

ABSTRACT

Impact of Work Assignments on Collective Bargaining in the Petroleum Refining Industry on the Texas Gulf Coast. (August 1969)

M. J. Fox, Jr., B.S., Oklahoma A&M College;

M.S., Oklahoma A&M College;

Directed by: Dr. A. R. Burgess

The major objective of this research is the investigation of the various approaches used by petroleum refinery managements on the Texas Gulf Coast, as these refineries attempted to solve the problem of work assignments and their impact on collective bargaining. To assess the problem as it developed, and came to importance in the late 1950's, historical background has been used to trace the development of the petroleum refining industry, and the dominant union (Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union) in that industry. Legal background material and a literature survey are used to show how the area of management rights has changed over the period of the past 120 years, the development of the work assignment problem, and the evolution of the modern day arbitration process.

This investigation reviews personnel practices that contributed to loose labor relation policies in the refining industry. By tracing the industry conditions through the periods of World War II and the first Suez Crisis of 1956, it shows the refinery capacity and product demand factors which led to a softening of the industry-wide economic position. It further discusses the technological changes in the

industry which forced changes in the number of operating and maintenance personnel necessary to operate a refinery. All of these factors, which climaxed at approximately the same time, made necessary a reduction in product cost. This investigation has sought to examine the effect of the efforts of management to bring about cost reductions through a more efficient utilization of manpower. This necessity for change precipitated the work assignments dispute.

Four case studies of refineries on the Texas Gulf Coast are analyzed to show how each management attempted to obtain its desired changes in work assignments. The four cases presented include what is termed a hard approach to the problem, a soft approach, and two cases that fall somewhere in between these two extremes. The material for these case studies was obtained through interviews with management personnel, union officials, and individual workers from the various refineries.

A comparison is made between the work assignment problems in the construction and railroad industries, and the petroleum refining industry, seeking possible guidelines for use in the latter.

A computer simulation program is presented to give management and/or labor another tool with which to aid both sides in achieving a mutually satisfactory economic settlement in future negotiations in the work assignment area, be the solution through the technique of craft consolidation or easing of craft line restrictions in routine maintenance operations.

The work concludes with research recommendations in three areas: a change in the union bargaining methods, a quantification of routine maintenance scheduling using queueing theory, and suggested areas of improvements for a computer simulation program.