

UNION RESPONSE TO A HOSTILE LABOR ENVIRONMENT
THE CASE OF AUSTIN, TEXAS 1993

BY

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Seen on a bumper sticker in the parking lot of AFSCME local 1624,
"Will Rogers Never Met a City Manager."

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local union 1624 and the City of Austin, Texas have a dynamic and dependent relationship. Their relationship is similar to two good runners who need the challenge of each other to achieve greatness. It is not an adversarial relationship at all times, but rather one of competition. Competition for the support and loyalty of taxpayer-voters and public employees whom they both purport to serve. Each organization challenging the other to do its best.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this study is to explore the dynamics of the relationship between the City of Austin, Texas and AFSCME Local 1624. It represents a continuum of scholarly research begun by Chester A. Newland (1962), followed by I.B. Helburn (1971), Charles J. Morris (1976), and Cheryl G. Swanson (1989). This study, in fact, replicates the 1989 Swanson study. Using similar hypotheses and methodology, this study charts the changes that have occurred in the city-union relationship since Swanson's effort.

HYPOTHESES:

This study seeks support for four hypotheses: 1) That public unions gather power from their members. 2) Public unions exert an

influence on city personnel policies. 3) Public unions are successfully using political and social pressure to gain power in Texas. 4) Public unions are actively building coalitions in Texas.

INTEREST:

Interest in this subject stems from graduate study of public personnel concepts and systems in Texas. Coming from the Northeast where unions were concentrated and powerful during the 1960s, I was intrigued by the Texas practice of "at will" employment and Texas right-to-work laws. "Back East," a union card often meant the difference between wealth (employment) or poverty (unemployment or underemployment). Union membership also meant security.

Further investigation, by way of course work, revealed an alien environment of private and public employment in Texas. Texas law and Texans' attitude toward organized labor, especially in the public domain, demanded closer research.

The Swanson study provided a clear opportunity to learn more about public unionism in Texas. It also provided an opportunity to add this study to a growing body of knowledge. The data collected on union activity and labor management relationships will be used to make some tentative and very general assessments about the consequences of Texas labor law and resultant behavior for such values as representation, stability, and public accountability (Swanson 1989:2).

IMPORTANCE:

The city-union study is important for several reasons. First, and probably foremost, Austin taxpayer-voters should want to know how their monies (collected as city sales tax and property tax) are being spent by the city council. If infrastructure repair and maintenance is the number one concern of taxpayer-voters then the city council, assuming they are politically astute, should be dedicating money to infrastructure. If, however, the union has influence with the city council, tax dollars may be going to increase employee's salary and benefit programs.

We see the effects of influence every day at the federal level. Large interest groups have become so powerful that they dictate policy that is often contrary to public sentiment (the insurance lobby comes to mind). A public union is, of course, an interest group. It is a unique interest group in that its members are also taxpayer-voters-employees.

The Austin city council, which represent taxpayer-voters, should be interested in this study so that they are aware of union strategies to control tax dollars. If individual council members are not sensitive to taxpayer-voter's concerns over tax dollar allocations, they will probably not be re-elected. The often silent majority of voters may reshape the city council by electing members who will be more responsive to citizen priorities rather than responding to union influence.

The city managers should want to know how union influence may affect their decision making ability. After all, a new personnel policy or procedure may take away a portion of management's discretion. For example, if a union is successful in securing "just cause" as the sole criterion for employee dismissal, city management has now lost the authority to fire employees at their (management's) will. Thus, management's decision making may be directly affected by union influence with the city council or the voter.

On the other side of the scale, AFSCME Local 1624 should be interested in knowing which of their strategies and methods are most successful. Is it boldness or cooperativeness that works best? Is influence best achieved through public sentiment or political endorsement? A successful public union knows the best answer for these questions.

Lastly, scholars may be interested in this study of relationships and influence as a way of explaining other social, political, and economic phenomenon that are affected by public sector union successes and failures in the city of Austin. A tug on one strand of the city's web is usually felt throughout the entire web.

AUSTIN'S CITY GOVERNMENT:

The City of Austin is chartered by Chapter 90, page 634, Special Laws of Texas, 1909, 31st Legislature...The municipal government provide by this Charter shall be, and shall be known

as, "Council-Manager government." Pursuant to the provisions of, and subject only to the limitations imposed by the State Constitution, the State laws, and this Charter, all powers of the City shall be vested in and exercised by an elective council,...which shall enact legislation, adopt budgets, determine policies, and appoint the City Manager who shall execute the laws and administer the government of the City (Charter of the City of Austin, hereafter known as the Charter, Article I: 1).

The city council is made up of seven council members who are elected at large. There are six numbered council "places" and a mayor. Council members normally serve for two years beginning on the fifteenth day of May of each odd numbered year (the Charter, Article II: 7). The council may perform all municipal acts with the general exception that it may not sell, convey, lease, mortgage, or otherwise alienate land, or any municipally owned utility.

The City Manager is appointed by the Council. He or she is the city's chief administrative and executive officer. The City Manager has no definite term of office...but rather serves at the pleasure of the Council (the Charter, Article V: 23).

AFSCME LOCAL 1624:

The American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 1624 in Austin, Texas represents approximately 1700 Austin city employees. Austin has a total of approximately 8,200 public employees. AFSCME therefore represents

about 20 percent of the Austin city workforce. AFSCME Local 1624 also represents a certain percentage of Travis County public workers. For purposes of this study, only the City of Austin employees are considered.

AFSCME Local 1624 has recently formed two separate groups in order to tailor their programs to the specific needs of either the county or the city employees. AFSCME believes this functional breakout of a county group and a city group helps workers better identify issues germane to their particular group. It is also intended to improve members' feelings of representation by the local. The local is guided by a fifteen member executive board. The board is composed of AFSCME Local 1624 union members elected by the general membership.

CHAPTER SUMMARY:

In summary, this chapter states the purpose of the study at hand i.e., to examine the relationship between the City of Austin and AFSCME Local 1624. The study will be organized around four hypotheses. This chapter also establishes that this study is a replication of a previous study conducted by Swanson. This chapter expounds the study's value to different socio-political groups and introduces the study's major players. The major players are the Austin City Council, the Austin city management staff, and AFSCME Local 1624.

SUBSEQUENT CHAPTERS:

Chapter Two, the literature review chapter, will add

scholarly depth to the study by identifying previous researchers and their work. Support and clarification for the study's hypothesis (problems) will be discussed in the literature review. Justification and background for the study will also be contained in the literature review. Any expert opinions, speculations, theories, and perspectives of other researchers that bear upon the current study will be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Three will define the environment in which the study will take place. An overview of the city of Austin, Texas will be the "umbrella" of the setting structure. The city's demographics, political climate, legal climate, economic climate and social values will be the panels of the umbrella. AFSCME's position and influence in these various panels will be discussed as an integral part of the setting. A discussion of the Austin City Council and city management officials will complete the research setting.

Chapter Four will begin by discussing how and why the case study method is the most appropriate methodology for this research. It will also discuss the need to closely follow Swanson's research methodology. The specific case study method of interviewing union officials, city council members, and city management officials for this study will be discussed. The need for anonymity and confidentiality will be discussed. Interview questions for each group of officials will be listed and discussed. The use of triangulation methods to confirm verbal

data and an on-going literature review will be integrated in this chapter.

Chapter Five will be the paramount chapter. It will report the findings of the study in detail. It will restate the Who, What, Where, When, and Why of this study. A pattern matching case study analysis is planned. Outcomes predicted by the study's hypothesis will be compared with empirical case study findings. For example, one hypothesis claims that AFSCME is building coalitions in Austin with other interest groups. The case studies findings will support or refute this hypothesis. This chapter will also compare the findings of this study with the findings in the Swanson study conducted in 1989. Significant changes will be discussed as to their possible cause and effect.

Chapter Six will summarize the study in terms of hypothesis, methodology, and findings. Any substantive conclusions reached in this study effort will be discussed. Perceptions will also be discussed. Recommendations for future research and researchers will be offered.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this chapter is to clarify the research problem by identifying previous research that lends support to this study. Additionally, this chapter seeks to justify the study as a continuum of scholarly articles. Each new article builds upon previous articles and adds to the understanding of the relationship between public sector unions and public employers.

BACKGROUND:Profile of a hostile labor environment:

The literature suggests several conditions that identify an environment hostile to the organization and operation of public sector unions.

Prohibitive bargaining laws:

Prohibitive bargaining laws are probably the biggest obstacle faced by public unions today. Theoretically, the legal status of bargaining rights in the local public sector may be an important determinant of the extent of unionization. States that *prohibit* bargaining assign the highest price to union activity (Zak & Ichniowski, 1990: 448). In this circumstance, public employers are forbidden by law to bargain with public employee union representatives. In some cases, the public employer is further forbidden to even recognize union representatives. If challenged, public employers can easily take this one step further in the courts.

Courts can enjoin any employee activity aimed at winning bargaining rights (Zak & Ichniowski, 1990: 448). If public employers invoke this option, and the courts apply a strict interpretation of the law, any attempt by public employees to bargain collectively will be defeated in-hand. A somewhat dated example took place in Florida in 1944. At that time, Florida had an anti-bargaining law that was typical of most Southern states. When the city manager of Miami asked the attorney general whether the city was obligated to negotiate with a union of its employees, the attorney general replied in no uncertain terms:

No organization...can tell a political subdivision possessing the attributes of sovereignty, whom it can employ, how much it shall pay them, or any other matter or thing relating to its employees...You have absolutely no right or authority to grant collective bargaining with trade unions or their agents for your city employees and...you should not in any wise encourage the same, but should absolutely refuse to have anything to do with such an organization or its agents (Miller & Canack, 1991: 351).

The constitutionality of the anti-bargaining provisions was upheld by the United States Supreme Court in 1971 (Helburn, 1977: 350). Anti-bargaining legislation is considered by many researchers to be the paramount deterrent to establishing or maintaining public unions.

Right-to-work laws:

Right-to-work (RTW) laws also threaten public union security. Researchers in the 1970s reasoned that RTW laws were enacted because voters believed that prohibiting union shop contracts would attract industry to their state (Carroll, 1986: 495). However, there is nothing in the literature to support this

proposition. In fact, right-to-work laws actually appear to increase unemployment rates rather than decrease them (Carroll, 1986: 509). It could be hypothesized that employees covered by right-to-work laws are less likely to be union members than those not covered; there is presumably greater latitude for free-riders in a right-to-work environment (Hundley, 1988;306). Free-riders are non-union workers who work in collective bargaining units. Free-riders pay no union dues yet they benefit from union negotiations by virtue of their membership in the bargaining unit. Free-riders effectively reduce union membership. Lower union membership in right-to-work states means that unions are weaker in collective bargaining, thereby lowering the average earnings in both competitive and noncompetitive sectors of manufacturing (Carroll, 1986: 508). This free-rider reasoning applies to the public sector as well as the private sector. Right-to-work laws and their by product of free-riders are both detractors of public sector unionism.

Anti-strike legislation:

Anti-strike legislation is another stake in the heart to public sector unionization. Without the strike, or some substitute form of economic weapon, labor might never be able to force management to take its demands seriously, and management might never be able to force workers to withdraw demands or give concessions (Freeman, 1986: 66). The strike, or even sometime just the threat of strike, is a key weapon in the public union arsenal. Most states, however, have legislation that prohibits

strikes by public workers.

Public sector strikes also shed some light on the political nature of public unions. A strike that paralyzes government has the potential to produce a sovereignty crisis (Scheuerman, 1989: 434). Sovereignty is a key issue used to control public sector unionism. Among the first objections to public sector unionism was the claim that such unionism infringes on the sovereign power of the state in determining levels of services and rules for the behavior of public employees (Freeman, 1986:49).

The political implications of a strike also contain important ideological dimensions unfavorable to strikers. In a democracy where elected officials are responsive to the electorate, a public sector strike may scuttle an elected officials program. This is why citizens often view strikes against government agencies as an assault on the democratically arrived at "common good." Once this occurs, it becomes easy to brand a public strike as a selfish and anti-democratic act of another special interest. This helps explain the ease in which states have passed laws restricting public sector strikes (Scheuerman 1989: 434).

Employment-at-will:

Employment-at-will is an arcane concept brought to the United States via English Common Law. Employment-at-will helps create an environment hostile to unionization. For over 100 years employers have been shielded from judicial scrutiny in hirings and firings by a now antiquated legal presumption: the doctrine

of employment at-will. According to this doctrine, over two thirds of the U.S. work force can be fired for no cause whatsoever (Mauk, 1991: 28).

The United States is the last major industrialized country that does not have comprehensive statutes protecting employees against arbitrary dismissal or "discharge" as it is usually termed in American parlance (Grenig, 1991: 569). Employment-at-will gives the average American worker no recourse in the event he or she loses their job. Yet, a job is essential for most people. One's job and the important benefits that many jobs confer are perhaps an individual's most important "property." Not only is a job the principal source of economic wealth, it represents an important source of psychic investment and income as well (Lee, 1991: 64).

From the economists' perspective, employment-at-will works well in facilitating economic efficiency. Either the worker or the employer may terminate the employment agreement at any time, and it is rational for either party to do so when systematically exploited by the other. The moral failure of employment-at-will is its failure to respect workers as rational beings, as ends in themselves worthy of respect and dignity (Molz, 1987: 453). For any worker, public or private to be terminated from employment for no cause whatsoever does not show respect for labor. In fact, it helps foster an environment that is hostile to labor.

Impasse Resolution Procedure:

The lack of a standardized Impasse Resolution Procedure is

another crack in the armor of public unions. Public employees do not possess a common-law right-to-strike. In the absence of impasse resolution methods that promote concessions by both parties, there is nothing inherent in the bargaining process that should convince management to set compensation levels higher than the minimum level necessary to retain an adequate supply of labor.

Impasse procedures that culminate with compulsory arbitration are expected to have an unambiguously positive effect on union membership (Hundley, 1988: 307). An impasse resolution procedure also tends to prevent strikes. Its main benefit for organized labor, however, is that it forces public employers to the bargaining table. When these conflicts occur over personnel matters, there is a tendency to bring them to the political arena. And given the lack of formal procedures, the same issue may need to be resolved repeatedly over the years (Swanson 1989: 30).

Public sentiment:

Business orientation and general feelings of the population toward business and labor have a strong effect on public sector unionism. Public sentiment may empathize with the bold entrepreneur at the expense of labor. Lipset (1990) used extensive opinion polls to compare the union density in the United States and Canada. He found that union density in Canada was significantly higher than that of its southern neighbor.

My answer is that the 'American social structure and values foster an emphasis on competitive individualism, an

orientation that is not congruent with class consciousness, support for socialist or social democratic parties, or a strong labor movement'(Lipset, 1990: 531).

In some states, a strong business community will force strong anti-union legislation. The private and public business sector simply does not want to have their decision making authority infringed by labor. Given the political environments, it is not surprising that Florida's labor relations acts enacted before 1967 attempted to limit union growth in the private sector and to prevent completely the formation of unions in the public sector. This legislation was pushed by a well-organized business community (Miller and Canack, 1991: 351).

Lack of a central personnel agency:

The lack of a State Personnel agency keeps labor off-balance. States that do not have a single state personnel agency also do not have a single state personnel policy and procedures regulation. Consequently, state personnel management becomes very fragmented. Each agency develops its own peculiar personnel system. This means union organizations must deal with each agency with its peculiar personnel policy and procedures on a case by case basis. Large statewide victories cannot be won by the union due to this fragmented system. Helburn (1977), speaking to the dilemma faced by public sector labor organizations in Texas, relates,

There is no centralized personnel agency in Texas. "Every two years...the legislature rewrites the majority of the state's basic personnel laws and policies as part of the general appropriation bill" (Helburn, 1977: 352).

Because Texas has no centralized personnel agency, state

personnel policies are rewritten at least every two years. Thus, it is easy to understand how difficult it is for labor to hit this elusive target.

Privatization:

Privatization, the latest craze in governments' attempt to provide public services cheaper and more efficiently, can also be a ploy used to discourage unionization. Searching for ways to drive down the costs of government, administrators emulate the tactics of private managers by tightening their grip on the labor process. Speed-ups, deskilling, and contracting out, staples in the arsenal of the private sector war against labor, also characterize the offensive against public sector unions (Scheuerman, 1989: 433).

Theoretically, privatization offers a check on the ability of public unions to push up wages, fringes, employment and budgets. Because contracting poses such a serious threat to job and union security, it is hardly surprising that unions oppose it (Feuille, 1991: 360). Privatization of a public service can oust a union shop that previously provided the particular service or it can prevent a union from providing the service in the first place. Both tactics are hostile toward unionization.

Texas: Fitting the labor hostile profile:

Contemporary literature supports the proposition that Texas has a political, business and economic climate that is very hostile to union organization, particularly public unions. The story opens with enactment of article 5154c (of the Texas Civil

Statutes) which was passed in 1947. This statute unequivocally declared that it was "against the public policy of the State of Texas for public employees to engage in strikes or organized work stoppages." And to make doubly certain that such strikes would not occur, the legislature added express prohibitions in subsections 1 and 2 of the Act against union recognition and collective bargaining contracts (Morris, 1976:293). This is still the law-of-the-land in 1993, with the rare exception of police and fire fighter unions that have some collective bargaining rights.

There is still no centralized personnel system in Texas. Most public employees still work "at-will." The right-to-work law is still firmly in-place. Impasse resolution procedures are established at the option of the public agency. Privatization as a means of evicting public unions continues virtually unchecked. Business entrepreneurs are still revered by the public. On balance, however, Texas law and conservative and even anti-union feelings of both employees and supervisors throughout the state have resulted in a climate that has been hostile to union organization (Helburn, 1977: 354). Labor laws covering employees in the private and public sector can be perceived as holding down employee compensation and contributing to the creation of a "good business environment" (Swanson, 1989: 5).

Outside of civil rights and equal opportunity legislation, the federal government has issued no legislation mandating changes that would affect the status of union bargaining in

Texas. One researcher confirms,

Federal statutes regulating labor relations in the private sector have not been extended to the public sector, nor has separate federal legislation to regulate labor relations in the public sector been enacted (Lewin, 1985: 77).

The literature paints a grim picture of seemingly insurmountable legal obstacles placed in the path of public sector unionization in Texas. Despite the anti-bargaining provisions of the current law, there are political jurisdictions within the state where public employee unions do bargain with public employers (Helburn, 1977: 356). Nevertheless, this unique Texas brand of bargaining does consist of legal and enforceable rights and duties, and the agreements resulting from its practice are also enforceable though not with the ease of private sector agreements under section 301 of the Taft-Hartley Act (Morris, 1976: 292).

Conceptual framework for this study:

In 1989, Cheryl G. Swanson, who was then a professor in the Political Science Department of Southwest Texas State University, completed a study entitled: "Union Response to a Hostile Labor Environment: The Case of Texas." This study was completed by Swanson in preparation to teach a graduate course on public sector collective bargaining and for presentation to the Southwest Social Science Convention held in March, 1990 at Fort Worth, Texas. It focused on the relationship of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 1624 and the City of Austin, Texas. The purpose of Swanson's research was to determine 1) union objectives and the strategies the union uses to achieve its objectives, 2) the kinds

of political and administrative relationships the union develops with the city, and 3) the nature and scope of union influence in the city (Swanson, 1989: 14).

This study is a replication of the Swanson study. Its purpose is the same except it seeks to identify changes in the relationship between AFSCME Local 1624 and the City of Austin since 1989. This study seeks support for four hypotheses: 1) That public unions gather power from their members. 2) Public unions exert an influence on city personnel policies. 3) Public unions are successfully using political and social pressure to gain power in Texas. 4) Public unions are actively building coalitions in Texas. There is evidence in the literature to support these hypotheses.

HYPOTHESES:

Public unions gather power from their members:

It is important to emphasize that union membership figures and collective bargaining statistics are but crude measures of a broad social phenomenon. This phenomenon is the growing strength of organized workers. This bargaining strength gains not only higher wages, benefits, and job security, but also self-respect, better working conditions, more self-confidence, increased political influence, and stronger feelings of group, union, and class solidarity (Goldfield, 1989: 412). Goldfield's testimony confirms the increased political influence, i.e., power that is achieved by an active and growing union. One characteristic unique to the public sector is that employees can vote for those

officials who ultimately control their compensation and employment levels (O'Brien, 1992: 190).

Perhaps the best summation of how public unions may be strengthened by their membership is related in a frustrated union president's newsletter. Robert Beyers' union represents 69,000 members of bargaining units but only about 20 percent are dues paying members. Beyers is lamenting about lack of member support (and low union membership) that resulted in a disappointing pay raise for union members.

So you think your upcoming raise is too small? Remember: Our membership is our strength; it is our political power and our greatest bargaining tool. If we were 69,000 members strong, we would be more capable of voting in or voting out the political candidates of our choice. We must have legislators and congresspeople who we, as a union, can talk to and who will support us and our cause, which is: wages, hours, working conditions, fairness and equality for all State workers (Jermier, et.al. 1988: 175)

A union, as the cliché goes, is only as strong as its membership. An active, informed, militant rank-and-file makes a strong and powerful organization (Scheuerman, 1989: 439). Saltzman (1985) postulates that public union strength is not only an effect but also a cause of public policy changes. As public employee unions gain strength, politicians will become more sensitive to their demands (Saltzman, 1985: 341). Thus, a public union may be considered a separate interest group. Municipal employees are dependent on the city budget for their livelihood. Hence, they have the incentive to function as political interest groups on budgetary matters (Schwochau, 1988: 418).

The union does derive power from its members. That is,

council members tend to see the union as playing a legitimate and important role in representing employees in the political process (Swanson, 1989: 23). The foregoing literature clearly supports the hypothesis that public unions gather power from their members.

Public unions exert influence on city personnel policies:

Perhaps the most important way unionism affects the operation of enterprises is to force firms to alter their personnel practices. Rules replace managerial discretion in a wide variety of decision areas (Freeman, 1986: 62). For public sector unions the next best thing to collective bargaining is the power to influence public personnel policy. In some areas, unions have been able to establish a strong lobby effort and thus exert significant influence on wages and working condition decisions. The product of these negotiations may be found in city personnel policy manuals, minutes of council meetings and other documents that substitute adequately for the more traditional form of agreement (Helburn, 1977: 356). Feuille theorizes that public unions may be more influential than private sector unions. He writes, "Government employers do not have the same incentive to resist unions as their private sector counterparts do because of the absence of competitive product market pressure." (Feuille, 1991: 353).

Two recent studies confirm that AFSCME Local 1624 has input into the personnel policy making process in Austin. In 1989, the city personnel office revised the city's personnel policies, and

the revisions were submitted to AFSCME for review (Swanson, 1989: 21). Almost three years later Van Riper found a similar personnel policy revision involving AFSCME. The city of Austin has allowed AFSCME into the process of rewriting the City's personnel policies. An important point to note is that this is not a typical labor-management joint exercise. This must be a major coup for AFSCME (Van Riper, 1992: 7).

It follows that unions desire access to the operations of the firm's internal labor market. If the union wins the privilege of participating in personnel decisions, it can influence the wages of individual workers de facto. For example, the union can share or control responsibility for allocating training opportunities, grade-level improvements, promotions, and opportunities for overtime and shift duties (Blakemore and Faith, 1989: 911). This kind of participative management between the union and the employer can be mutually beneficial. The union gets access to decisions that can affect their members and the employer gets assistance with administration. AFSCME's staff attorney stresses that AFSCME does not view the labor-management relationship as adversarial. He adds that informed persuasion and mutual interest has been most effective in advancing organized labor's goals (Van Riper 1992: 3).

This is a new perspective on union-management relations. According to advocates of this new perspective such as Blakemore and Faith, the union acts in the capacity of a shared agent. The union can provide numerous services to the employer while still

fulfilling its obligations to its members. Indeed the union has an advantage in many personnel actions because the workers place greater trust in their own agent than their employer's personnel department. Further, the union can monitor employment contracts and discipline workers for the employer. It also can become an effective grievance coordinator and a dual advocate seeking to reduce absenteeism, and improve worker safety. In its dual agency role, the union is able to compensate the firm for the privilege of differentially rewarding its membership, and thus improving the union's internal and external security (Blakemore and Faith, 1989: 911).

Public unions use political and social pressure to gain power:

Public unions operating in an environment that prohibits traditional strategies, such as collective bargaining and strikes, must use other means to accomplish their objectives. Public unions have found that political and social pressure can help the union accomplish its goals and serve its members. The terms multilateral and end run bargaining are commonly used to refer to the situation in which public sector unions bargain not simply with those across the table from them, but with other interested public parties as well (Freeman, 1986: 53). When across the table negotiations are stalled, public unions must look to politicians and voters for relief.

In Austin, the AFSCME Local behaves like a political pressure group using lobbying and political endorsements to achieve its objectives (Swanson, 1989: 27). The literature tells

us that in other circumstances unions have effectively used legislative and voter support to win terms they could not gain at the negotiating table (Freeman, 1986: 52). Public employee unions have available a number of techniques to influence the demand for their members. Unpublished data collected by the International City Managers Association (1988) lists seven types of political activities: candidate endorsement, candidate financial contributions, manpower or in-kind campaign contributions, mismanagement disclosure threats, publicity campaigns, state-level lobbying, and taking issues to referendum (O'Brien, 1992: 190). Scheuerman confirms,

The politicalization of public production means that recognizable faces and political interests replace the abstract 'apolitical' workings of the market making it easier for voters to locate political responsibility...In a democracy popular opinion justifies the production of public products--voters make demands and elected officials respond accordingly (Scheuerman, 1989: 434).

To varying degrees, AFSCME Local 1624 in Austin uses most of the above techniques to increase its security. Van Riper (1992) reports,

AFSCME's political action committee in Austin is entitled PEOPLE. PEOPLE stands for Public Employees Organized to Promote Legislative Equality. This committee lobbies the Travis County Commissioners Court and the Austin City Council. They were also the largest contributors to three city councilmen's political campaign during the last city election. One of these council positions was the position of mayor. Naturally, this political action committee supports candidates whom they believe will be supportive of decisions favorable to labor. PEOPLE also is very active in a hands-on kind of way during elections. They assist with voter registration, distribute flyers, drive people to the polls and man telephone banks (Van Riper, 1992: 9).

Lobbying with individual council members was used extensively by

the union leadership to build credibility among council members and to establish closer relationships with them (Swanson 1989: 17).

An indirect way to apply pressure on politicians is to use public opinion to gain support for union objectives. The politician is ultimately answerable to the voting public. This tactic can be very effective in changing a political stance. Many unions use the media to reach the public. At AFSCME Local 1624 the union president developed a media strategy to increase union visibility and develop a favorable image of the organization. A social justice theme was developed that portrayed the union as defending just causes such as ending race discrimination in the city, exposing mismanagement, and fighting to prevent further cutbacks in basic city services. In this manner, the leadership tried to move the union toward a more public or community-regarding image and to pressure the council to give more recognition to the union (Swanson, 1989: 17). When public opinion is strong the public union may force a referendum vote to confirm its position. Taking issues to referendum is a direct way for public employees to appeal to the voter (O'Brien, 1992: 191). Public unions are actively building coalitions:

Public employee unions provide services to different segments of the population. This puts public workers in a convenient position to join with the recipients of the services they provide in demanding more and/or better quality goods (Scheuerman, 1989: 438). AFSCME Local 1624 is building a

coalition with the Austin City Council. AFSCME provides the city council with expertise and information that the council, because of a lack of staff support, would have difficulty getting on its own. Thus a relationship is built on mutual need. The council needs information and expertise and the union needs a voice with the council. When the union shares information with the council, it enhances the council's position, and council members can provide support to the union at little or no cost (Swanson, 1989: 26).

On a broader base, public unions of all types must band together as a coalition and act as a voting block if laws and tradition are to change in Texas. If the labor movement is to realize the full potential of organization as a source of power, unions have to take the concept of solidarity more seriously. They should develop solidarity networks to coordinate their activities (Scheuerman, 1989: 439). It will undoubtedly require a determined assault by a large and strong coalition of pro-labor groups to affect a change in the hostile labor environment that exists in Texas today. This may not be impossible, however, Scheuerman again tells us that a progressive social agenda connecting the private interests of unions and the recipients of public services could forge a labor-led public coalition capable of reshaping the existing political agenda (Scheuerman, 1989: 438). Changing the law will require changing the social conscience of Texans first. This will be a slow and arduous task. However, social change usually happens as described by French

historian Henri S'ee,

...a social movement operates like the waves of the sea eating away at the base of a cliff. For years nothing seems to happen. Then, one day, the side of the cliff falls in...The labor movement has always grown in surges (Goldfield, 1989: 415).

In summary, the literature clearly establishes that a environment hostile to labor organization still exists in Texas today. Laws still forbid collective bargaining for most public workers and forbid strikes for all public workers. Right-to-work laws and the arcane concept of employment-at-will are still enforced in Texas. Texas has no central personnel agency and no standardized impasse resolution procedure. Despite these obstacles, public unions in Texas are making some inroads via the political and social process.

There is strong support in the literature for the first three hypotheses: 1) public unions gather power from their members, 2) public unions exert influence on city personnel policies, and 3) public unions are successfully using political and social pressure to gain power. There is some tentative support for the last hypothesis: 4) public unions are actively building coalitions. All of these hypotheses will be researched using a case study methodology in an effort to build upon this literature review.

This research project will examine the changes in the union-city relationship since 1989, and how or why these changes occurred. Chapter Three will provide an overview of the setting for this study.

CHAPTER 3

Research Setting

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this chapter is to define the environment in which the study will take place. In this case, the city of Austin, Texas is the geographic locale. Austin's demographics, political climate, legal climate, economic climate, and social climate make up the panels of the study environment's umbrella. Because this study replicates Swanson's study it seeks to address the changes that have occurred in the city and the union since 1989, the time of the Swanson study.

The city of Austin, represented by the city council and city manager's office, and the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 1624 are the institutions being studied. As in the Swanson study, AFSCME Local 1624 is the unit of analysis.

BACKGROUND:

According to Money magazine, Austin, Texas is the third best city in the United States in which to live. Austin's major draws are low housing prices, low taxes, and the local music scene (Money, September 1992). The city of Austin is the second largest employer in Austin (the University of Texas is first) with approximately 8,200 employees. The Austin Chamber of Commerce touts the fact that Austin has no state or corporate income tax (Guide to Greater Austin, 1992-1993: 7) and highlights the low average cost of a new house in Austin \$85,421 (Quick

Facts, 1992: 11).

CITY DEMOGRAPHICS AND POLITICS:

Austin is located in Travis County in central Texas. It is the State capital and Travis County seat, and is home to the University of Texas. Government is the number one business of Austin. U.S Census Bureau data from 1990 estimates the City of Austin's population as 465,622. This is a six percent increase in total population since Swanson's study. The city's workforce of adults 18 years and older is 383,600. Racially, it is approximately 65% Anglo, 18% Hispanic and 17% Blacks/Asians/Others. The city workforce is now 35% minority members, up from 23% minority members during Swanson's research (Swanson 1989: 12).

Austin, as a part of Travis County, traditionally votes Democratic in state and presidential elections. Since the Swanson study, Texas has elected a Democrat for its governor, and the U.S. has elected a Democrat for President. As a city, Austin is viewed as very liberal. This is due in part to a very liberal press and the influence of the University of Texas. Access to the city council by citizens and groups seems to be very good. "No one is denied access," according to one Austin official who describes Austin city government as "Democracy run amuck."

The seven member city council places are elected at-large on a non-partisan basis. From AFSCME's point of view three of the city council members are viewed as pro-labor, two are seen as neutral towards labor, and two are seen as non-supporters of

labor. Two council places are up for re-election on May 1, 1993. AFSCME will try to get two more council members on the Council who will be supportive of labor issues.

Labor issues have gained some prominence in Austin. A labor issue will be included on the May 1st ballot. The labor issue on the referendum is to decide whether the city is going to embrace the principles of "just cause" in employee terminations or hold on to the tradition of "at will" employment. This issue will be addressed in detail in Chapter 5 of this study.

Most conflicts in city government still stem from growth and environmental issues. Where to locate the next Austin regional airport has caused great divisiveness in the city. Another bone of contention in Austin is the battle over the protection or development of Barton Springs. Environment groups want to protect the aquifer. Real Estate and Development groups see Barton Springs as prime growth property. The battle wages.

THE LEGAL CLIMATE:

The legal climate in Austin, and all of Texas, regarding public unions remains the same as in 1989. Employees have the right to join labor organizations, and they have the right to present grievances individually or through a representative that does not claim the right to strike. Public officials may not recognize a labor organization as the bargaining agent for any group of public employees or to enter into a collective bargaining contract with a labor organization...the law bans public employee strikes...and upholds the basic right-to-work

language passed in a 1947 statute (Swanson 1989: 3).

According to an AFSCME lobbyist, there are bills introduced during every legislative session to eliminate or weaken the restrictive nature of Article 5154c of Texas Civil Statutes. Most bills are killed out of hand by the strong Texas business lobby or die in committee for lack of funding. The AFSCME lobbyist also relates that some issues, like labor, are very polarized and therefore have difficulty building statewide interest and coalitions.

Despite the restrictive nature of Texas laws, de facto collective bargaining does take place in Austin. Negotiations between the city and AFSCME Local 1624 not only take place, they are on the increase. It is this anomaly that is the focus of this study. The how and why of this phenomenon will be detailed in Chapter 5.

THE POLITICAL CLIMATE:

Texans revere the entrepreneur. Big cattle. Big oil. Big high-technology. Big business. Power. Authority. Laws are a reflections of a state's political climate and Texas laws are focused on keeping the market place an open range. Labor laws and mandatory negotiations that restrict the entrepreneur have no place in traditional Texas politics. Texans in general resist any social or political change. According to T.R. Fehrenbach,

Every major social change that came in the 20th century was forced upon the State of Texas by outside pressures. Texans...did not follow the Western pattern of granting female suffrage. This came by federal amendment. A host of restrictive laws remained. They were barred from jury duty, restricted in doing business in their own name, and could

not transact property without their husband's consent. Some of this derived from Spanish law, but survived many referenda at large. Texans were indeed gracious to ladies, but preferred not to have the ladies dabbling in warrior's business. The Texan's image, everywhere, dryly and assertively masculine; this too, shaped the native culture.

Votes for Negroes, desegregation, welfare, and various forms of so called civil rights for the non-peer group were forced down the Texan throats from outside. These trends, in a region where New England libertarianism did not dilute the essential puritanism, kept Texas in continual collision with the dominant forces in Washington. The Texan bitterly attributed all such agitations to politics, and was outraged when politics were used to alter the basic parameters of social life (Fehrenbach 1991: 713-14).

Politically, Austin reflects the entrepreneurial spirit of the state. Hometown heroes are mentioned by name in the Austin Chamber of Commerce publication entitled "The Guide to Greater Austin 1992-93." Roger Ross of Ross Technologies and Michael Dell of Dell Computers personify the business bent of Austin's politics. Each of these men have taken an idea and nurtured it until it produced multi-millions of dollars in sales of high technology computer components. They are modern day "warriors," to use Fehrenbach's term, who have conquered the high-technology frontier.

The politics of Austin are designed to support the recruitment of new business to the city. Nowhere in any Chamber of Commerce booklet or pamphlet is there any mention of organized labor, either public or private. Everything is aimed at promoting an environment that is great for business. Low taxes, which usually connotes low wages, are frequently mentioned in Chamber printed material.

The current AFSCME Local 1624 president views the Austin

Chamber of Commerce as the number one foe of organized labor. He cites a recently failed AFSCME initiative as an example. AFSCME attempted to help non-union employees of Texas Instrument and Motorola get a city ordinance passed that would outlaw random drug testing in Austin. AFSCME viewed this policy as an invasion of privacy. The AFSCME president claims that the Chamber of Commerce used their political influence with the city council to prevent this from ever getting to referendum.

The politics of Austin is definitely pro-business. Austin ranks 6th in the U.S. as a preferred location for new manufacturing plants according to a survey by Ernst & Young and the International Association of Corporate Real Estate Executives. Factors include lower lease rates, an educated labor force, access to major highways, savings on construction costs and access to consumer markets (Quick Facts 1992: 10).

Austin also offers a liberal tax abatement plan in order to attract new business. Tax abatement speaks to low cost city services. This usually means low wages for city employees. Since salaries and benefits make up the lion's share of the city budget, it is natural to equate low or deferred taxes with low salaries for city employees.

The effect that low wages have on one's standard of living, however, is directly related to the local economy's cost of living. The cost of living Composite Index for Austin, for the second quarter of 1991 is 99.2. This is significantly below the composite index for Dallas-105.1, Miami-111.6, Seattle-112.7 or

San Diego-131.4 (Quick Facts 1992: 9). Low wages can still purchase a good deal of goods and services in Austin thanks to a low cost of living quotient. However, political maneuvers in Austin are mostly to blame for perpetuating low wages in the city.

THE ECONOMIC CLIMATE:

The Austin economy is steady when compared to other parts of the United States and Texas. Austin's solid base of government jobs has enabled Austin to weather tough economic times better than most cities. Austin has had a steady job growth since 1989 and the unemployment rate has remained below 7 percent (Bates, April 1993). The Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce confirms, "During the last five years, strong government employment growth has played a pivotal role in Austin's overall economic stability by offsetting wide swings in more cyclical industries like construction and real estate" (Employment and Economic Forecast 1991, 5). Local, state, and federal agencies are the largest employers in Austin, employing about 28 percent of the city's labor force. Service industries are a close second, employing 26 percent of the labor force (Guide to Greater Austin 1993: 13).

AFSCME Local 1624 has been able to hold its membership between 1700-1800 members throughout the early 90's. This reflects the somewhat stagnant nature of Austin's present economy. The demand for public services diminished as voter/taxpayers clamored for cuts in government spending at all levels.

One of these cuts at the federal level is the announced closure of Bergstrom Air Force Base in Austin. The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts economic forecast relates, "federal military presence in Austin is slated to decline substantially between 1992 and 1994 (with the closure of Bergstrom Air Force Base). During this period nearly 4000 military and 1000 civilian jobs will be eliminated (Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts Bulletin 1991: 12).

The loss of 4000 consumers, not counting their family members, and an increase of 1000 unemployed civilians will have some adverse impact on Austin's economy. Despite the loss of jobs at Bergstrom, the State Comptroller's economic forecast predicts growth, albeit slow growth, for the Austin area.

THE SOCIAL CLIMATE:

Austin views itself as a modern city with an educated citizenry, an outstanding quality of life and a nationally recognized music scene. The Chamber of Commerce confirms,

Austin is also a high tech city, and that--more than its status as a university or government town--is responsible for its swift growth in recent years. A "Silicon Mesa" of sorts, technology companies have been lured here by Austin's quality of life, its well educated workforce, the presence of the nation's third largest university, and housing prices less than a third of those in California (The Guide to Greater Austin 1992-93: 3-5).

Austin also boasts a professional theater group and a full-time symphony orchestra. These are the trappings of a modern Athens.

As a city, Austin is sensitive to environmental problems both local and global. Environmental groups and government agencies are working together to stop air and water pollution in

Austin. Town Lake in Austin is so contaminated that the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife advises against eating any fish caught from Town Lake. This lies in stark contrast to the pristine image of the city put forth by the Chamber of Commerce.

Austin, like any large city is not without social problems. There is crime in Austin. There are drugs in Austin. The year-round mild weather in Austin, and its abundance of social agencies and programs, has turned Austin into a sort of "Mecca" for homeless people.

The social climate can best be described as divergent. In the eyes of some people Austin is a hill country showcase of good jobs, clean water and air, a public symphony, a ballet troupe, and a center for higher education. Others see Austin as a polluted city, stagnated by an underemployed workforce, with crime, drugs, and homelessness prevalent in the streets. In truth, it is both of these.

Because it is the State capital and Travis County seat, Austin is the home of many state, county, and city government agencies. This is the domain of AFSCME. AFSCME represents primarily low income low skilled government workers. The legal, political, economic, and social climate in Austin directly and indirectly affects the livelihood of these public employees. They seek protection under this umbrella of socio-political artifacts.

CHAPTER 4

Methodology

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this chapter is to justify and detail the methodology used in this study.

BACKGROUND:

This study is a replication of a study conducted by Swanson in 1989. Swanson sought answers to "how" a public union in Texas responds to a hostile labor environment. Swanson also sought to determine "why" this phenomenon was taking place. According to Yin, in general, case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real life context (Yin 1989: 13).

The study at hand seeks to answer these same "how" and "why" questions. The present researcher has little control over events that might occur to affect the processes being investigated. The focus of the study is on the real life events that take place in the relationship between a city and a public union. A classic opportunity for use of the case study method.

REPLICATION:

In an effort to identify the changes that have occurred in the relationship between the City of Austin and AFSCME Local 1624

since the Swanson study was conducted it seemed imperative to follow Swanson's methods as closely as possible. In order to clarify Swanson's methods and obtain her discussion questions Swanson was contacted. She provided all the information necessary to reconstruct the steps and documents of her study.

Swanson interviewed all seven members of the Austin City Council, two union officials: the AFSCME Local 1624 president and the AFSCME Local 1624 Business Manager. Swanson also interviewed two assistant city managers: the personnel director, and the assistant city manager in charge of finance.

Similar positions were interviewed for the current study with four differences. 1) One city council member refused to grant an interview based on a self-imposed policy of not granting interviews to students. 2) One city council member who first asked to see a copy of the discussion topics, later declined to be interviewed. He stated that after reviewing the discussion topics he deemed the subject matter was too controversial. 3) AFSCME has hired a full time staff attorney since the Swanson study. He has been on board AFSCME for over two years. His input was deemed important because the attorney represents a new strategy by AFSCME. 4) The assistant city manager in charge of personnel was not available for interview. The assistant city manager in charge of several functional departments i.e., Aviation, Environment, Public Works, et.al. was interviewed instead.

In sum, five council members were interviewed, two assistant city managers were interviewed, and three union officials were interviewed. Additionally, an extensive phone interview was conducted with a union lobbyist from the AFSCME regional office. Handwritten notes, later transcribed to typed text, document this phone interview.

INITIAL CONTACT OF OFFICIALS:

All city and union officials to be interviewed were mailed a letter of introduction. This letter explained the nature of the study and requested a face to face interview with that official. An example copy of each type of letter: council member, assistant city manager, and union official are attached in appendixes A through F. This letter was followed up with telephone call to each official's office. In all cases, a secretary or executive assistant set up the interview appointment.

Appointments ranged from one week to five weeks delay. Some of these appointments were canceled with no notice by the official and had to be rescheduled for an even later date. A copy of the discussion topics was not provided in advance except in one previously mentioned incident. In all but two cases the officials claimed to have forgotten the text of the introductory letter or said they had not received it.

CONDUCT OF THE INTERVIEWS:

All the interviews were conducted in Austin at the Austin

City Hall Municipal Building 129 W. 8th St. or the AFL-CIO Building 1106 LaVaca. The interviews ranged in length from 45 minutes to 1 hour 20 minutes. All interviews were tape recorded. No one interviewed objected to the use of the tape recorder. The tape recorder is an essential piece of equipment for preparing a word by word transcription of the interviews.

A discussion topic outline was used during each interview. The outline questions were different for each group i.e., the council members were asked a certain set of questions, the city management representatives were asked another set of questions, and the union officials were asked a third set of questions. Naturally, there was some overlap of topics.

For the purpose of this report all city and union officials will remain anonymous if at all possible. In some cases it is impossible to separate the name from the position. Names, however, will not be used. The generic terms of council member, assistant city manager, and union official will be used instead.

VALIDITY:

A transcript of each interview was prepared to document the interviews and facilitate a pattern matching analysis. Yin tells us,

For case study analysis, one of the most desirable strategies is the use of pattern-matching logic. Such a logic compares an empirically based pattern with a predicted one (or with several alternative predictions). If the

patterns coincide, the results can help a case study strengthen its internal validity (Yin 1989: 109).

The pattern-matching logic of this study compares Swanson's study as an empirically based pattern with four predicted patterns (four hypotheses) to determine whether the patterns coincide.

TRIANGULATION:

In an effort to confirm interview data the following printed and non-printed sources were used: newspaper articles, union documents, the Neal Spelce Austin Letter, the Austin City Charter, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce Relocation packet, and phone conversations with the Texas Employment Commission statistician and with AFSCME's regional lobbyist.

CHAPTER 5

Study Report

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES:

Since Swanson (1989) there have been several important personnel and position, and program changes in the city council, AFSCME, and the city manager's office. All of these changes affect the relationship of the city and the union in some fashion. A short summary follows:

The city council has two new members elected in 1991, one of these is the mayor. One new council member was not endorsed by AFSCME.

AFSCME has established and filled a new position of staff attorney. A new union president has been elected. AFSCME Local 1624 has established two groups within the local. One group is comprised of Austin city employees. The other group is made up of Travis county employees. Each group conducts separate meetings.

The city manager has implemented a Total Quality Management (TQM) program called BASICS--Building Austin Standards In Customer Service. The city manager has appointed an AFSCME coordinator from her staff. This appointment is an extra duty. It is not a new or full time position.

UNIONS GAIN POWER FROM THEIR MEMBERS:

AFSCME Local 1624 gains power from its members, not in numbers, but rather in reasonable persistence and political and community activism. Reasonable persistence has gained them more recognition than was found during Swanson's research.

Informal Recognition:

Even though state law prohibits public agencies from recognizing labor organizations as collective bargaining agents for public employees, informal recognition is strong in Austin, Texas. Informal union recognition is clearly stronger than the time of the Swanson study. Four of five Austin city council members who were interviewed clearly stated that they view AFSCME Local 1624 as representing the public employees of Austin. Two council members said they appreciated the fact that front-line employees had a voice through AFSCME, and thought AFSCME provided a good conduit to get employee concerns in front of the city council or city manager.

One union official cites the fact that AFSCME Local 1624 is recognized by the city as a "player" in the restructuring of Breckenridge Hospital as a major recognition of the Local's strength. Breckenridge Hospital will become a public hospital authority and hospital employees will no longer be Austin city employees but rather hospital authority employees.

After 17 years of continuous operation in a hostile labor environment AFSCME's small in number (1700), but persistent members have achieved at least informal recognition from the Austin city council. One city council member stated how impressive it is when AFSCME members attend city council meetings in mass, and fill the city chambers wearing AFSCME's symbolic green tee-shirts.

Apparently, this is a very effective tactic i.e., to make a

few members seem like many members.

Membership Numbers:

All union and city officials noted that the low number of AFSCME Local 1624 members somewhat weakens its influence. Membership has stayed about the same (1700 members) since Swanson's study. When asked to rate a series of factors that might affect a union's position of power and influence in the city all respondents scored the number of union members low. However, all respondents affirmed that if AFSCME Local 1624 could increase its membership, this would certainly mean increased influence. One council member noted that the union's influence would be much greater if they represented 50% of the workforce rather than 20%.

Membership recruitment and retention rates are frustrating to the union's leadership. AFSCME Local 1624 is making a concerted recruiting effort to gain new members. An action plan is being put in place under the direction of the new union president. Recently, gains have been made in the Adult Probation Department of the city. Several city officials recognize that the potential strength of AFSCME Local 1624 could be awesome.

Access:

Access to the city council and the city manager's staff seems to have improved since the Swanson study. This also helps legitimize the influence of AFSCME Local 1624 members. Access is power in political arenas. All of the city and union officials interviewed mentioned that access to the city offices is now just

a matter of a phone call to set up an appointment, and appointments are kept.

Scarce resources caused by budget austerity, and the mutual need for information has played a major role in opening doors for AFSCME in city hall. This will be discussed later in detail in Chapter 6.

Political Action Committee:

AFSCME Local 1624 members also make political contributions through their voluntary participation in AFSCME's political action committee, P.E.O.P.L.E. This acronym stands for Public Employees Organized to Promote Legislative Equality. All campaign funds are allocated from the national AFSCME headquarters in Washington, D.C. Nationally, AFSCME claims that their PAC money had a significant part in getting President Clinton elected. AFSCME is also quick to point out that Clinton is an AFSCME member and that they anticipate that he will be very receptive to issues of concern to public employees. In Texas, AFSCME claims that PEOPLE played an important role in getting Governor Ann Richards elected to office. Locally, AFSCME Local 1624 makes claim to contributing significant campaign funds (about \$5000) to three city council member's successful campaigns and Austin mayor Bruce Todd's successful bid for office.

AFSCME Local 1624 members also provide manpower to local political campaigns. Members man phone banks encouraging people to vote for their (AFSCME's) endorsed candidate. Members pass out voting information leaflets and put up campaign posters. AFSCME

members even drive voters to the polls if the voter has no other transportation.

Community Action:

AFSCME Local 1624 has an active Community Action Committee made up of volunteer local 1624 members. This is another way for AFSCME Local 1624 to gain power, by gaining the support of local communities. The Community Action Committee involves itself in community activities such as blood drives, mentoring programs with the Austin Independent School District, reading for the blind programs, and Telethons. They have also made a financial contribution to Travis County's Black History Program.

The community involvement not only builds community support, it also builds political and social coalitions that may be useful to AFSCME Local 1624 at some point in the future. Coalition building will be discussed later in this chapter.

PUBLIC UNIONS EXERT INFLUENCE ON CITY PERSONNEL POLICY:

There are three distinct new initiatives where AFSCME has exerted influence on city personnel policies. They are, 1) a sick leave transfer program, 2) a return to work program, and 3) a "just cause" employment termination policy. These initiatives were not operational at the time of Swanson's research.

Sick Leave Transfer Program:

AFSCME Local 1624 has been successful in establishing a Sick Leave Transfer Program in Austin. The sick leave transfer program is codified in Austin Administrative Bulletin 91-04 date November 1, 1991. This program allows city workers, who have exhausted

their sick leave and vacation time, to have donated to them the sick leave of other employees. This allows an employee who has sustained a catastrophic illness to continue receiving a paycheck and health insurance benefits even though they have exhausted all of their own time (Public Employee 1993: 1).

Return to Work Program:

AFSCME has convinced the city of Austin to adopt a Return to Work Policy. Under this recent change an employee who gets injured on the job is not automatically terminated. If he or she cannot perform their own job, the Return to Work Policy requires the city to evaluate the injured (now disabled) worker in terms of skill, education, and preference and place him or her in another job, if one is available.

Just Cause:

All three union officials and the majority of the council members interviewed identified "just cause" as AFSCME Local 1624's biggest success in recent years. On August 13, 1992 the Austin city council voted 5 to 2 to adopt "just cause" as the policy to guide the termination of city employees. "Just cause" is codified in the minutes of the August 13, 1993 Austin city council meeting. Black's Law Dictionary defines "just cause" as, "A cause outside a legal cause, which must be based on reasonable grounds, and there must be a fair and honest cause or reason, regulated by good faith (Black 1979: 775).

This is actually a return to a "just cause" policy. From 1954 to 1977 Austin previously followed "just cause." After 1977

Austin returned to the traditional but arcane Texas policy of employment "at will." "At will" employment means an employee may be terminated at any time "at the will" of his employer. AFSCME views "at will" as a substantial threat to job security.

According to union and city officials, AFSCME Local 1624 did a major lobbying effort to secure enough votes to get "just cause" passed by the council. AFSCME Local 1624 also sought and received support from approximately 50 other labor, civic, and community action groups.

As a result of the August 13th vote the city council instructed the city manager to incorporate "just cause" language into the city personnel policies. The city manager's office claims that the personnel policy manual is being revised in accordance with the council's instructions. From AFSCME Local 1624's viewpoint a lot of "foot dragging" is taking place at city hall regarding "just cause," and they (AFSCME) claim that they have not had an opportunity to review the new policy drafts.

So far, this is a major victory for AFSCME. It is a clear inroad toward getting more of their agenda into the city's personnel policies. Opponents of "just cause" on the city council have called for a referendum vote on "just cause" on the May 1, 1993 ballot.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PRESSURE:

Political and social pressure has now become AFSCME Local 1624's most powerful engine of change.

Political Candidate Indorsement:

Three of five city council members interviewed, and two of three union official felt that political candidate endorsement is now viewed as AFSCME greatest source of influence. Swanson reported that "When council members were asked to identify sources of influence, political endorsement was mentioned by only one council member" (Swanson 1989: 24).

As previously mentioned AFSCME views five of the seven city council members as friendly or neutral toward labor. Two members are viewed as not supportive of labor issues. AFSCME Local 1624 will try to replace the two council members viewed as non-supportive. AFSCME will do this by endorsing and campaigning for new candidates who are more labor oriented. AFSCME goal is to load the council with seven council members who were elected because of AFSCME campaign efforts.

Lobbying the City Council:

AFSCME Local 1624's leadership feels that they are often successful in lobbying the city council as an effective way to further their programs. They do this by sending the union official who has the best relationship with a particular council member. This is normal political consensus building. They seek to bring a controversy to a vote and then win that vote. The recent passage of "just cause" is a good example of this tactic. AFSCME lobbied the council until they were reasonably sure that they had sufficient votes to win. When the vote was called AFSCME won by a five to two margin.

One union official described the union's major source of influence in this manner, "I think it is our political clout. In Texas with the laws the way they are, political clout is all we have. When things get sideways with city management, the city council is our last avenue." Another union official states, "Politics is our life blood."

Social Pressure:

AFSCME furthers its goals and objectives by appealing to the social conscience of the community. AFSCME champions such causes as: health and safety in the workplace, civil rights, affirmative action programs, sexual harassment awareness programs, and employee training. Any organization that supports the above causes must have the support of the local community.

Recently AFSCME Local 1624 joined with the Texas Workers Compensation Commission on a training initiative. Their goal is to educate workers regarding safety and health on the job. AFSCME asked the city to allow them to training all city employees whether or not they are AFSCME members. AFSCME has put forth that this kind of training can save taxpayer dollars by increasing productivity. Naturally, the city agreed. How could they disagree with a program that saved taxpayer dollars and increased productivity? A rhetorical question.

What did AFSCME get from this initiative? It built a new coalition with the Texas Workers Compensation Commission. It got the AFSCME logo in front of nonmember city employees during the entire training session. It got a chance to demonstrate its

professionalism to prospective members. It built good will with the city by providing them professional training that is aimed at saving money and increasing productivity.

AFSCME Local 1624 still uses the public television channel to put forth their views on labor issues. AFSCME has a weekly TV show entitled "The Public Employee." It airs every Wednesday at 6:00 P.M. on Austin Channel 10. AFSCME also provides a representative to a live press conference show, which airs every Wednesday and is repeated on Saturday on Austin Channel 6. The outgoing union president used television extensively and apparently became quite adept at appealing to Austin's social conscience. The new Local 1624 president claims that he will use the public television channel when necessary but prefers to work more behind-the-scene.

BUILDING COALITIONS:

The building of coalitions with other labor and non-labor groups is very effective for AFSCME Local 1624. Swanson also mentions this phenomenon. However, the use of coalitions seems to have greatly increased in the last four years.

Labor Groups:

AFSCME Local 1624 actively builds coalitions to support its programs. During the "just cause" initiative Local 1624 sought and received the backing and support of over 50 other organizations according to the union business manager. Most of these organizations were labor organizations from the Austin area Central Labor Council (CLC). There are 32 unions in the Central

Labor Council representing approximately 11,000 workers. AFSCME Local 1624 and the Communications Workers of American (CWA) are the largest members of the labor council. Together they representing about 4000 workers. The CLC members are normally the first to respond and can network very quickly with other groups.

Non-labor Groups:

During "just cause" negotiations AFSCME Local 1624 called upon such non-labor groups as InterFaith, an alliance of religious organizations, the NAACP, LULAC, and the Democratic Party for support.

In community actions AFSCME Local 1624 interfaces with such groups as the Austin Independent School District, the Austin Public Television Channel, and environmental activist groups such as "Save Our Spring."

These coalitions are built for both near and long term needs. AFSCME is sensitive to the need to build a broad base of consensus for the future. This is one of their implied goals. They have, however, been very effective in using their existing coalitions. AFSCME cites the election of three out of four political candidates that their coalition supported as proof of this strength through numbers phenomenon.

NATURE AND SCOPE OF UNION INFLUENCE:

This section reports on the perceptions of union influence by the various council members and assistant city managers interviewed. Unfortunately, two council members chose not to participate so any attempt at statistical comparisons may be

misleading.

AFSCME As An Interest Group:

All council members conceded that they viewed AFSCME Local 1624 as an interest group, although no council member thought that AFSCME Local 1624 was especially powerful. The small number of votes they actually control was cited as the reason by one council member. Business and environmentalist groups were cited as having more power in Austin.

Effectiveness of PAC:

AFSCME's Political Action Committee, P.E.O.P.L.E. is thought of in terms of political contributions. One council member stated that he knew AFSCME had a political action committee but he didn't view it as a lobbying activity. He viewed it only in terms of campaign donations. Another council member confirmed this noting that AFSCME's PAC has more influence on council elections rather than referendum items.

AFSCME's Importance to Council Members:

Council members were asked how important was AFSCME Local 1624 to them as council members. The answers varied from some importance to important. All council members interviewed acknowledged that they viewed AFSCME as somewhat important to them. Most cited the fact that AFSCME Local 1624 did a good job representing front-line employees. They seemed to appreciate that AFSCME is able to articulate the needs of employees who, because of their low position on the pay scale, might not have another voice.

Council members also noted that AFSCME Local 1624 was a good source of information for them. They particularly mentioned that AFSCME was important to them for budget expertise, and for AFSCME ability to point-out "fat" in the budget.

The fact that one council member refused to be interviewed because he felt that the subject was too controversial makes its own statement of AFSCME's importance. A person trying to avoid a controversy is really saying that he would rather not stir up trouble with a politically influential opponent. This also says that the council member who wanted to avoid controversy perceived AFSCME Local 1624 as important.

AFSCME's Strengths and Weaknesses:

This category provided the greatest difference of council members opinions and perceptions. One council member identified AFSCME local 1624's skill in negotiating budget items and their political influence as their greatest strength. Another council member noted that they have great potential strength in their potential membership. One council member admired their persistence and "doggedness." Another council member thought they had a fairly large membership and considered this their strength. Lastly, one council member felt that AFSCME's strength was that they provided organization and (political) connections for their members.

Swanson observed, "Council members were hesitant to identify any weaknesses." (Swanson 1989: 22). This was not the case during the current study. Most council members cited at least one

weakness of AFSCME Local 1624.

One council member, boldly stated that AFSCME Local 1624's management was their weakness. He felt that the paid staff (the management staff) was more concerned with their own agenda rather than representing members. One council member stated that AFSCME Local 1624's low number of members is a weakness. Another council member offered that AFSCME often had poor membership participation in their programs and activities. (A union official expressed this same weakness). One council member felt that AFSCME was sometimes inflexible and considered this a weakness.

There did not seem to be any reluctance on the part of council members to identify AFSCME Local 1624's strengths and weaknesses. This could mean several things. Council members may now have a better familiarity with AFSCME Local 1624 than they did in 1989. The present council members may be more secure in their council "seats" than were the council members in 1989. The council may perceive that AFSCME Local 1624 is not as strong as it was in 1989.

Areas of Most and Least Influence:

This is another grab-bag of perceptions with no identifiable consensus on the part of Austin city council members. Three council members cited personnel policies as AFSCME's area of greatest influence. Another council member identified these same personnel policies as an area of least influence. Two council members felt that AFSCME Local 1624 had the most influence over the city budget. One member also

mentioned grievance procedures as an area of great influence.

One council member felt that AFSCME had the least influence on major policy decision of the council. Another member felt that AFSCME had the least influence on the city managers office. Still another identified the fact that AFSCME Local 1624 has been unable to expand its membership base as an area of least influence.

What Council Members Liked Most and Least About AFSCME:

Five council members interviewed rendered five different answers to the question: "What do you like most and what do you like least about AFSCME?" One council member said he like AFSCME's help with the budget most of all. A second council member claimed he liked the AFSCME board members who had principles and were willing to take stands that were unpopular with their members. A third council member claimed he liked the way AFSCME Local 1624 worked with lower level employees. Council member four said he admired the way AFSCME officials would stand up and represent their members. The fifth council member's answer was similar to council member four's answer. Council member five admired AFSCME as because they represented city employees.

The fact that there is no consensus about what is liked least about AFSCME Local 1624 seems to indicate that no single thing blatantly sticks out. One council member claimed he disliked labor board members who wouldn't stand up and be counted. Another council member disliked the fact that AFSCME's initiative of "just cause" would create a property right in city

jobs. A third council member faulted AFSCME Local 1624 for not exercising greater influence for front line employees. Two council members said there wasn't anything they disliked about AFSCME.

Had all the council members separately mentioned the same dislike, say for example they all found fault with the aggressive nature of the union, a more meaningful conclusion could be drawn.

AFSCME Local 1624's Role in Wage Settlements:

Council members were asked to comment on AFSCME's role in negotiating wage settlements with the city. One council member disclaimed any knowledge of this area. One council member felt that AFSCME Local 1624 exerted very little influence on wage settlements. He stated that despite AFSCME's recommendations, city management normally ignores them and does what management wants to do anyway. One council member confirmed this stand and stated flatly that AFSCME has very little influence and emphasized, "We don't negotiate."

Two other council members felt that AFSCME had fairly good influence on wage settlements. One of these council members said that AFSCME's role varied from merely lobbying the council to the more traditional union role of collective bargaining for wage settlements with management.

AFSCME's Source of Influence:

Three of five council members clearly stated that AFSCME's main source of influence was their endorsement of political candidates. This somewhat confirms the belief of all three union

officials who felt that political endorsement was their most powerful tool. One council member felt that AFSCME Local 1624's greatest source of influence was derived from the AFSCME state and national organizations. Another council member felt that AFSCME Local 1624's greatest source of influence was the fact that they represented a large number of people.

Changes in AFSCME Local 1624:

Council members were asked to comment on any changes they had seen in AFSCME Local 1624 over the past several years. One council member felt that the general perception of AFSCME Local 1624 has changed for the worse. He claimed that the Local staff was perceived as not treating their employees very well. He also felt that the Local staff was more interested in expanding their political base as opposed to representing members.

One council member mentioned that the only change he noticed was that the Local union president changed. Another council member commented that he had not been a council member very long so from his point of view nothing changed at AFSCME Local 1624.

A more senior council member relates that AFSCME Local 1624 has had a history of ups and downs. He claims that in the past the union was more active and more aggressive than it is today. He also stated that for a time AFSCME seemed to have some difficulty in their relationships with the council and city manager's office but, that they were working out of that now.

Influence Ratings:

Council members were asked to rate AFSCME's influence with

them as an individual council on a scale from 1-10 with 10 being the highest degree of influence. Table 1 is a summary of the five council member's ratings.

Council members were also asked to rate a list of conditions in terms of how they affected the unions position of influence or power in the city. Ratings were from least important (1) to most important (10). Tables 2 through 6 record those ratings.

The average scores on these six conditions rated by seven council members in 1989 ranged from 6.6 to 8.4. The current ratings by only five council members score from 5.6 to 7.6. Because the current study lacks two scores for inclusion in the range of score any comparisons drawn from this would be suspect.

Two AFSCME Local 1624 union officials were asked to rate similar conditions. Their response is recorded on Tables 7 though 9 on pages 71 and 72.

Table 1		<u>UNION INFLUENCE RATING</u>									
		lowest					highest				
Council member	1	1	2	3	4	5	X	7	8	9	10
Council member	2	1	2	3	4	X	6	7	8	9	10
Council member	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	X	9	10
Council member	4	1	2	3	4	X	6	7	8	9	10
Council member	5	1	2	3	4	X	6	7	8	9	10
Modal score 1989*		__8__					Modal score 1993				
Mean score 1989*		__7__					Mean score 1993				

*Seven council members' rating 1989

Table 2

UNION POWER AND INFLUENCE CONDITIONS RATED BY EACH COUNCILMEMBER

Union leadership	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	X	10
Management's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	X	10
Council's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	XX
Mayor's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	XX
Number of city employees in the union	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	X	9	10
City financial circumstances	1	2	3	X	5	6	7	8	9	10
Any other circumstances	1	2	X	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Average score										7.6

Table 3

UNION POWER AND INFLUENCE CONDITIONS RATED BY EACH COUNCILMEMBER

Union leadership	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	X	9	10
Management's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	4	X	6	7	8	9	10
Council's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	XX
Mayor's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	4	5	X	7	8	9	10
Number of city employees in the union	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	8	9	10
City financial circumstances	1	2	3	4	5	X	7	8	9	10
Any other circumstances	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	8	9	10
Average score 7.0										

Table 4

UNION POWER AND INFLUENCE CONDITIONS RATED BY EACH COUNCILMEMBER

Union leadership	1	2	3	X	5	6	7	8	9	10
Management's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	X	5	6	7	8	9	10
Council's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	8	9	10
Mayor's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	4	5	X	7	8	9	10
Number of city employees in the union	1	2	X	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
City financial circumstances	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	X	10
Any other circumstances	1	2	3	4	5	X	7	8	9	10
Average score 5.6										

Table 5

UNION POWER AND INFLUENCE CONDITIONS RATED BY EACH COUNCILMEMBER

Union leadership	1	2	3	4	5	X	7	8	9	10
Management's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	8	9	10
Council's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	X	5	6	7	8	9	10
Mayor's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	X	10
Number of city employees in the union	1	2	3	X	5	6	7	8	9	10
City financial circumstances	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	X	9	10
Any other circumstances	1	2	3	4	X	6	7	8	9	10
Average score 6.0										

Table 6

UNION POWER AND INFLUENCE CONDITIONS RATED BY EACH COUNCILMEMBER

Union leadership	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	XX
Management's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	X	9	10
Council's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	XX
Mayor's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	X	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of city employees in the union	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	XX
City financial circumstances	1	2	3	4	X	6	7	8	9	10
Any other circumstances	1	2	X	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Average score 7.1

The above tables 2 through 6 are included to show the ratings of the five council members interviewed for this study only. They may be of some use to future researchers.

MANAGEMENT'S PERCEPTIONS:
Recognition and Relationship:

Both of the city manager's representatives interviewed recognized Local 1624 as a viable representative of city employees who are union members. The fact that the city manager has appointed someone as the manager's AFSCME coordinator also validates AFSCME Local 1624's influence. The coordinator meets with AFSCME Local 1624 representatives on a regular monthly basis, and meets with the AFSCME executive board every two months.

One acting assistant city manager, who is the AFSCME coordinator, describes her relationship with AFSCME Local 1624 as very good. In fact she views Local 1624 as a positive resource in the area of employee discipline problems. She claims that AFSCME has identified problem employees who are AFSCME members and alerted the city manager's office. AFSCME then assists the city in counselling the employees to solve their job problems or, if this fails, supports the city in dismissing the employee.

Another assistant city manager describes AFSCME's relationship with the city managers office as "friendly adversarial." He thinks this is an appropriate relationship and feels that the city manager's office has a healthy relationship with AFSCME Local 1624. He stated that each side watches the other and is sensitive to the others point of view. He also said that the city and AFSCME take exception with each other on specific cases, but generally the relationship is on a good foundation.

When asked whether the relationship has changed over the past several years, both assistant city managers responded that it had changed for the better. Both acknowledged that in many cases the city management's goals and objectives for employees was virtually the same as AFSCME's. One assistant city manager described the relationship at times as mutually supporting.

Management's View of AFSCME Goals:

Personnel policy revision and making the work place better were cited by one assistant city manager as that manager's view

of AFSCME's goals and objectives. He also mentioned that AFSCME is trying to get the city council to bring forward a policy of "no layoffs without cause."

A second manager viewed AFSCME goals as threefold: 1) representing individuals on a case by case basis, 2) pursuing changes to personnel policy to have the city move from an "at will" employer to a "just cause" employer, and 3) annual pay and benefit initiative to maximize pay and benefits for its members.

Budget Negotiations and Wage Determination:

City management assistants describe AFSCME Local 1624's role in the city budget process as indirect. AFSCME does get brought into the budget cycle early-on but has no direct role in budget negotiations. Most of the interchange between the city and the union is informational only. Basically the city tells AFSCME what amount of funds is available and AFSCME submits a "wish list." The city normally funds some of AFSCME's list items.

The assistant city managers were asked to best describe how wages were determined in Austin given four alternative:

- a. unilaterally by the city
- b. informal notions of city employee desires
- c. jointly by employer and employee representatives
- d. other (please describe)

Both assistant city managers chose "other" and described a very democratic and formal process of employee involvement. The city has two boards. One board is the Pay Board. The other board is the Benefits Board. These boards are task forces of city

employees that make pay and benefits recommendations to the city council. Some of the members of these boards are coincidentally AFSCME members. Board recommendations are bumped against employee surveys, employee focus group reports and market surveys to determine which recommendations best reflect the needs of employees. Recommendations are then prioritized based on funds available to the city. Recommendations are then forwarded to the city council for approval.

AFSCME Local 1624 is given a voice throughout the budget process and they are listened to, according to one of the assistant city managers, who is also the city's finance director. As a last resort, AFSCME can lobby the city council to get its demands funded. The former Local 1624 president confirms this tactic, "Management said there was no money for an employee benefits package, so we decided we'd find the money ourselves and go straight to council." (Austin American Statesmen 9/6/90: B2)

AFSCME's most effective strategy has been to expose "fat" in the city budget and make recommendations to the city council how that "fat" can be converted to employee salaries and benefits. The city council is receptive to AFSCME's budget scrutiny.

Management claims that most of AFSCME's recommendations to streamline government are cuts at the top of city administration (managers) to fund pay raises or new jobs at the lower levels of government. Management views this as a zero-sum game.

AFSCME's Role in Personnel Policy Development:

The assistant city managers claim that city personnel policy

manuals are being revised at this time. Essentially, the revisions have been done to incorporate "just cause" language into the policy manuals as instructed by the city council. Although AFSCME was instrumental in bringing this about in August of 1992, AFSCME is just now (April 1993) being brought into the review process.

From the assistant city manager's viewpoint AFSCME had a lot to do with causing the rewrite of the personnel manuals, but the city manager's office is responsible for the actual task. AFSCME's satisfaction with the policy rewrite is moot until a May 1, 1993 referendum finally decides whether or not the City of Austin will adopt "just cause." It is expected that AFSCME will lobby the city council extensively to get their wishes into the personnel policy manuals if "just cause" is adopted.

AFSCME's Greatest Strength and Greatest Weakness:

The fact that AFSCME Local 1624 now has a management staff that is helpful rather than combative is viewed as AFSCME's greatest strength by one assistant city manager. Another city manager views AFSCME's political endorsement and clout with the council as Local 1624's greatest asset.

One assistant city manager claims that AFSCME Local 1624's greatest weakness is that they over-react sometimes before all the facts are known. The second assistant city manager cited no weaknesses.

AFSCME's Influence With the City Council:

One assistant city manager felt that AFSCME had moderate

influence with the council on pay issues, and moderate to great influence on "just cause" issues. This assistant city manager stated that he felt that the city council was sensitive to a broader base of interests on pay issues and therefore AFSCME was not quite so influential on pay as on other personnel issues.

Another assistant city manager felt that AFSCME's influence with the council overall was moderate. He relates that AFSCME has more "pull" with some council members than other. Austere budgets have brought AFSCME, the city council, and the city managers office closer in terms of mutual support. The union and the city both recognize that the other party has resources available. During hard economic times it makes sense to pool as many assets as possible. Basically, this is what the city and the union have done. City management and the city council knows that AFSCME Local 1624 has budget expertise available to them from their national headquarters.

AFSCME LOCAL 1624'S PERCEPTIONS:

Working Relationships:

AFSCME views the city of Austin as a series of departments rather than a monolith. From this view AFSCME claims that they have good working relations with most department directors. The AFSCME staff admits that they have had difficulty in reaching a working relationship with the city manager, but that they have good rapport and trust at the city's various departments.

AFSCME leaders try to match the AFSCME staff member with the best rapport at a particular department to work on member

problems in that department. Comments made by the assistant city managers who were interviewed seems to confirm that AFSCME technique is working.

At the city manager level, AFSCME officials describe their relationship as competitive. The city manager's Total Quality Management program is a good example. TQM is viewed by management as a way to reach out to front line employees, and empower them to become part of the city's decision making process. It is also intended to give employees a voice in their jobs. AFSCME views TQM as an attempt to disenfranchise the union. AFSCME claims that TQM gets a lot of lip-service but does very little to empower the front line employee. Both AFSCME and the city manager are competing for the support of employees.

The relationship with the city council has improved substantially in the last two years according to one union official. He cites the fact that AFSCME helped get three council members elected as the reason for this improved rapport with the council.

AFSCME also believes that their new acquisition of a staff attorney helps their relationship with the council and helps to level the playing legal field. The staff attorney represents a new source of power for AFSCME Local 1624. They are much more likely to force a problem to the courts if all else fails than they have been in the past. AFSCME feels this is a way to get things moving. The threat of litigation can sometimes get parties back to the bargaining table rather than face a long and costly

Table 8

UNION POWER AND INFLUENCE CONDITIONS RATED BY EACH UNION OFFICIAL

Union leadership	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	X	10
Management's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	4	X	6	7	8	9	10
Council's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	X	9	10
Mayor's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	8	9	10
Number of city employees in the union	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	X	9	10
City financial circumstances	1	2	3	4	5	6	X	8	9	10
Any other circumstances	1	2	3	4	X	6	7	8	9	10
Average score										7.0

Table 9

UNION POWER AND INFLUENCE CONDITIONS RATED BY EACH UNION OFFICIAL

Union leadership	1	2	3	4	5	X	7	8	9	10
Management's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	4	X	6	7	8	9	10
Council's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	X	9	10
Mayor's attitude toward the union	1	2	3	4	5	X	7	8	9	10
Number of city employees in the union	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	X	9	10
City financial circumstances	1	2	3	4	5	X	7	8	9	10
Any other circumstances	1	2	3	4	X	6	7	8	9	10
Average score 6.3										

The union official's scores are clearly in line with the ratings rendered by five city council members on similar questions. This would seem to indicate that each side has a similar estimation of AFSCME's power and influence with the city council and city management.

CHAPTER 6

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

SUMMARY:

The purpose of this study was to look at the kinds of relationships that exist between the city of Austin, Texas and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 1624. It also sought support for four hypotheses: 1) That public unions gather power from their members. 2) Public unions exert an influence on city personnel policies. 3) Public unions are successfully using political and social pressure to gain power in Austin, Texas. 4) Public unions are actively building coalitions in Austin, Texas.

Research started with the decision to replicate the 1989 study entitled Union Response to a Hostile Labor Environment, The Case of Texas conducted by Swanson. Next, an extensive review of the literature was conducted to determine whether or not there was support for the hypotheses in the literature. This search was positive.

Following Swanson's lead, and using Yin's book entitled Case Study Research Design and Methods as a guide, interviews were conducted with five Austin city council members, two Austin assistant city managers, and three AFSCME Local 1624 officials. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed to written text. A case study pattern matching analysis was conducted to determine what change in the relationship between the city and the union has taken place since the Swanson study was conducted

in 1989.

CONCLUSIONS:

Relationships:

The overall relationship between the city and the union has improved. The last four years of austere budgets have caused the city and the union to realize that each has resources needed by the other. This has fostered an atmosphere of cooperation on the part of the city and the union. Examples of this are the city manager's appointment of an AFSCME coordinator and AFSCME's initiative to train city employees who are not AFSCME members regarding health and safety in the workplace.

Additionally, almost every person interviewed, regardless of organization, mentioned that the other party was much less confrontational than they had been in the past. Terms like "friendly adversaries" and "competition" were often used to describe the relationship between city departments and the union.

AFSCME cannot yet be considered a "shared agent" but it is moving in that direction. Under the shared agent concept, a union represents their members and they also provide some services to the city.

Influence:

AFSCME main source of influence has become the strategy of political endorsement. During the Swanson study when council members were asked to identify sources of union influence only one council member mentioned political candidate endorsement.

Today, a majority of those interviewed cited political endorsements as AFSCME most powerful source of influence. This could also be a symptom of an austere economy when campaign funds are not easy to find. More than likely, it stems from AFSCME Local 1624's success at putting candidates on the council who are supportive of labor issues. AFSCME feels that three of the present council members were elected because of AFSCME's endorsement. They are trying for more.

A renewed effort to build coalitions in Austin is another strong source of influence for AFSCME Local 1624. AFSCME has found success in forcing their demands on the city council by gathering support from other labor and non-labor organization. AFSCME closely identifies itself with the civil rights movement and bonds with civil rights groups to further both causes. Because AFSCME Local 1624 represents many black and hispanic members it has built coalitions with the NAACP and LULAC. During the battle over "just cause" AFSCME claimed support from over 50 other organizations. AFSCME has also bonded with environmentalist groups

AFSCME's Staff Attorney:

The staff attorney position at AFSCME Local 1624 adds a new dimension to AFSCME's negotiating model. The staff attorney represents a continual threat to force unresolved labor issues to the courts. The national AFSCME organization has provide grant monies to the staff attorney to pursue court actions. This is

particularly interesting in that the Florida labor movement reversed a long standing policy of political hostility toward organized labor by taking labor issues to the Florida Supreme Court.

PERCEPTIONS:

In the "big picture" sense, political endorsement and coalition building are working for AFSCME Local 1624. In the detail, however, several more subtle tactics are paying off.

Information is power and this is true for AFSCME. AFSCME's network is adept at passing information up and down the chain of command, so to speak. The city manager and city council cannot reach the front line worker nearly as quick or as accurately as AFSCME can. AFSCME members trust AFSCME more than they trust city administrators.

AFSCME has labor expertise and this is in demand from the city. AFSCME knows the pulse of the workforce better than the city staff.

Cooperation is paying big dividends. The old days of confrontation for confrontations sake are over. Joint goals and cooperative programs will help both AFSCME and the city.

Persistence is next to godliness. AFSCME persistence tells the city that AFSCME won't go away. This helps AFSCME's competitive image. It also makes the city work harder to further its own goals.

Assertiveness, not aggressiveness, is keeping AFSCME name in

front of the city council.

Reasonableness has won more friends for AFSCME at the city than any other tactic. Reasonableness will probably provide the environment from which AFSCME can continue to grow in influence and in members.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:

Like most research, this study has uncovered more questions than it answered. Several more areas that make up the relationship of AFSCME Local 1624 and the City of Austin beg for exploration. Grievance procedures, as suggested by Swanson, open another side of the city/union relationship that needs study.

The city's TQM programs is viewed entirely different by the city and the union. The city claims the TQM programs is alive and well. The union says it is only lip service and a popularity contest. Which view is correct?

The budget process, and AFSCME role in that process is a third new area open for research. Will AFSCME continue to make inroads into the budget process or will AFSCME be excluded? What are the best tactics and strategies for AFSCME to follow to become a "player" in the budget cycle?

AFSCME's relationship with the Austin Chamber of Commerce is most interesting. According to the current union president, the Chamber is organized labor's greatest foe.

The next level of AFSCME, the regional office and the State of Texas could expand the horizons of this and past studies. What

issues are the AFSCME regional office addressing? Who are their friends and who are their foes?

Labor legislation that is pending or that has failed and its potential impact on the labor environment in Texas is another possibility.

The list is almost endless. Suffice it to say that there is plenty of new and old public labor issues to be explored.

APPENDIX A

Introduction Letter to Austin City Council Member

(Council Member's Address)

Dear Sir,

This is a request for an interview.

I am a graduate student at Southwest Texas State University seeking a Master of Public Administration degree. The capstone of my degree plan is to complete an Applied Research Project. I have chosen to replicate a 1989 study conducted by Dr. Cheryl G. Swanson. Swanson studied the relationship between the City of Austin and AFSCME local 1624. Her research sought to determine: 1) union objectives and the strategies the union uses to achieve these objectives in the city, 2) the kinds of political and administrative relationships the union develops with the city, and 3) the nature and scope of union influence in the city.

Swanson's methodology consisted of individual interviews with all members of the Austin city council, two Austin city administrators, and two AFSCME local 1624 officials. I seek to update the Swanson study. I request an interview with you in order to discuss your perceptions concerning the city council's current relationship with AFSCME local 1624.

The interview will be limited to one hour. I will have several open-ended questions to use as a guide for the interview. In return for your time, I will provide the Austin city council with a copy of my applied research paper as soon as it is approved by SWTSU. Hopefully, it will provide some new insight on the dynamic relationship between the City of Austin and AFSCME local 1624.

I am trying to complete the city council member interviews during the period Jan. 5 through Jan. 10, 1993. I am not working during this period, so I can meet with you at your convenience, day or evening. I will contact your office by phone on Jan. 4, 1993 for an appointment.

Thank you, and I hope you have a happy holiday.

Sincerely,

George G. Van Riper
4402 Onion Road
Killeen, Tx. 76542
(817)628-1180 hm.
(800)597-5692 off.

APPENDIX B

Introduction Letter to AFSCME Local 1624 Official

(AFSCME Official's Address)

Dear Sir,

This is a request for an interview.

I am a graduate student at Southwest Texas State University seeking a Master of Public Administration degree. The capstone of my degree plan is to complete an Applied Research Project. I have chosen to replicate a 1989 study conducted by Dr. Cheryl G. Swanson. Swanson studied the relationship between the City of Austin and AFSCME local 1624. Her research sought to determine: 1) union objectives and the strategies the union uses to achieve these objectives in the city, 2) the kinds of political and administrative relationships the union develops with the city, and 3) the nature and scope of union influence in the city. Mike Shirk has a copy of the 1989 Swanson report.

Swanson's methodology consisted of individual interviews with all members of the Austin city council, two Austin city administrators, and two AFSCME local 1624 officials. I seek to update the Swanson study. I request an interview with you in order to discuss your perceptions concerning AFSCME's present relationships with the city council and city management.

The interview will be limited to one hour. I will have several open-ended questions to use as a guide for the interview. I will attach a copy of these for you. In return for your time, I will provide your 'Local' office with a copy of my applied research paper as soon as it is approved by SWTSU. Hopefully, it will provide some new insight on the dynamic relationship between the City of Austin and AFSCME local 1624.

Your input as Local 1624 President is extremely important to me. I will contact you by phone on Feb. 11, 1993 to arrange a meeting.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

George G. Van Riper
4402 Onion Road
Killeen, Tx. 76542
(817)628-1180 hm.
(800)597-5692 hm.
(817)288-3410 off.

APPENDIX C

Introduction Letter to Austin City Management Official

(Management Official's Address)

Dear Sir,

This is a request for an interview.

I am a graduate student at Southwest Texas State University seeking a Master of Public Administration degree. The capstone of my degree plan is to complete an Applied Research Project. I have chosen to replicate a 1989 study conducted by Dr. Cheryl G. Swanson. Swanson studied the relationship between the City of Austin and AFSCME local 1624. Her research sought to determine: 1) union objectives and the strategies the union uses to achieve these objectives in the city, 2) the kinds of political and administrative relationships the union develops with the city, and 3) the nature and scope of union influence in the city.

Swanson's methodology consisted of individual interviews with all members of the Austin city council, two Austin city administrators, and two AFSCME local 1624 officials. I seek to update the Swanson study. I request an interview with you in order to discuss your perceptions concerning the city of Austin's current relationship with AFSCME local 1624.

The interview will be limited to one hour. I will have several open-ended questions to use as a guide for the interview. In return for your time, I will provide the Austin city manager's office with a copy of my applied research paper as soon as it is approved by SWTSU. Hopefully, it will provide some new insight on the dynamic relationship between the City of Austin and AFSCME local 1624.

I will contact your office on Wednesday, March 17, 1993 to arrange an appointment with you. I look forward to meeting you .

Sincerely,

George G. Van Riper
4402 Onion Road
Killeen, Tx. 76542
(817) 288-3410 wk.
(800) 597-5692 hm.

APPENDIX D
Questions Used for Council Member Interview

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Please describe your perception of AFSCME's role in city government.
2. Do you think of AFSCME as an interest group?
3. How effective is AFSCME's political action committee.
4. Have you seen any changes in AFSCME in the last few years?
5. How important is AFSCME to you as a member of the city council?
6. Describe AFSCME's main strengths and weaknesses.
7. Where would you rate AFSCME's influence on you on a scale of one to ten with ten being the highest influence?
8. What areas of city government has AFSCME had the most influence and the least influence on?
9. What do you think are AFSCME's major sources of influence?
10. What do you like the most and the least about AFSCME?
11. Please comment on AFSCME's role in negotiating wage settlements with the city.

PLEASE RATE THE FOLLOWING LIST OF CONDITIONS FROM LEAST IMPORTANT (1) TO MOST IMPORTANT (10) IN TERMS OF HOW THEY AFFECT THE UNIONS POSITION OF INFLUENCE/POWER IN THE CITY.

Union leadership abilities	_____rating
Management attitudes toward the union	_____rating
Council attitudes toward the union	_____rating
Mayor's attitude toward the union	_____rating
Number of city employees in the union	_____rating
City financial circumstances	_____rating
Any other circumstances	_____rating

THANK YOU

APPENDIX E
Questions Used for AFSCME Official Interview

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. What kind of working relationships have you developed, or do you hope to develop with the city? Include both political and administrative relationships.
2. What do you feel have been AFSCME's greatest accomplishments in the past three years? Greatest disappointments?
3. Describe AFSCME local 1624's major goals and objectives in the near term and long range.
4. What has the recent change in local 1624 presidents meant to the union? Do you think this will effect AFSCME's relationship with the city? If so, how?
5. How does AFSCME view the city council's TQM initiative of B.A.S.I.C.? (Building Austin Standards In Customer Service)
6. Describe AFSCME's main strengths and weaknesses.
7. Where would you rate AFSCME's influence on the city council on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest influence?
8. What areas of city government has AFSCME had the most influence and the least influence on?
9. What do you think are AFSCME's major source of influence?
10. Does AFSCME seek alliances with other organized groups in order to increase its negotiating power? And if so, please identify these groups.

PLEASE RATE THE FOLLOWING LIST OF CONDITIONS FROM LEAST IMPORTANT (1) TO MOST IMPORTANT (10) IN TERMS OF HOW THEY AFFECT THE UNIONS POSITION OF INFLUENCE/POWER IN THE CITY.

Union leadership abilities	_____rating
Management attitudes toward the union	_____rating
Council attitudes toward the union	_____rating
Mayor's attitude toward the union	_____rating
Number of city employees in the union	_____rating
City financial circumstances	_____rating

APPENDIX F
Questions Used for Austin City Management Official Interview

City Administrator's Discussion Topics

1. Please describe in general terms AFSCME's relationship with the City of Austin. (Big picture)
2. Please describe what you think AFSCME's major objectives are, based on your observations of their behavior?
3. Please describe the role of AFSCME in last years budget negotiations.
4. Which best describes how wages are determined in Austin:
 - a. unilaterally by the municipality
 - b. informal notions by the city of employee desires
 - c. jointly by employer and employee representatives
 - d. other (please describe)
5. What kinds of recommendations if any has AFSCME made to management to streamline government?
6. How can AFSCME make recommendations to streamline government without hurting its own membership?
7. Describe the relationship between AFSCME and city management. Is this relationship adversarial? Has this relationship changed over the last three years?
8. Describe AFSCME role in personnel policy development in the city.
9. What do you view as AFSCME greatest strength? Greatest weakness?
10. How much influence do you think AFSCME has with the city council? (little, moderate, great) Please cite an example if possible.

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