

8. Should the present legal requirement that union members be given the chance to elect their national officers at least every 5 years be changed to make this period of time something less, like 3 years?
9. "Every national union should be required to establish a UAW-type Public Review Board." Discuss.

Minicases

1. Higher Pay for National Union Presidents

Many people believe that "You get what you pay for" is an entirely valid statement and that on this basis one major reason for labor's inability to organize more effectively as well as succeed in its political action can be traced to the relatively low incomes of national union presidents in the early twenty-first century. Granted, these people say, you never know what you don't have, and it is impossible to pinpoint exactly what labor has lost in this regard. But, they argue, the huge imbalances nowadays between the very low six-figure salaries of most top national union leaders and the seven-and eight-figure compensations of many corporate CEOs in the United States have undoubtedly deterred good men and women from pursuing careers as labor leaders even forgetting other negatives such as union politics and the growing complexities of the union president's job.

Therefore, at least one expert in this area has asserted, a more realistic salary scale—based on the actual membership of each union—should be established by the AFL-CIO for its member internationals, and individually by the internationals that have broken away from the AFL-CIO in independent action, at the rate of \$1 for each union member, to be recalculated annually. Leaders of the four largest unions—the Service Employees, AFSCME, Teamsters, and Food and Commercial Workers—would in 2008 by this formula have received respectively: \$1,900,000; \$1,500,000; \$1,400,000; and \$1,300,000; and the heads of several other internationals (the Teachers, Automobile Workers, Laborers, Electrical Workers, Machinists, and Steelworkers) would have gotten between \$640,000 and \$850,000. The presidents of another nine unions would (also in 2008) have been paid more than \$200,000, in five of these cases more than \$300,000.

What do you think of this proposal? ■

2. Qualifications for Union Office

In a 1977 decision* involving the United Steelworkers of America, the U.S. Supreme Court by a split vote upset a union rule requiring candidates for local union office to have attended at least one-half of a local's regular meetings for the 3 years preceding the election. Under the union's rule, 96.5 percent of the members of the local were disqualified from union office. In its decision, the high court stressed that national labor legislation (and specifically the Landrum-Griffin Act of 1959) was designed to promote union democracy without interfering unduly with union internal affairs. It said:

Applying these principles to this case, we conclude that . . . the anti-democratic effects of the meeting attendance rule outweighs the interests urged in its support. . . . An attendance requirement that results in the exclusion

of 96.5 percent of the members from candidacy for union office hardly seems to be a "reasonable qualification" (as required by Landrum-Griffin) consistent with the goal of free and democratic elections. A requirement having that result obviously severely restricts the free choice of the membership in selecting their leaders.

The minority of the court believed the attendance rule to be a reasonable qualification. It criticized the majority for using a statistical test. The rule was reasonable, it said, because it could encourage attendance at meetings, guarantee that candidates for office had a meaningful interest in the union, and assure that the candidates had a chance to become informed about union affairs.

Do you agree with the majority or the minority here and, in either case, why? ■

*Local 3489, *United Steelworkers v. Usery*, 429 U.S. 305 (1977).