

ABSTRACT

TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY
OF TRADE UNIONISM IN THE OIL AND SUGAR SECTORS

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Trade unions occupy a strategic position in contemporary society because they have profound influence on the lives of all working people. Any attempt to understand work in society must of necessity understand Trade Unionism and the trade union as an organization.

R. Hyman and R.H. Fryer, in their article "Trade Unions, Sociology and Political Economy" (1976) suggest that trade unions are first and foremost a source and medium of power, and processes of power are central to their internal and external relations. The examination of power, control and dependence, they insist, are essential for any proper understanding of the trade union.

This thesis is concerned with the analysis of trade unions as formal organizations. A. Etzioni in Modern Organizations (1961) contends that organizations are deliberately constructed and reconstructed to seek specific goals and are characterized by divisions of labour, *power* (emphasis mine) and communication responsibilities. The trade union then, is viewed

as a formal organization with *power* being the most important variable in understanding and explaining its development and functioning.

Taking a point of departure from Max Weber in Theory of Social and Economic Organizations (1962) and M. Poole in his article "A Power Analysis of Workplace Labour Relations," (1976), 'power' is viewed as a three dimensional concept. Not only is the exercise of power important, but also the bases upon which the successful exercise of power rests, and the value orientations of the persons who are members of these organizations. Both organizational and extra-organizational factors can influence this process.

Within the foregoing framework, the thesis has presented a comparative analysis of trade unions in the Oil and Sugar sectors in Trinidad and Tobago, focussing on 'power' as the key explanatory variable in understanding and explaining the development and functioning of those trade unions.