space could make to the achievement of her objectives:-

*The office here looked a mess, it looked like a bomb site and I wanted everybody to tidy it up. You know, we have nice windows where people had barricaded themselves in with posters. I wanted those all down so I reshifted all the offices and I have put appropriate people in with appropriate people. So in other words, no team of National Officers sit together any more. It's a National Officer and an Assistant National Officer because that means that you have got education and training for Assistant National Officer; that Assistant National Officer is also providing support for the National Officer. And we have got nobody hiding behind posters and wardrobes and God knows what and we are having a clean sweep. I want the office to look efficient, tidy, effective and to be a welcoming place to come into. I want it to be a fun place, and inspirational place to work and I think we are getting there (Interviewee D)*

One manager was equally critical of the space that was designed in the Kings Cross building but felt that allocation of open plan space could have been successful in another environment:-

## Deploying resources

*The problem with Mabledon Place was that, although it was originally designed as an open plan office, by the time Woolwich and Banstead staff moved in, it was not really an open plan office. We were squeezing open plan in there and the open plan was poor open plan rather than well designed open plan and I think we had the consequence of poorly designed offices. Which I am not blaming anybody for, that was the nature of the building by that stage, whereas if we had had purpose-built open plan such as now exists, you have probably not seen it, in Nottingham and to an extent in Manchester (Interviewee A)*

Although from another regional office, this optimism is not entirely shared:-

*S chose that (open plan) for them when they came into this building. It is controversial and a lot of people, I think, would still like offices but that has never been negotiable. It does cause a bit of embarrassment when I have got, like, my palatial surroundings here, you know, and I do open this up as a meeting room for people and I have noticed that the team leaders have now all got private offices, within the teams. (Interviewee O)*

Belief in the importance of physical space to the union has been translated into a strategy for the future, in the event that a decision is taken to refurbish the head office and move back in:-

*But the beauty of moving out will change all the working relationships within the head office. We will get the change that we want and we will do it in two ways. As we move out, there are lots of things that we are not taking. We are not taking stuff from the basement but we will actually put people in positions in work groups where we want them as we move out so that we can bring them back here in different formats. And it may be completely different formats on the floors because they will be open plan again, for everybody (apart from me!). So we are looking at different ways in which we can use the building, improving the conference facilities, perhaps pulling back down and getting very modern conferencing facilities put in. Actually using a necessity to revamp this building as a way of changing the culture within head office. It might change working relationships and hopefully with the regions as well. (Interviewee C)*

Physical space and physical structure, therefore, is perceived by UNISON managers as having demonstrable importance in their managerial activities, but perhaps not entirely in ways that were anticipated. It has had a significant impact on the development of the new union since it was formed 10 years ago.

**'Meaningful Managerial Actions  
Merger Management**

- 8.13. UNISON was formed in 1993 which was longer before this research than in respect of the other case study unions. Managers, therefore, did not talk about the nuts and bolts of merger management, and there is less data on this than is the case from managers in other unions. The process is described from a managerial point of view in much more detail in Dempsey and McKeivitt (2001), based on the researcher's experience as participant observer. Issues relevant here include:-
- Cultural analysis
  - Counselling available for staff in an employee assistance programme
  - Use of management development as a tool for facilitating management of the merger process
  - Management of change programmes for staff
  - Cultural strategies to endeavour to demonstrate that none of the organisations was the dominant partner
  - Major voluntary redundancy programmes

One manager reflects on learning from his experience at the time:-

*I do remember saying at the time that as far as I am concerned I get a real buzz from this. I love the idea of change management, thinking that you are trying to improve things and I can't understand why people have got problems with it -- and a person turned round and said that the difference between you and me is that you are the instigator of change and I am the victim of change. And it is something that has always stuck in my mind -- that if you want proper change management and you want improvement, you can't have victims of change  
(Interviewee C)*

Managerial reflections in hindsight do produce some interesting features:-

*If they worked at Woolwich, and worked for NUPE, and were coming into a group of predominantly NALGO people to do the same sort of function, functions were changing slightly, and in hindsight what we probably did not do enough of was integrate these people, take notice of the fact that you have got a member of staff here who has worked with colleagues and those colleagues have gone.. I don't think we paid enough attention at the time to talk about where they were going to be and how it was going to work. That is the integration of people together. It is like meeting new friends for the first time, it takes a while to build up a relationship. Perhaps as a manager it is certainly something I would say to anyone else going through the same exercise. Spend a bit of time to integrate. It could be social events, it could be away days, whatever suits but I don't think we*

## Merger management

*had time to do that when we brought people together.  
(Interviewee N)*

*The one thing, though, that I think we didn't really discuss at the level that I was engaged was the management process of the new union. Now I am certain that there wasn't sufficient dialogue around that at national level because had there been we would have been more engaged or at least aware of it.  
(Interviewee M)*

Although another manager had a slightly different perspective on one aspect of management process:-

*Well there was a lot of discussion around structure, as usual, as Unison always seemed to be obsessed with structure so there was an awful lot of discussion about structure and levels  
(Interviewee G)*

Another structural reflection related to the idea of regional management teams:-

*That made it very difficult to manage when you create a management team from people from each of those three cultures. Even the very sense of management team is different, Mike, because if you recall I never operated a management team in NALGO. I, if you like, was a manager and other people had different jobs to do. The term "management team" was something that was really quite new. And we were told to have a management team. What was that and what was that about? And I am not sure that we were terribly well fitted to do that in the early stage (Interviewee K)*

Managers from the Health Group reflected that their experience was different from others:-

*It was a collective and it was very, very important in those first couple of years that that was conveyed to the staff. You know, saying to the staff at this was a genuine partnership, this wasn't a takeover, that we were trying to build something in health that was a new union not, you know, the practices and culture of one other partner unions would not dominate. (Interviewee H)*

*The coming together of the Health Group was fun, it was great, it was extraordinary and in a sense every single one of us felt that we were Unison, that we represented everything that was good about Unison and we felt that we were at the cutting edge and leading Unison -- but we lost our way. (Interviewee D)*

*There are scars on my back, actually, because I think that the Health Group did it too well too quickly and as a consequence a*

## Merger management

*lot of people were quite jealous of it, actually. That's my perception. I can remember comments like "look at the Health Group up there having lunch together" and all that and I mean people didn't like it. I think the Health Group was successful much earlier than other parts of the organisation and people resented it. (Interviewee B)*

Another lesson has been learned by one senior manager which he is seeking to translate into the future:-

*I'm even changing my approach to staff as well because I would have argued five or six years ago -- and I've argued more recently than that -- forget about the old unions. The people who just hark on about the old unions, in some ways they are in the wrong. I compared them to colonists, people who live in the colonial world who used to look back on the mother country and they have this ideal of the mother country that, whenever they came back, just wasn't there. The ideal didn't match the reality. And I've played down the old unions but I think they are gaining so much more confidence now that I am saying, you should remember your old union. You have got to remember, we have got quite a lot of new staff who don't know what you are talking about but if you have come from one of the partner unions, you should remember the old union and what they were able to achieve and what they did for over 100 years on behalf of their members and you should remember your involvement with them with honour. But then look forward. As I say, we are now into our 10th year of Unison -- how are we going to make this union the union of the 21st century, remembering our past? And then trying to deal with it that way rather than saying, as I would have done a few years ago, you have got to cut off and just move forward. Otherwise, you get collective amnesia and you don't need that (Interviewee C)*

So reflections by UNISON managers on the events of merger management with which they were involved, taken together with a published account of those events, gives a slightly different emphasis to this case study than to those of managers in other unions. It demonstrates that, however one judges their success, explicit merger management activities were practised in UNISON and that some degree of managerial learning has taken place arising from their experiences of them. Maybe this will be a long term process:-

*It's a bit like the French Revolution and Chou en Lai's view on that when asked whether it had succeeded and he said "it's too early to tell." I don't think we'll have to wait 200 years but I think it's a bit too early to tell. (Interviewee A)*



**Managerial Tasks**

**Managing by Information**

- 8.14. Dempsey and McKeivitt (2001) contains criticisms of managerial communication during the merger. Whilst examples of good practice were found, such as a newsletter with a column guaranteeing responses from a member of the Senior Management Team to staff questions, the article concludes that 'lack of staff resources led to communication becoming piecemeal and it was not possible to develop the required strategic communication policy' (p 10)

Personally, however, some UNISON managers reflect on communication as part of their management practice:-

*I see myself as the conduit -- no, that's not the right term -- between the centre and the region. You know, it's important that the corporate issues that we are pursuing get communicated within the region and to the staff and the lay members, not just communicated but people engaged with them. (Interviewee O)*

*You start to see bigger than the little niche that you work in and become interested in how things work and how the problems get resolved. So I did come through that route and that probably that meant that I was quite (I think it would have been natural anyway) a consultation manager. I kind of wanted to talk to people a lot and make sure they felt all right about things and saw, I suppose, initially the side of management that I like doing is very much being about motivating people and looking at what people are good at and trying to encourage them to go a bit further, that kind of thing, I suppose. Soft management, I suppose. (Interviewee G)*

Another manager has found that her staff have taken initiatives in this area:-

*I was going to drive the team that was going to deliver IIP in the department and I very quickly learned that it doesn't work like that and so we have now set up a team within the department taking responsibility for doing the work on it which has been a great innovation and they have got a lot more, they are very much more able to sell it to their colleagues than I ever would be because it would have looked like another management initiative if it was me. So they are enthused in their own right and they are coming up with lots of ideas about things they would like to do differently, ways they would like to communicate differently. So we have our own newsletter, we have done our own survey on what changes we would like to see. All this the staff have initiated rather than me. (Interviewee J)*

Another manager reflects on one particular difficulty he admits in his communication with his staff:-

## Managing by information

*I think one of the difficulties we have got, Mike, -- it is a classic old managerial position, I suppose -- but I think I have allowed the trade unions to have too much of the running and keep the staff advised on issues. I tell the stewards and they interpret it and tell the staff. And what I was saying to C who is responsible for staffing is that, we need to communicate more directly with the staff what we are proposing. It's fine for the trade unions to put out their position on that but they shouldn't be the main communicator of what were doing and we should get our views out. After the monthly management team, whenever I get time, I actually put out a newsheet round staff saying what we talked about, what we have agreed, what were the points. Fair enough, the unions can put their views out but they shouldn't be the messenger for us (Interviewee K)*

One of the changes made by the current General Secretary is to widen the membership of what is now the Senior Management Group to include regional managers. One manager believes that this initiative has improved communications:-

*I have certainly discerned a better sort of liaison and coordination with them. In other words, more communication, more exchanges about what is happening, perhaps more of a willingness for them to discuss issues with me. It doesn't always work but they do do that. I like to think that there has been a more open approach from me to discuss with them what we want to trying to do so I think that there is a better exchange. I think that has come about because of more regular coming together of managers in that sort of context and therefore that sort of inclusiveness that I have talked about. (Interviewee N)*

And other systems have been introduced which could have an impact on communications. A process commenced in 2001 was called 'Transforming Our Union':-

*Two years ago, we embarked on a new process which aimed to bring together the different parts of our union to speak with one voice and pursue one agreed agenda. We agreed that we needed to focus our energies more closely on the key activities which could develop the union and take us forward. To do that, we recognised that we needed to tighten up on our decision-making; our evaluation and monitoring and our reporting procedures. As part of that process, we asked ourselves some searching questions and developed some agreed broad priorities for the organisation. We called the process Transforming the Union. (Transforming Our Union 2002/3 Update)*

## Managing through people

This process included written and managerial communication and seminars and was based on UNISON's six objectives, cited above. One of the achievements of the process was stated to be that the union had:-

*improved our staff communications: regular staff magazine and news and Intranet information. (Transforming Our Union 2002/3 Update)*

The review from which these texts are cited was distributed to all staff and was therefore itself part of a communications process. There is a regular staff magazine and an intranet, on which Senior Management Group minutes are posted.

*All our minutes and that are put on the intranet, we expect all managers to go and brief their managers after we have had meetings of the Senior Management Group, we have meetings with the level twos; we are going to be bringing the level two managers together across regions -- I think we have got a date later this year. That will be the first ever meeting. We are having meetings of women managers (Interviewee E)*

There is, therefore, evidence that managerial communication is an issue for UNISON managers. However, it cannot be said that it featured as one of the key tasks of most managers when asked to identify the way they operated as a union manager.

### **Managing through People**

- 8.15. UNISON has made a commitment to achieve the Investors in People standard. The Transforming Our Union update cited above says that three regions have so far been awarded the standard, together with UNISON's Holiday Centre, and the process at other regions and Head Office has commenced. A next step of achieving IIP nationwide is identified in the document. The East Midlands region is one of those which has received the award. In the assessment, staff are reported as making the following comments about managers, in respect of the way they are managed:-

- *Very approachable and supportive*
- *Gives me responsibility*
- *Genuinely has an open door (UNISON East Midlands Region IIP Assessment, May 2001)*

The manager of this process appears to have found it rewarding himself, though pointing out, after experience in another region, that his experience may not be altogether typical:-

*Having engaged in the process of IIP and taking people with that -- and as you know, it is the process that is important, not the shield -- in a wonderful experience in the East Midlands, having*

## Managing through people

*moved last August/September temporarily into the north west, trying to lift the organisation up to then go for IIP and the process, massive, massive differences. I had almost forgotten what it was like, you know, three or four years ago in the East Midlands. I'd like to think it was never quite that bad between you and I, but it is quite instructive to be taken back again and to do this parallel thing. We have arrived in the East Midlands and our job now is to stay top of the perch whereas in the north west we are just at the bottom of the ladder. (Interviewee M)*

Many other managers do highlight their responsibilities for their staff when asked about their managerial roles. One does so in an IIP context:-

*To be part of the Senior Management Team, to participate and to help make corporate decisions but also to inform, to motivate, to challenge the staff to make sure that they know what's going on in the organisation, that they feel part of the organisation, that they are stretched and that they think they have got development opportunities. All the stuff you get in IIP, really, which is a synthesis of what we are doing anyway. (Interviewee J)*

Another, after describing her responsibility for the smooth running of the section, to the General Secretary and for achieving the union's objectives and priorities, turns her attention to her people:-

*In terms of management of the personnel within Unison, I see myself as somebody here to support the staff, to ensure that they are functioning at their best and delivering what is required, either from the national perspective with regard to Unison or the Health Group perspective nationally (Interviewee D)*

Another focuses first on her people:-

*My managerial role I think is a high level of responsibility for staff in a kind of managerial welfare, staff development but I think crucially about engaging with the union's priorities and having responsibility for ensuring that they work within that framework and they deliver. (Interviewee F)*

A senior manager describes the process that the union has gone through in arriving at a position of people orientation in terms of a journey:-

*The irony is that what we have been about as trade union officials is to get better management for our members. If the truth be known, if you tried to analyse it, you are looking for good management of the membership and if that is the case, the trade union should have good management as well. We never had.*

## Managing through people

*We have had bullying types of management, we have had management which has been secretive, we have had cliques, we have had networks that exclude people and quite a large number of people, they continue working for the organisation because they want to be a trade unionist but they feel alienated from many of the internal processes. We have never, ever been good at managing. I think with Unison -- and again, a lot of the work was started with you with the initial management courses -- nine years into Unison they are realising that we are a big organisation, that we do have a duty of care to the staff. I am not pretending that everything is rosy in the garden (Interviewee C)*

Part of this message is that people management is still developing, a point taken up by another manager:-

*When it comes to the relationship with people, it is really like anywhere else. It depends on the individual and how they relate to people and I don't think that we have ever tried, although we have tried to introduce certain things by performance management, etc, I don't think we have ever tried to introduce a sort of way of managing people. So you have got good and bad people managers and, going back to my point, you have got the wrong people in the wrong jobs so we have got people who have no people skills in people jobs. If you were to go to staff and ask what is it like in Unison, I suspect it would depend on how good or bad their manager was. I guess that is the same everywhere. (Interviewee B)*

Good people management is not equated by some managers with lack of decisiveness. One manager, having described the way she has tightened up on sickness absence and annual leave and removed anomalies in what staff were doing, describes her approach:-

*What I have done is put forward proposals and said to people, tell me what you think about it and, to be honest with you, most have been agreed with. Some people have disagreed with some things, some things I have taken on board, others I have enforced. They have to take it or leave some things. (Interviewee D)*

Both she and another manager are firmly of the view that this sort of clarity and openness is what staff want:-

*There is a transformation taking place and it is a recognition that we are a big organisation with huge resources the most important of which is staff and those resources need to be managed in an efficient and effective way. The price of mismanagement its first of all that you are less efficient than you ought to be but you're also sending messages out to other staff. And, in fact, if you talk to staff and not managers, one of the*

## Performance management

*criticisms they will express is that the organisation is not managed. People get away with things that they shouldn't get away with. (Interviewee H)*

Formal relations with staff, through their unions, is not however quite as positive in some places:-

*It (industrial relations) is not terribly good. Every time there is an issue, in other regions where things happen, up here it's -- you can't do that because of this, or that. There is no sense of, how do we take it forward? (Interviewee K)*

### **Performance management**

Amongst issues mentioned here have been staff development and performance management. As mentioned earlier UNISON has a development reviewing scheme, introduced by the then General Secretary as facilitating the linking of individual development with the wider objectives of UNISON. These objectives, and priorities, are, as has been seen, now formalised into a system which seeks to focus the union on national, sectional, regional and individual objectives formulated on a cascading basis and there have been attempts to link this process to resource allocation.

In fact, with the exception of one manager who had not found the scheme over helpful, UNISON managers do tend to talk about development reviewing in a contextual way rather than about the scheme itself. They seem to see it as part of a series of wider processes. For example, the process of talking to staff on an individual basis:-

*And the one-to-ones, of course, hugely important, the individual time not just the formal development reviewing process. I would be very interested to see the results of your analyses with the four unions because I certainly feel that Unison is streets ahead in tackling this huge, huge issue. And we have had a lot of problems, as you know. Compared with where we were two years ago, it is just remarkable (Interviewee M)*

Or in the context of a holistic objective setting and achieving process:-

*I think we have at last got it round the right way -- draft the plan, talk to staff through the development review process, make sure we have the skills and resources to deliver the plan, draw up training schedules if we need something, deliver and probably the area that we are still weak on is to monitor and assess where we went. (Interviewee L)*

*Now how you make people accountable, in my view, is that you agree what the objectives are and what the priorities are within the framework of the union's objectives and priorities, what is*

## Performance management

*achievable -- we are all into SMART objectives but it is about being specific and identifying what is achievable, negotiating and agreeing that that is a reasonable work programme and then having a system of monitoring through one to ones or at least periodic interviews and feedback so that you can check what progress has been made. (Interviewee H)*

Accountability is seen elsewhere as a significant issue in the process:-

*This is like absolute news, isn't it, in the trade union movement, Mike, that we have got to in fact be accountable in the real sense, not just to lay people but to be accountable for our performance on a quarterly basis with the management team, with statistics. We don't call them performance indicators. We started off calling them that. They are now progress indicators because we are sensitive of course, you know. And we are operating performance measurement, time that people spend on achieving the six core objectives. How much time you spend organising, you know. That kind of analysis is being done and people are co-operating with that across the union and that is remarkable. (Interviewee M)*

The principle of performance management is usually accepted in terms, if with the odd caveat:-

*Performance issues are becoming big issues and I think particularly since we are committed to IIP -- because IIP has got a very clear model of the sort of organisation we ought to be. In fact, when I talked to (my line manager) about it, I thought it was a good comment he made. He said to him it is a bit like Nigeria calling in the International Monetary Fund and they say -- to get all the money you have got to privatise your water etc. We are going in the IIP model of what an organisation should be like and having had our diagnostic assessment, you know, I'm very with that. I think we weren't aware how much that was about performance management and allocating resources and measuring effectiveness and all those things. So I think maybe we have a bit stumbled into this, not realising when we committed to IIP that it was that. I mean, that is the direction things have been going. (Interviewee O)*

And the same manager expresses another concern in a somewhat wry fashion, making another reference to the language of the scheme:-

*Of course, it does make it harder, as well, because I said to you that we are doing very poorly in our recruitment performance indicators and you don't half feel it, you know. Yesterday when we were looking at our information and we are languishing at the foot of what isn't a league table (but of course it is), it puts pressures on you. I went home saying "I'm a failure. We're*

## Performance management

*doing so badly. What are we going to do about it?" (Interviewee O)*

One manager is sceptical:-

*I see no real evidence that there is any vigorous debate about financial devolvment, policy devolvment and delivery devolvment, performance indicators or anything like that actually working. Looking at the paperwork I saw, I just don't see any evidence. No (Interviewee A)*

And another manager does see performance management as not yet working well:-

*I would say that we are not good.(at performance management) We are, like, so far behind even the public sector in terms of management. We are trying. (Interviewee B)*

He makes this point in the context of an observation, cited earlier, that setting objectives has not led to the union stopping doing anything. But another manager is positively evangelical about the principle:-

*Performance management -- yes, it's not in our interests to have an inefficient organisation. People in my experience like working to clear standards and expectations and the staff certainly don't have any problem with that. So I think it's a very old-fashioned view that somehow they are all free spirits that do their own thing for the labour movement. I mean, they are employees, they are all employees of the organisation and we all have expectations and as long as you are clear about the expectations and clear about what you expect of people and recognise and reward when things are done well, I think that those principles apply right across the spectrum, whatever the organisation is (Interviewee J)*

And another explains how it informs her overall management practice:-

*I think what we should try and do is this corporate thing about the objectives and working towards those and promoting that approach and trying to use that as a way of balancing things out. So we have now got these six headline objectives and you are looking at how things pertain to those and you are looking at how the organising culture and the approach that you are supposed to be adopting fits into that. I know it sounds very vague but, you know, you are trying to look at a holistic kind of model. I know some of my colleagues on the management team don't like me talking this way but I think it's important that we have some conceptual grasp of some of these things. This is what you are trying to do. It's not airy fairy. It actually comes*



## Staff development

*down to practical things about how you allocate working in teams, for example. (Interviewee O)*

### **Staff development**

Development reviewing, as its name suggests, involves assessing needs for staff development. One manager has already referred to drawing up training schedules as part of the process, as one unit's training plan outlines:-

*This draft training plan is prepared in accordance with the section's Training Policy and the outcome of development reviews during which the Business and Environment operational plan for this year was discussed. (UNISON Business and Environment Training Plan 2002)*

In the East Midlands region, IIP assessment confirmed that:-

*Top management can describe strategies that they have put in place to support the development of people in order to improve the organisation's performance. There is strong evidence of senior management commitment to a strategic approach to staff development. I was able to confirm through interviews that the Regional Secretary and the heads of areas demonstrate a high level of involvement and interest in planning learning to improve the Region's performance and to develop the staff. Recent priorities relate to management development, developing skills for the wider role of the union, such as presentation and handling the media, developing teams following the restructuring into areas and ongoing events linked to 'WOW' - or winning the organised workforce, the Unison initiative to increase membership. (UNISON East Midlands IIP Assessment May 2001)*

A senior manager explains the strategy for management development, which was mentioned by several managers:-

*We have embarked upon IIP which started before you left, we are really pushing that very hard and it is compulsory for managers at all levels to go on management development courses. I think we have completed just about the first tranche of development, the SMG has been and they are having another two or three days later this year and there is induction training for managers now so we have tried to instil, you know, that people starting believe that they are managers with having regular managers meetings (Interviewee E)*

And one manager explains how it works in her management practice:-

## Teams

*There are more tools now, the development review process, we have always done that here and that has been useful. We have also reorganised twice and we have had staff come and go, which is unsettling and short-term puts more demands but it has actually been quite refreshing and I think that has been a good sign. So we use the development review and I think that's positive. There is now training that people see that they can have, as opposed to a wish list that wasn't there and we have regular unit meetings. People go to lunch. We have a team away day. It's not rocket science. (Interviewee F)*

This is virtually the only evidence relating to staff development and training in general in the union. In the East Midlands the evidence seems reliable; in the one area where a training plan is available, just under 60% of the training budget was unspent in 2001, which is an indicator only of quantity of training, not quality.

### **Teams**

There have been references on several occasions in this case study to various teams – management teams in the main but also teams at regional level. The General Secretary is clear about the national position on this:-

*What we are doing is to change that by bringing in team working. So we are now within regions, and most regions have gone over to it (and it's not successful yet), we are bringing regional officers together as a team and they work together as a team under a team leader and the team also includes organising assistants and clerical and secretarial staff. They have got to keep a diary within those circumstances. They have got to sit down as a group under a manager and talk about what they are doing and we can get through to them the priorities on what we want them to do. There has been a belief in trade unions that this job has been done for 100 years and we will continue to do it that way but by bringing in team working under a manager, you can actually change the job of the regional officer. And again, we are part of the way through this. I am not saying that we have done it but we are part of the way through it.*

He believes that team working is changing the job of the regional officer. A reason for that is offered from one region:-

*It (scepticism about management) also manifests itself in working as part of a team because there is kind of an individualistic culture, not just amongst ROs but generally amongst staff that working in a team was seen as being synonymous with being managed and, again, for people to work as team members you have to see that the team is greater than the sum of its parts and has a contribution to make. (Interviewee O)*

## Teams

So, one would speculate, introducing team working may not have been straightforward:-

*That's beginning to work through but we are in the early stages of it. We weren't alone with it. I think down in the southwest they were fairly early into team working. We certainly embraced it -- I wouldn't say we embraced it -- we imposed it and then tried to persuade people it was the best way forward. I think it is, actually, making a difference. (Interviewee K)*

Although in one region the problems seem now to be of a different order, one in which the focus seems to be on improving cross team working rather than philosophising about the value of teams per se:-

*Whilst it has many, many pluses in being in a single office, the interesting feature of the last three months is there is a degree of criticism now that we have not maximised the benefits of working from a single office. And that arose from two team meetings. We had a management team yesterday when we were discussing it. And the interesting feature is that whilst we have all these wonderful teams and they are really working well, there is still insufficient engagement between the teams even though they are in the same building now. And they will be, now, open plan and all the rest of it. Like, next-door to each other. (Interviewee M)*

A particular manifestation that teams in one region were working together was observed at one regional office, as evidenced by a note made at the time:-

*After the interview, we went on a visit to two of the floors in the building and saw the fact that several teams had on the walls of their offices the flip charts from their away days, which were giving them guidance on how they had agreed they would move forward as teams. This gave the office space a feeling of team identity. (Research note September 2002)*

At national level, one manager talked about team formation in the context of merging old union groups of staff together:-

*I decided that building a team was more important than necessarily doing things in the most efficient way straight away. So as a consequence I talked to everybody and I tried to design a job around what people wanted to do. Certainly, which meant they had something for which they were directly responsible and so it was a combination. But, you know, it certainly wasn't the most efficient way to organise but it did mean that we started to build a team right from day one...It was a good experience. Unison was a good experience. (Interviewee B)*

## Managing action - leadership

A number of other initiatives have already been mentioned. Regional Secretaries were required to form management teams, the Senior Management Team has been widened to a Senior Management Group, of which the Head Office Senior Management Team is a part. Several managers have referred to team away days. So it is fair to say that in UNISON there is a positive managerial attitude to team working. At regional level this has represented a major change, challenging the attitudes of staff to their somewhat autonomous traditions and their attitudes to management – the cognitive rules by which many traditionally lived.

### **Managing Action**

- 8.16. Here we look at the extent to which trade union managers engage in 'action' roles, given that they are popularly known as 'leaders' and lines may be blurred between 'controlling' and 'doing.' One manager approaches this question in terms:-

*The role is as a strategic manager, almost like the Chief Executive of the Region, which raises interesting questions about the political role which we can go on to in more detail. But I think a Regional Secretary who is a strategic manager does do stuff which appears to be operational but is part of the strategic management/political leadership, if I can use that term, role. Whilst you service the Regional Committee and Regional Council which on the one hand could be seen as operational I think they really are strategic. So I would have to say that was the area where perhaps it is most operational, interfacing with lay members and with the lay member democracy. And it's inevitable that -- I mean, what is the difference between a strategic and an operational manager anyway? I mean, you lead a Management Team and everybody has got responsibilities for certain areas but you inevitably get drawn into talking about -- I can't think of an example really but, you know, hands on sort of stuff. But I think the bulk of it is strategic. (Interviewee O)*

Another manager reflects this strategic focus

*In terms of hands on management, if I can put it that way, locally, I mean, that (strategic management) has always been the function. In fact, particularly in NALGO because that was far more the function and on the policy side. It was as a manager rather than as a "trade union leader" (Interviewee K)*

Another manager is particularly thoughtful about her own role:-

*Well, the word lead that I am using is about a person who takes full responsibilities for negotiations and that is the lead person who is recognised outside the organisation as the lead negotiator. I think that in terms of my role and function as a manager of the Group, I have leadership qualities so it is*

## Managing action - leadership

*different from what I am describing in terms of the lead person within the negotiations. I think the important thing is that people within the Group respect me and recognise my contribution to the Group and how I work in the past. So therefore I have got a history and people understand my way of working. I believe I do show leadership from my own history but also in terms of the management, the way I lead this group, I believe I show leadership because I am constantly reflecting on where we are now and consulting with the managers all the time. We sit down and have brainstorming, futuristic discussions, look at where we are going to be going, where the National Health Service is going to be going and how we are going to gear ourselves up to about. And, as I say, my position is not about telling the officers here what they have to do but about ensuring -- knowing what they need and ensuring they are supported. I think all of that demonstrates leadership but it also demonstrates management and I think they go hand-in-hand. (Interviewee D)*

This reflects the strategic focus of the first two managers but adds to it personal qualities demonstrated in her past working life. Maybe the idea is that she is in some way a role model. She does, however, make a distinction between leadership and management. The General Secretary does not express a view on this but he believes that there is no distinction between his political and managerial roles, the latter seen popularly as the 'leadership' role:-

*No. None at all (difference between the roles). This morning I have been talking with an MP about political action that we want to be taking over public services, talking to our press office about the political stance that we will take as an organisation on public services, very, very clear that you have got to actually position the union in a mainstream position which the activists and staff feel comfortable with. You want an organisation which is respected so the political dimension is important to us and there is the staffing dimension. The two go together. I mean, I speak on a political stage and I want to be listened to on behalf of the union. I don't speak on my own behalf, I speak on behalf of the union. When I meet the Prime Minister and the others, they don't want to meet me because they like Dave Prentis. They meet me because I am General Secretary of Unison*

One manager, whilst describing his own role as in some ways being akin to that of a senior civil servant, mentions 'inspiration' as a feature of the leadership role:-

*I think the former General Secretary of NUPE was seen as a rather more inspirational character than our then leader (Interviewee L)*

## 'Legitimate' managerial actions - stakeholders

The civil service analogy is drawn by another manager, seeing the prospect of the external influence of the senior manager, in her or his external role, being diluted by structural changes:-

*You might have Cabinet members in the same way that you do in local government and the national government who not only decide policy but also present that policy to the outside world at the role of the officer is more a civil service role. So you can see some really interesting dynamics (Interviewee H)*

It is difficult to draw conclusions from these contributions but we see leadership here as having an external focus, a political focus, a strategic focus and a personal focus. This does at least give a good deal of food for thought.

### **'Legitimate' Managerial Actions**

8.17.1 Here we look at the practice of stakeholder management within UNISON, influenced as it will be by the moral norms discussed above on representative rationality within the union, many of which were influenced by the idea of partnership. Views such as those in PCS about the representative nature of the systems were not often expressed, but they were evident:-

*What I find is, because of the way we have gone, in my particular services, one in particular, it is like the Executive that is writing the motions, and the officers are drafting the motions for a Conference, they are then amended by one or two branches, people who happened to sit on the Executive and then the motion ends up coming back to the committee and I just sort of think -- where were the members in that loop? And as we know, the other difficulty with Conference motions is that they come from totally unrepresentative cliques who take advantage. (Interviewee L)*

The essence of the idea that the lay structure may not be entirely representative is described in rather more practical terms:-

*I am really interested in how much Unison attempts to find out what all of its members want or as a broad a view across the membership as possible and I think that, I suppose to be blunt, my view is that the senior activist structure is one part of that but it is only one part of that whereas, of course, the senior activist structure believes itself to be the entire embodiment of that. So we do, for example, focus group work and survey work on Unison Focus and the magazine and perhaps, I'm sure you would not be surprised to learn, people don't necessarily want exactly what the activists think that they want and so I think our job is to try and give people, the broad scope of people, as much as possible of what they want that there is then a tension if you*

## 'Legitimate' managerial actions - stakeholders

*have to explain to senior lay activists why actually people don't want a huge diatribe on the particular campaign that they are most interested in. And it is about how you pitch those things. We have done quite a lot of work over the past year, and I think they are getting more used to it, but I think it is quite a typical tension, really, as a manager, how much you do that. (Interviewee G)*

Another manager found relationships with the lay structure particularly difficult:-

*You might know what the General Secretary wanted but to be able to deliver it was difficult because these people were actively briefing against him. With some lay members it was almost a badge of honour to defeat the General Secretary. You can't manage an organisation like that. (Interviewee A)*

Some practical examples of managing the relationships in a region are described:-

*Here we have got a Finance Secretary which very much carries on the sort of old NALGO Regional (District) Treasurer tradition and a very strong sense that the money that is the lay activity money is like "our money" and it is for us to decide what to do with it and a lay elected Finance Secretary who signs cheques and when I came here, you know, we had very few financial controls in that area which I think is wrong, you know. I think that members' money should be properly controlled and scrutinised. With J on this we have been successful in clawing a lot of that back, not all of it and I think I was in a position to be able to do that because I've got my East Midlands experience. We didn't have a lay treasurer in the East Midlands, we had a Finance Committee with a Chair and I was Secretary to it and it was a good example of partnership working where it was lay decisions but it was in partnership with staff. So I think that is a specific example which gives a flavour. And I think the other thing that, a more general point, is this whole concept of partnership working I don't think really took root in this region. I think there is a lot of them and us in terms of members and staff. I think in the East Midlands we had gone a lot further in terms of partnership working and genuinely recognising, you know, that lay members have a role, staff have a role too and we are still, kind of, work in progress here. (Interviewee O)*

And another manager has a personal view of the management of partnership, personal not only to her but also in terms of her approach to managing stakeholder relationships:-

*I think I do have a very personal approach which some people may feel is a dangerous one to have but I think it's crucial that*

## 'Legitimate' managerial actions - stakeholders

*you have a good relationship with your Chair and Vice Chair and I also think it's crucial that you have a business plan so that everything that you do is crystal clear to the Chair, the Vice Chair and the Executive itself -- that there is a work programme, that there are costings beside that. There should be no hidden agendas whatsoever. So your relationship needs to be on the basis of trust and confidence in one another. I think that that is paramount. If you haven't got that, then I think that you are in trouble. (Interviewee D)*

*I think it's important that you do have a caring and understanding for one another because their time that they give you is precious. You know, they actually have to work and so you need to keep a keen interest in their health and their welfare as well. So that of primary importance. I also think it's important that you have a relationship with each member of the Service Group Executive and that is a business relationship but it's also a caring one. (Interviewee D)*

Relationships are described by another manager in terms of the importance of the lay member with whom he is relating:-

*I would say, and be honest, if I get a phone call saying can you ring D.A. (then Vice-President), I'm going to ring (him). Not because he is an NEC member but because he is an important player. That doesn't mean if I had a call from someone else, I wouldn't call them but to a certain extent you do think about the importance. And you do get NEC members try to short circuit and I generally will try and not do that because I don't think it is right. (Interviewee B)*

A senior manager reflects on how management of the strategic goals of the union can be done in such a way that lay activists change their behaviour:-

*We work to the lay membership. But we are bringing in a new dimension, a different dimension, and one of the things that we haven't sorted out yet is if we are going down certain tracks as far as the union is concerned with the full time officers, whether or not we are taking the lay membership with us. If we are saying that more of our resources are devoted to doing things rather than sitting in committees and yet we have still got a group of lay activists who want to sit in committees and we can't get them to move over to an organising type of culture. (Interviewee C)*

A regional manager articulates a particular problem for her in stakeholder management where the issues involved are political ones:-



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*It says in the Regional Secretaries' job description is that she or he is the representative of the General Secretary in the region -- you know, the three key points about the job, that is one of them. I think there is an expectation that she will have a political role but unlike the General Secretary, we are not elected by the members. So it is, I think, hugely problematic. The scene is shifting, really, and it is often what you can get away with in terms of political influence in the sense of, what can we do about the S. W. P.? But then, in other areas the union has clearly got policies that have been agreed at National Delegate Conference and so part of the political role is to work with the lay leadership, the lay stakeholders, in a managerial sense to get those policies implemented, actioned locally. But again, there are always tensions around that because historically regions and branches have seen themselves as having a degree of autonomy -- and whether they are bound, you know (Interviewee O)*

There are obviously constitutional implications in the issue described here. UNISON managers have mixed views on the utility of the Rule Book in the stakeholder management process. In terms of the Aims and Objects, which in the UNISON Rule Book are rather more like a purpose statement than a constitutional definition of powers, several managers express an affinity:-

*What I said to you is that I do what is in the interests of the whole union. You know, who is to say what is in the interests of the whole union? I have a particular view of what is in the interests of the whole union, which of course I could say is based on our aims and objects so I have some legitimacy in all of that. You know, I could claim that I am just here to uphold the rule book aims and objects and what I do follows on from that but I wouldn't claim that a logical thought process. (Interviewee J)*

*I thought that the rule book was a cultural document and particularly the Aims and Objectives. It had things in the Unison rule book, no matter how they were written -- how they were written was often not particularly important -- but the fact that they were in the rule book at all was important. They didn't appear in the rule books of any other unions and that helped define what we were about. Now that was a list of good intentions that we had got to, some of them lowest common denominator; they were a list of good intentions that we had got to in the creation of the union -- they weren't necessarily part of the union when we created Unison but nevertheless that was the rule book and it was a cultural document and surely it was there to help us try and define the culture and help us work out what we were there for. There were times when you had to pay attention to particular nuances here and there in the rule book, some of which were intended and some of which weren't. By*

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*the nature of things, things sometimes did hinge on the interpretation of a word. I am always absolutely amazed that the rule book is not used more than it is in Unison. I thought at one stage it was going to be on everybody's desk well thumbed but often it's not. That helps define the culture, I think and that's what I would often go back to when I was trying to work out the things that I am here for. You know, I re-read the aims and objectives to work out what does this mean in this context. (Interviewee A)*

One manager finds the Rule Book difficult to interpret:-

*You have got in the constitution and rules which says things about roles but the example I gave about the Regional Council, one of its functions (and it is not just our Regional Council that has adopted this themselves, it is in the model rules for Regional Councils) is to oversee allocation of resources. I think that creates huge problems. What does that mean? It varies from region to region. It depends on the lay members. It depends on the Regional Secretary. It depends what you want. In some regions Regional Secretaries are very keen to deny that the Regional Council should have any role. Myself, I think they should because it says they should but how much is a problem. (Interviewee O)*

Whereas other managers find the Rule Book of little practical help:-

*I very rarely refer to the rule book. I tend more to what is practical. Obviously there are times when I refer to the rule book, if we get into a nitty-gritty debate about something and then it is sometimes useful to wave the rules around but I do not like doing that too often because you get it done back to you if you do that, and that is not always helpful. (Interviewee N)*

*Probably not, (the Rule Book being of help) except that I suppose the Conference is ostensibly the democratic vehicle. (Interviewee L)*

Another manager finds it of importance in specific cases:-

*I can't remember the last time that I ever consulted the rule book but generally you know, as a result of your knowledge and experience, whether that needs to go to NEC committee or whether it should go to Service Group Liaison or whether it should be going to the two service groups if there are two service groups involved or whether this or that. I think the rule book is a bigger issue. Where authority lies is important and so you know that the industrial action is being planned in local government, you know where that needs to go before you can sanction it. So the rule book is important in that sense but there*

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*are other issues that you can progress outside of the rule book (Interviewee H)*

The Rule Book sets out formal roles and responsibilities of the various formal bodies in a union. It cannot, obviously delineate more informal boundaries and it cannot be comprehensive. On a merger in particular, it is likely that different interest groups, different stakeholders, will be looking to establish their own places in the new organisation and therefore to define their own boundaries to their own satisfaction. There are likely to be important cultural implications here. In UNISON, there were attempts to do this on a more corporate basis by a process of defining the lay member zone, the officer zone and a 'shared zone', representing, in effect, the partnership area. This was a hugely controversial area, particularly with ex NALGO activists, who saw it being led by a senior ex-NUPE manager trying to limit their influence. One manager expresses the issue starkly:-

*Very few lay members seem to know the difference between governance and management. Many of them want to get involved in management rather than just governance. The truth is that they are just involved in governance but that is not what most lay members want. They want to get elected because they want to get involved in the day-to-day operations of the union, otherwise they are just coming to London for a fairly routine meeting every so often. (Interviewee A)*

The work on defining a shared zone was never completed, to the regret of one manager:-

*You have to work through a fairly powerful lay structure that is probably more powerful than, say, a Board of Directors or even a Management Committee of a local authority. We in this particular union have never reconciled this tension about whether they set the policy and we do the work. There isn't a huge tension and if .T.S. had been allowed to finish his -- this is what you do, this is what we do and the shared bit -- maybe it would have been a bit clearer. (Interviewee B)*

And another manager thinks that the consequences of this are serious:-

*Even now, I am not sure that people in Unison are clear at all what their limits of authority are and, if they have got them, whether they work within them or whether they are quite extended. I used to think that perhaps it was different at national level to regional level. When you talk to Regional Secretaries, the tensions that they have with lay members in that big area that we used to call the big grey area, the shared zone; it's not so much sharing, it's people walking about blind folded (Interviewee A)*

## 'Legitimate' managerial actions - stakeholders

Whether as a consequence or not, managers can describe examples of unclear boundaries:-

*Oh undoubtedly they are unclear. They are unclear in the sense that there hasn't really been a whole union debate on all of this. We have all worked it out in different ways and it's very much done on the basis of personalities rather than there being a kind of logical approach. (Interviewee J)*

This manager describes her process of negotiation with one particular individual, a senior lay member and chair of a committee and the fact that different negotiations with different outcomes occur elsewhere. Another manager can state the principles he believes should be followed but again goes on to discuss his negotiations with a committee chair:-

*I am firmly of the view, and it is very easy to say this, that the membership can deal with policy and management will deal with implementing the policy. The divide is not clear, it is not as obvious as that. There are times when senior managers will shape the policy and J recognises that and we work together in that. Equally, sometimes, there are times when I appreciate J coming to me and saying, well, you are talking about this in a managerial point of view that he has got some thoughts or ideas (Interviewee N)*

Sometimes, managers are engaged in trying to adjust their positions vis-à-vis the committees themselves:-

*Sometimes it feels to me like I spend all this time doing all this stuff and doing it pretty well and the results are quite good, and I have brought down costs on things and improved certain things and whatever and I do think that to some extent we should be judged on that but in reality, actually, you are judged by a certain tier of the lay members entirely by your kind of reporting to them, really. And that feels like a kind of additional burden which is not really very related to the actual work that I do. So I just think that I have got to work a bit to locate that happily for me and for them. I think I did try to encourage a rather kind of "have a broad overview of my work; I won't tell you very much but I'll be very charming" and that really hasn't washed. (Interviewee G)*

One manager is seriously paranoid about the fact that some staff deliberately transgress the boundaries in ways which make it difficult for him to manage:-

*In that bar were people that I knew never ever went into that bar but they were in there lobbying NEC members and getting involved (Interviewee A)*

## 'Legitimate' managerial actions - stakeholders

Earlier there was a discussion about the political role of the Regional Secretary and the problematic issues that raised. In Scotland, this problem is magnified:-

*It is something of a problem for me because I think the role of Scotland is different because there are so many areas I am involved in that replicate what the secretariat is doing in London.*

Other managers have distinguished between political issues with a large and a small p. One manager describes thoughtfully how difficult this can be:-

*When I go to the Policy Committee, I am quite clear I go there as the Director of Policy and I am giving policy advice for the whole union, for Unison. I don't go there as the Labour Party NEC rep and try and persuade them that, you know, what the Labour Party is doing. So in the sense that those sort of formal things, about actually going to the committees, is actually fairly straightforward and when I go to the A P F committee, they have elected me to represent them so they are quite clear that I am accountable to them in terms of what I do for the Labour Party. I guess those aren't the problems. The problems are at what happens the rest of the time and I do end up wearing lots of different hats all in one go and I do get some criticism for having my Labour Party NEC hat on when I shouldn't have it on, and I suppose D might say on occasions he doesn't know which hat I am wearing when I am giving him advice, let's put it that way. So I probably do get them muddled up. Now whether it is possible to separate them, I don't know. I am aware of it and I am quite sensitive about it but when it comes down to it, you just have to give the best advice you can. You can't just keep constantly changing hats. (Interviewee J)*

Another manager explains how he approaches different forms of political issues:-

*I think it is political with a small p. It's an influencing role, isn't it. It's political -- and big P, yes, we still have big political issues to feed into the union but they are not as high profile as Local Government. Things like the minimum wage, for example, aren't really an issue. I think there is still a political role in persuasion and influencing people. (Interviewee L)*

One manager agrees that he has an influencing role and sees managing political boundaries as part of the whole job of being a manager in a trade union:-

*I see the two as going together. I see my role as a manager as being political. I see being a manager as a political job within an*

## 'Legitimate' managerial actions - stakeholders

*organisation. Part of my managing is managing the lay members and I have to be conscious of their political aspirations and roles, where they are coming from, whether they are S. W. P. or Socialist or Labour or Conservative. Because I am trying to influence them at something. Now if I do influence them, if we are having a debate about whether we should enter the European monetary union, we can debate it but I don't think that I have got any particular more skills in doing that than they have. So it is a political judgment about what you believe in, if it is good or bad for Britain. So I can marshal arguments and say, well, from this research which has been done it would be better to come in or stay out, or whatever, but I am one voice in it and they might take a lead because of the status that I have in the organisation. But then on the other side, as a manager, I am a political animal because I have to work with these people in order to achieve what I am trying to as a manager. And that's by far the bulk of the time (Interviewee E)*

Politics can, however, be seen as a factor with hard boundaries which can only be harmoniously crossed in some specific circumstances:-

*Politics will always win except in one circumstance and that is where you are hitting the financial rocks. My experience is that when you are running out of money and going to go bust (I know that technically unions can't go bust but in practical terms) people will then put politics on one side. We did a bit of that in Unison when we had brought in a voluntary severance programme two years or 18 months into the union. It certainly happened in NUPE when we had run that six years of deficit and we were faced, not with going bust, but with the difference between a takeover and a merger and it wouldn't be a takeover by NALGO, either, it would have been a takeover by the GMB which, horror of horrors, we didn't want that. It quite concentrated people's minds wonderfully and politics were put on one side and I think if Unison was running a £5 million deficit instead of a £5 million surplus a lot of the political game playing would go on one side. (Interviewee A)*

Some managers, however, do see the process of managing boundaries as possible within an overall idea of partnership. One reason is that lay members do not have the individual expertise to cross boundaries.:-

*In an odd sort of way, maybe that helps the sort of partnership approach that I'm talking about. Today, lay members are sort of happy to say "that's our policy, off you go" because they recognise that they do not necessarily have the skills to bring to be managing of the type of organisation that we are. So maybe that helps here in terms of that arrangement (Interviewee N)*

## 'Legitimate' managerial actions - stakeholders

Another is that maturity has been gained in working out the relationship:-

*The discussions in Unison in terms of democracy guidelines and how you change policy is a debate that we have been having over the years and I think we are mature enough now to understand that relationship, that you can change policy in the appropriate fashion. Equally, I am in a position, in engaging with the regional lay people, to in fact be able to argue politically for a change in national policy. And that is back to the partnership. I mean, it is not just left to lay dimensions regionally and nationally to do that. (Interviewee M)*

And another believes that introducing work programmes has served to define boundaries in the very way they operate:-

*We have developed a work programme. We didn't have work programmes in the past. There weren't any. So in a sense this has been a major step forward and that is kind of an example of what we have to do as officers for the lay committee and we hold ourselves accountable to them. So that is a clear boundary. We do those work objectives; they then have a say about them but we put them together. (Interviewee D)*

Managers, then, manage boundaries, some with clarity, some with ease, some with competitiveness. The word 'negotiation' has been used several times in connection with the ways used to engage in these managerial activities and, of course, one would regard negotiations as a core skill of a trade unionist. In UNISON, managers frequently talk of bringing people together to arrive at a solution where stakeholders are in conflict or boundaries need to be managed:-

*Bringing people in. Not excluding one of the interests -- bringing them in and trying to sort it out. And usually you can sort it out. But again, the issue is time and it is the will to do it. At the end of the day, if there is a clear difference, they have got to accept that you will take a decision and hopefully you will take the right decision. (Interviewee C)*

*I guess what I do is, normally I will bring people together to do that. That's the way that we tend to work inside Unison. We identify a problem or an issue, we identify a range of interested stakeholders or interested individuals -- you know, is it an issue for officers, is it an issue for lay members, is it an issue for both, is it an issue where we have got to get officers together first and then get lay members together and you either deal with it through a series of individual consultations or you deal with it by bringing people together around the table in a much more structured way. (Interviewee H)*

## Modes of management - styles

*I always tried to avoid reading the fine print because if you get down to reading the fine print and you get those stakeholders together and say "the rule book says this", you are close to saying "you are right and you are wrong." I always thought that it was better to try to resolve the conflict without getting into that position and having to make a judgment. (Interviewee A)*

These inclusive approaches are echoed by another manager in more conceptually structured terms:-

*There are overlapping circles of interest and it is getting to the central core, knowing what the central core is and influencing that and trying to build it out so that you get a consensus on what you are trying to achieve. If you can usually get the central core on board you can usually bring the others in as well. The process is networking around to get majority support for a particular approach and the networking is done initially with the core group and you identify who the other stakeholders are that you need to bring on board. (Interviewee E)*

There are other examples of inclusiveness, of working with interest groups at national and regional level. One manager talks of herself as being a go between, a facilitator and explains:-

*Well there has to be a resolution. It's a way of negotiating, isn't it? The reality of negotiation is somewhere in the middle, getting an outcome as opposed to not having an outcome, that is the aspiration. Whether it is settling a case, or negotiating it -- a grading, anything. (Interviewee F)*

There is, indeed, a significant impression left by this evidence that UNISON managers make use of some core trade union skills in managing stakeholder boundaries.

### **Modes of Management**

- 8.18. Management style, arguably, is affected by a range of factors. Many of these will be personal factors, some of them by personal values, which is one of the reasons why the issue is being examined here. Some are organisation specific, influenced amongst other things by cultural factors. In UNISON, there is an attempt to influence managers to base their management style on a specific concept, that of emotional intelligence:-

*We are now running management courses for all our managers - I have made them mandatory for everybody, including myself, courses which relate directly to Unison style of management. If you want a word for it, it is emotional management; this idea that you control your emotions in managing people and actually getting over to everybody who supervises any staff that there is*



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*a managerial input into the job that they are doing. (Interviewee C)*

The concept has taken root amongst some who have experienced it, in that it is said to be consonant with core values:-

*So these people put this course on and we looked at this concept of Emotional Intelligence. This was deemed to be the approach that we ought to adopt in terms of our management style. I mean, I am very sympathetic towards having that sort of approach. We are going to go with our values, aren't we? (Interviewee O)*

Several other managers mentioned these courses, commenting that the activities in which they engaged had revealed that they were on the 'soft' side when dealing with their staff – a view which was in fact supported by several managers whether they mentioned the courses or not:-

*We had an interesting management training course and we were all asked to identify our management styles by doing one of these questionnaires and, interestingly but not surprisingly, nearly everybody came out, I can't remember that it was like "supporter/trainer" style and virtually nobody in the room had the "directional" style.....And I do think there is a sort of fear factor almost at the directional style (Interviewee L)*

*We've had some training and started to identify what we think the kind of core management standards should be, which is a good start, and I think that in the training it was basically established that we were all a bit too soft, which I think is a fair criticism. We all ought to kind of buck our ideas up a bit and be a bit firmer about what we expect from people. (Interviewee J)*

Despite the self-criticism, this manager seems to be clear about her own approach which seems more rounded than she admits to:-

*My management style is (let me get the right words here) -- I think I am a good manager. I think I'm inclusive, I work very closely with my immediate managers that work for me. I think it's important we have a strong managerial team within the department. I have an open door policy. I have very good relationships with the individual members of staff. I'm a great believer in enabling and encouraging. I like to think that a lot of staff here work beyond their grade and beyond their pay because at the end of the day it's better for them and it's more fun to be doing more demanding work and so I'm a great believer in pushing them along and encouraging them and hope for the one day they will get their just rewards. What else? We have rules. Yes, I'm not kind of laissez-faire, I won't intervene.*

## Modes of management - styles

*When people fail (hopefully we don't have too many people that fail) then it's made clear and they have clear expectations of how to put it right. So I think the staff would say (and they have said about me, in fact) that they think I'm fair and I think that's right. (Interviewee J)*

A similar balance between inclusiveness and direction was articulated in a regional context:-

*In terms of our values, in terms of inclusiveness, not being the sort of managers who just tell people -- although interestingly enough in our IIP assessment it says that consultation was a bit tokenistic. I think people often say that. But I think you've got to, sort of, vary it, really. There are occasions where you do have to direct people to do things and say "I expect you to do this" and follow that through. (Interviewee O)*

One manager, in discussing her management style and the importance she attaches to being a decent and fair manager, emphasised the importance of clarity for the staff:-

*My door is always open. People can come to me at any time and so I like to think that my management style is open but it is hierarchical as well. We had a situation before where everybody wasn't really clear about who their manager was but knew that they could go to the senior person. The restructuring that I have done within the Group has brought tiers of management in and that means that people have responsibilities towards other people and so there is to a degree, although my door is always open, of hierarchy. (Interviewee D)*

Other characteristics of management style include stakeholder awareness:-

*Well it would have to be a sort of stakeholder management type style. (Interviewee L)*

Delegation:-

*I have kind of reinstated the idea of having a sort of middle management tier that you actually trust to do something and get on with things and delegate to and that has made a real difference. (Interviewee G)*

And another manager expresses aspirations to openness and equality whilst acknowledging her personal difficulties in achieving those virtues:-

*Chaotic. Seriously, chaotic...I do try to be open when people will talk to me. I do know there should be a drive to give equality*

## Modes of management - styles

*of attention to all staff but I don't think I achieved that because I don't have the time. So, luck rather than planning, probably.  
(Interviewee F)*

There are no illusions in UNISON that managers in the union have achieved these value driven goals. As mentioned earlier, managers have described ways in which management has fallen short of the ideals which they have been seeking. But people orientated ideals are frequently articulated in the context of the way in which managers are seeking to develop the approaches to managing people adopted by them and their colleagues.

## 8.17. CONCLUSIONS

### ***Trade Union Managers***

Acceptance of managerial roles in UNISON is wholly shared and reinforced from the top of the organisation. Systems and structures are designed on the assumption that managers will be undertaking those roles. There are some visions of a past in which trade union organisers became managers without really realising it and in which some struggled to accept the fact. There is evidence of managerial learning, particularly since the merger. There are few doubts expressed about whether others wholly share this role acceptance, except where there is a suggestion that regional staff below the level of regional secretary may not be in that position.

### ***Systems***

#### ***Resource Distribution Systems***

UNISON is a substantially devolved union with powerful regional offices and one would expect that financial systems would follow that structure, which is the case. Managers have to justify bids against plans formulated in accordance with the union's objectives and priorities. Budgets are then allocated and which managers control. There are suggestions that virement within those budget heads is permitted, though this may be at the discretion of the Finance Officer, suggesting that systems retain some central control even if financial management is more devolved. Senior managers emphasise their responsibility for budgetary strategy but there is an indication that financial policy is set by lay members, as one would expect. Lay members also have a role in financial affairs in the regions, particularly in the management of the lay activity budget, where different practices are adopted in different areas – at least partly influenced by partner union practice.

The original space allocation decisions were obviously taken some time ago but the key decision, not to acquire a single head office, was taken as a result of political influence on allocation systems. A decision to bring managers together in a single office was not a success and space was allocated for some years in two separate buildings and then, in 1999, in a single office which had been NALGO 's head office.

There is no data on the processes involved in space allocation at national level and managerial attitudes to it. This is because the researcher was responsible for those activities and there could be no assurance that answers given in response to questions of that nature would have been reliable.

#### ***Systems relating to cognitive rules***

Nine years on from the merger which created UNISON, it was striking the extent to which cultural images of the old unions were still vividly described by many UNISON managers, even to the extent of discussing the way some lay members moved towards the concept even where that had not been their previous experience. In terms of the

## Conclusions

present day union, there is a general belief that UNISON is a partnership union, though not without some expressed concern about the exact location of the boundaries – where the ‘shared zone’ is situated. The exact nature of partnership, too, may be different in service groups, and certainly different in regions, from that operating with the NEC and its members and committees.

Despite the widespread acceptance of managerial roles, there is still understanding of the historical situation in which trade union officials rejected management as a concept. This seems to have been particularly the case in NUPE, where the word was banned, suggesting that managers from that tradition may have had a longer road to travel than some others. But discussion of these issues displayed an understanding of the roots of the problem – maybe in some residual manifestation of class war – and of some of the remaining difficulties, such as the use of language and the adoption of managerial techniques about which members remained sceptical, such as performance indicators. It also recognised that there had been a tradition of substantial full time offices being, as one manager described it, almost sub-contractors and that, although management may reduce autonomy in practice, an appropriate type of management could be offered as a trade off.

UNISON managers perceive there to be constraints on their managerial practice, principally in the area of personnel practice and particularly in areas of conduct and discipline. There are some suggestions that relations with lay members are perceived as constraining, but this is at a more personal, or political, level rather than the identification of an institutional constraint.

### ***Systems relating to moral rules***

UNISON managers perceive fairness, together with linked values such as openness and inclusiveness, as being the principles which they believe should influence their managerial practice. The protection of minorities is also identified, which, in that such action involves a belief that minorities should have fair treatment, is very much of a part with the idea of fairness.

UNISON managers seem also to exhibit values which involve a commitment to the idea of partnership working. This is not, however uncritical. There are suggestions that boundaries are sometimes drawn in inappropriate places and the difficulty of this mode of working, particularly where it involves accountability to lay member structures, is recognised even if some managers perceive this as somehow involving the use of committee management, or manipulation, skills.

### ***Managerial Activities Deploying Resources***

UNISON has begun to develop systems of identifying objectives and priorities, together with concomitant business planning and is endeavouring to link these with resource allocation systems. The union's six objectives are not SMART, so the process would remain informal unless SMART objectives were formulated at other levels in a cascading process. There is evidence that this is being done and that some managers are very committed to the idea, though managers agree that this has to be developed further and there are some doubts about whether everyone has internalised the idea and is capable of making unpopular decisions on withholding resources from unprioritised activities. Demonstrated also is a belief that the resource allocation system should incorporate fairness in ensuring, as far as possible given stakeholder pressures, that minority interests in the union are not subsumed by the majority.

In discussing physical space allocation, UNISON managers seem acutely aware of its importance to the operation of the union. This ranged from practical problems arising from split site working through to cultural manifestations of undervaluation arising from perceptions of occupying less satisfactory or undervalued space. At regional level, various cultural strategies were adopted for integrating staff, even some seven years after merger. At national level, there remained a belief that the lack of a single head office held back integration and it was suggested that the move into the old NALGO building led not only to unsatisfactory space but also gave out cultural messages. The cultural implications of a new office in the future are also articulated in terms of facilitating new working practices, particularly in open plan designs.

### ***'Meaningful' Managerial Actions Merger Management***

Arising from externally published research and from managerial observations as part of this project, it is clear that UNISON engaged in a high level of merger management activities. Retrospective reflections recognise possible areas of improvement; some of these suggest that in one area, integration was so marked that those members of staff who had not integrated to that degree were resentful. Even nine years after the merger, valuing of old union cultures is identified as a constructive step in planning for the future.

### ***Managing by Information***

Although there is criticism of communication processes during the merger, there is evidence that this is something which seems now to be recognised as significant. Individual managers – not, it has to be said, by any means all of them – describe their approach to the activity, even if in one case it is coupled with recognition that using staff trade unions to communicate is inadequate. There have, though, been institutional

## Conclusions

initiatives which have had the effect of concentrating more on communication – the inclusive nature of Senior Management Group meetings and the process setting and reviewing the union's aims and objectives.

### ***Managing through People***

UNISON is seeking Investors in People and one of the managers interviewed as part of this project has succeeded in achieving the award in his area. Other managers are, to a greater or lesser extent, aware of their responsibilities as contained in the union's Aims and Objectives. One might, therefore, expect that people management was recognised as a core role and this is indeed the case. There is, though, recognition of the fact that there have been examples of management in the past which have been less than satisfactory – reference was made a couple of times to a well publicised case of bullying in Wales. The IIP assessment in one case offers support for the view that, at least at the time of the assessment in that particular location, people management was seen positively by the staff.

Even in the field of performance management, often a difficulty in trade unions, there are indications that managers want to take it seriously and that they see the development reviewing system as being at the centre of a developing approach to it. The main tool is seen as the corporate objectives and priorities setting system together with IIP, part of the benchmarked standards that award requires being that staff understand the objectives of the organisation and are aware of how they contribute to achieving them. The systems followed by managers also include the production of training plans, though there is little evidence of the extent to which training is actually provided in accordance with those plans, other than a compulsory series of management development courses.

Particularly within regions, team working has become a corporate requirement. Officers in the regions traditionally ploughed their own furrows so requiring them to work within teams is a significant cultural change which is consciously changing the way in which this work is done. Managers appear to have embarked on these activities with approbation and there was no evidence of other than positive attitudes to the use and development of teams within the union.

### ***Managing Action***

There is some singularly interesting discussion by UNISON managers on the subject of leadership and the extent to which, in trade unions, it is separable from the leader's action or 'doing' roles. One idea is that, in practice, it is difficult to distinguish between operational and strategic roles – or, in another case, between political and managerial roles. Another is that 'leadership qualities' are important, gleaned from one's history and experience and from one's actions in strategic development, reflection and involvement. 'Inspiration' is another feature

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mentioned. But there is no shared view on these issues – merely evidence of thoughtful reflection on them.

### ***'Legitimate' managerial Actions Stakeholder Management***

UNISON managers display a variety of tactics for stakeholder management involving the lay structure. Some find the idea problematic in that there is some doubt about whether the activist structure represents the ordinary members, or whether its actions are sufficiently open. Different approaches may be necessary in different environments, where conceptions of partnership working are different. One manager emphasises the importance of personal, caring, relationships with lay members; another on the difficulty of defining political relationships where managers are not elected.

There is, though, little agreement on the precise location of boundaries and these are not, evidently, adequately set. The most pointed comment was that lay members do not know the difference between governance and management and there are numerous examples of unclear boundaries, practical, personal and political. Although there is a view that politics will always win out in the end, managers have developed ways of negotiating the boundaries in individual cases, in one case agreeing work programmes and managing partnership working around the achievement of the programme. Boundary management is clearly a key role of managers in UNISON. In the absence of clear agreement on a 'shared zone', boundaries seem to be an area of continuous, though not always conflictual, contest.

### ***Modes of Management***

UNISON is unusual in that attempts are being made to base corporate management styles around the ideas of 'emotional intelligence.' This does not necessarily comport a homogeneous style but styles which are informed by emotional awareness of oneself and others. This is a recent initiative so it is not yet possible to evaluate it.

However, managers in UNISON tend to describe their styles in terms of supportive characteristics rather than directive ones – in fact, this was the subject of particular study at an internal management development course. Inclusion, delegation, enabling, encouraging are other descriptions, suggesting that UNISON managers aspire to people centred styles of management.

These conclusions are now summarised in a way which relates them to Hales' (1999) model of management. It seeks to provide explanations for managerial actions from the systems and modalities which comprise the environments in which trade union managers work, as discussed earlier.



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## CHAPTER NINE: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

### 9.1. INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER NINE

The previous four chapters presented within-case analysis. This chapter is designed to address the cross-case analysis data from the four cases, consistent with a multiple case study approach (Miles and Huberman 1994; Yin 1994). The intention is to contribute further to the understanding of, and insights into, trade union managers and how they manage.

The chapter is divided into five sub-sections, the next four of which of which have relationships to the propositions outlined in chapter 2:-

TOPIC IN SUB-SECTION	PROPOSITION
9.2 Acceptance of managerial roles	1
9.3. Managing people and physical resources	2, 3 and 4.1
9.4 Stakeholder management	4.2 and 5
9.5. Resource deployment	(4.2)

### 9.2 ACCEPTANCE OF MANAGERIAL ROLES

#### *The merger context*

Merger was a significant contingent factor in the choice of the case study unions. The literature review - in particular in its review of the work of Bouono and Bowditch (1989) - suggested that one should not treat merger as a single, one-off event. Merger travels through a number of phases (they identify seven – shown in Exhibit 2.4) during which staff exhibit different emotional responses, calling ideally for different managerial responses. Hence, in examining the extent to which managerial roles are accepted, these aspects of the merger context acquire some significance.

All four unions had become legal entities some years before research commenced. Thus, in terms of the seven stage model, they could all be expected to have reached the sixth or seventh stage. A more complex picture emerges, however, arising from a range of factors. The first of these is how the unions approached the management of the mergers that created them.

The four case study unions adopted different approaches to managing mergers. UNISON adopted by far the most pro-active approach; its commissioning of an anthropological survey of the cultures of the merging unions is probably unprecedented and its use of various training techniques, in management of change and management development, were extensive. PTC used some of these ideas upon merger but it could



Furthermore, the exhibit enables judgments to be made as to the progress made by the four unions along the continuum of phases of merger-

### **CWU**

The evidence from the Equality and Diversity study, cited in Chapter 5, suggested that staff felt that to some extent the union constituted two unions sharing the same building rather than one merged organisation. Staff told stories about their old organisations rather than their new one. Management did little on any sort of corporate basis to address integration issues other than, some years after formal merger and in ways that left substantial parts of the union unintegrated, to move the union to a joint head office.

The level of organisational stress revealed in this research suggests that the union had progressed little from the formal merger stage of the process. At the very least, the union appears to be at the early stage in the 'combination aftermath' stage where a 'we' versus 'them' mentality remained.

### **PCS**

The case study mentions in many places the conflict occurring within the union, involving personality, political and cultural conflict. On top of that, as shown above, merger management was of a low order.

However, there were attempts to improve the situation, arising from the Eastbourne senior officers' meeting in April 2000; team briefing was introduced and a menu of induction, leadership and management courses was introduced. Managers typically however, identified initiatives that had not been taken - lack of empowerment, lack of performance monitoring and so on. Whilst the conflict might have been a prime cause of this, this type of drift following merger is often identified with the 'combination aftermath' stage of merger.

### **UNIFI**

As Exhibit 9.1 suggests, UNIFI did undertake identifiable merger management activities and its Investors in People and project management initiatives seem to have achieved significant integration. The early IIP accreditation reported that assimilation had exceeded expectations and this was supported by staff comments in the report.

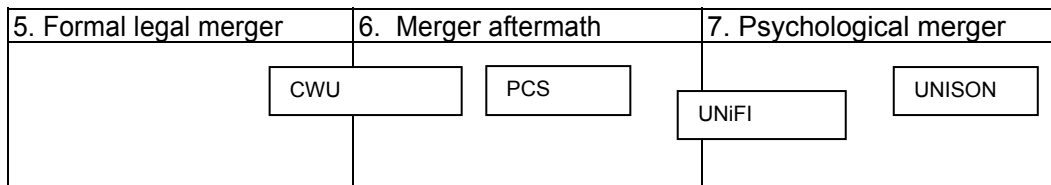
However, UNIFI has been discussing further merger for at least three years. This was reported to staff in staff meetings but, although keeping staff informed represented good practice, little detail was then available and the initiatives seemed to be linked to some extent to poor financial performance. Although, therefore, it could be argued that UNIFI had reached psychological merger, the renewed uncertainty caused by new merger talks created degrees of uncertainty typical of the pre-merger phase of a merger. Staff must have been aware of these issues taking up management time, along with 'Project Recovery.'

## UNISON

Of the four unions, UNISON devoted the most time actually to managing the merger, of which the anthropological study to examine partner union cultures may be the most dramatic example. UNISON was the oldest merger studied and time is one factor in organisations progressing along the stages of merger.

Managers remained aware of merger management issues, to the extent of its still being suggested that partner union cultures and achievement should be celebrated. But insofar as the psychological merger state was visible in any of the case study unions, it was visible in UNISON.

The following exhibit illustrates these thoughts diagrammatically:-



**EXHIBIT 9.2 Stages of merger. Source: adapted from Buono and Bowditch (1989)**

### ***Managerial roles***

These important contextual issues, insofar as they impact on the undertaking of managerial roles, will be considered shortly. In general terms, however, this research revealed that all but one of the interviewees accepted that they had a managerial role. The one person who did not, who was in the CWU, accepted that he had a responsibility to ensure that the organisation was well-managed; he therefore engaged in what seems to have been the practice in trade unions in the past, to delegate managerial responsibility - in fact, probably more than that, to pass off managerial responsibility - to others in the union who were thought to be more appropriate individuals to carry out that responsibility.

Whether specialists undertake what in other organisations would be regarded as line management responsibilities is one of a number of symptoms which indicate the extent to which unions have built line management responsibilities into their structures. Another is whether managers think that other managers accept the responsibility. In other words, they may have told the interviewer that they personally recognised their role but they were less confident in whether others did. In unions where there was a greater and more longstanding recognition of the role (perhaps after psychological merger), managers were less likely to assume that others did not. But one would expect that in unions where managerial roles were recognised, managers would have started using the language of management, even if in a modified form, to take account of the fact that certain concepts raised more difficulties than others.

Another symptom is whether management training is provided. This itself is an indication of the extent to which there is institutional support for the role. In many cases, managers felt rather alone - with no external material available to tell them how to manage in an organization which was unclear on the extent to which it wanted them to do so.

In the case study unions, these thoughts are summarised in the following exhibit:-

<b>SYMPTOM</b>	<b>CWU</b>	<b>PCS</b>	<b>UNIFI</b>	<b>UNISON</b>
<b>Role delegated to others</b>	Examples of both senior and less senior managers transferring responsibility	In PTC, problematic staffing issues delegated to Personnel	No evidence.	No evidence
<b>Use of language</b>	Interviewees engage with managerial language; staff respond to consultants in those terms but no public managerial communication. New General Secretary focuses on the ideas but alters more problematic language.	Managers use managerial language in public and private communication. NEC alter title of Plan in 2001 from 'Management Plan' to 'NEC Plan'.	No evidence that language problematic	Suggestions that language of more problematic ideas (league tables, performance indicators) changed in recognition of staff susceptibilities.
<b>Don't think others accept the role</b>	Significant degree of speculation that few others accept role	Speculation that some did not accept the role but not a theme.	Speculation that some did not accept the role	Belief that role fully accepted except, in one case, at regional level
<b>Institutional recognition</b>	Very little evidence of institutional recognition of the role, or support for it, until election of new General Secretary. IIP now sought; Strategic Plan in place.	Management structures in place requiring managing; job descriptions contain elements of managerial responsibility. Development review scheme	IIP accreditation suggests that institutional support for processes of managing people; PDP scheme. Project management instrument of policy	Structures of planning around Objectives and Priorities require management. IIP accreditation sought. Development review scheme
<b>Management training provided</b>	None	In house programme of short courses on various aspects of management	Little evidence of management training; old unions trained in change management – some external provision	Compulsory management training programmes. Support for external courses

**EXHIBIT 9.3. Symptoms of union acceptance of managerial roles**

This evidence enables some associations to be made between the stage that the case study unions have reached in merger and the institutionalisation by the organisation, and the internalisation by the individual, of the concept of management.

### **CWU**

As noted above, the CWU is at the earliest stage of the four unions in the phases of merger. Little real effort was exerted in dealing with the separate existences of, particularly, the postal and telecommunications parts of the union. Strategic planning offers the prospect of a more corporate approach but at the time of this research it had not had time to show how it might contribute to moving the union to a state of psychological merger where, despite differences in industrial organisation and culture, ambiguities were clarified and co-operation and tolerance arose.

In the CWU, all but one manager accepted the managerial role. But that one, and another previous General Secretary, fulfilled that role by delegating substantial parts of it to others. There is evidence too that senior elected managers, as a matter of practice, expected others to deal with their managerial problems. This evidence also suggests that senior managers were in doubt about whether other 'officers' accepted any managerial responsibilities.

This speculation was, at least in part, inaccurate since interviewees did accept that role. Given the lack of institutional support for the role, consistent with the lack of institutional attention given to the merger, this means that managers were to some extent cocooned, seeking to undertake managerial functions but, as one said, defining the role themselves because the system didn't and because, consequently, there was no management training available to help them as individuals come to terms with that role.

So there was a lack of institutional acceptance of management in a union which had given little corporate attention to the management of its merger and which, consequently, had developed only slowly as a single, merged, entity. These links could have been in either direction; that is to say that lack of attention to the management of the merger could have resulted from the undeveloped state of management generally – or else the undeveloped state of management could have resulted from the failure to create a coherent entity requiring management. To some extent both hypotheses could be true. What does appear to be the case is that there are links.

### **PCS**

PCS is more clearly at the merger aftermath stage of merger. The 'us' and 'them' attitudes postulated may not remain so evident at staff level but, at least until the departure of the last of the two Joint General Secretaries, it was evident at senior management level and between management and lay stakeholders. Cultural ambiguities remained as

organisational members waited to see what sort of organisation would finally emerge.

A significant contributory factor to these characteristics was the failure of management to take pro-active steps to manage the merger, owing to the failure of senior managers from different traditions to agree on any action to be taken. There was significant experience of merger management on the part of one of the merging unions but no such experience, and no understanding, of it on the part of the other.

All PCS managers, however, accepted managerial roles. There is evidence that in one of the old unions, managerial responsibilities were delegated to specialists but it is also clear that in the merger management process that created PTC, this was tackled. In the other union, managers were constrained in their roles by what was described as a 'culture of fear' – inhibiting encouragement, support and trust.

Some managers speculated that acceptance of managerial roles was not unanimous, though this did not square with this research. Nevertheless, although management structures were in place and the union generally used the language of management, managers did not always feel confident in their roles. The role was undervalued and unlikely to contribute to internal recognition. To this extent, managers undertaking their managerial roles would be likely to feel somewhat isolated, particularly in the absence of any external guidance as to how to behave. Nevertheless, some management training is now provided which is likely to some extent to alleviate these concerns amongst those who attend.

PCS is unusual in that the thrust to develop management – not just merger management but the management of the structure - arose from the efforts of one of the partner unions which was not able to make headway because of the resistance of the other partner. So the expertise existed within the union – it was not allowed to be deployed. Thus, the development of the managerial role is related to institutional constraints arising from the failure of the union to progress to psychological merger.

### **UNIFI**

As indicated earlier, UNIFI had reached a high level of integration. Thus, it is not surprising to find that managers accepted the role, even if some of them were not entirely convinced that every other manager did so. The area of surprise is in the lack of management training provided for UNIFI managers, particularly since several of the partner unions had recognised the value of appropriate training during the merger process. This may be a factor of management, to some extent, taking its eye off the ball as a result of protracted discussions on possible merger whilst experiencing cash problems, something that may also have been a factor in a more critical IIP assessment in 2003. It is speculated above that the uncertainty caused by this may have



been unsettling. If so, it does show a link between the inhibition of the progress of the union towards psychological merger and the development of management within the union.

## **UNISON**

UNISON, as is noted above, gave a great deal of attention to merger management and psychological merger has almost certainly been reached. All of its managers accepted their managerial roles. It has developed some sophisticated management systems – moving recently into ‘programme management’ in order to set up mechanisms for the setting and monitoring of annual objectives. Language could in some cases be a problem but this difficulty was faced by changing the language rather than by abandoning a managerial concept. Management training is not only provided, it is compulsory for every manager from the General Secretary downwards.

It is thus apparent that the development of management within UNISON reflects the development of UNISON as a merged organisation. In UNISON, it would be people who resisted undertaking managerial activities that would feel isolated in an organisation whose systems are founded on the assumption that they will be managed.

### ***Hypotheses***

The following hypotheses, relating to the case study unions, appear to flow from this discussion:-

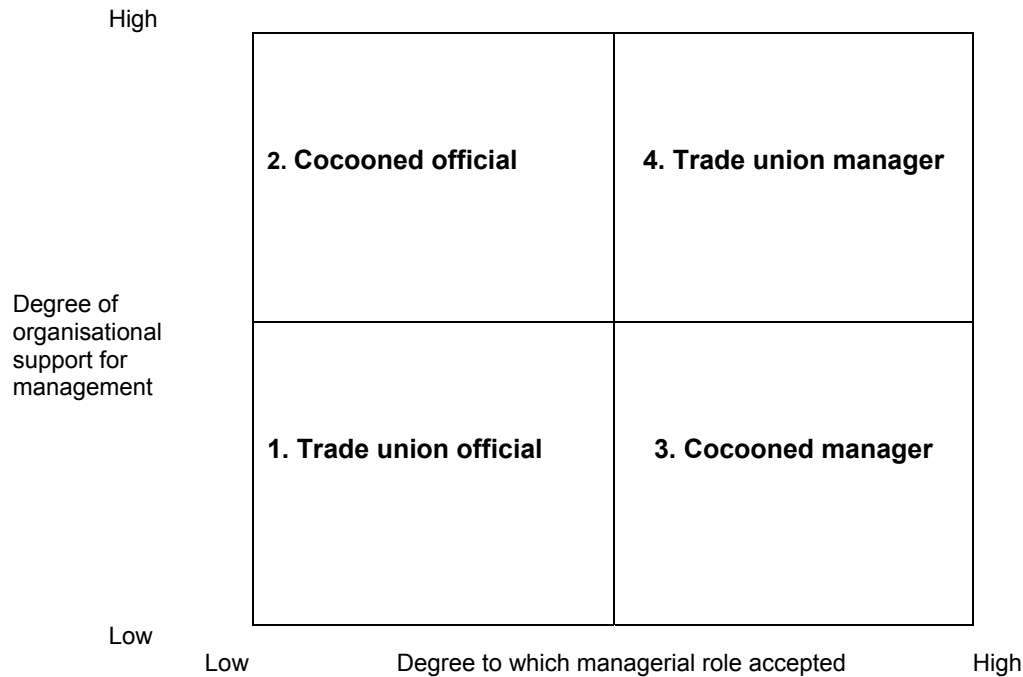
1. Lack of a developed approach to management may be related to the lack of attention given to the management of merger.
2. The extent of attention given to the management of the merger process is related to the ability of the unions to reach psychological merger.
3. There is a relationship between the phase unions have achieved in their mergers and the extent to which the managerial role has become institutionalised.
4. Where there is little support for management, managers often seek to pass their managerial responsibilities over to specialist third parties.
5. Neither acceptance of managerial roles nor undertaking of management activities depends on institutional support, though managers may modify the language of management.
6. In the early stages of the development of management, managers who accept their roles may, in the absence of overt institutional support for the role, doubt whether

colleagues in senior positions accept their management roles.

7. Where there is institutional acceptance of management, it is evidenced by recognisable processes of managing people and resources and corporate support for training to improve management quality.

Individual managers face particular challenges. Sometimes they seem to be in a cocoon, either because they are trying to manage without institutional support or because they do not want to manage and find institutional support growing and putting pressure on them to accept roles that they do, or do not, want to undertake.

There is a good deal of evidence, particularly in CWU prior to the election of the new General Secretary but also in PCS, of managers trying hard to be thoughtful and creative about their managerial roles but without feeling that they had the support from the organisation (as hypothesis 5 would suggest) – one manager felt that the organisation had accepted him as a manager because it had suggested that the researcher should talk to him. There is only one example of a ‘trade union official’ (in terms of Exhibit 9.4) the one person in CWU who did not accept that he undertook a managerial role but there were many examples, in all unions, of people who were rather surprised to find themselves as managers, given their chosen career path. There were also examples of people who were resisting particular managerial initiatives – some of those, for example, in UNiFI who were particularly cynical about personal development plans, even though they professed acceptance of managerial roles. And there were many trade union managers – people who willingly accepted the role and felt that their organisation was behind them in undertaking it. Exhibit 9.4 illustrates these thoughts.



**EXHIBIT 9.4 Typology of the development of the role of trade union manager**

One issue that was raised in the case studies was the extent to which election was a factor in managers accepting their roles. This was something raised particularly in CWU, which had more elected officials than in other unions and where managers typically expressed doubts about whether the National and Assistant Secretaries, particularly, accepted that they were managers. It was also suggested that election limited the time horizon of elected managers and therefore affected their ability to act strategically.

Whilst it is an attractively intuitive position that election does act in this way, it is not supported by the evidence. It was the new General Secretary of the CWU, after all, who introduced that union’s strategic planning process shortly after his election, which hardly suggests a lack of strategic focus. There are examples in the CWU of elected managers finding it difficult to act managerially, or acting inappropriately, but this is based on the assumptions of those reporting such examples that those people have not accepted managerial roles and, in this study, there is no evidence of that. The evidence is of interviewees’ perceptions.

Proposition 1 in this research suggested that various specific incidents of merger were significant factors in the acceptance of managerial roles by trade union managers. Because of merger, all the unions had become substantial businesses which, however far individuals had or had not moved in their recognition of the importance of management, required some degree of management. This was one of the reasons that merged unions were chosen for this study in the first place. Indeed,

there are factors contingent on merger which clearly had an impact. In PTC, for example, it was the development of a new management structure for the new organisation that led directly to the Templeton College sessions which sought to influence managers to accept managerial roles. The same structures were used for PCS when that union was formed. Similarly, the need to manage the merger was perceived by CWU managers, principally originating from the NCU, which led to sessions at Cranfield to look at how management of the new organisation could be approached, taking into account the different cultural experiences of managers from the two old organisations.

In UNISON, several managers suggested that it was merger in particular which led to the development of a management culture and the size of the new organisation as being a contingent factor. The General Secretary of UNiFI talked about how he wanted to use the process of merger to introduce things which had not been there in his previous union – an HR specialist, individual assessment and, consequently, IIP.

Depending on the phase of merger which the union had reached, organisational changes occurred which required managers to manage – new structures, new systems, programmes for senior managers in merger management and so on. Managers did not, however, generally express the incidents of merger mentioned in proposition 1 – with the exception of the size of the organisation – as being the major factor causing them personally to accept managerial roles, though the size of the new organisation being created was clearly a factor. Rather, contingent factors outlined in the above hypotheses led to greater institutional support for the concept and thus changed the environment in which they managed.

### **9.3 MANAGING PEOPLE AND PHYSICAL RESOURCES**

Any examination of the way in which trade union managers manage people and physical resources and the reasons for how they do so needs to be undertaken in the light of the research propositions. These suggest (proposition 3) that the experiences of trade union managers in confronting managers in their negotiating roles will be a significant factor in management being regarded as a problematic concept. As conceptualised using Hales' (1999) model, cognitive rules deriving from those experiences will impart meanings impacting on the way in which trade union managers act. Proposition 4 suggests that trade union principles, as defined by Batstone et al (1977), influence the way in which trade union managers undertake their managerial roles, specifically in the management of people. So, describing this proposition in the light of Hales' (1999) model, 'norms', arising from moral rules deriving from the principles espoused by trade union managers, will impact on the way in which they act as managers.

In the first instance, the research attempted to establish exactly what values were espoused by trade union managers in this context. Batstone et al (1977) list unity, social justice, fairness and equality as the principal categories in their definition and all of these were expressed by some individual managers. A summary of individual statements is set out in Exhibit 9.5, explaining how managers saw their values impacting on their management roles:-

<b>CWU</b>	<b>PCS</b>	<b>UNIFI</b>	<b>UNISON</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern for individual problems</li> <li>• Fairness but firmness</li> <li>• The sensitivity of a butterfly but the hide of a rhinoceros</li> <li>• Seeking out areas of commonality</li> <li>• Democracy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mutual protection</li> <li>• Fairness</li> <li>• Protection of minorities</li> <li>• Openness</li> <li>• Taking account of the views of others</li> <li>• Treating people how you would expect members to be treated</li> <li>• But also taking decisions in the knowledge that the members provided the resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fairness but hardness</li> <li>• Treating people how you would want to be treated or would want the members treated</li> <li>• Practice what we preach</li> <li>• Principles derived from trade unionists' – valuing the individual, diversity</li> <li>• Accepting responsibility, transparency, consistency but pragmatism</li> <li>• No compulsory redundancies, social justice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fairness and decency</li> <li>• Fairness and democracy</li> <li>• Fairness, equity, compassion, hardness</li> <li>• Involvement</li> <li>• Inclusion</li> <li>• Protection of minorities</li> <li>• Understanding people</li> </ul>

**EXHIBIT 9.5. Trade union principles and management**

This is not a positivist study and therefore we are not seeking to come to decisions based on the numerical frequency of particular words. Nevertheless, it is hard to ignore the fact that, although these ideas demonstrate a fascinating bundle of values which certainly indicate a strong people orientation on the part of trade union managers, the thought mentioned substantially more frequently than any other is 'fairness.' In several unions, there is the caveat expressed that this did not, in effect, mean that trade union managers should be a pushover – they should be firm, having, perhaps, the hide of a rhinoceros.

The second area where investigation was required was how managers' experiences, and, perhaps, the culture arising from the experiences of organisational members, impacted on how managers acted. It was therefore necessary to examine those experiences and to see what 'meanings' were derived from them.

In varying ways, cultural issues relating to the value placed on management in the union were perceived by managers as having an influence on their management roles. Furthermore, they perceived that

their managerial roles were in some way constrained. The situation can be summarised in Exhibit 9.6:-

<b>UNION</b>	<b>What are the issues arising from individual or collective experiences vis-à-vis management of union members?</b>	<b>What constraints do trade union managers perceive have arisen for them arising from such experiences?</b>
<b>CWU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officials' primary experience is conflictual negotiating</li> <li>• Officials maintain pugilistic attitudes when given managerial roles</li> <li>• Difficulty in admitting the need for training for role other people do</li> <li>• 'Management is bollocks'</li> <li>• Language a problem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor employees will take advantage</li> <li>• Can't discipline people</li> <li>• No performance management</li> </ul>
<b>PCS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job of officials to biff management</li> <li>• Officials there to oppose management</li> <li>• Street cred from bargaining role, not management role</li> <li>• Management not seen as profitable time – therefore undervalued</li> <li>• Officials will stand up for themselves more</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to engage with emotional agenda</li> <li>• Discipline and inefficiency not dealt with</li> <li>• Staff perceive that managers will not confront them</li> <li>• Lack of empowerment</li> </ul>
<b>UNIFI</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We can't be managers because those are the people we oppose</li> <li>• Trade unions embarrassed to manage</li> <li>• We can keep our trade union principles pure if we don't manage</li> <li>• Management is a bit of a luxury – you must have time to spare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No culture in which people are disciplined – you have to punch the General Secretary</li> <li>• Grievance and disciplinary procedures not used</li> <li>• No culture of staff performance – appraisal blasphemous</li> <li>• Staff take advantage</li> </ul>
<b>UNISON</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management pejorative term – until a few years ago you would spit</li> <li>• Always dealt with managers adversarially</li> <li>• Not encouraged to think of ourselves as managers – dirty word</li> <li>• Residual view that we are defending workers and therefore awkward to be on the other side of the fence</li> <li>• Managerial concepts and language opposed by members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disciplinary sanctions nobody wants to get into</li> <li>• Lack of support from senior management</li> <li>• Lack of processes for performance management</li> <li>• Lack of effective management</li> </ul>

**EXHIBIT 9.6. Management as a problematic concept**

It does not seem fanciful to posit that there are connections between these perceptions. A culture in which management is undervalued, where managers feel embarrassed to manage, where individual experiences have been centred on defending people rather than holding them to account, where being a manager has in past experience invited conflict and being a trade union negotiating officer has meant acting with a considerable degree of independence, in at least two of the case study unions – all this is not conducive to undertaking managerial roles, particularly those which involve taking any form of judgmental stance. This is the stance which may be required in conduct or performance management and it seems to be these managerial areas which are most the subject of difficulty. This cultural environment seems to influence even those who may not themselves have engaged in confrontational negotiations with management over the years, so the constraints arising do not always appear to derive from individual experience.

These analyses have been directed to identification of 'meanings' and 'norms' which might influence trade union managers in their management of people. Modalities concerning resources are also a factor. In all the unions except UNISON, these indicate that centralisation is a modality in connection with resources and in two of them, CWU and UNISON, political decision making is identified. These modalities might be expected to both constrain and enable managers as they engage in 'meaningful' managerial activities.

### ***Merger management***

Earlier in this chapter, there was a discussion of corporate approaches taken by the case study unions to the management of their mergers, identifying the consequent phase of merger they had reached. This section looks at individual managerial activities.

The management of physical space and physical resources is of interest for two reasons; first, it is an incident of merger management and secondly it is a 'modality' having an impact on the way in which managers undertake their trade union management roles (Hales 1999). However, links between resource modalities and the space management element of merger management are more difficult to discern. There is significant awareness of the importance of the task to merger but this appears to arise from a sense in all unions that the management of space, in a merger context, had not been ideal. Such activities that occurred were self-evidently designed to bring staff together but not always in ways designed so that partner union staff could work together. In CWU, for example, significant areas of the head office building are still occupied by staff exclusively originating from one union, together with any new staff appointed since merger.

As far as merger management itself is concerned, this can be observed at different levels. In CWU and PCS, it was largely left to individual managers. In CWU, there were individual managers who understood

the impact which integration would have on their staff and who approached it in a people centred way, trying to get to know the staff and facilitating interaction between them. In PCS there was a highly charged understanding of the different cultures of the two old unions – something which is identified as a ‘meaning’ derived from old union experiences - and managers took similar steps to try to build their new functions, eventually bringing them together in the old CPSA head office, which had an impact on staff attitudes, if only for a short time. In PCS there were participative approaches to actually planning integration within individual units. So in these two unions there is some evidence of people-centred approaches at individual manager level, though the extent of corporate support for individual managers may have meant that some managers were, in effect, operating in something of a cocoon.

In UNIFI integration as a whole union did not occur at head office level. However, the union’s integration strategy was based around the idea of project working, in which staff at all levels would work together, irrespective of grade, function and location, to undertake some real projects which would be of benefit to the union. Project management activities were undertaken by people at different levels. Furthermore, working towards Investors in People, important for integration, required managers to develop skills in the managerial activities required to gain the standard, in particular in undertaking PDP interviews. UNISON’s management development strategy helped managers to surface issues about what it meant to be a UNISON manager and the implications for their management within the organisation. Workshops for managers and staff on management of change were held. Split site working was a reality in both unions, for different reasons, and this seems to have had a greater adverse impact on managers in UNISON than in UNIFI. Both these unions’ strategies were people-centred, suggesting that views were taken on how staff might be feeling and what positive steps might be taken to incorporate them in the new organisation. They explain to some extent how psychological merger might have been achieved.

### ***Managing by Information***

Although not set out in the case studies as a people management activity, the notion of managerial communication clearly has a strong link with such activities. Communication, one could hypothesise, is a core skill of trade unionists. Trade unions have outward facing roles and are engaged in communication with members, employers, opinion formers, governments and all other relevant stakeholders. All of the case study unions have set up communications departments for that purpose.

Mintzberg (1973) notes that 40% of Chief Executives’ time is devoted to communicating roles. So if managers find this role important, trade unionists regularly engage in it and there are no cultural inhibitions to undertaking it, one could hypothesise further that this would be a strength of trade union managers.



The evidence does not support these hypotheses. Managers were asked as part of their interviews to describe how they went about their jobs as trade union managers and no manager in any union identified communication as one of their key roles.

Unions do have some systems in place which involve communication activities. PCS has a development reviewing scheme. Some managers use team meetings as modes of communication. In the case of that union, there is also some evidence of written briefs being issued to staff. UNiFI has a personal development plan system which is linked to IIP. That automatically means that there are institutional links with the union's Business Plan which need to be made. The researcher attended a staff meeting at one of the head offices. UNISON has a development reviewing scheme and an objectives and priorities system which is intended to cascade objectives through into sectional and regional business plans.

Against that, there is criticism of communication. In CWU this is made in an external report (Delivering on Equality 2000). In PCS it is made in reports from a senior officers' meeting at Eastbourne, also in 2000. In UNiFI there is no criticism but some managers' accounts of communications processes relate to their old unions rather than to UNiFI itself. In UNISON there was criticism identified of communication during the merger process, although there is here some evidence of communications processes at work since then.

This is, therefore, something of a paradox. Trade union managers may view communication as a necessary part of the work the union does in its trade union role but not as something to which many consciously apply their minds in their managerial roles. It is also the case that poor managerial communication is a symptom of centralised management. If management is centralised and there is perceived to be concomitantly less value placed in the powers of middle managers, communication to them, and from them to their staff, is likely to be perceived to be less reason for communications strategies to be adopted. The three unions where managerial communications are less easy to identify are also most centralised in terms of their resource modalities. Whether this has been carried forward into the attitudes of their managers to managerial communication would be speculation but it would repay investigation.

### ***Managing People***

The case studies were structured around four categories in the area of people management. The first was people management in a generalised sense, obviously important in view of the 'norms' which were emerging about managers' values in regard to people. The second was performance management, relevant because of the constraint which this appeared to be for managers. The third was staff development. In the past, literature (cf Heery and Kelly 1994) has suggested that unions were not strategic in their approach to staff

development. The fourth was team work and team building. The individualistic attitude of trade union officials was also identified by Heery and Kelly (1994) and so it was felt to be interesting to examine whether, in any sense, team working was a reality and whether it was seen in any respect as counter-cultural.

In addition, the case studies contained a section in which managers described their management styles or the management styles that were common in their union. This section described styles followed by managers in their interfaces with staff, which therefore are relevant in the context of endeavouring to discover the nature of people management by the managers concerned.

In analysing the approach of managers to people, it is appropriate to place their reactions in the context of their responses when discussing their trade union principles relating to how people should be treated. Exhibit 9.7 seeks to do this.

With one exception, the negative words and phrases in the final column were descriptions of other people's styles rather than descriptions of the interviewee's own style. Nobody admitted to being a bully, for example. As one person said, nobody is likely to admit to being a bad manager. The table suggests that there is less of a match between principles and the nature of interfaces with people in CWU than in the other unions. Beyond that, the table suggests that espoused theories of people management do bear some relation to the principles that trade union managers profess and which are identified as 'norms', influencing their managerial actions.



The negative words and phrases are, however, important because they suggest that there may be a mis-match, on occasion, between respondents' visions of their own management or of corporate approaches to management and what was actually delivered – as also observed, sometimes, by lower level managers. So the fact that expressed principles and espoused approaches to people management had some relationship to each other may need to be regarded with a little caution.

### ***Performance management***

The evidence therefore presents a *prima facie* case that trade union managers might be expected to give attention to people management issues. In the case of performance management, however, undertaking people management responsibilities brings them up against some potential problems. Table 9.6 indicates that the most common areas of management where managers perceived constraints to exist on their management roles were conduct and performance management. So one would expect that this would be an area where people management might be less developed.

In three of the unions there are formal systems which might involve performance discussion. In PCS and UNISON the systems are called development reviews; in UNIFI they are called personal development plans. In UNIFI, PDPs are a component of the union's IIP strategy and are therefore built explicitly around a process whereby staff link their own objectives to the union's objectives. In UNISON, development reviews are now intended to be linked to the union's objectives and priorities and, through them, to any sectional or regional business plans, intended to contain more detailed targets.

Nevertheless, it has not been difficult to find reservations about aspects of these schemes and about performance management generally, in either a broad or narrow sense. In PCS there is evidence of staff nervousness and managerial ambivalence – one manager thought it was almost subversive for her to consider performance during the interviews. Another implies lack of commitment from the top and, as we know, conflict at the top had had a consequence for the development of management and the progress of the union through the phases of merger. In UNIFI the scheme may well work from a developmental point of view but there are doubts about whether it does from a performance point of view. UNISON managers do seem to be more positive but even here there is a suggestion that it is still work in progress.

In CWU there are no systems of performance management, though one manager indicated that in his department he did operate a form of appraisal. Such a scheme is an aspiration of the present General Secretary, though he does recognise that this is the subject of tension. This is consistent with the slow progress of the union through the phases of merger.

This bears out the view that trade union managers see this as a problematic area. When interviewed, they tend to give the impression that lack of performance or conduct management is an incident of the system, rather than something for which they bear responsibility. Yet the evidence suggests that this is a characteristic of the many, rather than the few. First of all, it is possible to relate these attitudes in many cases to a shared 'meaning' deriving, one may speculate, from a culture in which 'doing something to people' is recognisable as a principal management activity to which trade unionists are frequently opposed. Secondly, in some unions – UNISON is a case in point – managerial styles have been identified as being the very opposite of directive and therefore, one might further speculate, making it more difficult for trade union managers to become at all directive on the issue of staff performance or conduct. On this argument, trade union managers are themselves architects and members of the systems they hold responsible for deficiencies in their ability to ensure good performance. It is easy to see the connections which enable this argument to be mounted.

### ***Staff development***

There is no quantifiable measure available to enable the extent of staff development made available in the case study unions with the figures estimated in literature in Chapter 2. It is possible to examine the extent of systems in those unions for the delivery of training and development opportunities and to examine whether management development is available. Exhibit 9.8 presents a summary of this. It suggests that there are corporate approaches to staff development and training in at least two of the unions and to an extent in a third. Unions have always provided courses for negotiating staff, often through the TUC, and it is likely that this table does not fully reflect this type of training which may not be authorised by some of the very senior managers in some of the unions.

In UNISON and PCS managers appear positive about the need to provide staff development. In UNIFI there seems a little more cynicism, though this is not generally shared. A positive approach is an outcome one would expect if the people orientation identified above is a reality. It is noticeable, however, how little management training is provided, except in UNISON. This was discussed earlier in the context of its giving an indication of the extent of institutional support for the concept of management. The extent to which people orientation is observable in actual management practice has not been the subject of research and is only discernible here from external documents, such as IIP accreditations. But in that there is some suggestion that practice may not wholly meet aspiration, it could be speculated that availability of management training could be a key issue. It may be that managers who profess a strong people orientation as part of their core principles, the 'norms' that influence them, simply do not know how best to

translate those principles into managerial practice. This is something that would benefit from further research.

<b>UNION</b>	<b>Training plans compiled</b>	<b>Types of training/development available</b>	<b>Management development</b>
<b>CWU</b>	No	Varieties of external training such as IPD courses for support staff. Available on 'first come first served basis' Skills training/development for specialist staff	Not provided
<b>PCS</b>	No	Menu of short courses provided in house; some related to organisational priorities such as member care. Some evidence of development activities undertaken by managers.	Short courses provided in house; some staff attend short courses elsewhere
<b>UNIFI</b>	Yes	Induction programmes and training in skills required in particular situations such as equality and interviewing skills or project management for participants in project teams. Skills training in technical areas, such as IT applications.	Little evidence, though very senior staff have attended external programmes. Old unions trained in change management
<b>UNISON</b>	Yes, at unit level	Evidence that training provided externally to meet needs identified in development reviews and also to meet organisational priorities, such as 'winning the organised workforce.' Development review guidelines make distinction between development and training.	Compulsory in house courses provided for managers at all levels. Managers supported for external qualifications.

**EXHIBIT 9.8. Managing staff development and training**

### **Teams**

UNiFI's corporate approach to team development stands out in this area. Faced with bringing together three quite different organisations – two of them staff associations merging with a union which traditionally hated staff associations – they made use of the expertise of one or two key staff and set up project teams to run aspects of the merger campaign. They then built on this when the new union came into existence by adopting the idea of project group working as an instrument of policy. The objectives were that it would bring staff together to work together (given the existence of three head offices), would give responsibility to more junior staff and would get some real jobs done. The jobs listed below were the subject of project group consideration in July 2000..

<b>UNiFI PROJECT TEAMS</b>
Communicating with members
Organising in the branch network
Organising recognised greenfield sites
Organising unrecognised greenfield sites
Organising large sites
Organising HSBC managers
Organising in partnerships
Negotiating in an organising union
Negotiating in merging employers
Ending divided staff representation
Merger with finance unions/associations
E-organising
Conference motions
Education – generic reps course

Two staff conferences were held to set up, and hear reports from, project teams, the second one of which was well regarded by staff attending the staff meeting noted by the researcher. Not all the teams were a success, some staff did not want to co-operate and there were suggestions that the idea had not fully survived. However, the attitude to them was positive and one felt that in UNiFI working in teams was part of the culture.

In UNISON, the rhetoric of teamwork was also positive. Here teamwork had been adopted on a corporate basis because an initiative had been launched to organise regional staff in teams. As one manager testified, this runs counter to regional officers' traditional individualistic culture and in all three regional offices researched, some problems were identified. In PCS, there were similar cultural issues identified, less than in UNiFI and UNISON, perhaps because regional offices in PCS have far more bounded authority than in those unions. In part, they also arose from the culture of the former CPSA which had not placed value in teams and, on merger, associated them with the PTC tradition of, as they saw it, setting up a working party for everything. Despite this, most comments about working in teams were positive.

In CWU, however, there was more ambivalence. Suggestions were made that this arose, as in UNISON, from a more individualistic approach – in this case, it was suggested, as a result of individuals being in post as a result of election. However, there were also industrial reasons, rooted in the fact that union members had been resisting team working in the Post Office for many years, so that, as it was put, the very concept arouses suspicion.

Looking at the reasons for these attitudes does not produce a clear cut result. In UNiFI, as in UNISON, some degree of autonomy on the part of negotiating officers was identified as a ‘meaning’ arising from cognitive rules. In the case of UNiFI this does not seem to have been an impediment, at least at first, to the organisation pushing through a radical programme of project team formation even though it was known that some staff did not make much of a contribution to it. In UNISON, similarly, team working in regions was a centrally driven initiative which was explicitly trying to tackle the phenomenon of negotiating staffs’ perceived autonomy. There was a candid appreciation of the fact that autonomy was affected, but that there were trades off in terms of staff experiencing a more concerned form of management. There were several suggestions that most staff actually liked being managed because, amongst other things, of the level of support that it demonstrated. ‘Meanings’ arising from cognitive rules are not, of course, immutable. They can be re-formulated and re-created over time as a result of organisational change and development, in cases of major change initiatives sponsored by senior management.

CWU, is, though, an example of where there seems to be a very clear link between the ‘meanings’ influencing managerial actions and managers’ actions in approaching the idea of team working. The cognitive rules in CWU arise in part from a history of conflictual experiences with employers and part of that conflict has been related to supporting members who resist team working. It would not be surprising, furthermore, if concentrating on their own periodic elections influenced those organisational members concerned to be wary of ways of working which involved any form of shared responsibility. These may therefore contribute to explaining why CWU managers have been less involved in setting up and working in teams than managers in some other unions.

### ***Managing action***

Rather than focus on managers’ ‘doing’ roles, which are the subject of this category in Mintzberg’s (1994) typology, this research focussed on the issue of trade union leadership. The reason for this, as mentioned earlier, is that senior trade union managers often have to exercise more ‘hands on’ roles, possibly as a result of public and member expectations. If they delegate, everyone wonders where they are. Furthermore the literature on trade union governance has hitherto made little distinction between leadership and management, focussing



on a catch-all category of 'trade union leader'. So it was of interest, in trying to make sense of the roles of trade union managers, to explore managers' perceptions of the nature of the leadership role.

In fact, there was little agreement on what it involved. Trade union managers seem as confused as most of the rest of the population on exactly what is the difference between leadership and management, as Exhibit 9.9 demonstrates.

It may be that, when trade union manager becomes a category of person that is recognised inside and outside the movement, there may be more clarity on what distinguishes it from trade union leadership. The most it is possible to glean from these responses is some sense of strategy but, perhaps more strongly, some sense that a trade union leader needs to demonstrate influencing skills, vis-à-vis both the membership and the staff. Plainly this will require specific research but it may also be the case that both trade union managers and trade union leaders might benefit from greater awareness of where the boundaries of the respective roles begin and end.

UNION	Key words and phrases in describing the nature of trade union leadership
<b>CWU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big picture stuff</li> <li>• Giving strategic direction</li> <li>• The rest of you jump because I'm the leader</li> <li>• The Prime Minister hasn't got a job – he's got every job</li> <li>• Focussed on the organisation, innovating</li> </ul>
<b>PCS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My job isn't to run the union – it's to take it somewhere</li> <li>• Managing an idea – a crusade</li> <li>• Leadership tended to be the 'softer' side, concerning staff</li> <li>• Developing and supporting people, delivering the product</li> <li>• Good management is leadership with a very light touch on supervision</li> </ul>
<b>UNIFI</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovation, communication and motivation</li> <li>• 'He is not a leader, he is a doer'</li> <li>• My job is to be visionary</li> <li>• You are regarded by the members as the leader</li> <li>• On the leadership side (it) is being potentially outspoken and saying to people 'well, you might have the most glorious vision...but hang on a minute'</li> <li>• The ability to manage strategically</li> </ul>
<b>UNISON</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic management has always been the function</li> <li>• I have leadership qualities</li> <li>• I show leadership from my own history but also in terms of the management, the way I lead this group</li> <li>• Inspirational character</li> </ul>

**EXHIBIT 9.9. Leadership**

#### 9.4. STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

As with the management of people and physical resources, this section needs to start with the propositions of this research. In the area of stakeholder management, these assert that trade union principles influence trade union managers in the practice of 'normative stakeholder management' as defined in the literature. They go on to suggest that political and power relations cause boundaries between managers and lay member stakeholders to be unclear. As section 2.2 of Chapter 2 makes clear, the argument here was that there were links between the management of organisations identified as polyarchies and the practice of stakeholder management.

The Hales (1999) framework enables us to examine 'norms' and 'meanings' which might influence trade union managers in their managerial practice in this area. Exhibit 9.5 describes trade union principles seen by managers as impacting on their roles and in two of the unions, CWU and UNISON, democracy features as a specific value, along with the notions of 'fairness' or people orientation discussed above. However, discussion with managers of values issues strayed further into issues of representative rationality.

These are rather too complex to lend themselves to summary, although similar issues arise across the unions. In CWU, as will later appear, there appears to be a sense of commitment to the union's democratic structures which may well arise from their extensive and, consequently, embedded nature. This is despite the fact that they more closely resemble the structures of one of the merging unions rather than the other. Some senior respondents, though, emphasise their own accountability to the members in different ways – either by presenting themselves for re-election to the members after five years (when lay members were elected annually, leading to some concern about their low time horizon) – or else by identifying an occasion where members were consulted directly by ballot.

There are managers in PCS who display commitment to the union's systems of representative rationality and to working to achieve agreement to joint action – just as there are those who express frustration with it. Consultative structures have been set up to obtain a variety of member views. But PCS is unique in that the union's 'aims and values', as presented in the merger ballot, involve the members being balloted over the heads of leading lay activists voting at conference. Despite enthusiastic support for these values, it is not clear the extent to which they were shared, then or now, particularly in the light of changes made since this research concluded which involved alteration to certain Principal Rules.

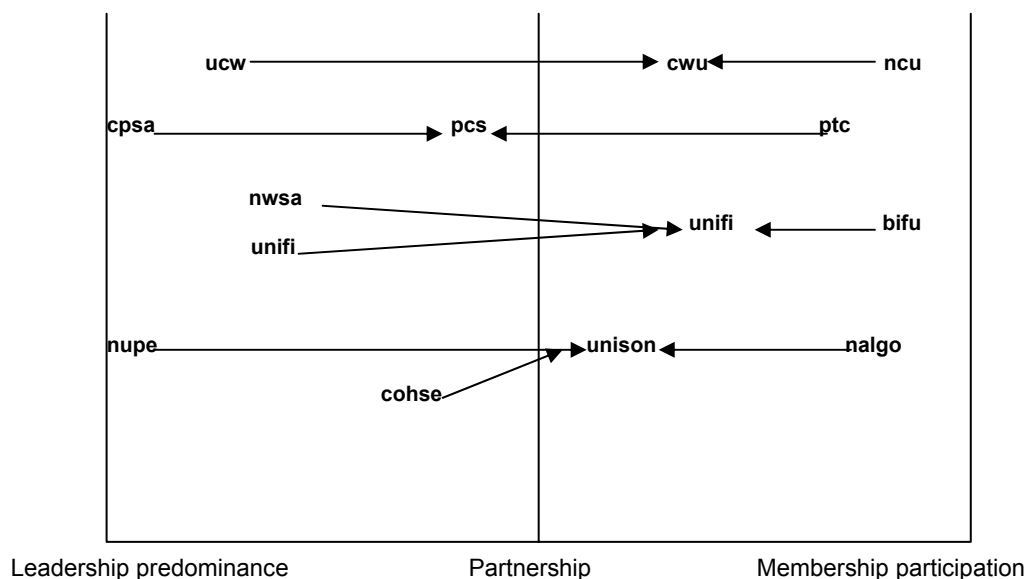
In UNIFI, managers express concerns about particular practical experiences of the lay member relationship. However, although the

exact nature of the relationship has changed for almost all of them, there is a strong commitment made to the relationships between managers and lay members in furthering the union's objectives. The case study cites a senior manager as saying that managing the lay structure is part and parcel of the job, and if you can't do that, you can't do the job.

In UNISON, the commitment seems to be to partnership with lay members. This is an imprecise concept and can therefore bring its own problems of defining boundaries. One could argue that this is what many managers have articulated in all the unions, but it is striking the number of managers who use the word, some in very principled terms.

These issues of 'norms' can be approached from another angle when examining managers' responses in discussions about the extent to which their unions were member led, officer led or partnership in character, using the simplified form of the terms. This is relevant to the extent to which these imparted 'meanings' influenced their managerial actions.

Exhibit 9.10 presents a visual representation of how this idea might apply in the four case study unions and their predecessors.



**EXHIBIT 9.10. Movements in perceptions of governance (adapted from Fairbrother (2000))**

As with the application of any idea of this type, this is based on subjective assessment. But it sits as closely to the evidence as possible. CWU seems to be engaged in a slightly grudging form of partnership, characterised by conflictual relations with lay members and where managers, who are predominantly from a UCW background and a significant number of whom are themselves elected, have had to make cultural shifts to cope with a new environment. PCS managers

were also working in a conflictual environment and only now do they at least have some stability even if conflict may not be absent. There are expressions of commitment to partnership and many things that have happened, for example the operation of the forums for a wide range of members, confirm this. But the extent of activist participation is limited by the Principal Rules and the constraints imposed on implementing decisions without ballots. The exact nature of the partnership model in PCS is therefore still unclear and is certainly contested space.

In UNiFI, the big change for ex BIFU staff was the principle of company committee autonomy. This automatically restricted the power of the NEC (although it ensured control of bargaining by other groups of lay members) and therefore affected the relationships between managers and lay members. The partnership model seemed to be settling down, though not without some anguish about poor experiences dealing with lay members exerting their muscles in the early days of the new union. In UNISON, as in UNiFI, there was some regret felt by some managers about the greater levels of trust which they identified as being characteristic of organisations where managers had comparatively more influence and were, they perceived, trusted by the lay members to exercise it. But UNISON has had longer to develop its model and its managers seem more comfortable with it, though it is clear that many boundary issues remain unclear.

Managers perceive, then, all four unions as practising some form of partnership, involving change for everyone. These perceptions could have been expected to have been influenced by the phase of merger the union had reached. In the earlier phases, where cultural and role ambiguity remained, change of this nature and order is likely to be difficult and unwelcome. With psychological merger could come greater acceptance. But even in those unions which had approached this, uncontested models of governance had not emerged.

One point was made several times in UNISON, and hinted at in UNiFI, to the effect that lay members from more leadership led unions rather liked what they saw in the unions they were merging with, where lay members enjoyed, as they saw it, more power and influence and therefore moved themselves in that direction. This, of course, meant that the balance of their relationship with managers changed; as their power and influence increased, so the boundaries with their former managers moved for them in the direction of having less predominance. It may be, therefore, that in a merger between unions at different ends of this continuum, lay members from unions where the leadership is predominant will welcome the creation of a new organisation in which they have less constraints; concomitantly managers from those organisations will be less likely to welcome a new organisation in which they perceive constraints on them to have increased. This is not something that can be concluded from the data here but it would benefit from further research.



## **Boundaries**

A word mentioned frequently in the discussion above was 'boundaries'. In many ways, the role of the trade union manager in managing stakeholders seems to involve managing boundaries. This will have been clear in reading the case studies where boundaries of different types were discussed. Exhibit 9.11 summarises some of the boundary management issues that arose in the four case study unions.

The Exhibit contains some issues that would be applicable to more or less any form of boundary. But this summary makes it possible to discuss the following boundaries:-

- **Boundaries related to conflictual relations**

These are personal boundaries. Although arguably not boundaries in themselves, they are included because good personal relations between stakeholders facilitate effective stakeholder management whilst poor personal relations set up human boundaries which have to be managed before there is any realistic hope of any such managerial processes taking place. In the CWU, the conflictual relations between stakeholders 'battling' with each other effectively prevent managers from rationally addressing the issues. Conference, for example, makes an (*ultra vires*) decision about substitution of lay negotiators and energy sapping conflict commences about how to respond to it. In PCS, lay members pounce on ideas concerning call centre access to the union and they are consequently put on hold. In UNIFI, an early atmosphere of low trust between lay members and managers leads to managers being apprehensive that they will be exposed at committees. In UNISON, perceptions that lay members are organising against senior management inhibits dialogue, though one manager was adamant that good 'caring' relationships were vital to her relationships with lay activists.

- **Constitutional boundaries**

These are boundaries that have some reference to the Rule Book. In CWU, legal advice was eventually taken to establish the boundary between senior management and activist structures on staffing matters, so that the General Secretary could resist *ultra vires* decisions. In UNIFI, the overriding importance of the principle of autonomy for company committees is set out in the Rule Book and is used by managers to resist activist initiatives designed to transgress those boundaries. In UNISON, financial regulations are used to regulate the use of funds contained in lay activist budget heads and ensure management oversight of them. In UNISON, too, the issue is raised of the boundaries between governance and management. In PCS the ideal is expressed that lay members make policy and managers report to committee. Although this may be implied in the Rule Book, it is not sufficiently clear to

prevent this space from being contested in all sorts of areas. In the absence of a clear Rule Book prescription, perhaps it cannot be defined without some kind of agreed code of practice defining relative spheres of influence – and maybe the ‘shared zone.’

- ***Moveable boundaries***

Boundaries that are not agreed are liable to move, depending on contingent factors. In PCS, boundaries, it was suggested, can move where lay members perceive that something has gone wrong. So even if the subject of the error is one that is clearly within a managerial sphere, lay members move over the boundary in a belief that they can thus prevent the error recurring. In the same union, where there has been conflict between senior managers, it was suggested that the conflict made it difficult for managers to defend their boundaries, so that lay members were able to move over them. There was also conflict between lay members themselves, which could have led to the boundaries moving in the opposite direction. It could be that boundaries are spanned in such conditions on a case by case basis; where one party was united on an issue, boundaries could be spanned by that party where a disunited party could not defend them.

- ***Staff boundaries***

Managers know well that key to their achieving the organisation’s objectives is an effective appointments process – having staff in place who can do the job. Lay members know this also; they may also still hold to the rather naïve belief that someone with appropriate political credentials can do the job better. For whatever reason, there are histories of lay members, either in Conference or on the NEC, trying to move boundaries in the direction of more lay decision-making on staff matters, and of managers trying to defend and define the boundaries. In CWU, the issue was colourfully highlighted by suggesting to lay members that hiring and firing went together and that none of them wanted the latter, however much they wanted the former. The issue of lay negotiator substitution, mentioned above, was a particular example of unclear staff boundaries which affected both managers and staff. In PCS, there is a suggestion that, despite a formal appointments process which reflects good practice in equal opportunities terms, political decisions may still be possible. UNIFI has an extraneous agreement with unions representing staff that is designed to facilitate managers defining boundaries which have agreed elements of lay member involvement but also contain good practice elements designed to prevent bias. UNISON has similar processes but the issue mentioned here was that some staff lobby lay members directly – presumably, therefore, lay members allow themselves to be lobbied – something which affects the boundaries between them and managers.

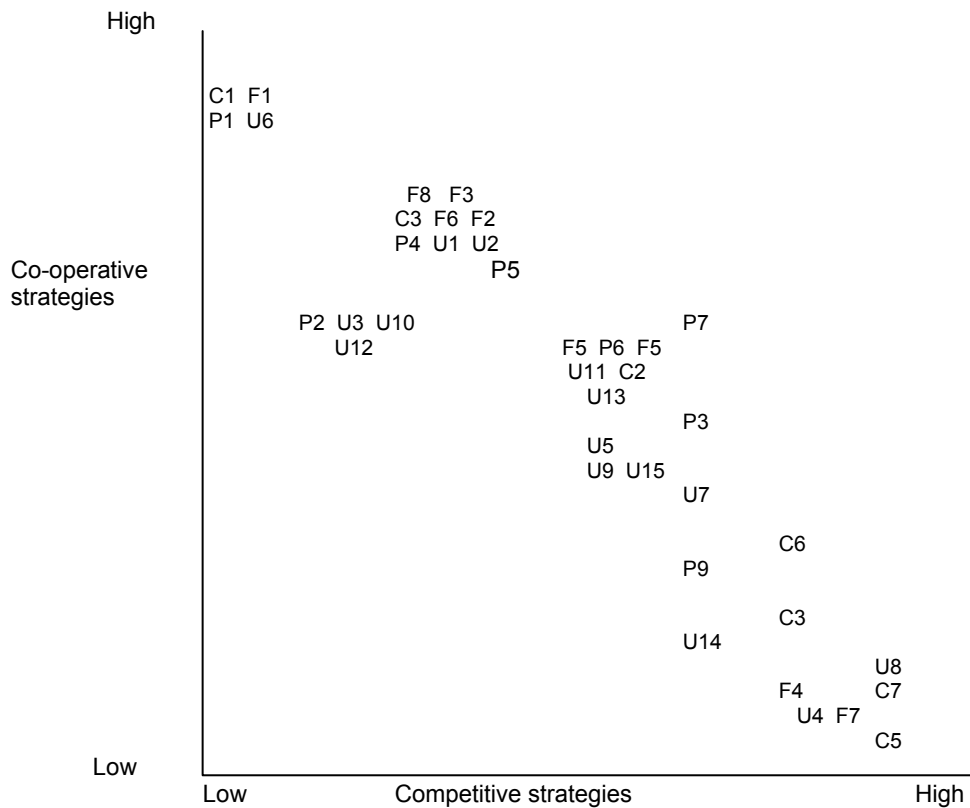
- ***Policy and political boundaries***

Unsurprisingly these are areas of significant boundary dispute. In CWU, boundaries are obviously fuzzy because of the extent of election amongst managers in the union – although paradoxically, it is not an area of significant comment in that union, except for a suggestion that elected managers might pander to political groupings. In PCS there are some serious reflections on these boundaries. There are examples of where professional issues become political ones – office space or IT systems are examples – and considerable concern that negotiating these boundaries involves such political compromises that it has a detrimental effect on managerial responsibilities. One observation suggested, however, that it was possible for managers to resist inappropriate political action by escalating the political issue to senior management level. Presumably this would only be effective in the event of a united management being able to defend its boundary. In UNISON there are examples of managers having to adjust their hats depending on which role they were adopting and finding that a difficult process. It was suggested that it was particularly difficult in regions where the Regional Secretary was the General Secretary's representative in the region, a role which included political elements, but where the General Secretary was elected and the Regional Secretary was not. To defend one's political boundary, one certainly has to know with some degree of clarity where the boundary lay – although the General Secretary himself denied the existence of any such boundary.

Exhibit 9.12, based on comments reported in the case studies, summarises how trade union managers go about managing boundaries. It endeavours to 'map' modes of management against ideas of co-operation and competition. As with any 'scaled' illustration of this kind, the location of particular modes of boundary management on the scales is subjective but it is intended to illustrate patterns of interest.

These patterns demonstrate the diversity of strategies used by trade union managers in all unions to manage boundaries – strategies that appear from Exhibit 9.12 to be unrelated to the phase of merger reached by the unions. They also demonstrate that it is not possible to sustain any proposition which posits that trade union managers employ any particular form of stakeholder management. Boundaries are contested. Managers, as contestants, employ a range of strategies to seek to defend and move the boundaries under contest.





<p><b>CWU</b></p> <p>C1 Positively involving lay members            C2 Displaying 'political nous'            C3 Negotiation            C4 Playing political games            C5 Agenda control            C6 'Freudian' resistance            C7 Use of Rule Book for definitive decision (e.g. legal definition of boundary)</p>	<p><b>UNIFI</b></p> <p>F1 Developing the role of the NEC            F2 Making sure President and Vice-President au fait            F3 Helping Company Committee to decide rather than assenting to conflict with NEC            F4 Using Rule Book to maintain Company Committee rights            F5 Using Rule Book to emphasise union's values            F6 Balancing interests            F7 Manipulation of interest groups            F8 Facilitation</p>
<p><b>PCS</b></p> <p>P1 Make sure good relationships            P2 Identify priorities            P3 Negotiate with lay structure to give them Something in exchange for support            P4 Using powers of reason with lay members            P5 Displaying political awareness            P6 Using Rule Book to define values            P7 Using Rule Book for guidance            P8 Using instinct            P9 Committee management</p>	<p><b>UNISON</b></p> <p>U1 Negotiation            U2 Bringing people together            U3 Work programmes            U4 Using financial crisis to defeat politics            U5 Influencing skills in political issues            U6 Building relationships – trust confidence, caring            U7 Using surveys to discover members' views            U8 Instituting financial controls on lay funds            U9 Attending to lay members status            U10 Implementing national conference policies            U11 Using Rule Book to define culture            U12 Using Rule Book to define Aims and Objectives            U13 Deciding where authority lies            U14 Seeking to give members only broad overview            U15 Managing personalities rather than logic</p>

**EXHIBIT 9.12. Boundary Management**

One would assume that unions where there is a real partnership between lay members and managers would tend to fall in the top left hand quadrant of Exhibit 9.12. The fact that this is not the case suggests that, even in those unions, such as UNISON, whose managers profess the ideal of partnership quite strongly, the reality is that partnership is defined by a range of strategies, some co-operative and some competitive. This does not mean that partnership is not a reality – in the real world, conflict and co-operation go hand in hand and have to be managed, though in different ways. But it does mean that, in seeking to pin down the differing ways in which trade union managers manage boundaries, the nature of these dynamics requires further research.

## **9.5. RESOURCE DEPLOYMENT**

This topic is to some extent tangentially related to the research propositions. In the literature, there are doubts raised about the extent to which unions have robust systems of resource management, specifically financial management. One of the reasons advanced for this is the potential conflict between administrative rationality and representative rationality. This, in terms of this research, raises issues about stakeholder management. If, in particular, the modalities influencing trade union managers in their approach to stakeholder management are positive in relation to their interface with the systems of representative rationality, then the concerns raised in the literature are unlikely to be sustained. Managers will perceive the importance of financial and resource management systems and any impact which those have on systems of representative rationality will be managed.

In terms of resource modalities, we see that all four unions have centralist modalities, though in UNISON devolution is a factor, based on systems in which budgets are devolved to managers and where virement between budget heads, subject to regulatory control, is possible. There has been discussion in the earlier parts of this chapter about 'meanings' and 'norms' relating to representative rationality. The conclusions are mixed; there are many words of commitment to the democratic process but actions relating to boundary management that give a much more varied picture, as we saw in Exhibit 9.12. Other 'norms', however, relate to the idea of 'fairness' and Exhibit 9.5 contains words in three of the four case study unions that explicitly relate to the protection of minorities or 'diversity', inherent in which is a commitment to the value of individuals and individual groups, no matter their size or influence.

Exhibit 9.13 examines managerial actions relating to resource deployment in the light of these factors. Examination of these actions might conclude as follows:-

<b>UNION</b>	<b>Nature of financial systems</b>	<b>Links to planning process</b>	<b>Lay member issues</b>	<b>Issues of 'fairness' in resource distribution</b>
<b>CWU</b>	Centralised systems but little central control; managers spend without too much reference to budgets, though functional managers ensure contractors work to budget. Meetings budgets spent against by managers. Top up system deals with unplanned expenditure. More effective financial control systems planned	Strategic Plan includes financial objectives and Finance Department plan reflects this. But Plan objectives themselves are not costed.	Lay members being brought within budgetary planning and monitoring systems. Belief at the top that issues about the cost of meetings and thus the cost of representative rationality will have to be faced up to by activists	Strong belief by one senior manager that resource allocation must be issue driven, rather than related to the size of any group seeking resources
<b>PCS</b>	Centralised systems with significant expenditure the subject of specific allocation. Meetings budgets subject to some managerial decision-making. Pressure from regions for more local decision making.	Management or NEC Plan sets objectives. Specific financial papers on implications of aspects of Plan (incorporating some hesitant devolution) but Plan itself not costed.	Lay members involved in budgetary decision making. Suggestion that meetings budgets could be examined if reductions required	Strong statements about the need to ensure that minorities fairly treated in resource allocation.
<b>UNIFI</b>	Centralised systems, first for merger and latterly in view of financial difficulties. Managers unconnected to process. Meetings budgets subject to managerial decision-making; on line meetings trialled.	Annual Business Plan produced containing some specific targets. But Plan not costed.	Lay members involved in resource allocation. No evidence that lay members have addressed meetings costs but suggestion that case would have to be made to exceed budget.	Beliefs expressed of the importance of minority rights on resource allocation (consistent with devolution to company committees)
<b>UNISON</b>	Budgetary decision making centralised but decisions around budget holders' submissions. Budgetary control devolved with some virement allowed.	Aims and Objectives criteria for budgetary decisions but an national level these are vague and not costed. At lower levels, business plans can contain costable targets.	Lay members involved in budgetary strategy and considering managerial bids. No evidence that issues of representative rationality addressed	Belief that minority issues important and best dealt with by addressing Objectives and Priorities, though in the knowledge that this is difficult

**EXHIBIT 9.13 Deployment of Resources**

### ***Financial systems and planning***

At the time the research into the CWU took place, financial systems were certainly not rigorous, but the need for a rigorous approach had arisen from the new management team seeking to tackle the union's financial problems, the context being one where the union's development of management generally was at an early stage, consistent with the earlier phase of merger which it had reached. But the systems in the other unions were rigorous and controlled, even if the centralised nature of those in PCS and UNiFI caused stresses amongst those who had insufficient authority to deploy resources themselves. The latter union did have aspirations to devolve budgets when the time became appropriate but had not done so when this research ended. If, however, links between planning and budgetary control are a measure of rigour, none of the unions measured up. All believed that their planning processes would determine levels of activity in their unions; all but PCS sought to link planning and resources in some way but not in ways which commercial organisations, or even public sector ones, would usually recognise.

### ***Representative rationality***

In all four unions, lay members were involved in resource allocation to a greater or lesser extent. This is not a surprise; if there is one aspect of governance in which one would expect the representative system to be involved, it is that of resource disposition. There are understandings, certainly in three of the unions, that the cost of the representative system is an issue in budgetary control and that it carries with it the risk of its being seen that the administrative tail is wagging the representative dog. They could, of course, argue that more meetings do not equate with more representative governance. However, unions seem to be very slow to take the step of curtailing representative structures in order to free resources for other purposes, or just to save money in a crisis. It is suggested in CWU and UNiFI, both in some financial difficulty when the research took place, that these issues needed to be addressed but by the time the research had been concluded, they had not done so in any corporate ways.

### ***'Fairness'***

In all unions beliefs were expressed about the need to ensure that resource distribution should be issue driven rather than responding to the power of numbers. It did seem, in fact, that structural steps had been taken to prevent the latter; in two unions (PCS and UNiFI), per capita budgeting had been an issue that had been defeated. In UNiFI also, the principle of company committee autonomy underpins this. Not all the company committees relate to large banks. Small building societies and financial institutions have their own committees – some managers serviced from Bournemouth or Raines Park institutions on the Channel Islands where, they said, air fares were the highest in Europe - and managers dealing with these smaller organisations were confident that they were entitled to manage sufficient resources. In

UNISON, there was a belief that their objective setting and planning processes facilitated issue driven resource allocation.

So it could be argued that there are links between modalities and actions in this area. There are evident links between resource modalities and managerial actions on deploying resources. It is less clear the link between 'norms' and managerial actions affecting systems of representative rationality. In general, managers do not seem to be taking any financial decisions which adversely affect those systems, even if they are aware that there is an issue here. However, there does seem to be a link between 'norms' and the 'fair' distribution of resources. To this extent, there is some support for one aspect of proposition 4.2.

### 9.6. SUMMARY

The issues that emerged from the within case data analysis and the cross-case data analysis have now been presented and discussed. Key comparisons between the case studies, and between the different respondents, have also been discussed. A rich picture of how trade union managers go about the management of their unions has emerged. Many of the comparisons have been made using matrices, displays and models, as is consistent with presenting qualitative data (Miles and Huberman 1994), case studies (Yin 1994) and Realism research (Healy and Perry 2000). It is also customary with realist research to show the degree to which the propositions have been qualified and validated by the data. This is now discussed.

Set out in Exhibit 9.14 is a diagrammatic representation of support for the propositions. As noted earlier, any display in the form of scaling contains, of necessity, elements of subjectivity. However, it is followed by a discussion of the issues.

Proposition	Cross case support
1.1	√√
1.2	X
1.3	X
2.1	X
2.2	√√
2.3	√
3	√√√
4.1	√√√
4.2	√
5	√√√

Key: X = not at all.      √      √√      √√√      √√√√  
Degree of support given: **Weak**.....**Strong**

**EXHIBIT 9.14. Support for propositions**

### ***Proposition 1***

Trade union managers accept managerial roles and undertake managerial activities. Merger was a factor in the case study unions. It led to organisational change but two of the three factors listed in proposition 1 were not in themselves the key issues for managers accepting their roles. There was some support for the view that the realisation of the size of the new union had some impact on the growth of managerial consciousness. There are also links between the phase of merger reached by unions and institutional acceptance of management and its development within them.

### ***Proposition 2***

Trade union managers attached importance to the strategic role of physical space and physical structure. Where appropriate, in two of the case study unions, it was important in bringing staff together. But the first sub-proposition is not supported and the third, whilst forming part of the strategies of some individual managers, was not the subject of much corporate support and consequently was patchy in implementation.

### ***Proposition 3***

The experiences of trade union officials in confronting management during their careers are a factor in management being regarded as a problematic concept within unions. But conflict is not the only factor; it seems that the bundle of experiences of trade union officials in defending members, a belief that management is in some way not a valuable practice, (something more common in unions in earlier phases of merger) a working life in trade unions which was characterised by absences of management – all these things and more have had an impact. Furthermore, they have an impact not only on managers who have those experiences directly – they have in many cases created a culture where these values have become shared.

### ***Proposition 4.1***

Trade union principles appear to be a factor in trade union managers espousing people centred values in relation to the way in which their people should be managed, though not amongst all managers. No research has been conducted amongst union staff but in one of the unions there is evidence that people centred management is not perceived by staff to be a feature of life in the union; in others there is also criticism of management. There are, though, other 'meanings' influencing people management which inhibit managers becoming involved in 'judgmental' activities such as those relating to the management of conduct or performance. It is also suggested that the lack of management training in two, possibly three, of the unions (to some extent a factor in the level of institutional support for management) may mean that, if there is justified criticism of people management, this may be because managers with people centred values may not know how to translate those into the management of people.

***Proposition 4.2***

There is some support for this proposition in terms of the deployment of resources. However, stakeholder management in respect of stakeholders within the union's democratic structure is a contested area irrespective of the phase of merger reached. There are statements that suggest that normative stakeholder management is the goal and these are related to trade union principles but between principle and reality the links are not clear in many cases.

***Proposition 5***

This proposition is largely supported. Boundaries are unclear and although political and power relations may be factors, there are other boundaries identified. Boundaries related to conflictual relations, constitutional boundaries, moveable boundaries and staff boundaries are significant; too. Again, these do not seem to relate to the phase of merger reached.

Realist epistemology, as noted in Chapter 3, is based on the building of models of mechanisms so that phenomena of interest can be examined. These hypothetical mechanisms, reflected in the propositions of this research, has enabled ideas about their content to be discussed and conclusions to be reached that account for the phenomena being examined. The fact, therefore, that the propositions may not have been fully substantiated is immaterial. A complex picture has emerged, revealing trade union managers and their activities in the case study unions. The closing chapter of this thesis will seek to make judgments about the theoretical implications of these findings.

## CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSIONS

### 10.1. INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER TEN

This final chapter brings to a conclusion this research project. It first discusses the conclusions from the research in the light of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Based on those conclusions, it seeks to answer the questions:-

- What has been replicated or confirmed by the study?
- What further development or extension of theory has taken place?
- What is there in the study that is new, novel or unique?

The answer to this latter question indicates what contribution to knowledge has been made by the project. The chapter will end with sections noting the limitations of the research, discussing implications for practitioners and suggesting areas for future research together with a personal postscript marking the end of a singular life experience.

### 10.2. THEORETICAL CONCLUSIONS

#### *Trade union managers*

The study has established that there is a role of trade union manager and that those in that capacity are significant actors in the dramas of trade union life. Both Dunlop (1990) and Hannigan (1998), whilst discussing management, did so speculatively, not empirically, whilst Willman et al (1993) studied only one particular category of manager, in a different context. Broom (1994) looked at the experiences of women trade union managers. None of these studies examined the development of trade union management. This study does so, in a context of unions formed by merger.

Buono and Bowditch (1989) propose a model of seven stages of merger, reproduced in adapted form in Exhibit 2.4, the utility of which lies in suggesting that different approaches to management are required at each stage. The goal is psychological merger. In one of their case studies, the authors found loss of organisational pride, employee detachment, fractionalisation, loss of job security and feelings of helplessness and Dempsey and McKevitt (2001), employing this model, identified some of these features in the UNISON merger. Their conclusion is that trade union mergers should be planned on the basis that such consequences should be anticipated.

The model of phases of merger facilitates this process. The three unions are, it is suggested, at different phases. CWU barely left the 'formal legal merger' phase, involving stakeholder conflict and organisational instability. Even as it progressed to the next stage 'merger aftermath', 'them' and 'us' feelings perpetuated themselves. PCS, owing to high level conflict, was not able to progress to



psychological merger and remained in the 'merger aftermath' phase. Buono and Bowditch (1989:99) say that this phase carries with it the danger of 'post-merger drift' as management struggles with merger integration. They say that this can take years to resolve. In the case of PCS, the union was in a state of cultural suspended animation whilst organisational members awaited the victor in the conflict (who turned out to be someone different altogether).

Both UNIFI and UNISON appear to have progressed towards psychological merger. However, in UNIFI the effects of this may have been dissipated as merger planning uncertainty recurred over a period of years as the union sought a new merger partner.

Chapter 9 discusses whether there are links between these factors and the development of management in the case study unions. One area for examination was the extent of management of the merger that took place in the different unions.

The four unions merged at different times. UNISON was the first and the merger was nine years old when the research took place. As we have seen, there were specific efforts to address cultural issues in that merger and to engage in explicit merger management activities. Buono and Bowditch (1989:92) say that culture change during a merger 'must be recognised as a time-consuming, evolutionary, process that often entails political manoeuvring, anxiety-provoking situations, conflicts and tensions and the need for learning, adjustment and flexibility.' The UNISON experience certainly supports the idea that this process is time-consuming. Even after this length of time, managers are very aware of cultural issues; the General Secretary is still reflecting on the importance of staff's reflecting on the achievements of their old unions

The most recent merger is UNIFI. Exhibit 9.1 reveals that here, too, there was a degree of merger management activity. The union used project teams to bring people together and Investors in People to act as a framework for the development of people management. In neither of the other unions was there evidence of much corporate merger management activity. Buono and Bowditch (1989: 235) say that whilst there is a general drop in performance during mergers, there is a significant difference between well managed and unattended combinations. An issue examined in the case study unions was whether there were links between attention to merger management and the extent of the development of management within the unions; also whether there were links between the phase of merger that a union had reached and the development of management.

This is not something that is examined in the literature on trade union management, such as it is, nor in that on merger management. Much of the latter has in it a sufficiency of examples of poor management – and some good examples – but these are not related to the institutional attitude of the organisations to management as such nor to its

development. In the event, links were discernible. Chapter 9 presented 7 hypotheses relating to those links. Although it is reasonable, one might conclude, to expect management to be more developed in unions that in later phases of merger, there are two qualifications. First, it is possible that the reason unions did not proceed to later phases is precisely because of the lack of development of management as a concept within those unions. If management is a difficult idea, then merger management will be just as difficult – leading to a rather circular scenario in which management does not develop as an idea because the union does not proceed to psychological merger. Secondly, the lack of institutional support for management does not mean that management is not taking place. Managers may be in cocoons but they accept their roles, recognise the need for management and seek to practise it as best they can, limited mainly by the lack of training that most of them receive in such circumstances and, often, cultures in which management is seen as lacking value.

Proposition 3 asserted that experiences in confronting management in past careers would translate into the problematisation of management within unions. The idea that management was a problematic concept was based on the finding by Ourousof (1993) in her extensive anthropological study of UNISON's constituent unions prior to merger – a finding replicated by Kelly and Heery (1994). This was postulated in a proposition in this research. The implication of that proposition, it was assumed, was that constraints on their managerial activities would be perceived by trade union managers arising from the problematic nature of the role. The research largely supported Ourousof's (1993A) conclusion. The research also found that managers perceived a series of constraints, the most common of which related to performance or conduct management. Hales' (1999) framework invites the researcher to postulate links between 'meanings', based on cognitive rules arising in a particular managerial environment, and managerial actions. Ourousof herself (1993B:13) implicitly makes this link when she talks of the word 'manager' being, with organisational members, 'synonymous with indifference to people with less institutional power than themselves'. So one might expect the 'meaning' of management to incorporate a belief that one should somehow redress the balance of power.

Articulation of the existence of constraints was made not only by people who had themselves negotiated with management but also by managers with other life experiences. So it is possible to suggest that cultural 'meanings' have arisen from the core experiences of organisational members that impact on the perceptions of trade union managers about the constraints that influence the way they carry out their roles.

### ***The activities of trade union managers***

Chapter 2 notes that there is little literature available describing what trade union managers do. This study has sought an answer to the

question by asking trade union managers themselves. It has categorised those activities into areas of interest which are now examined further.

### ***Merger management***

Chapter 9 discusses merger management in the four unions and aspects are summarised in Exhibit 9.1. The management of physical space is treated as an integral part of merger management, consistent with Becker's (1990) view that physical space issues should be linked to an organisation's strategy.

The management of physical space and physical resources is of interest for two reasons; first, it is an incident of merger management and secondly it is a 'modality' having an impact on the way in which managers undertake their trade union management roles (Hales 1999). However, links, between resource modalities and the space management element of merger management are more difficult to discern. There is significant awareness of the importance of the task to merger but this appears to arise from a sense in all unions that the management of space, in a merger context, had not been ideal. Such activities that occurred were self-evidently designed to bring staff together but not always in ways designed so that partner union staff could work together. In CWU, for example, significant areas of the head office building are still occupied by staff exclusively originating from one union, together with any new staff appointed since merger.

The General Secretary of UNISON, and other of his managers, still reflect also on the damage done by the absence of a unified head office for the first six years of the merger. In PCS, some managers felt constrained by the cultural manifestations within their head office building of the history and organisation of the partner union whose building it had been.

The evidence here suggests, as do Dempsey and McKeivitt (2001), that these considerations affect trade unions as they do other organisations.

### ***Managing by Information***

Lipset et al (1956) characterise union bureaucracies as holding all the resources and all the powers of communication. They are, of course, advertent to communication with members. It would not, however, be unreasonable to assume that, given such advantages, communication with staff would be one managerial activity to which trade union managers would attend. It is one upon which, as Mintzberg (1973) relates, managers in other spheres devote high proportions of their time.

In fact, the evidence does not support this. Chapter 9 points out that there are processes in place which are integral to communications strategies, including one to one meetings and cascading overall objectives through into sectional business plans and individual

objectives. But managers do not in general speak the language of managerial communication. It does not seem to be key to their conceptions of their managerial responsibilities.

### ***Managing through people***

Chapter 2 makes clear that the search for a definition of trade union principles has not been wholly fruitful, particularly as an operational concept. One interviewee said that he didn't know what they were but, in effect, you knew them when you saw them. The propositions adopted the definition by Batstone et al (1977), an extensive one which was not supported by this research. This may partly be to do with the nature of the discussions with the interviewees, who discussed their values within the context of their managerial roles. They expressed many admirable values, the most significant one of which was 'fairness', echoing the more limited definition of trade union principles by Willman (1980). The most one can conclude, therefore, from this research is that the principle trade union managers most often perceive as influencing them in the performance of their managerial roles – in the language of Hales (1999) the 'norm' - is that of fairness. Obviously this is of interest in examining the people management activities of trade union managers.

Chapter 2 also suggested that Dunlop's (1990) model of how union 'executives' manage was a form of contingency theory of management style. He suggests that union managers exercise 'control' over some internal administrative matters but 'persuasion' where unpopular decisions are perceived to be necessary and the implication is that this involves some sort of democratic approach. Tannenbaum and Schmidt's (1973) model, also described in Chapter 2, is also a contingency model, suggesting that styles of management are dependent on four variables, the leader, the led, the task and the context. The idea that the 'led' constitute a variable here matches Dunlop's idea that they have to be 'persuaded', where the contingency is that the task is unpopular and the leader is a democrat. In any event, the 'led', as organisational members, may well share cultural values with their managers and so, if management remains in some circumstances a problematic concept for the managers, it would be likely to be so for staff as well.

The research has not been directed to analysing the management of particular tasks, other than those relating to merger where management styles are difficult to pin down in these terms because of the variety of activities undertaken. In Chapter 2 there is an extensive discussion of different contingencies affecting trade union managers and suggestions as to where on the Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973) continuum trade union managers might fall in different circumstances. The discussion concludes by pointing out that modern approaches to HRM, and IIP which is founded on them, are people-centred approaches to management – approaches which are very different to styles of management common when a good deal of literature on trade

union governance was written. This would suggest that, other variables permitting, trade union managers would be more comfortable on the right hand of the continuum than on the left.

Exhibit 9.7, in this context, makes interesting reading. It compares stated trade union principles, discussed above, with key words and phrases used by trade union managers relating to their interfaces with people. Those phrases which are positive, which means most of them, very much reflect styles of management to the right of the continuum. There may, of course, be other issues at play here. As discussed below, some trade union officials have, as Kelly and Heery (1994) point out, enjoyed some degree of operational autonomy and, taking into account the observation made above that staff expectations are a variable in a contingency theory of management style, being on the right of the continuum may be a convenient excuse for exercising, as one senior manager put it, no management at all. Being on the left of the continuum, furthermore, may involve, following Ouroussof's (1993B) finding, taking a judgmental approach to people who would, in other circumstances, have been represented as the powerless in conflict with the powerful.

This discussion lays a foundation for some rhetorical but interesting questions. When writers on trade unions talk of 'bureaucracies', are they talking about models of organisations managed by trade union managers where those managers both express such people centred views about managing their people and, in some cases, are committed to benchmarking their performances in this area against a national standard? Of course, there are fine, sensitive, people managers in bureaucracies but the word, used in the context of writing on trade union governance, contains, it could be argued, much negative imagery in the present day. Similarly, when Kelly and Heery (1994:86) report that there are, amongst negotiating officers, 'examples of resentment and resistance to attempts at greater management control', what models of management were in the minds of the respondents, and/or the researchers, when responding on that issue? The questionnaires which formed the basis for those responses talked of 'control' and 'autonomy', suggesting that subtlety in contemplating different managerial models was not in the forefront of the minds of either party.

These are rhetorical questions and this research does not attempt to answer them. The fact, however, that they can be asked, in the context of trade union managers in the present day expressing people centred approaches to their people and, in some cases, contemplating systems of people management which reflect those approaches, suggests that significant changes may be observable in trade unions.

One must, however, be wary of accepting managers' responses at face value. As Chapter 9 points out, there are examples of poor management in trade unions, as some of the managerial responses acknowledge. Research amongst trade union staff would reveal

whether there is a match between managerial aspiration, or espoused theory, and theory in use (Argyris et al 1985). Argyris's theory asserts that people are often unaware that their theories in use are not the same as their espoused theories – and that people are often unaware of their theories in use. There is enough evidence of scepticism about trade union managers in this research to make this caveat.

### ***Performance management***

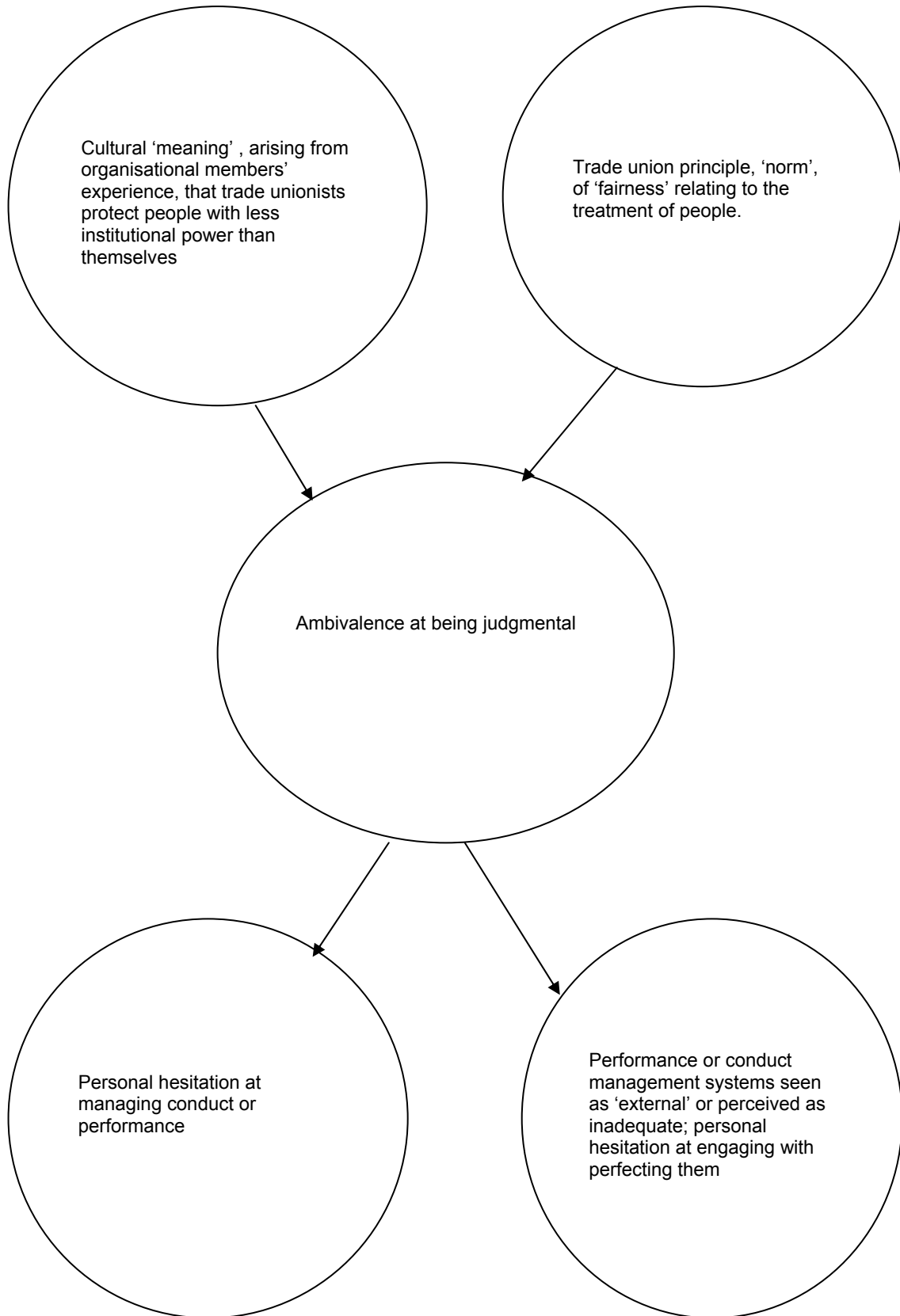
Dunlop (1990:13) suggests that performance of 'labor leaders' is measured by the votes of members. This view was expressed in this research, but only once – a reflection of the different structural components of American unions compared with British ones. Hannigan (1998) says that performance appraisal is generally not handled at all in American trade union organisations and Kelly and Heery (1994) say that, in 1991, only 16% of UK unions operated a formal system of performance appraisal. Appraisal is not, of course, a pre-requisite for performance management but this is a relevant snapshot.

In three of the case study unions there are systems (development reviews or personal development plans) which, in the hands of some managers (maybe most managers in some unions), enable there to be performance related discussions. One manager reported that she had mounted disciplinary proceedings on the grounds of competence. Chapter 9, however, draws attention to Exhibit 9.6, which suggests that conduct and performance management are the most common activities seen as constraints by trade union managers. The exhibit juxtaposes those constraints with managers' experiences leading to the conclusion that management remained a problematic concept, discussed above.

Chapter 9 speculates on the connections between personal unwillingness to manage performance or conduct and the fact that systems are sometimes treated as external to them – merely organisational incidents. These ideas are described in diagrammatic terms in Exhibit 10.1. Whilst speculative, they go some way to offering an explanation of why it is that some trade union managers who may be committed to the ideas of thoughtful people management often find difficulty with one of the principal components of any model of managing people.

### ***Staff Development***

Kelly and Heery (1994:62) say that few unions develop a strategic approach to training in which there is an attempt to specify the objectives of training policy and identify training. As Chapter 9 reports, this research has in most cases been able to examine systems rather than practice and systems exist in three of the four case study unions. In two of them, UNIFI and UNISON, these are translated into training plans of one form or another, supporting in both unions (though in UNISON not throughout the organisation) their Investors' in People strategies.



**EXHIBIT 10.1 Union managers and performance management**

Exhibit 9.8 summarises staff development and training provision. Kelly and Heery (1994) were focussing on the training of negotiating officers whereas this study only lightly touches on this type of provision. What it does identify is that two unions are very parsimonious in their provision of management education and a third is developing slowly. Chapter 9 suggests that the provision of management education is an indication of institutional support for management. It also speculates that, in that (as we have seen above) some managers may have difficulty in translating their principled people orientation into the full range of people management activities, management training directed to this area may be critical. The lack of such training might in part explain, for example, why people management is not reported as being a strength in CWU, a union which appears to provide no management training at all.

### ***Team management***

There was a discussion above which drew attention to the extent of operational autonomy typically enjoyed by negotiating officials. Kelly and Heery (1994:81) quote an official as saying that 'no national officer can instruct me to do anything; I decide my own diary'.

If this is remotely typical in the case study unions, as it seems to be to a greater or lesser degree, then one can see how teamwork can impact on what may be a significant cognitive 'meaning' for the staff involved. In UNISON, where the intention is specifically to change the job of the regional officer, one manager admitted this, drawing attention to how team working was seen as synonymous with 'being managed' and pointing out how sharing diaries, setting team and individual objectives and giving team leaders authority did in fact impinge on 'autonomy', even if it was OK for staff to pop into Sainsburys on the way to the office. Managers in such a scenario move, as Chapter 2 predicts, towards the centre of the Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973) continuum though they report that many staff, particularly newer staff, welcome the increased level of support involved in this.

In UNIFI too, institution of project team working on a corporate basis involved change for everyone who went into it and tried to make it work. Some did not, for reasons which may relate to the finding of Kelly and Heery (1994) though this is not known. The changes occurring in both unions, though, seem to represent significant cultural changes, challenging cognitive meanings within the respective organisations. Managers in these unions in general seek to impute a much more positive attitude towards team working than has been the case in the past.

The situation in CWU illustrates the extent of this change in magnified form, where suspicion of teamwork is linked to membership attitudes and the experiences of negotiators, themselves elected by the members. This union is taking much slower steps in this direction and one can understand why.



### ***Leadership***

In the public mind, all the interviewees in this research would have been described as trade union leaders, with the possible exception of two or three functional managers in CWU. Some were career professionals (IT, research, library, finance), some were managers elsewhere before they were appointed to posts in the union, some had been appointed from other unions. They may well be 'moral activists' (Undy and Martin 1984), whatever that means, but many were not appointed from a restricted recruitment base. One General Secretary joined from another union; another Deputy General Secretary went off to be General Secretary of another union. The characterisations of union leaders cited in Chapter 2 (e.g Undy and Martin 1994, Allen 1954), whatever their validity at the time they were written, seem something of a caricature today in what we observe in the case study unions. Some, in subjective assessments, seem to the researcher to be intellectually brilliant (a characteristic discounted by Allen 1954); others display businesslike characteristics (contrary to observations by Barbash 1959 and Clark and Gray 1991).

This research has examined not 'trade union leaders' per se but 'trade union managers' It attempted to gather evidence as to what 'trade union leadership' meant to trade union managers, but this was inconclusive. As Chapter 9 comments, there is a sense of strategy and it is possible to discern a thread (in Exhibit 9.9) of belief that influencing is a component of the role, consistent with the definition of Paton and Clark (1999:36) that 'leadership is influencing other people, in ways that are more or less acceptable to them, regarding certain core issues that face the group or organisation'; together with its corollary that 'leaders are those people who are expected to be, and are seen to be, influential on important matters'. This is of interest but the evidence is not strong enough to support any conclusion on the matter.

### ***Resource deployment***

As noted in Chapter 2, Willman et al (1993:53) presented a series of hypotheses relating to union finances. Two of these can be summarised as follows:-

- Formal financial systems will be neither common nor rigorous in trade unions and financial issues will only be to the fore in moments of crisis or where survival is at stake, for example in the course of strikes or when mergers are discussed
- Union leaders will seek to centralise the management of funds, whatever Rule Book provisions there may be, and seek to depoliticise income and expenditure decisions

Willman et al (1993:203-5) found that the first of these propositions met only limited support. They found unions that planned for the future and pointed to the growth of technology in facilitating this. The second, they found, was substantially supported, particularly with the growth of

technological systems and the appointment of professional finance officers.

'Rigour' is not a measurable concept but three of the four case study unions had systems budgeting for and monitoring income and expenditure, operated by professional finance officers. The fourth, CWU, maintained a strong central grip on expenditure though the manager responsible for finance, an elected manager, believed that new systems were necessary to add rigour to the process. Some rigour is clearly evident here, although in none of the unions, despite their planning processes, were their systems explicitly linked to financial planning in the sense that activities were costed and measured.

Three of the systems were strongly centralised, in one union explicitly because of merger; but in that case the systems were in existence prior to merger. In two of the three unions, far from seeking centralisation, the aspiration was to decentralise, something already practised in UNISON.

Willman et al's (1993) hypotheses were based on their discussions about the distinction between administrative and representative rationality and their formulation of the 'two markets' model of union organisation. Their proposition is that administrative rationality will be unlikely to prevail, hence that unions will adopt satisficing rather than maximising behaviour. This posits not just a distinction between administrative and representative rationality but conflict between them.

The evidence here is that lay members are involved in the budgetary process. In the case of the CWU, managers were trying to involve them more. Managers are aware that there are potential implications in budgetary control for representative systems but in no union does there seem to have been any managerial attempt to grasp the issue. Furthermore, there is some evidence in all unions to the effect that minorities within the union should be treated fairly in resource distribution, suggesting that managers are aware of 'norms' influencing their behaviour that are relevant to issues of representative rationality.

It is therefore suggested that this research offers little support for either of Willman et al's (1993) hypotheses. There are financial systems, with varying degrees of rigour, depending how one defines that word. Finance was seen as particularly important on merger in UNiFI and it was the subject of great concern in CWU in that its income was exceeding its expenditure, so this would offer some support for the second limb of hypothesis 1, even though, certainly in UNISON, finance appeared to be a subject of importance even though the union was not in crisis.

Three systems are centralised and the fourth involves setting of budgets centrally. However, the involvement of lay members in resource decisions, sometimes with increased responsibilities, does not

suggest depoliticisation. In that the hypothesis implies power strategies by union leaders to control finance in the interests of maximising their own power, this does not seem to be supported.

### ***The interface with lay activists and members***

There are two propositions relating to stakeholder management in this research. The working assumption was that, in a trade union having polyarchal features, containing many legitimate interest groups, stakeholder management was likely to be the way in which trade union managers went about their business. This would, it was believed, be based on trade union principles (hence proposition 4.2) and be concerned, in practice, with aspects of boundary management (proposition 5). 'Norms' and 'meanings' deriving from culture and values were examined using the framework of Hales (1999).

As pointed out several times, polyarchy theory usually carries with it the assumption of competition, even conflict, between interest groups (e.g. James 1984) and this, it was suggested, placed the theory in the pessimistic tradition of power relations in unions. This research did not make that assumption. Indeed, in that it posited 'normative' stakeholder management as the form practised by trade union managers, it moved into ethical realms where the intrinsic value of stakeholder interests were accepted (Donaldson and Preston 1995). Of course, the fact that interests compete for attention within a polyarchy does not necessarily mean that the parties do not accept the intrinsic value of each others' interests. But the pessimistic tradition (e.g. Michels 1915, Kelly 1988) assumes that salaried officers in many cases will not act in the interests of the members. Normative stakeholder management does not imply that stakeholder managers act in this way. Indeed, ethical theories such as that of Argandoña (1988) talk of different groups and their members achieving their own perfection.

The assumption was that, as has already been discussed, trade union principles would influence how trade union managers behaved – in the terms of proposition 4.2, the principles suggested by Batstone et al (1977). As noted above, the research suggests that the more limited definition of Willman (1980) is more recognisable, presenting ideas of 'justice and fairness'.

In terms of commitment to ideas of representative rationality, there are many expressions to this effect (Exhibit 4.4) and actions demonstrating that. Bok and Dunlop (1970) comment on the value of interest groups in the expression of member views. Managers in PCS and UNISON explain, in some cases, their role in setting up such structures and of their intrinsic value. Managers in all the case study unions have described their role in facilitating or actively implementing the greater, more informed or more prepared involvement of lay members in union activities.

Chapter 9, and Exhibit 9.10, discuss the issue of relations of managers with lay activists in terms of the development of the merged unions into models of relationships adapted from Fairbrother (2000). Most managers profess to be engaged in one form or another in 'partnership', not a concept presented by Fairbrother and one that is difficult to define. Cornforth (2002:3) says, in a slightly different context, that there is in the partnership model an assumption 'that managers want to do a good job and will act as effective stewards of an organisation's resources. As a result senior management and ...representatives on the board are seen as partners....The role of the board is primarily strategic, to work with management to improve strategy and add value to top decisions'

Even in the union where managers express most strongly ideals of partnership, it is clear that conflictual relations can occur and in other unions this becomes more evident. There must at the very least be a question about whether there is a general assumption in the case study unions that managers want to do a good job, something only possible to ascertain by researching activist groups. Furthermore, a clear definition of the role of the governing body, the Executive Council, as being primarily strategic is not easy to arrive at. Such a boundary is virtually impossible to locate accurately in any of the case study unions. Hence, the role of trade union managers in such an environment is substantially one of boundary management. Chapter 9 suggests that four boundaries are identifiable; conflictual, constitutional, moveable, staff and policy related/political.

Chapter 2 referred to literature from other areas examining relationships between managers and those governing (inter alia) public and voluntary sector organisations. Leat (1988:67), for example, pointed out how difficult it was in voluntary organisations to distinguish easily between 'making policy' and 'day to day management'. This suggests that the problem is not one confined to trade union management and therefore that experience may be available from other areas to enable it to be examined more thoroughly.

This study is concerned with trade union managers; no part of it has involved research amongst other stakeholders. It has not, therefore, been able to mount an investigation into the power dynamics between trade union managers and other stakeholders, which would have involved research amongst other stakeholders. It would be an interesting area to study, given that it has been possible to establish some of the boundaries that stakeholders contest. There was an instance where a manager described from his position an example of the first face of power (Dahl 1961) where he acquired superior bargaining resources by obtaining legal advice on where constitutional boundaries should be drawn. There was an instance noted of the second dimension (Bachrach and Baratz 1962), where a manager explained, in relation to a moveable boundary, how he could use agenda control. In unions where there was perceived to be more

leadership predominance and, in the perceptions of some managers, a higher trust environment existed, it could be argued that relations rested on perceptions of the appropriate relationship between the parties, thus demonstrating the third dimension of power (Lukes 1974). There were several instances, over political boundaries, where technical or physical space issues became political ones and the view was expressed that only in a financial crisis could, in effect, rationality defeat power; thus modifying Flyvberg's (1998) hypothesis that, in open confrontations, rationality would yield to power. There was also one clear statement that, in certain circumstances, managers would be engaged in some Freudian way in trying to find ways to undermine a 'ridiculous' membership decision – a situation which Marxist writers such as Kelly (1988) would probably see as evidence of a manifestation of the class struggle (though the manager who made the observation would probably be quick to claim a Marxist pedigree).

This study, then, does not purport to have analysed these manifestations of power strategies involving trade union managers on the basis that this would be a one dimensional exercise, given the nature of the research. It has, though, undertaken an assessment of the character of managerial boundary management against dimensions of competition and co-operation. These are dimensions familiar in the power and conflict resolution literature (see e.g. Deutsch 1973; Coleman 2003) where they are seen as being at either end of a continuum of relations. Exhibit 9.12 reveals a pattern of responses going from one end of the continuum to the other, demonstrating the impossibility of maintaining, on any practical or theoretical basis, that trade union managers practise normative stakeholder management in respect of stakeholders within the union's democratic structures.

As Chapter 9 points out, the responses in Exhibit 9.12 do not 'map' against any notions of greater or lesser degrees of partnership working, insofar as those are ascertainable. Nor do they relate to the phase of merger that the union has reached. Exhibit 9.10 sought to estimate cultural movements on merger so that unions were categorised (no doubt imprecisely) not only by the extent to which they might engage in partnership working but how they might have arrived at that position, using a modification of Fairbrother's (2000) framework. Before looking in a little more detail at whether any other ideas of governance can help to model how union managers and activists relate in that process, there is one idea about cultural movements that should be flagged up.

Cartwright and Cooper (1996:63) suggest that cultural movement in mergers is important. As reported in Chapter 2, the key issue for them in successful mergers is whether the culture of the new organisation imposes more or less constraints on organisational members as individuals. Chapter 9 distinguishes between the attitudes of managers and lay members in situations where culture is moving towards less (or more) autonomy for managers and/or towards more (or less) autonomy for activists. It suggests, consistent with Cartwright and Cooper (1996),

that whichever party is gaining autonomy will welcome merger; whichever is losing it will be more ambivalent. This proposition involves complex stakeholder dynamics, the isolation of which would be of interest in any future trade union mergers.

We have seen that, though unions are organisations responding to numerous stakeholder groups and that although there are complex dynamics between activist stakeholders and managerial stakeholders, normative stakeholder management does not provide an adequate explanation for the way trade union managers manage in such an environment. But neither, it is suggested, are the stakeholder dynamics of a character which would support theories of oligarchy (e.g. Michels 1915). Kelly and Heery's (1994: 196) characterisation of the traditional bureaucracy vs rank and file division as being 'unhelpful' would seem to be a wise conclusion, particularly now that trade union managers have been revealed as actors in the dramas of union life. We have seen that, in certain circumstances, union managers and activists have both shared goals and conflicting goals and contend for power and influence over boundaries, some of which it has been possible to identify. This describes, it is suggested, polyarchies in which, as James (1984) found, managers and activists (inter alia) compete for control over decision-making.

**Models of governance**

It remains to consider whether Cornforth's (2002) 'paradox' perspective on governance might help provide more complete explanations of how managers and activists relate in union governance. Exhibit 2.5 adapts this perspective to a trade union environment. Using Fairbrother's (2000) framework as a basis, it might be possible to place these models on a continuum as follows:-

Cornforth:	Rubber stamp	Partnership	Co-optation	Compliance	Democratic Stakeholder
Fairbrother:	Leadership predominance	Partnership			Membership participation

**EXHIBIT 10.2. Models of governance. Adapted from Fairbrother (2000) and Cornforth (2002)**

Discussing this framework in the light of this research:-

**Rubber stamp/leadership predominance**

In the four case study unions, this was something which managers resisted, though they were able to identify it in respect of certain of the old unions. It was suggested by one manager that it was an outdated notion. Cornforth (2002) says that, under this model, control would have been ceded to a new managerial class. In trade unions, there is a new category of manager and managers contend for power; theories of oligarchy (cf Michels 1915) might suggest that this model was the

inevitable consequence of organisational creation. But this is not supported in this research

### ***Partnership***

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, a criterion for this model is the assumption that managers want to do a good job and are effective stewards of the union's resources (Cornforth 2002:3). It assumes expertise on the part of activists so that they can make equal partnership a reality – something which some trade union managers recognise and some do not. Managers in this research identify circumstances of equal partnership with lay activists but others identify circumstances of low trust and competitive behaviour. In trying to establish exactly what the partnership model might look like in trade unions, however, Cornforth's definition is potentially useful. If applied here, it might suggest that none of the case study unions was truly a partnership.

### ***Stakeholder***

Cornforth (2002) focuses, in discussing this model, on external stakeholders, as Freeman (1984) originally intended. The role of the Executive Council is to represent stakeholder interests – which is certainly what one would expect as elected representatives – but as stakeholders themselves they would be likely also to represent political or societal interests. Thus, this model enables one to think of EC members, realistically, as bringing to the EC their experiences and affiliations as socialists, feminists, environmentalists, workers in particular specialisms and so on. Thus, for managers, managing political boundaries becomes an issue.

### ***Co-optation***

If one regards the stakeholders that a union primarily relies on for its resources as the members and the role of Executive Council members as spanning boundaries between managers and members, then this idea can explain some aspects of union governance. When UNIFI required a subscriptions increase, it mounted a campaign amongst the membership which was designed by managers but in which lay activists played a crucial part in approving and implementing.

### ***Compliance***

There are some similarities between agency theory, which is at the heart of this model, and theories of trade union governance which assume that officials and members have different interests and the function of activists is to control officials in the interests of the members. In that this research has found managers and activists competing over boundaries in polyarchal organisations, this model can help to explain some of the relationships observed.

### ***Democratic***

Cornforth (2002:4) says that a democratic perspective on governance suggests that the job of the Executive Council is to represent the

interests of the members of the organisation. It sets policy which is then implemented by managers and staff. As indicated, boundaries this rigid are impossible to define as a result of this research but both trade union managers and activists seem to be very concerned, judging by this research, to try to define them in ways which are not always consistent.

This is an early and speculative attempt to consider the utility of using multiple perspectives to look at what part trade union managers might play in the governance of trade unions, based on experience from this research. It seems a hopeful avenue of thought. More than ever, however, it demonstrates how many traditional approaches to the topic of trade union governance are 'rooted in....naïve and simplified views of the government and management of complex organisations' (Terry 2000:5)

Exhibit 10.3 comprises a model of trade union managers in the case study unions, using the model of Hales (1999) which has formed the framework for the reporting of this research.





### 10.3. THEORY REPLICATED OR CONFIRMED

#### ***Trade union principles***

Trade union managers expressed a variety of views on the nature of trade union principles. One unsurprising conclusion is that trade union managers are highly principled people. They did not, however, express the same principles, however closely related their definitions were. The word used most often was 'fair' and this suggests that an involved definition, such as that of Batstone et al (1977), might include values that were less or more espoused by different people. Willman et al (1980) defined trade union principles as involving justice and fairness and this research confirms that most of the principles articulated by trade union managers could be related to these two values, even though they were often found to be difficult to articulate.

#### ***Merger management***

Buono and Bowditch (1989:92) described the process of culture change during merger as a 'time-consuming, evolutionary process.' UNISON had been in existence for over 9 years when this research took place and managers were still aware of cultural issues and had ideas for dealing with them. In addition, they postulated significant differences in the performance of organisations in well managed and in unattended mergers. The differences between the UNiFI and UNISON mergers, which to a greater or lesser extent were managed, and the other two mergers, which were largely unattended, supports this view. However, in the UNISON case, integration was affected by split site working at national level, supporting Becker's (1990) view that physical space issues should be linked to organisational strategy.

### 10.4. THEORY DEVELOPED OR EXTENDED

#### ***Analysing managerial work***

In its analysis of managerial work, this study used the framework presented by Hales (1999). Hales reviewed a wide variety of studies of managerial work and concluded that many of them, including those of Mintzberg (1973 and 1994) were descriptive or correlative. He set out to facilitate an explanatory account of managerial work which was 'attentive to the constitutive influence of context – how managers' location within different institutional and organisational systems both generates and shapes their work.' (p 342)

This study was examining managerial work in a context where this had not been attempted before; one where the context was assumed to be of particular importance. Hales' framework was therefore considered to be potentially a useful tool for getting to grips with what trade union managers actually did.

The study has confirmed the utility of the model in a context where it had not been employed before – one which Hales had probably not considered, though he did suggest that the framework might be of help

in analysing not for profit organisations. In particular, it has enabled the activities of trade union managers to be related to culture and to values – to ‘meanings’ and ‘norms’ – and thus to be explained and understood in their context.

### ***Management as a problematic concept***

Ouroussof (1993) suggested that management was a problematic concept within the unions that made up UNISON. She said that the word manager was (1993B:13) ‘synonymous with indifference to people with less institutional power than themselves’. Kelly and Heery (1994) also identified a deal of hostility towards managers by trade union ‘officials’.

Various trade union managers have suggested that management is undervalued, that managers feel embarrassed to manage, that some individual experiences have been centred on defending people rather than holding them to account, that on occasion being a manager has invited conflict and being a trade union ‘officer’ has involved, on occasion, a great deal of autonomy. The study suggests that these cultural or experiential circumstances can tend to inhibit the undertaking of managerial roles, particularly those which might involve taking judgmental stances.

The study links in this way the idea that management is problematic with some actual or perceived consequences, and so develops the original finding by looking at what it might mean in a context where trade union managers are seeking to manage in such an environment.

### ***The theory of polyarchy***

This study offers support for what is known as the theory of polyarchy, that unions consist of a variety of interest groups whose goals are sometimes shared, sometimes in conflict, and who contend for power and influence (Kelly and Heery 1994:15). Different writers have posited different ‘cleavages’ in unions, many of which are outdated because, for example, they do not take account of the existence of groups such as women, black and Asian members, disabled members and gay and lesbian members.

However, Banks (1974) identified the primary locus of competition as being officers and lay activists. In that this study has identified a category of union ‘officer’ described as a trade union manager, this category needs to be understood as one of the groups within any description of what the theory of polyarchy means in trade union terms.

### ***Trade union governance***

Cornforth (2002) reviewed a number of theories of governance as they applied to public and non-profit organisations. Trade unions are non-profit organisations; Paton (1992) describes voluntary and non-profit organisations as value-based organisations in the social economy and the TUC is fond of describing them as the country’s largest voluntary

organisations. So using Cornforth's ideas in a trade union context is not extending his ideas unduly.

He seeks to use a multi paradigm framework to seek to understand governance more holistically – what he calls a paradox perspective. This study found, unexpectedly, that normative stakeholder management was not the common currency of trade union managers. It also found that trade union managers commonly believed that they were managing in a 'partnership' environment without being able clearly to articulate what that meant. Boundaries, in particular, were unclear.

The study therefore employed Cornforth's (2003) model to see if it had potential to throw light on trade union governance, arguably something needed in view of the rather polarised view taken in much of the literature. This, although somewhat speculative, did demonstrate some potential to help us better to understand trade union governance and some of the complexities involved in the topic in the modern age.

#### **10.5. NEW, NOVEL OR UNIQUE ELEMENTS – THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY TO KNOWLEDGE**

##### ***Trade union managers***

The study has established that there is a category of employee in trade unions which can be labelled 'trade union manager'. This has not been identified empirically in the literature in these terms. It is of significance because literature analysing trade unions has never taken into account the existence of managers. The discovery of this category has potentially immense importance for future literature on all aspects of trade union work because the internal dynamics of trade unions will have to be re-read and re-stated in its light.

The study concluded that trade union management developed over time. All four of the case study unions had merged and their mergers were also developing over time. Using Buono and Bowditch's (1989) seven stage model of merger, the study found that there were links between the development of trade union management and the development of a union's merger along the final three stages of the model. This may be a two way link, in which the development of management is affected by the stage of merger and the development of the merger may be affected by the existence or otherwise of a cadre of developed managers. These issues are not to be found either in trade union literature, or in Buono and Bowditch (1989) or other merger management literature.

Management, however, is practised even in unions in an early phase of merger and low institutional support for management. Where a staff member personally accepts the managerial role and seeks to manage, s/he operates in something of a cocoon, denied the systems and support which managers in many other organisations take for granted.

Only when the organisation begins to support management and managers can s/he operate as a trade union manager in the fullest sense. On the other hand, staff remain in the capacity of trade union official where there is low institutional support for management and a low degree of acceptance by that official of the managerial role. Where institutional support increases, trade union officials are in something of a cocoon, where they can pass off management responsibilities to others to avoid succumbing to institutional pressure to manage themselves.

### ***The nature of trade union managers***

The study suggests that trade union managers typically espouse trade union principles which incorporate ideas of 'fairness', imputing a concern for the way people are treated. Cultural values, however, may include notions of management being a problematic concept, something which may be manifested by feelings or beliefs, shared by organisational members regardless of their backgrounds, that management is undervalued and/or that it typically involves the exertion of power over the powerless, judgment on the weak.

Consequently, trade union managers may be ambivalent at being judgmental and not only eschew some aspects of conduct or performance management but also fail to identify with, or introduce, management systems designed to facilitate conduct or performance management.

### ***Boundary management***

Trade union managers manage in polyarchal organisations where boundaries between the roles of lay activists and the roles of managers are unclear. They engage, therefore, in contests to define those boundaries in individual circumstances. It follows that, for trade union managers, boundary management is a key function. Boundary management can be defined as stakeholder management in that, in this context, legitimate stakeholders in the unions are on either side of the boundaries. The fact that the area is contested and boundaries unclear does not mean that trade union managers working in polyarchies do not engage in stakeholder management activities.

Boundaries may be many and various but may include the following:-

- Boundaries related to conflictual relations. These are human boundaries which have to be managed before managerial activities can effectively be undertaken.
- Constitutional boundaries. These are boundaries that have some reference to the Rule Book. Although they can sometimes be defined by experts, the consequence can be zero sum management which could engender further boundaries of a conflictual nature.
- Moveable boundaries. These are intended to signify boundaries that can move depending on contingent factors, such as

divisions causing relative weakness to parties on one or other side of the boundaries.

- Staff boundaries. These relate to the extent to which lay activists claim to involve themselves in matters concerning staff, such as appointments.
- Policy and political boundaries. These are boundaries where it is unclear where politics and management begin or end – such as the retention of a particular regional office because of the symbolic nature of it to one of the parties to the merger.

## **10.6. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

Chapter 3 describes the extent to which the research is designed to ensure validity and reliability, trustworthiness and generalisability. The reader must judge the extent to which it has achieved these objectives. This section will draw attention to some areas which can be taken into account in assimilating the work.

This is a qualitative study. 56 respondents is not a large number but the richness of the data is, it is suggested, demonstrable. Nevertheless, it is always the case in studies of this character that more subjects may have increased confidence in the results. Similarly with the case studies. They have, as has been demonstrated, been chosen carefully but care must be taken not to generalise the findings outside their particular contexts.

All these unions have merged. One of them is by far the largest union in the country. The others are of not inconsiderable size. Different occupational groups are members of unions of different cultures and characters. Thus, the 'norms' and 'meanings' influencing trade union managers in those contexts may produce different results in terms of managerial actions.

So the reader needs to take into account these contextual factors when reading this document and assessing its value. The need to research other unions in similar ways has been identified as a necessary further research project. The researcher would hypothesise, however, that in the vast majority of unions it will be possible to identify trade union managers, even if they are in 'cocoons'.

A particular factor which affected the research was the length of time over which it proceeded. Although this was unavoidable, in the CWU it meant the election of a new management team with a much more positive attitude to management. In PCS it involved the election of a new General Secretary (whom it was not possible to interview) and the ending, following legal action, of the conflict between the two most senior people in the union. Informal talks with staff at PCS suggested that he was doing 'surprisingly well' and, as cited in the case study, management still featured on the agenda after his arrival. Any piece of research is a snapshot. The submission here is that, although these

factors do comprise a limitation, the richness of the data actually collected renders this less of a concern than it might have been.

It was always a worry that researching UNISON would lay the researcher open to charges of bias. As is evident from the data, some of the interviewees approached the interviews in very familiar fashion. But the vast majority of the data was in many cases surprising and novel – in some cases highly impressive. Just reading the data leaves the researcher in a state of admiration for the interviewees and what they are trying to do. This suggests that they have felt able, for whatever reason, to be comfortable being interviewed and therefore able to unburden themselves. The reader can judge this also as a result of the extended quotations presented, specifically to guard against accusations of bias. This is a limitation which it is right to raise but, it is submitted, difficult to substantiate.

As suggested above, it is hoped that the rigour of the research process has guarded against limitations which might have affected the quality of the research and of its outcomes.

## **10.7. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS**

The fact that managers have been identified where no managers have boldly gone before suggests that unions who wish to understand how to improve the way they are managed, who wish to know about any distinctive features of trade union management or the particular characteristics of trade union managers will find this research of great interest. One manager said that the absence of any material helping him to know how to manage in a trade union was 'scary'.

This study has suggested that trade union managers typically have a people orientation but they are not attuned to undertaking the full range of managerial activities, particularly activities relating to conduct or performance management. This suggests that management training which identifies the links between managers' personal values and the values required of a trade union manager could be of particular value. This is all the more the case when management training in the case study unions does not appear to be as extensive as it might be.

In three other areas, practitioners might find benefit. First, there does not seem to be a predisposition to developing communications strategies. This is somewhat extraordinary in individuals who are continually considering how best to communicate externally. Yet some people suggest that it is almost impossible for a manager to over-communicate.

Secondly, attending to the management of trade union mergers has been identified as something of potential importance. New mergers are going to occur – one, almost certainly, will see UNiFI merge with Amicus and the Joint General Secretary of UNiFI, in an informal

conversation, seems prepared to countenance the destruction of UNiFI's culture. Practitioners must understand the potentially adverse consequences of such an approach.

Thirdly, this research has begun a task of understanding how trade union governance works. Boundary management has been identified as a key managerial task and the nature of this boundary management seems likely to be different depending on the model of governance applying to particular unions. Understanding these issues, perhaps drawing on public and voluntary sector work, and developing strategies to deal with them could be of great value, both to trade union managers and to the way that trade unions operate in the interests of members.

## **10.8. FURTHER RESEARCH**

All research seems to generate further research. In this case, it is easy to see why because it has opened up a field of study where there has been limited academic attention. A suggested research agenda is as follows:-

- The development of trade union management. Is it possible to replicate the conclusions of this research about the way trade union management develops? How does it develop in unions which have not merged? What are the implications for trade union managers, trade union officials and those who may be 'cocooned'?
- Can one arrive at some operational definition of 'trade union principles', be they 'fairness' and 'justice' or some more complex formulation?
- If trade union management is changing, so that it involves the use of standards like IIP or the institution of teamwork for negotiating officers, what effect is that having on the role of the 'trade union officer'? What effect is it having on the delivery of union strategies for, for example, recruitment and retention? And are staff perceptions of the way they are managed consistent with the attitudes trade union managers espouse on the way people should be dealt with?
- Are there any differences in the practice of management skills between trade union managers who have been trained and those who have not? In particular, has that training had any effect on closing any gaps between the espoused people orientation of trade union managers and their practice of the full range of people management skills?
- Are there any qualitative differences between the way in which female trade union managers carry out their tasks and the way male managers do?
- Now that it has been possible to identify a category of trade union manager, can this role be distinguished from the role of trade union leader? Can the distinctions adequately be defined? And what does this mean for the vast and inconsistent literature about trade union leaders and trade union officials?



- In connection with trade union governance, is it possible to use the Cornforth (2002) idea of a paradox perspective to arrive at clearer ideas about the dynamics of governance as it affects lay activists (who should be additional subjects of research) and managers? Is there a 'partnership model' and how can it be defined? In any case, is it possible to arrive at shared views about where boundaries lie?
- There is work in the public and not for profit sectors on the relationship between, and the consequent boundaries between, managers and those with governance responsibility. Research may reveal the extent to which that work can be of utility in examining the boundaries between trade union managers and lay activists.
- In connection with union mergers, research around the following proposition arising from Cartwright and Cooper (1994). 'In a merger between unions at opposite ends of the continuum between leadership predominance and membership participation, lay members from unions where the leadership is predominant will welcome the creation of a new organisation in which they have less constraints; concomitantly, managers from those organisations will be less likely to welcome a new organisation in which they perceive the constraints on them to have increased.'

## **10.9. EVIDENCE OF DISSEMINATION**

A paper, 'Get Thee to a Nunnery; trade union managers, values and governance', was accepted by a process of peer review for the Second International Symposium on Management in the Non-Profit Sector in Nicosia, Cyprus on 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> December 2003. A further paper, 'Trade Union Managers; invisible actors in trade union governance' has received a favourable referees' report for publication as a Cranfield Working Paper, provided the material on trade union governance is expanded. This will be done in 2004.

## **10.10. POSTSCRIPT**

It all seemed so easy. The supervisor said that anyone could do a PhD if they wanted to do so. I had a brilliant idea of what to do. My organisation agreed to pay half the costs and my Cranfield Centre agreed to pay the rest. I negotiated being late at choir practice so I could attend the (excellent) research methodology course and off I went.

But the topic changed by the month, sometimes more frequently. Access became a real problem. Every piece of writing, viewed some months later, seemed inexplicable. Every stage in the research seemed problematic – transcribing interviews took for ever until I discovered speech recognition software, coding seemed a mystery until

I discovered NVivo and I needed constant reassurance that what I was doing was worthwhile.

This has been the most stressful experience of my whole life. Holding the complete document in my hand will begin to justify that; receiving the degree would go a long way further. But feeling that I had been able to contribute something to the development of trade unions, organisations which frequently are the only thing standing between individuals and oppression and which are the living demonstrations of a free society – and also to helping some of those working in them to make sense of their lives – that would be an achievement beyond measure.

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## APPENDIX 2

### INTERVIEW AIDE MEMOIRE

<p><b>PROP 1.</b> Management of merger</p> <p>Ditto</p> <p><b>PROP 4.</b> Stakeholders and reasons for involvement</p> <p><b>PROP 5.</b> Boundaries</p> <p><b>PROP 1.</b> Factors leading to role acceptance</p> <p>Ditto</p> <p><b>PROP 4.</b> How they undertake their managerial roles</p> <p>Ditto</p>	<p><b>ABOUT THE UNION</b> (Merger Management 1)</p> <p>MERGER- talk me through the merger from your perspective as a senior manager in one of the constituent unions (which?)</p> <p>DISCUSSION on different union positions, different stakeholders, different power sources. ROLE OF STAFF &amp; staff stakeholders; of ELECTED LAY MEMBERS - and how structures reflected their agendas; and of MANAGERS</p> <p>MODEL of lay member/manager relationship - total leadership, partnership, lay member led?</p> <p><b>B ABOUT UNION MANAGERS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background in unions</li> <li>• To what extent do you see yourself as a senior manager in the union?</li> <li>• How has this come about?</li> <li>• Who are union managers in the union? - how do they see themselves? - tensions and contradictions - views of staff.</li> <li>• (Explain Dunlop model) - how do the different elements of the job look on his headings (open questions)</li> </ul> <p>Areas of commonality with other managers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental analysis</li> <li>• Setting roles and priorities</li> <li>• Selection and development of people</li> <li>• Shaping the structure of the organization</li> <li>• Negotiating and consensus building</li> <li>• Generating and introducing innovation</li> <li>• Managing the interface between politics and management (Audit Commission conceptualisation)</li> </ul> <p>Areas of difference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance measurement</li> <li>• efficiency or equity</li> <li>• public or private processes</li> </ul>
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<p><b>PROP 4.</b> How they undertake their managerial roles</p> <p>TU Principles</p> <p><b>PROP 3.</b> Management as a problematic concept – why?</p> <p><b>PROP 4.</b> How they undertake their roles.</p> <p><b>PROP 3</b> Concept of Management.</p> <p><b>PROP 4.</b> TU principles</p> <p><b>PROP 5.</b> Boundaries – political and power relations</p> <p><b>PROP 4.</b> TU principles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• command or persuasion</li> <li>• personnel constraints</li> <li>• length of service and time perspectives</li> </ul> <p>Taking this as a background, what are the main areas of similarity and difference and what are the major constraints?</p> <p><b>WHAT DO UNION MANAGERS DO?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management styles</li> <li>• Setting priorities</li> <li>• Allocating resources.</li> <li>• Delegation</li> </ul> <p>What has influenced the way you perform these roles?</p> <p><b>GENERAL ISSUES ON RELATIONSHIP WITH FTOs AND REGIONS AS EXEMPLAR OF WHETHER MANAGEMENT IS PROBLEMATIC</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do managers ensure regular reporting by FTOs?</li> <li>• How often will they interact?</li> <li>• Level of autonomy of FTOs?</li> <li>• Extent to which national policy is enforced through FTOs by managers - level of discretion?</li> <li>• Relationship with regional offices?</li> <li>• To what extent do union managers differ from 'officers?' what is their perception of this?</li> <li>• How do trade union officials and staff generally view management as a concept?</li> </ul> <p><b>(Stakeholder Management)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you interface with the lay structure? How? Do you have a political role as well? Are there any Ethical issues involved in your approach to the way you personally manage the interests of the various stakeholders in the union in the situations we have been discussing - or generally?</li> <li>• Are these ethical issues rooted in your values (TRADE UNION PRINCIPLES AND THEIR APPLICABILITY TO DECISIONS ON RESOURCE ALLOCATION OR PROTECTION OF MINORITIES) and/or in the way the union's constitution and rule book define the interests of the various stakeholders - and/or some other root (such as contractual or exchange relationship)(need to <i>expand here- this is to examine the issue of legitimacy and whether it is defined in a legal or</i></li> </ul>
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<p><b>PROP 5.</b> Boundaries – political and power relations</p> <p><b>PROP 2.</b> Reasons why decisions were important.</p> <p><b>PROP 4.</b> Stakeholders</p>	<p><i>socially constructed way)?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is your approach to these stakeholders the same in all situations- i.e. when might you I approach their interests in a more or less positive or negative way?<i>(this is related to the idea of 'urgency' and the extent to which this influences stakeholder salience)</i></li> <li>• Practical examples?</li> </ul> <p>C MERGER MANAGEMENT 2</p> <p><b>PHYSICAL SPACE AND STRUCTURE</b></p> <p>PROCESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was there an interface with the political structure in relation to physical space decisions? - if so, describe it.</li> <li>• Where did the power lie in that interface?</li> <li>• Who was involved - what were their interests - who was not involved and might have wanted to be - who made what decisions - how typical was all this of the union and how it works?</li> <li>• How were power relations managed - what did management do to manage the system (<i>agenda, biases, use of rationality or rationalisation to counter or exercise power</i>)?</li> <li>• Why were these issues managed in the way they were?</li> </ul> <p>STRATEGY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was the strategy governing the decisions on physical space and structure which were taken?</li> <li>• <b>NATIONAL AND REGIONAL DECISIONS</b> - cover both.</li> <li>• How was that strategy formulated and what were the reasons for it? (e.g. culture, merger, staff issues, lay member issues, management, management style, new ways of working, relations between HO and other levels, other stakeholder issues)</li> <li>• What were differing views of the various stakeholders on that strategy?</li> <li>• How were the various stakeholders affected by the decisions which were taken?</li> <li>• Were there decisions involving particular layout</li> </ul>
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<p><b>PROP 2.</b> Importance of physical space and structure</p> <p><b>PROP 4.</b> Stakeholders</p> <p><b>PROP 5.</b> Boundaries – political and power relations</p> <p><b>PROP 2.</b> Importance of physical space and structure</p>	<p>(such as open plan, shared space, team space, landscaped space, cellular space) or design? If so what view did you have on the benefits of the particular solutions chosen?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did other stakeholders have different views - if so, what were they?</li> <li>• To what extent were stakeholders involved in the process of determining operational issues such as layout and design?</li> <li>• What attention (differential or otherwise) was paid to their views and why and how? What has been the result of the implementation of the decisions?</li> <li>• How do the various other stakeholders see the results of implementation?</li> </ul> <p><b>HEAD OFFICE ROLE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and proportion of staff at head office</li> <li>• Strategy for size and role of head office</li> <li>• Relationship with other levels in managerial terms (i.e. targeting, guiding, directing, running)</li> <li>• Reasons for that approach -implicit/explicit? (<i>cultural issues here</i>)</li> <li>• Did the strategy impact on physical space decisions?</li> </ul>
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## APPENDIX 3: STAGE 1 NODE PRINTOUT

Node Explorer - Managing Trade Unions 1

Node Set Tools View

Browse Properties Attributes DocLinks NodeLinks Edit Set Assay Search

Nodes

Trees (131)

- Managerial roles
  - Acceptance P
    - Reasons for acceptance
      - Larger, complex org P
        - Bring staff together P
        - Partners working together P
        - Other merger reasons**
        - Non-merger reasons
      - Rejection
        - Reasons for rejection
        - Compared with political role P
        - change of roles
        - Identity of managers
        - specific roles
    - Undertaking managerial activities
      - Activities undertaken P
        - Merger Management P
          - Cultural management
          - Structures
          - change management
            - training

Tree Node - [1 2 4] /Managerial roles/Reasons for acceptance/Other merger reasons

Node Explorer - Managing Trade Unions 1

Node Set Tools View

Browse Properties Attributes DocLinks NodeLinks Edit Set Assay Search

Nodes

- managing volunteers
- Performance management
- Budgets & resource allocation
- Shaping goals & strategy
- Innovating
- Consensus building
- Shaping structure
- Other activities
- Team management
- project management
- Diversity~equal opps
- networking
- staff development
- stakeholder management
- systems
- Time management
- People management P
- Leadership
- Service delivery
- Organising
- Change management
- Negotiation~IR

Tree Node - [1 2 4] /Managerial roles/Reasons for acceptance/Other merger reasons

Node Explorer - Managing Trade Unions 1

Node Set Tools View

Browse Properties Attributes DocLinks NodeLinks Edit Set Assay Search

Nodes

- Mode of undertaking roles
  - Management style
  - Delegation
  - Quality of
    - vision~direction~priorities
  - Importance of management
    - matrix working
  - Interpersonal skills~relationships
    - negotiation
- Reasons for mode of management
  - Trade union principles P
    - Definition
  - Other reasons
- Constraints or otherwise
  - Personnel processes & use of
    - Lay members~politics
  - Others
    - Quality~resistance of staff
    - ICT~systems
    - Stress~time~resources issues
    - Finance~resources
    - poor management~Lack of support

Tree Node - [1 2 4] /Managerial roles/Reasons for acceptance/Other merger reasons

Node Explorer - Managing Trade Unions 1

Node Set Tools View

Browse Properties Attributes DocLinks NodeLinks Edit Set Assay Search

Nodes

- Decisions or lack
  - lack of authority~autonomy
  - culture~structure
  - Training
  - Egos~personalities~macho
  - Unclear strategy
  - size
- Comparison with external managers
  - Similarities
  - Differences
  - Experience elsewhere
- Why doing managerial activities
  - Larger, complex org P
    - Bring staff together P
    - Partners working together P
  - Other merger reasons
    - non-merger reasons
- PS & PS & Merger management
  - Reasons for importance
    - Larger, complex org P
      - Bring staff together P
      - Partners working together P

Tree Node - [1 2 4] /Managerial roles/Reasons for acceptance/Other merger reasons

Node Explorer - Managing Trade Unions 1

Node Set Tools View

Browse Properties Attributes DocLinks NodeLinks Edit Set Assay Search

Nodes

- symbolism~culture
- Other reasons
  - Reasons for rejecting importance
- managerial interventions
- Relations - HQ & Regions
- Effect of ps & ps on merger
- Role of head office
- Stakeholder Management
  - Acceptance value~legitimacy P
  - Reasons for acceptance
    - Trade Union principles P
      - Definitions
      - Other reasons
    - Rejection value~legitimacy
    - Reasons for rejection
    - Significance of Rule Book P
    - Clarity of boundaries P
      - Significance of political relations
      - Significance of power relations P
      - In PS~PS activities
    - In merger management
      - Building new union

Tree Node - [1 2 4] /Managerial roles/Reasons for acceptance/Other merger reasons

Node Explorer - Managing Trade Unions 1

Node Set Tools View

Browse Properties Attributes DocLinks NodeLinks Edit Set Assay Search

Nodes

- Differential stakeholder involvement
- Stakeholder involvement structures
- Change in new union - model~
- PS & PS
- Relationships and involvement of
  - staff
  - staff unions
  - Others
  - members
  - activists
  - Employers
- Conflict between stakeholders
- Examples
- styles of
- Management problematic concept
  - With whom~
  - Reasons why problematic
    - Experiences confronting management
    - Other reasons
  - Reasons why unproblematic
  - Examples
  - Undervaluation

Tree Node - [1 2 4] /Managerial roles/Reasons for acceptance/Other merger reasons

## APPENDIX 4: EXTRACT FROM STAGE 2 NODE PRINTOUT

**Node Explorer - Managing Trade Unions 1**

Node Set Tools View

Browse Properties Attributes DocLinks NodeLinks Edit Set Assay Search

Nodes

- Mode of undertaking roles
  - Management style
  - Delegation
  - Quality of
  - vision~direction~priorities
  - Importance of management
  - relevance of structures
  - Interpersonal skills~relationships
  - negotiation & arbitration
  - flexibility
  - emotional intelligence
  - extra mile
  - facilitator~enabler~supporter 2
  - fairness
  - consensus
  - consultative~inclusive 2
  - openness

Tree Node - (2 2 24) /Undertaking managerial activities/Mode of undertaking roles/bullying~blame

**Node Explorer - Managing Trade Unions 1**

Node Set Tools View

Browse Properties Attributes DocLinks NodeLinks Edit Set Assay Search

Nodes

- example
- directive
- Leadership
- problem resolution
- supportive
- valuing staff
- firmness
- bullying~blame**
- image
- Reasons for mode of management
  - Values & Trade union principles P
  - consistency
  - capitation
  - challenge perceptions
  - respect
  - corporate
  - culture~structure

Tree Node - (2 2 24) /Undertaking managerial activities/Mode of undertaking roles/bullying~blame



## APPENDIX 5

### SECOND STAGE – MODE OF UNDERTAKING MANAGERIAL ROLES

#### Stimuli (with consequential related mechanisms) for mode of undertaking roles

- Being given managerial roles and/or responsibility for staff – perhaps not previously having seen oneself as a manager.
- Going on a training course(s) and/or gaining increased understanding of managerial issues
- Forms of structural arrangements in the union, a part of the union or institutions relevant to the role
- Issues relating to staff or management – good or bad staff or management; meetings with other people, up or down; conflict management.
- Work pressures, sometime called by resource issues relating to people or finance
- Cultural or values issues, often related to the cultures of partner unions; secrecy or openness.
- Matters related to the process or content of setting objectives and priorities or issues arising (for example IIP)

#### Description of cognitive processes relevant to principal stimuli/mechanism

#### Managerial actions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relating the experiences that managers have had, formal and informal, and the implications of taking on new roles, in new structures to their core values as trade unionists – to be supporting people at work – and their core work – for example, negotiation. <b>New code : people orientation</b></li> </ul>	<p>There is a dichotomy; those people for whom their approach to people means that they recognise that their approach is on the ‘soft’ side – going the extra mile to help people, seeking a civilised culture in the office, showing respect and valuing staff, seeking or having an aspiration towards openness or else adopting a management style that involves delegation, facilitating, empowerment or consultation; and those who felt that, because of the nature of the trade union and trade unionism, it was necessary to be harder. Those people felt that the consequence of this approach to people was that there arose a culture in which people were not confronted or disciplined when they would have been in other organisations. Some managers</p>
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	<p>regarded themselves as people orientated whilst still trying to be clear and decisive.</p> <p>Delegation was often seen as going with the grain of the union in which FTOs traditionally had more autonomy than many workers in other organisations – even if many found it difficult because of whether staff could accept it, either because of their own capabilities or because of their pressure of work.</p> <p>Negotiation was seen as a common approach to dealing with people, often because they were familiar with that. One manager described himself as a referee ‘I should wear black shorts really’. Similarly, some managers saw managing conflict as being an important component of their roles.</p> <p>A people orientated style of management arose sometimes from training courses, although in one union the lack of directive managers was something that arose specifically from one course. Trying to achieve consensus was more typical, sometimes by going with the results of a majority approach (on office layout). Many mentioned an open door policy as being important, as was giving support to staff.</p> <p>Often managers struggled with the distinction between management and leadership. Typically they saw leadership as involving ‘soft’ skills but some associated it with being elected or appointed to give industrial leadership and therefore involving autocracy and, sometimes, unpleasantness. General Secretaries recognised their responsibilities to take the union places and identified that as leadership. One manager wanted to lead based on her history</p>
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	<p>and personal qualities and the respect that had engendered.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specifically, equating their managerial orientation to the values and ethics which led them to become trade unionists in the first place. <b>New code: ethics principles</b></li> </ul>	<p>Managers saw fairness as being a key factor (though it was sometimes coupled it with firmness as a description of an approach to management). Consistency and managing by example were similarly identified.</p> <p>Emotional intelligence was identified by two Unison managers as fitting with their values. Values identified include; avoiding managerial imposition and abuse of process; treating people as you would expect to be treated yourself; democracy; identifying areas of commonality; nurturing people; ‘trade union values’; developing people; valuing the individual; diversity; adherence to what the union is trying to achieve; openness transparency, involvement, consultation, participation, fairness equity and compassion; no compulsory redundancies; a belief in how people should be treated; practise what you preach. Though one manager commented that being a firm employer and preventing staff taking the rise was not inconsistent with these values and another said that if you want to be a priest of a nun, fuck off to a nunnery.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding that the way managers behave has a relationship to the culture of their own unions, or to their experience as trade unionists in either old or new unions, or both, or the processes which often arise from them. <b>New code: culture/experience/processes</b></li> </ul>	<p>Culture was recognised as a significant factor. Equal opportunities was one such cultural issue, either in the positive sense or as leaving managers to cope with a male dominated culture, one where emotion was avoided, in which uncertainty could not be expressed or in which blame was more common. These cultures often arose, it was perceived, from one or other of the partner unions in a merger. It was suggested that unions had a culture of believing they were different from everyone else, particularly where decisive management was required;</p>

	<p>also that it was in negotiation, not management, that one acquired street cred. So trying to change a blame, macho or fear culture was seen as a priority, or standing up to the manifestations of that, personally or institutionally.</p> <p>Managers who recognised the influence of structure or process sought to use other processes, for example IIP, or change things. They recognised the need to manage resources effectively or to institute processes that achieved more accountability. They held liaison of staff meetings or tried to improve staff communication.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relating their actions in some way to the strategy of the union. <b>Code: vision/direction/priorities</b></li> </ul>	<p>Vision is a controversial issue 'I don't believe in visions'. It was suggested that in one union it was only skin deep, despite public acceptance of it. Yet in Unison, there was proposed to be a move to prepare a vision statement.</p> <p>There are increasing efforts to institute processes and procedures to set objectives and priorities, based on measurable targets or SMART objectives. One drew an analogy with the democratic process; elected people had to be accountable to their electorate so managers should be accountable to their managers. This was felt to clarify roles and responsibilities. Ownership of such a system was seen as being important. It was also seen as making it possible to emphasise the oneness of the union, particularly in respect of regions and the centre. Business plans were instituted in one union, though one manager thought they were excessive because by the time you had done this, the opportunity may be lost. Such a system enabled people to say 'no' – though, again, some managers thought that was rare.</p>

## APPENDIX 6: FINAL NODE PRINTOUT

Node Explorer - Managing Trade Unions 1

Node Set Tools View

Browse Properties Attributes DocLinks NodeLinks Edit Set Assay Search

Nodes

- Free (1)
  - Trees [111]
    - Managerial roles
      - Acceptance P
        - Larger, complex org P
          - Learning
          - reputation
          - business administration
          - culture and ethos
          - change
          - negotiation
        - Lack of Acceptance
        - Identity of managers
      - Undertaking managerial activities
        - Activities and roles undertaken P
          - Merger Management P
            - lay members
            - staff
            - partner unions
            - union structures
            - management structures & systems
            - External events

Trees

Node Explorer - Managing Trade Unions 1

Node Set Tools View

Browse Properties Attributes DocLinks NodeLinks Edit Set Assay Search

Nodes

- space
  - larger, complex, org P
    - Bring staff together P
    - Partners working together P
    - Relations + roles - HQ & Regions
    - partner unions
    - Staff
  - managing volunteers
  - Performance management
  - Budgets & resource allocation
  - Shaping corporate goals & strategy
  - Innovating
  - Consensus building
  - Shaping structure
  - Merger Management P 2
  - Team management
  - project management
  - Diversity~equal opps
  - networking
  - staff development
  - stakeholder management
  - Time management

Trees

Node Explorer - Managing Trade Unions 1

Node Set Tools View

Browse Properties Attributes DocLinks NodeLinks Edit Set Assay Search

Nodes

- lack of authority~autonomy
- Training
- Egos~personalities~macho
- Unclear strategy
- size
- undervaluation
- employer issues
- Comparison with external managers
  - Similarities
  - Differences
  - Experience elsewhere
- Stakeholder Management
  - values and TU principles P
  - managing boundaries
    - formal
    - political
    - power
    - employer~TU dichotomy
  - members
  - Rule Book P
  - activists
  - mergers

Trees

Node Explorer - Managing Trade Unions 1

Node Set Tools View

Browse Properties Attributes DocLinks NodeLinks Edit Set Assay Search

Nodes

- People management P
- Service or policy delivery
- Organising
- Change management
- Negotiation~IR
- communications
- decision making
- Mode of undertaking roles
  - Management style
  - vision~direction~priorities
  - people orientation
  - ethics~principles P
  - culture~experience~processes
- Constraints or otherwise
  - Personnel processes & use of
  - Lay members~politics
  - Quality~resistance of staff
  - ICT~systems
  - Stress~time~resources issues
  - Finance~resources
  - poor management~Lack of support
  - Decisions or lack

Trees

