OMGUS Survey of German Attitudes toward Economic and Political Strikes (February 1949)

Abstract

After twelve years of Nazi rule and nearly four years of Allied occupation, Germans were no longer familiar with strikes as an instrument of economic and political struggle. Although the attitude toward strikes varied according to the age and political orientation of those polled, the majority of Germans in the American occupation zone generally rejected strikes.

Source

German Attitudes toward Economic and Political Strikes

Sample: 1,500 residents of the American Zone, 250 West Berliners, and 150 people in Bremen.

Interviewing dates: February 1949. (9 pp.)

The large majority of respondents in AMZON (68%), Bremen (81%), and Berlin (72%) disapproved of strikes for higher wages.

In AMZON, however, fewer people disapproved of political than of economic strikes, although more respondents expressed indecisiveness by giving "no opinion." The main reason advanced in support of strikes for political purposes was to call politicians' attention to the shortcomings of their decisions. The main counterargument was that such strikes are useless and accomplish nothing.

Respondents from the younger age group were more willing to express approval of both economic and political strikes, but even with them it was only a minority sentiment. As might be anticipated, people in the upper income and better-educated groups – where most employers are found – looked more askance at strikes for better wages or more food. Attitudes on political strikes could not be categorized so easily. Among political groups, SPD sympathizers registered widest support for strikes, although the extent of approval was still no greater than three out of ten. Even among union members, less than one out of three supported strikes as an economic or political weapon; moreover, present union members were less favorable toward the idea of strikes than were would-be members.

Group comparisons for the AMZON population add up to the clear suggestion that disapproval of strikes was not an attitude localized among particular groups, but was the dominating sentiment among all the major segments of German society.

Source: A. J. and R. L. Merritt, *Public Opinion in Occupied Germany. The OMGUS Surveys*. Urbana, IL, 1970, pp. 288–89.

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