
TOPIC

**Productivity and Quality
of Working Life -
Two Sides of
The Same Coin**



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Productivity and Quality of Working Life - Two Sides of The Same Coin

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TOPIC IN BRIEF

Productivity and quality of working life are generally perceived as two separate concepts. Upon closer examination, however, it appears that they are mutually reinforcing from the point of view of both the individual's working experience and the employer's interests in the efficient conduct of operations.

This Topic defines productivity and quality of working life in their broadest context, to allow flexibility in discussion and analysis of what is happening in the field. We examine both from a historical perspective in industry and government in the United States and Canada.

These experiences have shown that initiative, motivation and commitment are all major factors to the success or failure of any innovative program. Unless individual administrators or politicians within municipal corporations show specific interest in working with productivity and quality of working life questions, neither the public nor any other body is ready to question their lack of interest or activity in that area. It is specifically the nature of government's labour intensive structure that makes these issues important, however.

The examination of government productivity and quality of working life experiments show different approaches are being taken at different governmental levels and by different cities. The development and application of concepts in Toronto and several Ontario municipalities are discussed.

In analyzing the diverse approaches that are being taken, this Topic attempts to identify shortcomings, to pinpoint needs, and to recommend a course of action for coordinated development of goals. The recommendations are aimed at establishing better information systems to promote these concepts, as well as urging municipalities to deal with these issues on a realistic and comprehensive basis.

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I INTRODUCTION

There is consistent pressure for restraint in public spending. Local governments are faced with a fiscal squeeze caused by ever rising administrative and labour costs and a tax base that is unable to keep pace with escalating expenditures.¹ Provincial grants have failed to keep pace and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario has not yet succeeded at wresting a new formula for increased unconditional grants to municipalities from the Provincial government. The Canadian Union of Public Employees have recently obtained wage increases for Metro and City of Toronto employees of 7% retroactive to January 1, 1979 and an additional 2-1/2% as of October 1.² Despite this, garbage, road and parks workers in North York went on strike demanding a 9% increase retroactive to January 1. In the face of such constraints and increased demands, municipalities usually feel compelled to increase taxes and/or to effect service cut-backs. Both courses of action are unpopular with citizens. Yet another alternative is to evaluate and improve existing levels of productivity and quality of working life.

Productivity and Quality of Working Life Defined

Productivity can be defined in a variety of ways. It can mean: increased output per man-hour by making use of modern technology; individual attitude and cooperation among the work unit; or effective management making efficient use of resources, i.e. sophisticated budgeting techniques, efficient organization of work flow, and optimal use of human resources.

Productivity improvement projects by industry and government have considered productivity in various forms. However, it has been found that efforts to improve productivity which focus on cost reduction alone suggest management pressure to only increase output per man-hour. Labour productivity begins with good planning by management and the conscientious effort of the employee. In industry, competitiveness and the quality of the product enter into the cost factor. Concomitant aspects to the production process are

1 See Bureau of Municipal Research, CIVIC AFFAIRS, "Cost Saving Innovations in Canadian Local Governments", September 1979.

2 Toronto Star, July 17, 1979, "Metro civic workers settle".

sound investment, use of technology, better techniques and greater efficiency. The crucial question is how to translate theory into practice. From experiments in industry and government it is evident that three aspects - the individual, machines, and organization - are involved in bringing about greater productivity.¹

Quality of working life considerations must accompany productivity from the perspective of both the employee and the employer. The employee gains in human terms through a happy work environment and self fulfilment. The employer's gains are greater productivity when his company or organization operates uninterrupted by labour disputes and absenteeism, and is free of individual animosities, disinterest and lack of commitment. Increasingly, quality of working life concepts are being recognized as valid goals in themselves, fostering the realization of human potential which is not now fully utilized. It is therefore in the interest of any private or public corporation to promote development of the individual, equal opportunity, and a sense of participation and cooperation within the work unit, between different levels of management, and between employee, union and management.

Declining job satisfaction by employees may be indicative of greater expectations beyond adequate remunerative compensation. A Gallup Poll taken between 1963 and 1973 of 1,520 adult respondents in all spheres of employment in the United States shows job satisfaction decreasing from 85% to 77%² over the ten year period. Handouts and wage incentives to encourage increased productivity by themselves do not succeed in the long-run. When incentive payments are employed, they need to be coupled with involvement by the employee in the planning and decision-making of the work process to enrich the employee's understanding of the overall operations. This raises the question of the perceptions and attitudes of unions. As a body representing the labour force, have unions kept pace with employee's needs beyond adequate remuneration and job security?

1 Edward M. Glaser, Productivity Gains Through Worklife Improvement, Ch. 1, pp. 1 - 25, Harcourt, Brace Iovanovich, 1976.

2 Ibid., p. 19.

Local Government Versus Private Business Operations

In the municipal sphere, measuring and increasing productivity has been successful in such hard service areas as garbage collection or maintenance of equipment. However, in difficult to measure services such as health, policing, social work or education, methods of evaluation have been slow to develop and it is there that quality of working life goals have a particularly important contribution to make. When measuring productivity in quantitative terms, determining the actual output of services is also problematic, due to the diversity of demands, values and preferences by citizens and public employees. Another difficulty is presented by the division of responsibility for service delivery, i.e. each municipality provides its services to the public through a number of municipal departments which operate independently.

Operations of governments face additional complications. Primarily, these consist of extreme pluralism in political, administrative and community interests, leading to complex and multiple conflicts. For example, conflicts exist over local policies with provincial or federal levels of government or between different city bureaucracies, or between the mayor or elected representatives and independent boards and commissions. Local government is a democratic institution and must weigh the trade-offs between goals of good management and democracy. Stress on efficient business management and professionalism at too great an expense to democracy have produced strong reactions from citizen groups in the '50's and '60's.¹ Notwithstanding these differences between the operations of private business and public bodies, productivity and quality of working life goals are important to both, if not playing a greater role in the public sphere, because of its labour intensive operations.

1 Douglas Yates, The Ungovernable City: The Politics of Urban Problems and Policy Making, Ch. 2, "What Makes City Government Different?", pp. 17-41, The MIT Press, 1977.

This Topic examines productivity and quality of working life from a historical perspective in industry and government in the United States and in Canada in order to arrive at underlying principles. Our examination of government productivity and quality of working life experiments show that different approaches are being taken at different governmental levels and by various cities. These address themselves to cost savings as well as to the enhancement of the activities of the work force through quality of working life goals.

The final focus rests on the development and application of productivity and quality of working life concepts in Toronto and several Ontario municipalities. In analyzing the diverse approaches that are being taken, this Topic attempts to identify shortcomings, to pinpoint needs, and to recommend a course of action for the coordinated development of productivity and quality of working life goals in local governments in Ontario.

II EXPERIENCE WITH PRODUCTIVITY AND QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE GOALS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Financial incentives coupled with employee participation in traditional management functions leads to greater productivity and job satisfaction. This idea was popularized in the 1930's by United Steelworkers Vice-President Joseph Scanlon.¹ The "Scanlon Plan" has been applied in various forms in industrial experiments where employees (and unions where applicable) participate in company decisions about organization, job design, and information sharing. In addition, special financial rewards may be attached to increased productivity. The theory is that job satisfaction reaches beyond the concept of adequate pay, benefits and good working conditions. Essentially it means some control by the worker in connection with the work performed and maintaining his/her continued interest and sense of responsibility. This motivational approach benefits worker and employer alike and has been widely applied in Europe and the United States in restructuring the work environment.

The motivational approach constitutes a departure from the separation of tasks in the interest of "efficiency" which has contributed to worker alienation. Where work has been segmented, as in assembly line production, innovative methods have been applied, such as job rotation or restructuring of the work force into small crews that produce an entire unit of manufacture. These methods lend variety and a greater understanding to the process of production as a whole. The result has been higher job satisfaction.

Experiments by Corporations in Ontario

Experiments with quality of working life programs have shown successes as well as failures. The research branch of the Ontario Ministry of Labour has produced a survey of 25 Ontario firms which have used various innovative work arrangements to improve productivity.² The study does not apply scientific

¹ Edward M. Glaser, p. 19.

² An Inventory of Innovative Work Arrangements in Ontario, Ontario Ministry of Labour, Research Branch, September 1979.

methodology, but is an inventory of productivity and quality of working life programs evaluated by key persons involved. These evaluations, elicited from labour and management personnel of participating companies, are therefore subjective, and answers were not obtained via the use of a standard questionnaire. A summary of the responses, however, reveals some interesting insights.

The survey determines companies' reasons for embarking on a program of innovative work arrangements, and the difficulties that were encountered and asks for an evaluation of results as seen by labour and management involved. All the firms included were financially successful and demonstrated a long-term interest in and commitment to change through worker participation. The list includes unionized firms, as well as non-union organizations. It is to this analysis we now turn in looking for reasons why firms embark upon innovative projects, the factors to which success or failure are attributed, the effects experienced as a result of innovations and the problems that were encountered. The specific innovations will not be considered. Broadly speaking, they consist of a variety of experiments with job enrichment, such as changes in decision-making powers by involving union and/or workers in traditional management areas, changes in the form of remuneration and form of ownership, and reorganization in the methods of operation.

When all responses are summarised, the most frequently cited reasons for embarking upon an innovative program are: to improve communications or to prevent development of a communications problem between segments of the company; to achieve improved productivity; to involve the employees in job identification; and to promote a feeling of being able to contribute. Communication between people and attention to levels of productivity predominate in the answers given and reflect the primary concerns of the sample companies.

Of the numerous individual reasons cited to which success or failure of a program can be attributed, a number clearly fall into definite categories.

The personalities and degree of commitment given by people involved, an open environment, and open channels of communication are of major significance, accounting for nearly half of all reasons. All constitute attitudinal approaches to change and their significance must be noted.

Similarly, effects experienced from the projects were numerous, with several of them predominating. Improved productivity, motivation, efficiency and job satisfaction share top mention. Improved communication and relations between labour, union, supervisory personnel and management follow in importance. Reduced turnover, absenteeism and number of grievances were observed, as were improved product quality. In summary, the major effects of the experiments with innovative work arrangements were observed in terms of human values, centered on quality of working life concepts and resulted in greater productivity.

As for the problems encountered in the experiments, the following picture emerges. Problems were particularly apparent with employees and supervisors who felt their status threatened or were comfortable in the existing structures and had difficulty in adjusting to innovations or to greater responsibility. Both the problems encountered as well as the majority of reasons given for success of a program indicate that attitudes of the individuals involved are of primary importance to success or failure. This finding points to the need for education and awareness of the principles involved in productivity and quality of working life projects, prior to efforts at implementation of innovative work arrangements.

It was difficult to determine whether unionization constituted a positive or negative factor in relation to change. Union willingness to cooperate was cited as a contributing factor to success in some cases. In others, unionism contributed to problems of implementation by creating suspicion or initial argument against incentive payments to employees. One obvious reason for lack of opposition by unions can be attributed to the joint union/management approach to change. Most programs dealt with a combined job enrichment and

productivity philosophy and nowhere was the labour force cut drastically or pressure made evident for increased output. In industry, layoffs can be avoided in productivity programs by strategies which focus on product cost, pricing and sales volume. A good example is the case of Black and Decker in the United States. The company was able to improve markedly its levels of productivity and employee job satisfaction through quality of working life programs. At the same time, it doubled its sales volume in five years by reducing prices. The program thus necessitated the hiring of more employees to keep pace with its expanding market.¹

In the Labour Ministry's inventory of experiments with innovations summarized here, no measurements were used to determine the degree of raised productivity or dollar savings achieved by successful programs. In general, such data are necessary and useful in order to measure benefits against costs of a program. However, for our purposes, it is not necessary to record dollar savings documented by individual companies, but rather to learn that efforts to improve the quality of working life can affect production.

What Has Been Learned?

It was found that individual attitudes and motivations play a crucial role in any plan for improved productivity through work redesign. An organization would be well advised, therefore, to consider attitude when designing innovative programs in order to assure successful implementation. These findings indicate a need for an information and education source which can provide programs for education of both management and labour to create an awareness of new and emerging concepts of quality of working life philosophies. This would help to overcome ideological barriers and practical resistance that might be expected. An information resource centre would also be desirable for use by behavioural science experts upon which they may draw in order to integrate experience in strategy and methods of work redesign. Monitoring and evaluating a program, once in place, is the desirable next step in order that its impact may be measured, strategies adjusted, and lessons provided.

¹ Edward M. Glaser, p. 206

Unions may contribute to success or place obstacles in the way for change to traditional work arrangements. A joint union/management approach to planning for change is mandatory.

Repeatedly, Canada is being reminded of its low productivity vis-a-vis other industrial nations and the consequences this bears on international trade. In light of this, and other recent reports, the value and growing necessity for improving the quality of working life and productivity in both the private and public sectors are becoming increasingly evident.¹

¹ Globe and Mail, October 4, 1979, "Absenteeism Costs Canada \$21 million daily, Study says".

III PUBLIC SECTOR INITIATIVES

Initiatives for increased productivity and quality of working life projects in the public sector must come from within government and from union leaders. Even though one might logically expect public pressure in that direction, public awareness of increased taxation has failed to press for potential improvements in government productivity. One of the difficulties is the well recognized fact that no force analogous to the profit motive exists in the public sector, which acts to hold down expenditures. From the viewpoint of the administrator, public sector outputs do not reflect goods and services produced, but rather costs of goods and services purchased. Individual administrators and bureaucracies have frequently measured success by their ability to obtain budget increases, an enlarged staff and an increased scope of activities. Traditionally, fiscal requirements escalate because of population increases, greater urbanization, rising affluence and higher levels of service, and expansion of government into new fields. It is therefore particularly important in times of fiscal restraint to be able to call on devices which monitor, measure and are able to suggest corrective action for more efficient and productive uses of existing resources.

It is relevant to look at the experience in the United States because productivity and quality of working life concepts have been national policy since 1975 and municipal experiments are well documented. Canada has little experience and scant documentation of these concepts in the public field and can benefit from the experience and lessons provided by local governments in the United States.

Developments in the United States

The United States National Commission on Productivity was created in 1970 to develop recommendations and programs for improving the productivity of the economy and was composed of representatives from business, labour, government, and the public. It identified reasons for lagging productivity and pointed out areas for improvement. The rapid increase in the size of the public sector was seen as a possible factor in the slowing of overall

productivity and it was concluded that means of improving productivity in private industry were also applicable to the public sector. A report to the Commission identifies two major problems: (a) that there is no consensus on how to measure productivity; and (b) that political and administrative interest and will power are frequently lacking.¹ Despite this, the report makes recommendations for Commission action to help generate productivity. In December 1975, the Commission became the National Centre for Productivity and Quality of Working Life.

A statement on national policy by the Research and Policy Committee of the Committee for Economic Development identifies principal deficiencies and opportunities for improvement common to most state and local governments and suggests general approaches adaptable to particular circumstances.² Public opinion polls in the United States show that people feel they are not getting their tax dollars' worth; this gap between expectation and delivery defines public perception of productivity which is lower than it could be. The study shows that the number of state and local government employees increased by 150% between 1954 and 1974. On the other hand, it found no evidence of increases in quality and quantity of public service.³

Great disparities in performance levels also exist from city to city and an absence of comparable performance data makes comparisons extremely difficult. The report measures productivity in an economic sense, i.e. the cost of goods and services which government produces for its citizens, and makes suggestions for improvement. However, the report defines productivity not

1 H. P. Hatry & Donald M. Fisk, Improving Productivity and Productivity Measurement in Local Government, The Urban Institute, 1971.

2 Improving Productivity in State & Local Government, CED, April 1977 (3rd printing).

3 Ibid., p. 38.

solely in terms of inputs/outputs, but also identifies four other areas for productivity improvement. These are:

- (1) management
- (2) the work force
- (3) use of technology and capital investment, and
- (4) measuring results and impact of government programs.

In order to motivate government to take measures towards productivity improvement, the CED recommended that performance audits be conducted by outside agencies, and that competition creating consumer choice, be introduced, i.e. contracting out with either public agencies or private organizations for service. In addition, it called for pressure groups, such as business, political parties, and educational institutions, to exert their influence on government for improved productivity. It recommended federal research and development assistance and state involvement in financing and technical assistance.

Local government approaches to productivity can assume a hard-line cost-savings orientation or they may be experiments in motivational approaches toward greater managerial effectiveness, worker participation in planning of efficient work flow, and greater job satisfaction and productivity. The impact of motivational change can be measured, albeit not as readily as individual cost-saving projects. Various cities in the United States have used a combination of approaches and their experience is well documented.

Let us take a look at the approaches and general experience with productivity incentive and quality of working life programs and the results which were achieved. It is also interesting to note where impetus for change originates.

Case Studies

A review of eight United States jurisdictions (Dallas, Detroit, Milwaukee, Nassau County, New York, Phoenix, Tacoma and Palo Alto) indicates that impetus in seven of the eight cases came from an individual.¹ Productivity programs originated with the Mayor in New York and Detroit, with the City Manager in Dallas, Tacoma, and Palo Alto, and the Executive Assistant of the County Executive influencing several municipalities of Nassau County, Long Island. In Phoenix, the City Council as a whole was responsible for instigating a productivity program as a result of Council's reluctance to increase taxes. The lack of citizen group pressure indicates that citizens, on the whole, are not concerned with the topic of productivity in local government and that a city manager type organization or chief executive concerned with efficiency and cost savings are most likely to play the leadership role in an overall program. In the case of New York, severe fiscal problems necessitated a stern look at expenditures and greater productivity of its existing resources.

Acceptance by politicians is usually critical to a continuing program because inevitably, political issues are raised by the concept of productivity. Certain departments such as police or fire departments who consider themselves semi-autonomous are particularly sensitive politically and may be considered "untouchable". It is also necessary to exercise great diplomacy in introducing new measures to department heads who frequently consider the operations of their respective departments as their private domain, making them generally reluctant to submit to the scrutiny of efficiency or behavioural science experts. These considerations, plus a desire to point to early successes have frequently led to productivity improvement projects concentrating on cost-savings projects concerned with technological innovations coupled with departmental reorganization.

¹ Frederick O. R. Hays, Productivity in Local Government, Lexington Books 1977.

For example, in Dallas, an Office Management Services Department worked unofficially on a client relationship basis with Departments without a formal city-wide program. The Department of Public Works was reorganized into three separate departments. Simultaneously, with the introduction of improved equipment and reorganization of work schedules, staff cuts were effected in garbage collection operations and in maintenance cleaning staff. Staff cuts were usually implemented by attrition. Operations in the Water Utilities Department were reorganized subsequent to an in-depth study of the department by a management consultant which integrated dispersed functions concerning water meter readings. Tacoma made almost exclusive use of technology, engaging outside expertise in the form of consulting services donated by private industry in the industry's interest of diversification of its operations.

Other cities placed relatively greater emphasis on fiscal planning and the motivational approach. Phoenix, for example, coupled technology with reorganization to realize fast results, but set its goals primarily on increasing productivity over the long-run by detailed analysis and budget planning, engaging outside consultants to determine the most effective approach to increasing productivity. The Nassau County program included long range plans to stabilize manpower costs through implementation of productivity bargaining and sharing of gains in productivity improvements. New York, under Mayor Lindsay, concentrated on analytic expertise, but its emphasis under the next administration shifted to a joint union-management approach which emphasized union power. The analytical expertise and critical approach to departmental performance suffered when the original comprehensive and direct approach was followed by a more selective one with greater sensitivity to department and union objectives raising the dilemma of achieving balance between efficiency and democracy.

Problems with productivity programs most often centred on implementation of policy. In Dallas, strategy was unstructured, unsystematic and innovative programs were tried only in areas where success seemed assured. Tacoma failed to establish goals or provide directions and did not integrate technical innovations into departmental management. Its greatest obstacle to implementation was disinterest and inertia within the organization. Emphasis on process and attitude made evaluation of cost/benefit not possible. The only unqualified success occurred in Phoenix, which was credited in part to its special circumstances respecting sociological and physical characteristics, a city manager system, and a relatively inactive labour sector making it easy to put changes into effect. Phoenix raised efficiency to top levels and largest gains in productivity were realized from reorganization of work processes and mechanization. Phoenix monitored performance very closely, establishing appropriate service levels and distributed performance data. Quantitative productivity gains and cost reductions were not seen as a major contributing factor to overall savings. Knowledge of the cost of operating the productivity incentive program enabled calculation of net savings.

Union involvement varies greatly in United States local jurisdictions. Police, fire fighters and teachers were unionized long ago in most larger metropolitan areas. The right to bargain collectively was only slowly extended to other public employees. Of the eight examples, strong unions are present in New York, Detroit and Milwaukee. Detroit pioneered in productivity bargaining which included incentive payments for performance. However, unions did not sign a new contract in 1974 and thus successfully opposed productivity improvement objectives. In New York, where productivity bargaining was introduced in 1970, gains were achieved outside the bargaining process. The severe fiscal crisis changed the structure of collective bargaining and legal support for union rights has eroded because of concessions in workloads which are accepted as a result of layoffs. Milwaukee achieved all its productivity programs without strikes or incentive payments and staff was reduced by attrition. In the case of Nassau County, strong support was lent to productivity projects by the union chief. Elsewhere, labour relations were much less involved.

Union negotiations generally slow the process of implementation or act as a deterrent on management to propose productivity programs. Unions, on other occasions, have seen the necessity of productivity bargaining when faced with the alternative of contracting out for services. Productivity incentive contracts provide additional payment to the worker if certain performance levels are met, or work standards may be set on contract for a general salary increase. It will also be remembered that most productivity improvement projects involve changes in work organization and upgraded equipment. Worker productivity is therefore not attacked in isolation but is part of a process of change.

Other case studies analyzing hard-line cost-savings programs have shown that significant improvements in productivity can be realized only at the outset, after which further improvements are difficult to achieve.¹ When increased productivity was recorded, it could not be attributed to worker motivation to perform according to work standards alone, since technological improvements played a major role. Furthermore, embarking upon a program was not cheap and worker productivity improved significantly only where it involved sharing of benefits, i.e. bonuses or extra pay.

Savings effected by the setting of work standards or incentive programs in blue collar work are easily measured. For example, Harrisburg introduced work standards in the vehicle maintenance section of its Department of Public Works and recorded significant increases in efficiency over a two year period - specifically, a 43% rise in the number of vehicles maintained per employee per year with no evidence of a decrease in quality of service. Personnel expenditure fell by 21% per vehicle.² The program entailed posting of productive hours and use of flat rate work standards to assess individuals seeking promotions, or to provide larger pay increases. Underperformers were given the opportunity for special training or counselling. Personnel costs were cut by between \$16,000 and \$47,300 in 1974, depending on how costs were estimated.³

1 John M. Greiner, et al, Monetary Incentives and Work Standards in Five Cities: Impacts and Implications for Management and Labour, The Urban Institute, April 1977.

2 John M. Breiner, et al, op. cit., p. 30.

3 Ibid., p. 41.

One of the difficulties is performance measurement of activities lacking tangible output or gauging the time required for carrying out specific tasks, with the result that work standards might have to be set at fairly low levels. Setting of work standards and criteria for performance measurement also involve planning and scheduling of work which combines good management with worker productivity.

Job satisfaction in these experiments showed an initial drop in two of the five cities whose projects were monitored but generally produced increased job satisfaction over the long-run. All projects faced initial resistance but employee participation in the decision-making facilitated the introduction of programs.

The Results

In summary, experiments in the United States show that local governments have been predominantly concerned with productivity in terms of cost savings. The majority of programs which have been considered in the cities reviewed, have concentrated upon hard-line, clearly visible input/output operations and in areas where use of improved technology and reorganized work flow can show immediate savings. Fewer attempts have been made at planning over the long term since massive commitment is required and results accrue at a slower rate.

The responsibility for placing productivity programs into effect usually rests with a top level executive, and there has been no evidence of citizen pressure for improved performance, even though public perception indicates dissatisfaction with levels of performance. It was also found that middle management's cooperation is not always easy to secure but is critical to the success of any program as is commitment within the municipal corporation generally.

Analytical expertise, be it in-house or on an outside consultant basis is vital to a critical approach to performance but requires tactful handling in a consultant relationship with management and unions, as well as being supported by Council. The political environment of a particular city plays an important part and varies from city to city, which, in turn, affects the potential for success of any program. Evaluation of program impact is frequently lacking due to inadequate overall techniques of measurement and no continuous monitoring.

Unions in the public service in the United States vary in strength and have been able to hinder progress of productivity programs in certain cities. On the whole, their impact has not been detrimental to change when they have been involved in joint union/management decision-making.

In addition to various documentations of case studies, the development of an information resource base on productivity and quality of working life in the public sector is well underway in the United States. Since 1973, the National Centre for Productivity and Quality of Working Life has published an annual "Guide to Productivity Improvement Projects". It lists experiments in numerous municipalities and provides contacts for further information on specific projects. The International City Management Association published the results of a 1973 survey in its 1975 Municipal Year Book, titled "Employee Incentives in Local Governments" for municipalities of 25,000 population and over. The listing includes a variety of quality of working life programs and projects, as well as numerous monetary incentives programs, all conducive to better performance and greater job satisfaction.

IV PRODUCTIVITY AND QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE IN THE CANADIAN CIVIL SERVICE

Productivity and quality of working life concepts have also filtered into the public sector in Canada. However, experiments seem to be isolated in the early stages, particularly at the provincial and municipal levels. Examples at the federal level consist of a performance measurement system which includes the white collar sector and a number of experiments in which employees reshape their workplace to provide them with challenges, variety, responsibility and scope for development.¹ Specific experiments were conducted at the Revenue Canada District Taxation Office in London, in the office of the Secretary of State, the Translation Bureau and in Statistics Canada, involving the Express Key Punch Unit. Union and management were jointly involved in committees to coordinate activities and resolve problems. The experiments demonstrated that there was room for significant changes in traditional management practice. Employees knew more about their work than they previously recognized and, given responsibility, responded positively and began to become much more involved and interested in their jobs. It was perceived that the results of experiments of this type indicate "measurable gains for all".

Ontario Initiatives

At the Ontario Civil Service level, a Committee on Government Productivity was set up in 1969. Its appointed membership included senior management public servants and business executives. The Committee, with the aid of the services of management consultants and technical advisers, made an appraisal of provincial operating methods and levels of service. Its recommendations were reported in a series of publications focusing on human resource management, governmental structure, financial management and the use of electronic data processing in a business-like approach to government

1 James B. M. Gibson, "Quality of Working Life in the Federal Public Service", Canadian Personnel, November 1977.

operations with emphasis on efficiency and cost savings.¹ Recommendations were implemented in various ministries of the provincial civil service.

A different approach is currently being taken, centering on quality of working life. The concern is with improved employee job satisfaction, organizational performance and labour/management relations. Internal consultants are conferring with Provincial Ministries and obtaining commitments for quality of work life projects from both management and unions. The Civil Service Commission, at the instigation of the Staff Development Branch, is setting out to establish its own resource centre for quality of working life information.

In December 1978, the Province of Ontario established the Ontario Quality of Working Life Centre. A six man committee composed of union and management people investigated productivity and quality of work life ideas and experiences in Europe and the United States. It found that quality of working life changes seemed to have important effects on work. The result was the Centre, which operates on a \$500,000 budget² for the current year, under the directorship of a specialist in work-life programs has stated that "enormous untapped human resources are going to waste under traditional methods of organizing work in which human resources are treated as part of the machinery".³ The Centre assists any program, private or public, in a variety of ways but, until now, its work has concentrated primarily on the private sector. An outreach program is just getting underway, gathering information which is to be disseminated to all sectors of the economy.

1 Committee on Government Productivity, John B. Cronyn, Chairman, Interim Reports, Nos. 1 - 6, December 1970 to April 1972.

2 Globe and Mail, "A Better Life at Workplace, That's the Aim in Ontario", February 1, 1979

3 Hans Van Beinum, Director of Ontario Quality of Working Life Centre, as quoted in the Globe and Mail, February 1, 1979.

In 1972, an experiment was launched known as "The Local Government Management Project".¹ The Ministry of Treasury, Economics and Intergovernmental Affairs, the School of Business at Queen's University, and four Ontario municipalities (London, Ottawa, St. Catharines and the Regional Municipality of Niagara) acted as joint collaborators. Productivity and quality of working life are implicit in many of the ten areas identified by the Project as areas of development for municipal management. Specifically, these relate to performance measurement, organizational development and human resources management, labour relations, financial resource management and management information systems, restructuring and reorganization. From this extensive and complex program of experimentation, documentation and evaluation, flowed an understanding of the problems involved in municipal management and the processes which must be established to carry out an effective program. The initial objective was to experiment with certain approaches to management and not necessarily to seek improvement in the municipalities taking part in the project. However, over time, people involved in the municipal teams sought to develop ways of dealing with problems of these individual municipalities.

The documentation of the Local Government Management Project concludes with a section of recommendations which advocates action, action at the provincial, municipal and educative levels to stimulate improvement in local government management. Action for the Province was recommended with the full awareness of potential hazards inherent in provincial interference in local autonomy. The essence of recommendations for provincial action state that:²

1. The Province can insist that municipalities develop at least the external trappings of a systematic approach to management, i.e. the provision of direction for municipal management; a clear definition of the roles of council and administration; coordinated and integrated internal management; and measures

It is not within the purview of this Topic to evaluate the design, conduct or suppositions inherent in the Project, but only to record that it took place and to take note of its findings.

2 V. N. MacDonald and P. J. Lawton, "The LGMP Experience. Phase III, An Overview of an Experience in Organizational Change in Local Government", p. 74.

of productivity and performance for all service and support areas.

2. The Province can encourage the development of practical courses in local government management.
3. The Province can encourage municipalities to make municipal goals and objectives public to promote public understanding of management improvement.
4. The Province can encourage strategic planning among municipalities.
5. The Province can provide expertise to smaller municipalities.
6. Some funding contingent upon municipal management improvement be provided.

The Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs of the Province of Ontario has been reluctant to adopt a strong leadership role of the type suggested in the report. It sees its role as one of providing the information by publishing the results of such experiments as the "Local Government Management Project", and in recent years has also made available consulting services upon request. To reach into all regions of the Province, it has established a total of ten field offices to facilitate access. In addition, the weekly news bulletin "Background" serves as an information forum in not only updating municipalities on current legislation affecting them, but includes occasional references to municipal experiments in cost savings innovations and productivity and quality of working life projects. A recent issue of "Background" announced that the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs, through the Municipal Budgets and Accounts Branch, is developing a program of annual comparative unit cost and other performance measurements of municipal services to help municipalities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of services. A comprehensive catalogue will be produced by the Ministry and it is in the process of gathering information from municipalities who have

begun work in this area.¹ This step is an important one in aiding municipalities to measure their productivity and effectiveness as well as in facilitating municipal comparisons.

However, as desirable as communication and information access programs are, the involvement of the Province stops short of ensuring action. Municipalities have largely been left to cope with the subject of financial restraint and provincial cut-backs after their own fashion, which may take the least troublesome route of raising taxes and/or cutting services, or embarking upon individual short-term projects which can show immediate cost savings.

Municipal Development in Ontario

What of productivity and quality of working life projects initiated at the municipal level? Development of an overall program entails incorporating into the administrative, budgeting and managerial development process the long-term objectives of productivity and quality of working life goals. Productivity and quality of working life enter into the budget review process and into personnel and management functions. To what extent these concepts are recognized within these functions seems to depend upon the individual municipality. At present, no single source appears to exist which is familiar with current experiments in various Ontario municipalities, nor has there been any documentation of experiments.

The most important aspects of running a public corporation are its planning process and budgeting details. Various groups, politicians, departmental managers and employees are involved in the process of running the city's business. This proceeds in a competitive way and the process may be compared to that of various interest groups competing in the community at large. The element of political and administrative pluralism has been mentioned. It refers to competition within these individual groups themselves, so that competition exists both among and between them.

1 Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs, Background, September 14, 1979.

Within the municipal corporation an organized data base for planning the corporation's activities can exist within each city department. The department head who manages the department is usually responsible for submitting its fiscal requirements (both operating and capital budgets). After a series of review procedures by committees of council which direct the details of operating and capital budgets, council as a whole approves or rejects budget proposals. Various standing committees of council many times work closely with department managers and act as information brokers, making policy recommendations to council. The ultimate guideline for most councils in determining budget allocations is the tax rate which it must charge the citizens. A large proportion of a city's operating budget (between 70% to 80%) is taken up by wages and salaries. In order to safeguard the interests of the municipal employee, the Canadian Union of Public Employees is involved in municipal decisions affecting personnel.

The City of Toronto has injected expertise and experimentation, as well as control over budget format of departmental capital and operating budgets, into this process of arriving at better coordination of management functions. At the instigation of a previous Council member (Karl Jaffary) existing management functions within the City of Toronto were reorganized in 1975 under a new department called Management Services. The Department came into being with the general notion of consolidating policy responsibilities of the Executive Committee of Council and to improve overall productivity. The new Department also aids management in the performance of its functions, and has brought together management and unions in personnel policy development. Among other things, it has made available a resource body of behavioural science experts who deal with organizational change and personnel questions encompassing quality of working life concepts.

The Management Services Department consists of four divisions. These are: Management Consulting; Personnel Service; Planning and Budgeting; and Computer Services. Each of the divisions of the department has its own distinct responsibilities and interaction occurs between the various divisions and other bodies within City Hall.

The Management Consulting Division acts as a consultant to Council and departments to solve problems and develop new approaches to organizational change and administrative improvements. Its philosophy is a motivational approach when dealing with personnel considerations, by adhering to respect for people's self-determination and allowing employees to identify and deal with problems concerning them.

The Personnel Services Division encompasses the responsibilities of the former Personnel Department, as well as some functions not previously covered. It is in charge of the administration of personnel records of all city departments and administers policy concerning recruitment, appraisal and promotion. The Division also works in such development programs as recruiting, training and development, equal opportunity promotion, job evaluation, etc. It works closely with the Management Consulting Division and the Human Resources Development Committee in accomplishing this. The latter, a Committee of Council, was created by the Management Services Department and brings together representatives from the unions (CUPE Locals 43 and 79), COTAPSA (a non-union organization of middle management), and management. It is responsible for joint personnel policy development and provides the initial vetting place for proposed changes.

As its primary function, the Planning and Budgeting Division exercises all control and evaluation functions by scrutinizing departmental budgets on the basis of cost/performance in the budget review process and makes recommendations to the Budget Review Group of Council.

The Computer Services Division makes use of technological, highly advanced techniques and assists departments with analysis, development and implementation of new computer systems. It provides training programs to departments and operates a data processing centre for the City. Due to computerization, current budget expenditures can be closely monitored and long-range budget planning has been facilitated.

Change may be proposed by anyone within the municipal corporation. It may originate with politicians, department heads, from unions or the individual employee. These proposals may be in any area of operation, ranging from organizational changes to philosophical and theoretical orientations. Traditionally, line departments have the actual experience of performing tasks, whereas behavioural science and other experts have theoretical knowledge.

Some examples of current work being undertaken by the Management Services Department are: an employee attitudinal survey for the Property Department to measure organizational climate, sources of conflict and management participation, and a questionnaire for users of the Property Department's services to measure level of service and to facilitate problem diagnosis; the Housing Department has requested assistance to review and formulate procedures for its existing accounting system which will produce more data and greater internal control; the Generalist Inspector program is an attempt to reorganize and raise productivity of people by developing the job category of "Generalist Inspector". It will consolidate functions of property inspection of various kinds, previously performed by a number of inspectors.

As other in-house bodies of expertise which have documented their experiences in United States cities, Toronto's Management Services Department is in a politically sensitive situation when coupling past experience with theoretical knowledge in attempts to implement change. The Management Services Department has no formal link with other municipalities who may be pursuing similar aims in the municipal civil service. A major difficulty is the size of operations in the case of the City of Toronto versus those of other Ontario municipalities.

Success of innovations depends to a large extent on the cooperation and enthusiasm given to these programs by departments. Some departments have made good use of the in-house expertise provided by Management Services. Others feel that the budget process and their own internal operations have been conducted in the interest of efficiency and responsibility to the taxpayer and have adequately dealt with productivity questions. To some, quality of working life concepts as yet seem a hazy notion.

The participation of the unions has been closely linked to the decision-making process affecting Toronto's civil servants. However, Local 79 feels it must continue to stay on guard and that it is caught up in the red tape of the process. New ideas which break down the traditional management/worker relationship are regarded with suspicion. On the whole, its attitude remains one of business unionism - get as much of the wage pie as you can vis-a-vis management. The idea of productivity bargaining for Local 42 (Metro and City outside workers) is entirely unacceptable. It is felt that outside workers, particularly refuse collectors who are working with modern equipment, are performing to capacity and beyond. Generally, an overabundance of supervisory staff is felt to remove individual incentive and responsibility from the worker. This perception indicates the need to look at quality of working life concepts as a way of dealing with worker dissatisfaction.

With respect to developments in other Ontario municipalities,¹ the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton is currently discussing the establishment of a management services department. Its approach reflects a concern with measurement of existing productivity as a starting point to the concept of productivity and quality of working life. Two programs dealing with measuring output and evaluation are in place. A maintenance management system deals with standards and levels of services provided to the public. Performance measurement for all departments is the second, and is concerned with general efficiency, effectiveness of programs and output, as well as employee responsibility, accountability, individual performance and job enrichment. Ottawa-Carleton also plans to carry out fairly extensive training at the managerial and supervisory levels in order to gradually overcome selective bias.²

The City of Windsor has had a Productivity Committee operating for the past eighteen months, consisting of department heads and commissioners. The Committee has been attempting to gather information on productivity from the

1 Brief interviews may not have determined all relevant programs and approaches to productivity and quality of working life.

2 Interview, Dick Huband, Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, July 30, 1979.

from the United States and Canada. It has contacted the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs, suggesting that ideas and information on productivity and quality of working life be activated. A suggestion for the inclusion of a regular digest of productivity projects in the Ministry's information bulletin "Background" and actively generating interest in this topic was not acted upon, beyond willingness to publish information as it is received. The City of Windsor has embarked upon a number of individual cost savings innovations such as computer analysis of fire stations and equipment, experiments with solid waste collection and composting operations which have effected staff reductions and staff efficiency by reorganized work flow and use of modern equipment. A suggestion system encourages employees to come forward with innovative ideas affecting service, safety and productivity. The City Clerk's Department has experimented with job rotation for employees for a number of years to make their work more varied and interesting. The staff of 28 now performs work other than their regular job for three months out of twelve. Greater job satisfaction and suggestions for improvement in carrying out tasks have been observed, resulting in improved productivity. The Clerk would like to see flex time approved for use throughout the City departments. Another innovative program that is being recommended for discussion at the next bargaining session with the unions concerns full-time versus part-time work for clerical and secretarial employees of the Department. It has been determined that staff would prefer to work on a permanent part-time basis in order to better combine working life with demands of child-raising and homemaking. Windsor has demonstrated its commitment to productivity as exemplified by the number of cost savings innovations in various departments. The Clerk's Department has also shown concern with quality of working life concepts.

Yet another example of innovations in work organization and productivity programs is provided by Sudbury. Sudbury has followed the lead of the City's primary industrial employer, INCO, by paying employees for innovative ideas which improve productivity. The City has paid large bonuses to several people who have devised technologically innovative ideas in connection with

the performance of their work. A management assistance group composed of an interdepartmental committee disseminates information and provides impetus for experimentation. For the past four years, productivity in various selected departments has been measured and monitored via a program which was developed internally and rewards employees by means of a bonus system. Personnel has been reduced by attrition without evidence of reduced output. Its next project is a control system in building inspections in order to set standards and measures for productivity. In its approach to productivity along cost savings lines, the municipality feels that no difficulties have been encountered with the unions because channels of communications are kept open and innovative changes go through the process of joint negotiations.¹

Summary of Canadian Experience

Other programs in various municipalities across the province exist, but their existence is nowhere systematically documented and therefore only vaguely known in municipal circles. In the United States, state and local governments were introduced to the concept of productivity by a federally initiated program, the United States National Commission on Productivity, which evolved into the National Centre for Productivity and Quality of Working Life. All three levels of government in Canada, however, have been dealing with the concept on their own. While strides are being made in diverse directions concerning approach and are at varying levels of evolving, municipalities seem to lag further behind because they have been experimenting individually and without the aid of an adequate data base. Undoubtedly, their individual efforts are valid but they could benefit from a general framework which would make comparative analysis and exchange of experience among themselves part of the process.

¹ Interview, Mark Mioto, City of Sudbury, August 1, 1979.

V SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Historically, industry has passed on innovations to the public sector and Canada has had the opportunity to learn from the urban experience in the United States.

Although it is recognized that the intergovernmental hierarchy and municipal structures differ in certain respects between American and Canadian municipalities, the latter have the benefit of examples of experience to draw upon. It is evident that philosophical approaches to productivity and quality of working life are multifaceted and bear specific impact according to their application by municipalities. It has also been shown that measuring productivity is important but often presents difficult problems that are not easily overcome. Even when approaches do not take a hard-line cost savings orientation, a means of evaluating innovative programs is needed.

Programs in both the private and public sectors which have been undertaken in Canada and the United States provide lessons. The operational distinctions between government and private business are recognized, but the need to restrain spending and to establish quality of working life goals apply equally to the operations of government and business. Because of the nature of government's labour intensive structure, productivity and quality of working life questions are even more applicable to the public sphere. Some of the groundwork in information gathering pertaining to the experience in the private sector in Ontario is being laid by Ontario's Quality of Work Life Centre. What is urgently needed is that this work be extended into the public sphere. Federal, provincial and municipal jurisdictions are at present dealing with the concept in isolation and results of their work are not disseminated by any resource group concerned with public sector productivity and quality of working life goals.

Experience in the private sector in Canada and in the public sphere in the United States have shown that initiative and motivation are a major factor to the success or failure of any innovative program. Unless individual administrators or politicians within municipal corporations show specific interest in working with productivity and quality of working life questions, neither the public nor any other body is ready to question their lack of interest or activity in that area. The Province possesses the power to enforce a systematic approach to the question of local government productivity and quality of working life but has so far been willing to provide only information in rather piece-meal fashion. Its willingness to assist municipalities with expertise is admirable, but occurs only when specifically requested, and by no means assures that a critical look at operations and methods of work organization is undertaken where it is needed most. It is difficult to argue against the recommendations for action by the Province made by the Local Government Management Project regarding municipal management improvements.

Leadership is far from being provided by the unions if Canadian Union of Public Employees Locals 42 and 79 are any indication. A positive example of recent developments within unions is the decision by the Public Service Alliance of Canada. At its July 30th convention, it adopted quality of working life as a valid bargaining goal. Unions should not feel threatened or fear that their power is being eroded by innovations in the workplace which benefit the employee, but should be playing a leading role in promoting quality of working life.

In light of the information gleaned from experience in both public and private sectors in the United States and Canada, and the current stage of developments in Ontario, the Bureau recommends that.

1. The Ontario Quality of Work Life Centre expand its operations to include the public sector to document municipal activity in productivity and quality of working life concepts.

2. The public be made aware of the feasibility of alternatives to higher taxes and service cut-backs by the Quality of Working Life Centre, as well as other research organizations in the municipal field.
3. The Province inject an awareness of the concept of productivity and quality of working life as it applies to municipalities via an outreach program to generate interest and to promote exchange of experiments and experience among Ontario municipalities.
4. An educational program be developed by the Quality of Working Life Centre or the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs for the benefit of municipal administrators, politicians, and union representatives in order that they may be in a position to provide leadership.
5. Municipalities take a balanced approach to productivity in terms of hard-line cost savings and the long range goals encompassing behavioural science and budgeting techniques.
6. Municipal councils, in consultation with administrators, develop overall policy rather than sanction piece-meal projects at the inclination of individual departments.
7. Municipalities give careful attention to the educative function in order to avoid the development of separate units of behavioural science expertise or efficiency experts. These may clash with traditional management concepts and unions in their perceptions of productivity or resist the introduction of new concepts such as quality of working life goals.

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