

iciency by requiring the promotion, or retention, of employees who are not best suited for the jobs involved. They maintain that the difficulty of measuring merit can be overcome by such devices as careful job analysis and merit rating, trial periods for employees on new jobs, and resort to the plant grievance procedure in case of disputes over merit.

Over three-fourths of the 330 agreements analyzed required that varying degrees of consideration be given to seniority in establishing the order of lay-off. About 60 per cent of the agreements made seniority the governing factor in establishing the order of lay-off. Almost half of these added a qualifying statement to the effect that the senior employees must be competent to perform available work.

Another group of agreements (12 per cent of the total) made seniority a secondary consideration, i. e., seniority governed the selection of employees for lay-off only if the employees involved were approximately equal in ability.

Seniority was given most weight in lay-offs in the mass - production industries, possibly because a large proportion of employees have approximately the same degree of skill and ability.

In rehiring, seniority usually was given the same weight as in lay-offs, because agreements commonly provided for rehiring in reverse order of lay-off. Application of seniority in rehiring may decrease the mobility of labor reserves.

Almost 60 per cent of the agreements required some consideration of seniority in promotions. Most of them specified that seniority would govern only if the employees were competent to perform the work or only if the employees involved were of equal ability. An example of the latter type of provision reads: "In making pro-

motions, seniority shall prevail only where other qualifications are equal. The 'qualifications' as used in this paragraph shall include such matters as experience, physical fitness, skill, knowledge, adaptability, efficiency, responsibility, integrity, and the like."

Particularly interesting — especially in light of widespread popular conceptions that unions almost universally seek to base promotions on seniority — was the finding that 136 contracts covering almost half (46 per cent) of all the workers made no reference to seniority.

In general, employers hold that efficiency is impaired and individual employee incentive is stifled if seniority, rather than ability, governs promotions. Unions, in contrast, often take the position that seniority should be the primary factor in making promotions. They contend that other factors are too difficult to measure objectively — particularly if no joint machinery is set up to review these factors.

Approximately a fifth of the workers were covered by contracts which called for transfers from one job to another according to seniority.

A fourth of the agreements, covering about the same proportion of the workers, provided that senior employees were entitled to first choice of shifts. Owing to the general preference of workers for the day shift, the effect is to give older employees first

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