

EDUCATIONAL FORUM

COURSES and SEMINARS

13-14 October:

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SEMINAR, Rotorua

The Bay of Plenty Trades Council Industrial Relations Seminar for Union and Management representatives will be held on 13 and 14 October in the Conference Room, Rotorua International Hotel, Rotorua. Topics include: Amendments to the Industrial Relations Act (1976) and Trades Unions and the Law. Fee: \$15. Registrations to Mr R. A. Rogers, P.O. Box 1523, Rotorua.

3-6 November:

TRADE UNION LEADERS SEMINAR (2nd of 2 parts)

The second three-day residential seminar for trade union leaders, organised by the Industrial Relations Centre, Victoria University of Wellington, in conjunction with the New Zealand Federation of Labour and the Combined State Services Organisations, will be held from 3 to 6 November at Trentham. ©

REVIEWS

Worker Control and Influence: A Review of the Bullock Report

B. J. DIVE*

Introduction

In the last two or three years there has been considerable talk in Europe about industrial democracy, or employee participation. In Northern Europe the discussion is often about employee representation at Board level but for some the real issue is worker control. This emerges from considering recent developments such as:

Bullock Report on Industrial Democracy, UK, January 1977; Swedish Law on Democracy at the Work Place, 1-1-1977; German Amendment to Co-determination Act, 1-7-1976; Meidner Report on Profit Sharing in Sweden, October 1975.

Bullock Report

The most relevant of these for New Zealand is the Bullock Report which purports to be a Report on Industrial Democracy. There is always much debate about the nature of Industrial Democracy, or any form of democracy for that matter, but the Bullock Report's viewpoint on this subject is uniquely narrow. The blame for that though should be most fairly laid upon the Labour government which drew up the terms of reference in August 1975.

The Terms of Reference

The terms of reference given to the Bullock Committee already pointed it in a certain direction.

"Accepting the need for a radical extension of industrial democracy in the control of companies by means of representation on boards of directors, and accepting the essential role of trade unions in this process . . ."

Right from the outset then the government equated Industrial Democracy with board representation. The Bullock Committee subsequently extended "representation" to mean "control" as becomes clear from their report.

Majority/Minority Reports

The Bullock Report is in fact two reports, a majority report and a minority report. This lack of agreement by the committee seriously undermines their findings and recommendations. The split reflects the very divisiveness of society on this topic of worker directors.

The Majority Report is largely the union viewpoint since it is the opinion of three trade unionists, three academics and a solicitor — seven people who it seems have no practical first hand experience of company boards. Even so the solicitor, Mr N. S. Wilson, has also appended his "Note of Dissent" pointing out where he disagrees with aspects of the report he supports!

The Minority Report is the work of the three senior executives from the private sector who were appointed to the committee. The main difference between the two reports is that the majority report favours parity between Worker Directors and Shareholder Directors within a unitary Board while the minority report favours the two-tier board system which is also advocated by the EEC Commission. The minor three referred to the majority report as a "far from satisfactory or even wise remit."

* MR DIVE works for the Personnel Division of Unilever N.V., Rotterdam. His review is based on a talk given to the NZIPM in Wellington.