

Obstacles to the Survival of Democratic Workplaces

ZELDA F. GAMSON
AND
HENRY M. LEVIN

INTRODUCTION

It is a major anachronism of American society that democracy is defined as relevant only in the political sphere of life. The relative freedom of the political arena stands in sharp contrast to the authoritarian principles governing the American workplace. Clearly, a strong case can be made for bringing greater democracy into the workplace in order to create a citizenry that participates in all of the major areas affecting its daily circumstances and its future. In fact, it has been argued that political democracy must necessarily be seriously constrained in effectiveness in the absence of economic or workplace democracy (Mason 1982; Pateman 1970).

Partially as a response to deteriorating economic conditions as well as to a search for new political directions, there appears to be a rising interest in workplace democracy. Community groups and workers are increasingly considering and consummating the purchase of firms that are threatening to cease operations in order to protect the jobs of employees as well as the economic life of their communities (see Zwerdling 1978, and chapter 10 by Levin, this volume). Other small businesses have been started by groups of workers in order to create work organizations grounded in collective ownership and democratic

principles of participation. Perhaps the prototype of this type of democratic workplace is that of the worker cooperative. The worker cooperative is a firm that is both owned and managed by its workers. In the smaller cooperatives, democratic operation is based on direct participation of workers in all important decisions, while in the larger ones the direct participation on the shop floor is accompanied by representative forms of governance in the delegation of major decisions to worker-elected managers or boards of directors (Bernstein 1976b).

But, before considering this recent upsurge in workplace democracy as a vanguard of a larger social movement, one should be aware that there exists a major basis for skepticism. Throughout their history, many worker-controlled enterprises have been short-lived phenomena. They have been cyclical in their appearance and demise, and they have not been significant overall factors in the United States economy (Jones 1977; Shirom 1972). It is unusual to find examples of democratic workplaces that are more than a decade old. Although one of the plywood cooperatives of the Pacific Northwest is sixty years old, this is atypical. A recent survey of small worker cooperatives in the United States found that almost all were less than ten years old, and the median tenure was about 5.8 years (Jackall and Crain, chap. 5, this volume). Historically, the same pattern has been evident in every periodic cycle in which democratic enterprises were established (see chap. 3 by Jones, this volume). Indeed, one must look to other nations to find significant numbers of democratic economic entities with greater longevity (e.g., cooperatives in France and the kibbutz in Israel).

THE SHORT LIVES OF DEMOCRATIC WORKPLACES

There exist two major reasons for the short lives of many democratic workplaces. First, the circumstances under which they are typically established are ones of economic marginality; therefore, such businesses experience high rates of failure. Second, the internal requirements for sustaining democratic processes often conflict with the rigors of functioning in a competitive market environment. Normally, it is the first of these reasons on which the greatest emphasis is placed, but in this paper we will suggest that even when the economic foundation of cooperative firms is sound there may arise serious challenges to the internal functioning and reproduction of the democratic enterprise.

The causes of economic frailty derive directly from the circumstances under which democratic enterprises typically arise, that is, the preservation of existing firms and jobs as well as the initiation of new, small businesses. When a community or a group of workers joins

together to purchase a firm and operate it according to democratic principles, the firm is almost always in dire economic straits. In fact, community or employee purchase is often a last-ditch effort to stem economic failure and closure. In such circumstances, the optimistic alternative to massive unemployment and economic dislocation is an unbridled enthusiasm that collective action of the existing work force of the firm can overcome these severe hindrances (Zwerdling 1978).

In contrast, the establishment of many new democratic enterprises is less a response to threatened unemployment than to deeply felt personal and political convictions that are in conflict with more conventional forms of work organization. Such initiators may see cooperative and democratic forms of enterprise as a preferable alternative to the controlling structures of corporate and bureaucratic forms of work life. In these respects they are likely to be committed to greater development of their human and social talents as well as to a higher measure of social equality than they believe is possible in a more traditional workplace. Further, they may see democratically controlled enterprises as the fundamental building blocks of a broader movement toward a more democratic and egalitarian society. But, these convictions are not usually accompanied by access to the substantial capital and markets required to form and sustain a larger firm, so that these newer democratic enterprises tend to be concentrated among the typically fragile areas of business in which it is possible to start a small firm with little capital.

This means that these businesses are established in the most competitive and risky product and service domains of the U.S. economy. They are initiated in those areas that require relatively little capital investment and experience, and they are forced to compete with the many other small businesses that have been established in these relatively accessible portions of the marketplace. But, wherever it is easy to start a business, failure rates tend to be high. As with all small businesses, even those that are democratically operated may lack adequate capital to sustain them until the break-even point is reached. In fact, their unconventional form of organization may make it even more difficult for these firms to obtain loans through conventional financial channels. Market potential and profitability may be considerably lower than projections, and a lack of experience may also take its toll.

Further, even if the business becomes profitable, the relative ease of entering the market serves to attract new competitors who vie for clientele. It is not surprising to find that the goods and services that are produced by these businesses are heavily concentrated among restaurants, food stores, bookstores, printing shops, repair services, and other areas characterized by high failure rates (Jackall and Crain, chap.

5, this volume). It should also be noted that these businesses reflect the types of goods and services consistent with the values of their members, such as natural food, production and sale of political and feminist literature, alternative energy forms, social services, and so on. Thus the very circumstances of such small businesses, whether organized as conventional or democratically operated firms, contribute to high rates of instability and low longevity.

Any firm that cannot solve its economic problems—in a simple sense, obtaining revenues that are equal to or greater than costs—will be unable to survive. In this sense, producer cooperatives and other democratically managed firms are not unique, but share a dilemma with other types of enterprises. However, the very conditions that lead to the formation of democratic or cooperative workplaces tend to overlap with circumstances leading to greater economic marginality than in the cases of the more conventional firm.

There is a second reason for the relatively short longevity of the democratic enterprise. Democratically managed firms must not only survive economically in the marketplace but they must also survive as democratic organizations. This means that there must be effective mechanisms for promoting democratic decision making and participation as well as appropriate behaviors by co-workers that contribute to this end. If a democratically managed firm tends to be characterized by an inability to make decisions, by widespread and unproductive conflict among co-workers, and/or by a work force with inappropriate skills for the task of carrying out the operations of the firm, the firm will have a short life. Regardless of the intrinsic viability of the enterprise as an economic entity, it will not survive as a democratically operated entity unless it is able to reproduce the conditions required for sustaining its organizational form.

The purpose of this paper is to address three organizational obstacles to the reproduction and effective functioning of democratically managed workplaces which our experiences have convinced us have been endemic to such enterprises in the United States.¹ These three obstacles are: (1) the lack of a common culture or social contract in which there is a widely accepted set of values and processes that guide behavior; (2) the lack of democratic norms for decision making; and (3) an inappropriate mixture of skills for the needs of the enterprise. The importance of addressing these obstacles lies both in their crucial role in the success or failure of the democratic firm as well as in the relatively high incidence of these problems in cooperative firms. We shall attempt to explain, for each of these, the nature of the obstacle and the reason that it seems to be endemic to democratically and/or cooperatively run enterprises. We will also suggest some particular approaches to overcoming such obstacles, with a rather heavy emphasis on both educational and technical assistance strategies.

LACK OF A COMMON CULTURE

For any social organization or collectivity to function and survive, there must exist a common set of norms, values, and expectations about organizational functions and operations that are accepted by all or most of the members of that organization. These may take the form of accepted traditions, laws, rules, procedures, or guidelines for the organization, which serve as the glue that integrates individual participants into the overall functioning of the organization. This sort of common culture can be both implicit and explicit. Thus in a capitalist firm, most employees accept the notion that workers, managers, and capitalist owners have different rights and obligations. For example, workers are hired as wage labor with certain work obligations that are set out by their superiors on behalf of the profit motive for capitalist owners. These work obligations must be performed by the individual, if he or she is to retain employment and receive wage payments. Further, the precise nature and organization of work and definition of each work role, the relation of the workers to other workers in production as well as to the firm, the method of performing the work and the tools available to do so are the prerogatives of the capitalist owners and their managers.

This common culture of the workplace also assumes that workers compete as individuals with other workers for wages and promotion; that the place of workers in the hierarchy of the firm determines their degree of relative autonomy; that the interpersonal relations among workers are matter-of-fact relations designed to facilitate control and productivity rather than based upon traditional social relations such as those of family or kinship; that the main rewards for work activity are extrinsic ones such as wages, salaries, vacations, pensions, and promotions to higher status rather than the rewards of a high degree of control over one's work activities and of the ability to express one's human and creative potential on the job.

To a very large degree, these premises are accepted implicitly by most workers, so that they are rarely questioned. That is, they are reinforced by the norms, values, and expectations of workers as part of the common culture of the workplace. Thus, the capitalist firm can function on the premise that most of these matters are uncontestable, and that it is only issues such as the level of wages and salaries, fairness in promotion policies, the amount of work effort required by supervisors, and so on, that will be the potential subjects for contention. Although in recent years some aspects of this common culture have begun to deteriorate, at least in particular instances, this overall characterization of the common culture and the organizational practices of capitalist firms and government agencies that support it can be found in the vast majority of workplaces across the United States.

Why is it that workers in diverse occupations, regions, and economic sectors can be expected to share a culture of the workplace so generalizable that typical workplace orientation and behavior by employees can be assumed? To a large extent the answer is found in the schools (Bowles and Gintis 1976; Carnoy and Levin 1976a; Dreeben 1968), or, more precisely, in the schooling experience. In their study of six societies, Inkeles and Smith (1974) found that schooling seems to be the main contributor to the development of those personality traits that are fundamental requisites for factory work. In fact, schools tend to be impersonal, bureaucratic, and hierarchical, like the typical workplace. Course grades and promotion in the school are similar to wages and salaries and job advancement in the workplace. Expulsion or academic failure have their counterparts in job loss and unemployment. In both the workplace and the school, the activity of the student (workers) is determined by factors external to them, such as the curriculum (production activity), the organization of instruction (production), and the instructional materials (tools) that will be used. Supervision and evaluation are carried out by teachers (work supervisors) whose authority derives solely from their superior positions in the organizational hierarchy. These supervisors control the content of the work activity as well as the rewards and sanctions, and successful students learn quickly to accept the norms of the organization.

It is not surprising to find that by the time young people are conditioned by at least ten to twelve years of this regimen, they have learned to accept its legitimacy and internalize its norms or, at the very least, to conform to its requirements. This common culture is further reinforced by experiences in the workplace which rather consistently buttress these norms in supporting existing work relations. Of course, the media and the family also tend to portray this work culture as normal and acceptable, if not inevitable, because of its pervasiveness in the workplace.

The new democratic workplace is likely to be characterized by more of a yearning for a common culture than by the actual existence of such a culture. In fact, the ties that typically bind together members of this type of organization are based either on the need to ensure organizational survival, as in the case of worker takeovers of failing businesses, or on the common aversion to the culture of the traditional workplace with its strong elements of control and authoritarianism (Blauner 1964). To the degree that there is a common set of values, they represent a rejection of the conventional norms of hierarchy and control and an abstract acceptance of what is perceived as their opposite: equality, democracy, and freedom of expression.

However, one should not confuse what are typically abstract and romantic views, no matter how strongly they are held, with what is

a common culture of shared beliefs and understandings about appropriate behavior for members of democratic work organizations. Such shared beliefs can arise only out of an intense, common set of experiences that derive from the cultural context in which these experiences take place. Indeed, it is this factor that has determined the common culture of existing workplaces, in that the totality of experiences in the home, school, community, and workplace have led to a shared set of norms. In fact, in those historical cases where democracy in the workplace has succeeded, members have built their own democratic organizations around their common experiences and values. For example, from the Scandinavian immigrants and various religious groups who founded cooperatives in the United States, to the Eastern European Jews who initiated the kibbutzim in Palestine, to the Basques who created the industrial cooperatives of Mondragon, there has been a common experience and culture on which the democratic values and sense of destiny have rested. Further, in all of these cases the cooperative endeavors were workplace manifestations of larger movements for solidarity and survival.

This common background has not been true for most of the groups that have initiated democratic workplaces in the United States. For a while, it was thought that the shared generational experience of young people during the 1960s and early 1970s would provide a common culture (Flacks 1971). The experiences generated by opposing the war in Southeast Asia (as well as all the other upheavals associated with those protests) were viewed as at least a catalyst that would provide a new set of values for the "greening of America" (Reich 1970). When new democratic organizations were formed, however, the dominant culture was typically replaced by a set of romantic notions based on rejection of conventional norms rather than a shared vision of appropriate behavior. This normlessness often created paralysis, even in the face of obvious dangers to survival.

For example, the common rejection of hierarchy and control often brought persons with rather different needs into the cooperative or democratic entity. One of the principles of these organizations tended to be openness toward new members who preached similar values. Individuals who rejected personal or collective responsibilities were thus joined with those with a strong sense of social and personal responsibility and integrity. The former would often reject conventional demands on their energies or behavior, including getting to work on time, doing work of high quality, economizing on the use of organizational resources, and so on. In some cases, there were "rip-offs" in the form of massive telephone bills to friends across the country; stealing or giving away the resources of the organization (e.g., free meals and supplies) to friends; or outright extortion. Although most

of the members of the organization would see these acts as antisocial and destructive, the lack of a clearly acceptable code of behavior meant that formal action would have to be taken to expel such persons from the organization and to recoup losses. However, few wished to be accused of being on a "power trip" which in the negative milieu of rejection of the establishment meant that any member opposing the acts of another member was being antidemocratic and attempting to control the organization. Unfortunately, the fact that many of the democratic workplaces of the late 1960s and early 1970s were unwilling to expel members who were obviously engaged in destructive behavior meant that some were destroyed.

Another general ethos often associated with the rejection of conventional work structures is a peculiar form of anarchy in which it is assumed that an organization should make no demands on its members. Rather, it is assumed—at least tacitly—that individual voluntarism alone should replace the structure and discipline of the typical work bureaucracy. Pushed to its extreme, this view paralyzes an enterprise to the point that workers cannot engage in collective efforts. Using the term *the tyranny of structurelessness*, Joreen (1973) described some of the pathologies that arose from the resistance to structure in the early years of the women's liberation movement. Fear of power and a reluctance to exercise authority led to a variety of troubles which sometimes undermined the very existence of the organization. Under such conditions, rumormongers, narcissists, and petty thieves flourished in countercultural cooperatives and collectives. The tendency was to refrain from doing anything until it was often too late or to address these problems with such ambivalence that a destructive factionalism was generated among members. Graphic examples of these problems are found throughout the democratic workplace movement.

Without some consensus about the positive values of the enterprise and fairly explicit ways of dealing with destructive members, cooperative enterprises either die out or sell out. The landscape of alternative organizations is strewn with collectives that could not work collectively and with "hip" businesses manipulated by clever entrepreneurs (Kreiger 1979; Case and Taylor 1979). This is not only true of enterprises that started out devoted to democratic values and social and political change but also of democratic enterprises formed for strictly pragmatic reasons. In both cases, a vacuum left by the absence of a culture of democratic work has left these enterprises vulnerable to outsiders representing different interests.

It is fairly obvious that the development of a common culture is a necessary condition for survival of the democratic workplace. Unless a set of norms can be established about the relations of workers to one another and to the enterprise as well as about the acceptable and

desirable range of behavior of workers, it will not be possible to work collectively and to survive economically. Even the most basic decisions regarding the organization of production, the structure of rewards, the choice of products, and pricing and investment decisions require a common set of values for democratic participation to succeed. Further, the fine detail of daily operations and worker interaction require that, to a large degree, all members accept these norms.

We argued earlier that a common culture must necessarily arise out of a common set of experiences. From these shared experiences there tend to evolve norms for social interactions that come to be accepted as appropriate values and behavior for a social entity. The problem is that the types of democratic experiences that might create these shared understandings are typically absent in the major institutions that mold the social values, attitudes, and behavior of most Americans. Accordingly, the common culture must be largely created within the democratic workplace itself, a rather heavy burden considering that it may take all of the energy of the members just to meet the demands for economic survival. Nevertheless, there are at least two major strategies that might be pursued in developing a common culture: first, the development of a formal code of social statutes and second, a special emphasis on the recruitment and training of workers.

FORMAL CODE OF SOCIAL STATUTES

Probably the most important foundation for creating a common culture is the initiation of a written code of social statutes that describe both the rights and obligations of workers in the democratic work setting, as well as the methods by which the decisions will be made. The importance of this foundation is less in its permanence than in the process of transforming vague principles of democracy and equality into a concrete code of behavior. By going through this process, the organization must confront virtually all of the issues that will be an integral part of its common culture.

In fact, the original Rochdale principles enabled the Rochdale weavers to formalize their relationship as a worker cooperative and to establish a set of values and expectations about their participation. Such a code does not have to endure forever in its entirety. Indeed, a part of establishing a common culture is to periodically revise social statutes as necessary. It is this continuing interaction between the social code and social practice that creates the common experiences and the evaluation of those experiences that form the basis for shared values, attitudes, behaviors, and expectations.

What issues should a formal set of statutes address? There are a number of excellent sources that provide a discussion of these require-

ments. For example, Vanek (1977b) has provided a "basic folder" in which he distinguishes between the needs of self-managed firms and those of other businesses, as well as setting out suggestions for a constitution, available legal forms, ways of initiating the firm, guidelines for finances, and relations with the local community. Strongforce, a group in Washington, D.C., devoted to promoting self-management, published practical manuals on implementing the principles of democratic organizations (Strongforce 1977). The Industrial Cooperative Association (ICA) in Somerville, Massachusetts, has developed a number of documents for such purposes, with special attention to legal and governance details (for an example of this, see chap. 11 by David Ellerman). The most elaborate social statutes are probably those of the Basque Cooperatives in Mondragon, Spain, where more than twenty years of development has created a code that covers virtually all important areas of behavior.

The particular areas that ought to be addressed are virtually all of those that are necessary to characterize the nature of the enterprise and its relation to its workers and clientele. Clearly, these should include a description of the purpose and nature of the firm, including the types of products and services that it will provide; the basis for membership and the rights of members; the obligations of members to the enterprise; the criteria for making decisions on matters such as the organization of work, the basis for remuneration, the distribution of any surplus, and the pricing policies; the relationship to other democratic workplaces and the larger community; and the organizational and financial principles that will be employed. The initial steps in formulating these principles will require the members to address the question of what are their shared values and to create an initial process for resolving differences among them. The undertaking of this process, in itself, will go far to provide a set of common experiences for establishing the common culture necessary for survival. However, it is also important that workers be amenable to altering these codes over time as the needs of the organization change. Thus the formal social code should be seen as both a framework for functioning as a democratic organization as well as the catalyst for creating a common culture.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF WORKERS

One way in which a common culture can be emphasized is through the recruitment and training of new members to the democratic work organization. By selecting new members who are in agreement with the formal code of social statutes, it is possible to reduce the vagaries of trial and error that are often involved in finding appropriate co-

workers. Countercultural enterprises have generally drawn their members through friendship networks (see Gamson et al. 1978; Rothschild-Whitt 1979; and chap. 5 by Jackall and Crain, this volume). Recruitment has been informal and inexplicit, and serious problems have resulted. When the values of these enterprises have not been clarified in concrete terms, the criteria for selecting members have been difficult to specify, leaving mutual affinity as the dominant factor. In some cases this has meant that workers have been selected on very superficial grounds, such as the length of their hair, their style of clothes, or the attractiveness of their rhetoric.

Unfortunately, an organization using such an inexplicit selection process often ends up with persons whose only common value is negativism toward the traditional workplace, rather than a positive commitment to create and sustain a positive alternative. When demands are made upon such persons, they often become divisive, using their well-honed destructive energies to undermine the organization. Virtually all democratic organizations have had experience with these types of people. To a large degree, the recruitment of new members along the lines established by the social code can eliminate such applicants from the outset. In fact, it can be argued that an active recruitment program should take place outside of friendship networks, to attract a broader range of persons.

Formal attention to the training mechanism is also likely to be important. Exposing new members to discussions of the social code and its application can introduce them rather quickly to the expected behavior that characterizes the organization. It is true that this training requires time and organizational resources that are usually in short supply in fledgling democratic workplaces. Yet, such efforts may actually increase the total capacity of the organization by reducing the conflicts that typically erupt when members do not share a common set of values.

Like any group, democratic workplaces develop informal ways of encouraging conformity to group norms—but again, these are often not very explicit. Inculcating and maintaining certain standards of behavior, therefore, is accomplished indirectly, through a variety of subtle means. In a collectively managed bar, for example, workers who did not conform were subjected to the treatment that all small, cohesive groups mete out:

If people are unable to do their job or consistently use drugs or alcohol, they are pressured into conforming or leaving. The pressure is exerted in subtle ways. If someone is hired and does not do the job, he or she is given feedback immediately, usually by someone who is close to the person. Then if the behavior continues, there is a great deal of discussion and

consternation behind the person's back. Except in extreme cases, as with stealing, the time-lag between recognizing poor performance and acting on it may be months. (Sisson 1978:166)

As time passed, this bar and similar enterprises became more self-conscious about recruitment and training. In an Ann Arbor food cooperative, a formal hiring system evolved in its fourth year. One of the purposes of the new system was to move hiring decisions away from the paid coordinators—who tended to select people they already knew—and into the hands of community people and co-op members. For the first time, a job description was spelled out. This did not happen without some conflict, however: several applicants who were turned down under the new hiring procedures expressed dismay because they felt they deserved to be hired by virtue of the work they had put in at the co-op as volunteers. The new system held, though, and led to a formal training program for new volunteers. Such devices do not guarantee the formation of a common culture but, with the passage of time and the development of a stable work force, they can help in legitimating practices consistent with democracy in the workplace and in weeding out those that are inconsistent (Gamson 1979).

None of these devices can substitute for an organic connection with a culture that infuses larger meaning into the workplace, whether a religious culture, like that of the Bruderhof (Zablocki 1971) or Koinonia, whose economic enterprises are a part of a devout communal life; a nationalist culture, as with the Mondragon cooperatives and the Israeli kibbutz; or a self-conscious working class culture, as in Yugoslavia. We do see some hopeful signs, however, in the growing appeal of small towns and neighborhood associations, particularly among young adults, which are described regularly in publications such as *Communities, In These Times, Workplace Democracy, and Working Papers for a New Society*. But it is too early to know whether they will last long enough to form common cultures. Based on some shared generational experiences among young people who came of age in the 1960s, they may have a profound impact on the cities and college towns—Madison, Minneapolis, Boston, Berkeley, Ann Arbor, Seattle, Eugene, New Haven—where large numbers of them have settled (Training for Urban Alternatives 1979).

LACK OF DEMOCRATIC NORMS FOR DECISION MAKING

In addition to the general lack of a common culture among the workers in democratic workplaces, there is a specific lack of democratic norms and a dearth of experiences in decision making. Because of the favorable imagery of democracy in the political realm, democracy in

the workplace has an appealing halo. As we have seen, most people, however have had only limited experience with democratic organizations. Major agencies such as families, churches, and schools, as well as workplaces, tend to be organized along hierarchical and, often, authoritarian lines. Even those political institutions that are based upon democratic precepts tend to practice representative rather than participative democracy—that is, with chosen or elected representatives making the decisions.

To the degree that people have participated in democratic situations, that participation has tended to be episodic rather than pervasive and marginal rather than central to their lives. Most typically these experiences are found in voluntary organizations and among ad hoc civic groups. Even people who have participated regularly in non-economic, democratic organizations such as town meetings report a good deal of ambivalence about democratic norms, especially those that involve broad participation (Mansbridge 1973). As a consequence, those who have become involved in democratic workplaces have often lacked the skills and knowledge necessary for effective democratic participation, which in turn contributes to the demise of the enterprise or encourages the development of a more hierarchical structure (Case and Taylor 1979).

There are at least four problems in democratic decision making that appear frequently enough to constitute common issues. These are: (1) the legitimate exercise of authority; (2) obtaining accountability from members; (3) the productive use of conflict; and (4) the productive use of meetings.

LEGITIMATE EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY

However much one might question hierarchical forms of organizational control, they often have the virtues of clarity and familiarity. They may not be efficient—indeed, the efficiency of hierarchical forms of authority has been exaggerated—and they may not be accepted without some resentment by those who are constrained by them. But they are usually relatively clear, at least, about who has responsibility for what. Democratic work organizations can rarely make this claim. Part of the problem lies in the confusion between responsibility and authority. In democratic organizations, the effort to minimize differences in power and influence often leads to resistance in giving legitimate authority to a particular position or individual.

One way of dealing with this issue is to vest authority in the work group as a whole, not only to set policy but also to execute group decisions. We have seen instances where pure participatory democracy has worked well, but this is limited to small enterprises with a stable work force. A worker-managed bar in Ann Arbor began in the late

1960s under a traditional manager system. But inequities in scheduling (if the manager liked you, you got scheduled well; if she didn't, you ended up working Sunday afternoon) led to a rebellion among the workers, who designed a collective work organization that won approval from the owners. After several years of experimentation, the system at the bar was institutionalized; subgroups of workers—waiters and waitresses, bartenders, cooks—govern the day-to-day scheduling and organization of work. The work force as a whole (some thirty-five people) makes decisions about hiring and firing, the disposition of the profits which workers share with the owners, and other issues of policy (Sisson 1978).

Pure participatory democracy has not worked well in larger, less stable enterprises. When turnover is high, decisions made by one set of workers are often subject to criticism and reformulation by another set. Since there are few structures and procedures to channel the influence of new members, they can have a profound effect on the way the organization operates. One of the other consequences of the lack of structure is the unequal distribution of influence, which tends to favor the most articulate, best educated workers (Mansbridge 1979).

Another way of minimizing authority differences in democratic workplaces is to rotate tasks among workers. The kibbutz provides a good example of a democratic system with a clearly defined structure of work rotation: all members take turns doing onerous tasks, such as kitchen duty, and jobs in the various production and service branches are rotated regularly among the workers in them. Collective workplaces in this country are likely to rotate jobs, but this is done informally. In the bar and a food co-op in Ann Arbor, for example, workers switch jobs periodically when enough workers agree that they are ready to try something else.

But rotation, even in the kibbutz, has its limits. When jobs require scarce professional and technical skills, only certain people can perform them. Law collectives, countercultural newspapers, therapy groups, and health cooperatives founded in the 1960s and early 1970s found they could not freely rotate jobs between professionals and nonprofessionals because of the limited technical competence of nonprofessionals and because of lingering resistance among professionals (Rothschild-Whitt 1976; Case and Taylor 1979). Rotation works best among jobs whose skill requirements are relatively similar.

Large enterprises generally turn to some version of formal management, either by selecting managers from among the workers or by hiring an outside manager. The kibbutzim rotate management of each of the work branches among a small group of people who receive special training in kibbutz management, while the plywood cooperatives hire a manager from outside. In both cases, the members have ultimate authority over the manager. In democratic workplaces, there

is a tendency to minimize the importance of administration and management. We do not know why this is so—perhaps because information about the organization seems to be widely available, and because administrative tasks that would be limited to a few managers in a traditional firm are spread among more people, or perhaps because of closer connections between planning and production—but it does place greater burdens on managers. Because their work is seen as somehow not legitimate, managers in a democratic workplace must justify themselves to workers considerably more than managers in a nondemocratic firm. While we do not have any hard data, we suspect that turnover among managers is higher in democratic enterprises than in traditional ones; there are some indications that job stress among kibbutz managers is high (Yuchtman 1972). Adizes's close study of the operation of two Yugoslav firms under the worker council system (1971) documents the frustration of managers. He quotes one executive who put it this way: "I don't tell workers how to work on a machine because they know how to do it. Why should they tell me what price to set for a product? They don't know markets. They don't know the state of competition." Adizes notes that Yugoslav executives, "weary of slamming tables and delivering tirades," would become increasingly withdrawn and apathetic at meetings (Adizes 1971).

Managers in democratically organized workplaces complain that they have responsibility without authority. The other side of the complaint is that workers have the unusual opportunity to pick their leaders and to hold them accountable.

Whatever the precise form of the problem in different democratic work settings, the issue of the legitimate exercise of authority is often a serious one. Exactly how to resolve it depends on the nature of the organization, its size and functions, the backgrounds and orientations of its members, and the experience of the members in working together. Typically, the challenge is one that will ultimately yield to a concerted trial-and-error approach. A particular alternative is chosen by the members in the spirit that it will be given a chance to work. Based on the results, it will be retained intact, modified, or abandoned in place of another strategy. The best alternative will be discovered through this rather positive approach to ascertaining the minimal authority structures consistent with both democratic decision making and effective organizational functioning.

OBTAINING ACCOUNTABILITY FROM MEMBERS

A related problem in a democratic work organization is that of obtaining accountability from members. Most of the evidence we have seen indicates that democratic workplaces are more productive than conventional ones because of the collective commitment engendered

by worker control and/or ownership (Blumberg 1968; Jones and Svejnar 1982). From our own observations of democratic workplaces, it is clear that most workers put a good deal of effort into their enterprises, both in performing production tasks and in participating in governance and administration. It is also clear, however, that individual workers differ in the amount and quality of the work they do. While this occurs in other types of enterprises, it seems to have particularly deleterious consequences for morale and productivity in democratic organizations. In a situation where no one is boss, how do workers hold one another accountable? If responsibility is vested in the group as a whole, how can any particular individual feel responsible?

In the Yugoslav firms he examined, Adizes (1971) found that workers quickly learn what they can be held responsible for and what they can get away with; penalties for transgressions are not clear-cut and managers are powerless to discipline workers. Small work groups are notoriously resistant to firing their own members and will often rely on some superordinate authority or on the fates to do the dirty work. In the Ann Arbor bar, for instance, the workers asked one of the owners—whom they criticized harshly on most occasions—to fire a worker who was stealing rather than face doing it themselves (Sisson 1978).

People who have worked in democratic organizations for any length of time become aware of the unconscious traps workers fall into (Wyckoff 1976; Steiner et al. 1975). A typical trap is the emergence of an informal “straw boss” who becomes exasperated with fellow workers who take on the characteristics of irresponsible children. There was a dramatic example of this pattern at the food co-op in Ann Arbor:

She [a veteran coordinator] went around discovering problem after problem, all caused by negligence. The refrigerator was set on 52 instead of 32, meaning that food will rot more quickly. The scale was set too high so that when people measured food for bags they were giving too much for the customer's money.

She began yelling at him (a novice coordinator). She called up one of the other coordinators to complain, waking her. She talked about the refrigerator mistake costing them business and shoppers' respect. They moved away from the desk to a place farther back in the store. He continued, “You pushed me . . . I feel real uncomfortable with that.” She responded, “You make *me* feel uncomfortable. We should share the work. You've sat around for two days and we're paying for it.” He said, “You play boss.” (Gamson 1979)

It is not enough to urge avoidance of such unconscious work roles; their frequency indicates deficiencies in the operation of democratic

work organizations that must be addressed in some other way. Otherwise, they lead to scenes like the one at the co-op. In the more mature Yugoslav system, the elected committee of workers deals with disciplinary matters. Foremen and workers can initiate complaints to the company's legal counsel, who then calls the disciplinary committee together. The committee hears the workers' side and then decides if a disciplinary action is needed. Adizes (1971) claims that his review of disciplinary cases over a period of three years in two firms indicates that the "committee seems to 'put on the hat of justice and impartiality' during the hearings. Likewise, the idea that the committee members are workers and thus should side with workers does not occur, because unless the members of the organization are disciplined, all workers will lose income as a result of the income distribution system."

In the long run, most of the individual accountability problem is resolved by the development of a common culture. Even so, provisions must be established for particularly serious and persistent violations of the social code (Bernstein 1976*b*:chap. 8). However, in the early periods of development of democratic workplaces, this problem is likely to be more severe as norms tend to be more ambiguous. This factor underlines once again the need for a formal set of statutes that provide a clear picture of the responsibilities of and expectations for each member so that new workers can be informed concretely about their roles. The period of trial and error in dealing with issues of individual accountability should be considered a normal phase of development for the democratic workplace.

PRODUCTIVE USE OF CONFLICT

Overt conflict is proscribed from the typical capitalist workplace by the highly detailed division of labor and sharp delineations of hierarchical supervision and responsibility. There are latent feelings of resentment and inner conflict among individual workers in such a context, but they are rarely displayed openly. Rather, there is a substantial resignation to the allocation of tasks, the nature of work activities, pay and promotion policies, and other decisions of the firm. Even in the upper echelons of these firms, where decisions are generally made, open conflict is suppressed (see Jackall 1983).

In contrast, conflict is a central feature of democratic decision making, since democratic forms of participation are designed to allow the routine expression of different interests and values. The question that faces democratic workplaces is how to treat such conflict as a normal part of the decision-making process by using it in a productive way to explore and select among alternatives.

Both Jackall (chap. 6, this volume) and Mansbridge (1973), close observers of a variety of democratic organizations, conclude that con-

flict seems unusually high. Yet, at the same time, these authors and several others (Gamson et al. 1978; Reinhartz 1983) observe that there are often attempts to suppress such conflict. There are at least two reasons for this. First, the intimate and peerlike relations that develop among co-workers in a democratic workplace may seem threatened when conflicts arise. Given the negative aura that surrounds disagreement or conflict in the larger society, there is an emotional bias against open expression of conflict; it is thought to smack of uncooperative behavior and to undermine the warm relations among colleagues. Second, the seeming lack of conflict in bureaucratic workplaces makes the open expression of conflict among the warm and collegial co-workers of the democratic workplace seem a poignant failure.

Unfortunately, such views and the tendency toward suppression of conflict are incompatible with democratic decision making. As long as freedom of expression is encouraged, conflicting points of view will also manifest themselves. Eventually, the suppression of disagreements will build up pressure in the group until a major conflict erupts. Often this conflict will take on a highly personal and destructive form or waste energies by making much ado about an apparently unimportant issue which has only symbolic significance. If these eruptions are frequent and emotional, they take their toll on the organization. Some workers resign, others withdraw much of their involvement, and the cycle begins anew.

Thus the goal of a democratic organization should not be to suppress conflict, but to welcome it and use it productively. Freedom of expression is a value that should be widely embraced, for it enables an airing of alternatives that would otherwise not be considered. The more deeply involved the members are, the more likely they will wish to express and discuss the problems and the potential solutions of the organization. It is therefore necessary to create a format in which conflict and its resolutions are expected and can be addressed systematically. To a large degree this necessarily must be done at regular meetings of the membership.

PRODUCTIVE USE OF MEETINGS

Closely allied with the productive use of conflict is the productive use of meetings held by the worker-members of democratic workplaces. Meetings among the membership represent the prime arena for addressing the problems faced by the organization. Accordingly, they are a major focus for group decision making and for the airing and resolution of conflicts among members. Unfortunately, however, cooperative members often lack experience in using meetings in this way, and thus their meetings often exacerbate the conflicts, take inordinate amounts of time away from other productive activities, and

fail to resolve important issues. In part, these shortcomings are the result of poor planning and naive leadership.

While a portion of every meeting should permit open discussion of anything that is on the participants' minds, this period should not preclude the planning of an agenda. All members should be invited to submit items for that agenda, with at least a brief description of the issue, alternatives, and recommendations. Recurring problems should be placed on the agenda by those convening the meetings. The fact that individuals will be asked to come forward with agenda items and analyses will mean better preparation for meetings and will encourage informal discussions prior to the meeting which will often point the way toward resolutions.

The meeting facilitator should take the responsibility of ensuring that the meeting is completed in a reasonable period of time and that all members are encouraged to participate. This role is often a difficult one to fill because of the reluctance of co-workers in a democratic organization to be viewed as on a "power-trip." However, by rotating the job of facilitating meetings and by setting out a particular format, it is possible to make the facilitator responsible for keeping the meeting on track.

Observations of democratic organizations have often indicated that meetings are not productive because: (a) too much of the agenda reflects personal conflicts among particular workers rather than organizational issues; (b) much of the debate represents an airy discourse on abstract political or social issues rather than a practical discussion of problems faced by the organization; and (c) an excessive amount of time is often devoted to a dull discussion of the pressing details of daily life. By the over-reliance on meetings and ineffective use of them, democratic workplaces engender timidity ("I can't do that unless I check with the group"), mistrust ("You can't do that if you didn't check with the group"), and cynicism ("All we do is have meetings"). It is no wonder that people in democratic workplaces complain about being burned out and yearn for a chance just do to their work without the burden of an endless round of meetings.

How can meetings be used more productively? First, a planned agenda, a reasonable time limit for addressing it, and an appropriate style of facilitation are important. Second, personal conflicts that emerge in meetings should be discussed privately by the conflicting parties outside of the organizational meeting. A different meeting can be arranged with the principals if they cannot resolve their differences. Third, the small details of daily organizational life ought to be addressed on a daily basis among those who are affected by the decisions, and short reports of their resolution may be made at the regular meetings of the members.

In addition, there are a number of sources that can be drawn upon

for assistance in conducting democratic meetings and decision making. The Movement for a New Society, and the presently inactive New School for Democratic Management have worked out a variety of techniques for encouraging the legitimate exercise of authority, evaluating performance, confronting disagreement, and working out consensus. These techniques are a fascinating amalgam of Quaker meeting techniques, group dynamics, and sound business practices. There is a growing network of consultants around the country servicing alternative work organizations, some of whom have expertise in this area (Reinharz 1983; National Center for Employee Ownership 1983).

The Movement for a New Society, for example, makes the following suggestions for facilitating meetings:

1. Bring out opinions. Encourage the expression of various viewpoints—the more important the decision, the more important it is to have all pertinent information (facts, feelings, and opinions).

Call attention to strong disagreements. When handled forthrightly, differences of opinion yield creative solutions.

Ask people to speak for themselves and to be specific.

2. Help everyone to participate.
3. Keep the role of facilitator neutral.
4. Keep the discussion relevant. Point out to the group when discussion is drifting off the topic or becoming trivial. Cut off discussion when repetition occurs or when people become weary.
5. Keep track of time.
6. Encourage individuals to pursue on their own, projects or ideas in which they have a strong interest but which do not concern the group (Coover et al. 1978).

LACK OF APPROPRIATE SKILLS

The final obstacle to the survival of democratic work organizations that we wish to address seems far more mundane than the first two discussed above. This is the lack of appropriate skills represented among the work force of many worker cooperatives and other types of democratic workplaces. Unfortunately, it is often these mundane issues that cause democratic workplaces to founder.

As we have already argued, members of democratic work organizations largely come together to either prevent the closure of a firm or to create a new work entity based on democratic principles. It is only by coincidence that such enterprises find themselves with exactly the right combination of persons trained and experienced in the varieties of activities that they must conduct. The relative equality of

pay and loss of hierarchical authority that characterize democratic organizations will often result in substantially lower salaries and less status for educated workers than they would be likely to find in traditional organizations. While some workers will be so committed to the democratic ideal that they will readily forgo higher salaries and prestige, others will simply choose to work in conventional organizations where their skills and talents will command greater rewards. Some worker cooperatives will become so proficient that economic sacrifices will not be required, and in other cases, workers may actually see larger benefits than in the traditional firms (see Jackall, chap. 6, this volume).

Of course, many conventional small businesses face this problem as well, in that they cannot afford to hire planners, administrators, publicists, and accountants and still produce their product or service. This surely is a contributing element to failure rates among these businesses (Hosmer, Cooper, and Vesper 1977; Stein 1979). In the case of democratic workplaces, however, the problem is even more pervasive, for two reasons. First, the relative equality of pay and status even in larger democratic businesses may make it difficult for them to attract people with the best training and experience. This is especially true for financial and administrative personnel and for those with high-level technical skills. Second, members of democratic workplaces tend not to recognize the need for skilled people. The members of a democratic organization may believe that because conventional firms justify skill differences as an important criterion for ranking people in the work hierarchy, such distinctions should not be used in a democratic firm. Some may believe that the concept of a skilled person is not intrinsically meaningful, on the assumption that any highly motivated person assigned to a particular role can learn that role rather quickly. Thus members sometimes suspect that the perceived need for skilled persons is not a real need, but only a tendency to mimic capitalist enterprises.

There is a particular tendency to minimize the importance of management in democratic workplaces, primarily because of the association of administrative roles with bureaucracy, capitalist enterprise, and hierarchy. Even when the necessity of planning and management is accepted, it is often done so ambivalently. For example, at the food co-op in Ann Arbor everyone acknowledged the need for better business practices and coordination. When a new coordinator was hired to handle bookkeeping, however, he was neither selected for previous bookkeeping experience nor trained to acquire bookkeeping skills. In fact, the new coordinator was supposed to be trained by the previous coordinator, who it turns out had learned bookkeeping on his own. In any event, the previous coordinator was too busy doing other things

and had little time to teach the new one. So for several months, no one knew the financial status of the co-op, and the new coordinator was unsure about how to handle the situation.

Because it operated at an economic margin, the co-op—like most small businesses—had little time for planning, let alone for training; the daily tasks shaped the way the coordinators used their time. Since no one coordinator was at the co-op all the time, all of them did many of the same things. Their time perspective, therefore, was very telescoped—they had little time for planning, anticipating problems, or training. Even the task everyone considered to be one of the most important—organizing and training volunteers—was not accomplished well. A vicious circle operated: it took time to train people to take on jobs that would ease the burden on the coordinators, but since the press of daily jobs prevented the coordinators from investing time in training and planning, they did most of the work themselves (Gamson 1979).

There are a number of solutions to this problem, all of which have both strengths and weaknesses. The approach that is least consistent with the promotion of democratic values is to hire long-term consultants or employees on terms different from those for other workers. For example, if the firm can afford it, it can go into the marketplace, find someone with the necessary skills, and offer to pay an appropriate salary or fee on a regular employer-employee basis. As we mentioned earlier, one increasingly finds consultants with specialized skills in accounting, organizational development, training and education, computers, and law, available to work with democratic firms at somewhat reduced rates. However, these consultants or employees are obviously not full participants in the democratic process of the firm.

Another possibility is to concentrate on recruiting new members with the necessary skills. Even so, it may be necessary to offer a somewhat higher wage than is normally paid for most positions, though even then the new employee might still be expected to sustain a substantial personal, financial sacrifice. For example, in one worker cooperative that we studied in 1978, the highest level administrator was making about \$18,000 a year, while department heads were receiving about \$11,000 to 12,000 and other workers about \$7,000 to 9,000. A salary of \$18,000 for the top administrative position of a firm with annual revenues of over \$3.5 million is modest; indeed, it was only about one-third of the going remuneration for such a post at the time.

A possibility that is most consistent with the principles of democratic workplaces is to train existing workers for the skills that are needed. This solution has substantial promise, but it also has limitations. For example, there are some positions for which internal

training is not adequate. The obvious examples are those of lawyers and certain types of health personnel as well as accountants with expertise beyond the bookkeeping level. In most cases, however, these types of needs can be met through short-term consulting arrangements. The second limitation is that democratic workplaces typically lack the resources to train existing workers to fill job areas where skills are lacking. Indeed, it is this lack of skills in the enterprise that has created the problem. In these cases the chosen trainees will likely have to obtain formal instruction at local colleges or universities or other training organizations.

Fortunately, there are an increasing number of organizations that can assist in fulfilling the training requirements. These have included, among others, the New School for Democratic Management in San Francisco, which has provided training sessions around the country for cooperatives and self-managed firms. Courses offered included training for financial management, marketing, democratic practices, legal issues, and so on. At the present time, the New School is inactive but the North American Student Cooperative Organization runs training programs for people in cooperative workplaces. At a more advanced level, the doctoral program in Social Economy and Social Policy at Boston College develops expertise in worker self-management, co-determination, land trusts, community development corporations, consumer councils, and other areas related to democratic work organizations. Programs on self-managed firms and democratic organizations are also found at Cornell University and at the Five-College Consortium in western Massachusetts (University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Amherst College, Hampshire College, Smith College, and Mount Holyoke).

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

In this paper, we have addressed three major categories of obstacles to survival of the democratic workplace. In each case we have suggested the origins of the problem as well as some potential solutions. In this final section we wish to address some general possibilities for improving the knowledge base as well as the democratic functioning of these organizations. In particular, we wish to point out potential developments that could help clarify the functioning of democratic workplaces as well as promote their formation and survival.

There exists a large body of research in social psychology on the effects of group size and individual anonymity with respect to cooperation and problem solving (Jones and Vroom 1964; Lott and Lott 1965; Fox and Guyer 1978; Singer, Brush, and Lublin 1965). This research has hardly been explored in the context of the democratic

workplace. For example, research findings have consistently shown that groups are more likely to take risks than individuals acting independently. This literature suggests that individual accountability is increased in smaller groups with shared information. While many collectively organized work groups intuitively understand these principles, the social psychological literature provides a rational basis for organizing groups in ways that maximize risk taking and accountability. Several educational researchers (Cohen 1974; Slavin and Tanner 1979; and Slavin 1983) have been investigating the effects of different cooperative learning strategies on intellectual performance and interpersonal relations. It is clear from this pioneering work that there are many ways to teach cooperation and that these methods often lead both to better individual and group performances and to improved interpersonal relations. Teaching strategies, however, must include tasks that are appropriate for a cooperative structure and construct groups in a way that allows individuals to participate equally (Cohen 1974).

Since the best way to learn democracy at work is to participate in other democratic institutions encouraging cooperation and democratic decision making, schools would be an obvious place to start (Levin 1980). Labor studies programs (Stack and Hutton 1980), adult education schools such as the Highlander Folk School, and certain American colleges, such as Antioch and Berea, have developed ways to teach democracy, primarily by institutionalizing student participation. The distinguishing feature of these schools is the nature of their moral environments (Clark 1970; Grant and Riesman 1978). They all have in common a commitment to humanistic values, a deemphasis on status differences, and organizational mechanisms for including students in decision making. Unfortunately, they represent but a small fraction of schools in the United States, although we suspect that their students have been overly represented in democratic movements for change. The notion of a moral environment is critical for any educational program for democratic work, for it lays down the real conditions for students to experience directly the values and practices of democracy (Dewey 1916). Otherwise, education for democracy degenerates into technique stripped from its cultural and ideological bases (Bernstein 1976a).

An experiment that combined many of the characteristics of these schools in a democratic community setting occurred in New Haven, Connecticut. Using what they called *contextual training*, the Training for Urban Alternatives Project (1979) (with funding from the Center for Studies of Metropolitan Problems of the National Institute of Mental Health) applied the principles that Vanek (1977b) spelled out as necessary to successful education for self-management. Vanek (1977b)

has argued that all educational programs for democratic work should be designed according to the following principles: *identity* between the practice of self-management and the nature of educational programs for self-management; *proximity* between the educational activities and the workplace; *subordination* of training in skills to the development of a critical consciousness; *pairing* of co-workers; and *transparency* and *full disclosure*.

There are also other organizations that provide models for the democratic governance of work; most have some training programs. The kibbutz, with job rotation, a differentiated system that combines broad participation in policymaking with implementation by the groups closest to the tasks performed, is a model whose detailed workings have not been examined closely enough by proponents of democratic work. The kibbutzim operate their own primary and secondary school system designed to teach youngsters democratic, egalitarian values and skills. The kibbutzim also run training programs for teachers, administrators, and technicians geared to specific needs, values, and structures of the kibbutz. The Mondragon network of cooperatives in Spain began through the efforts of the graduates of a technical school that had been established in that Basque community. While its curriculum is focused on technical subjects, the school itself is operated according to the same cooperative principles as the other cooperative firms (Ornelas 1982; Gutierrez-Johnson and Whyte 1977; Thomas and Logan 1982:52–59). At the present time there are no democratic workplaces in the United States that have developed educational and training systems as extensive as those of the kibbutz and the cooperatives of Mondragon.

Finally, we would like to emphasize the emergence of various regional and national networks as well as technical advisory groups that can provide services and personnel for democratic workplaces. We have suggested that, to a large degree, the obstacles to survival of these entities are hardly idiosyncratic. Rather, these obstacles are shared by most democratic workplaces, whose internal organization and goals are largely incompatible with the society around them. The network, then, is a means by which democratic workplaces can join together to share resources, ideas, personnel, and training programs. For example, a regional network can provide technical advisory services on matters from marketing and financial management to democratic processes and formulating bylaws. Such a network can also assist in training personnel and in serving as a personnel clearinghouse for workers for democratic organizations. Services can be provided through the network mechanism that would not be affordable or practicable for most individual enterprises. While no regional network that we are aware of has developed its services to this extent, except

the Philadelphia Association for Cooperative Enterprise, the potential for doing so exists in the formal and informal networks of cooperatives, nonprofit organizations, and social change groups in college towns and in many major cities in the United States. In addition, at the national level, the Industrial Cooperative Association in Somerville, Massachusetts, the National Center for Employee Ownership in Washington, D.C., the Association for Workplace Democracy, the Center for Community Self-Help in Durham, North Carolina, and the National Consumer Cooperative Bank are responsible for providing financing and technical assistance to cooperative ventures.

To a large degree, we believe that many of the obstacles to the survival of democratic workplaces can be effectively surmounted by major programs of education and technical assistance at both the regional and national levels. For those of us who are committed to the democratic firm, it is important to support the establishment of such programs and the expansion of their services.

NOTE

1. This chapter is based upon information drawn from a variety of sources. Both authors have engaged in extensive fieldwork on worker cooperatives and democratic work organizations. Gamson (see Gamson et al. 1978) studied collectives and cooperatives in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and has extended this work to western Massachusetts. Levin has studied worker cooperatives since 1975, including the producer cooperatives of Mondragon (see chapter 2 of this book), the Meriden Triumph Motorcycle Cooperative in England (Carnoy and Levin 1976*b*), and worker cooperatives in the San Francisco Bay Area. In the summer of 1978, he devoted considerable time to an intensive study of a cooperative, wholesale book distributor with thirty-five workers and about \$3.5 million in sales. In addition to the fieldwork, the authors have relied on interviews with other members of cooperatives and discussions of these subjects at conferences. Finally, they have drawn upon the substantial and expanding literature on the internal dynamics of democratic organizations.