

REVIEWS

Charles C. Hecksher. *The New Unionism: Employee Involvement in the Changing Corporation (with a new introduction).* Ithaca, New York: ILRR Press, 1996. xxxiv. 302 pp. ISBN 0-8014-8357-3.

This is a reprint, with a new introduction, of an influential book first published in 1988. Hecksher, a former union staff person, was at Harvard when he wrote the book and is now at Rutgers. The work consists essentially of two parts. First is an explanation of why American unions have dropped so precipitously in membership and influence. The second consists of some fairly radical suggestions for dealing with these problems.

Many observers blame US unions' plight on employer hostility and conclude that the solution lies in strengthening the law protecting workers' rights to organise. Hecksher argues that this is not enough. Total transformation is required rather than reform. The whole US system of industrial relations is outmoded and needs changing.

The main trouble with the US system, Hecksher contends, is that its basic structure was designed to meet the needs of male blue-collar workers in mass production and is heavily influenced by the 1935 Wagner Act. It was adopted for large firms, stable employment (though with seasonal and cyclical layoffs), relatively slow change, and a sharp division between a small group of managers and a large, relatively undifferentiated mass of workers. The union's role in this system is sharply limited to bargaining over wages, hours, and conditions of employment. Top-level strategic decisions relating to such matters as investments, the scale and location of operations, and the use of profits, are all reserved to management, as are shop-floor issues relating to how the work is done. Collective bargaining contracts are generally three years in duration with differences arising between negotiations being settled through a legalistic grievance procedure. Contract negotiations themselves are tests of strength in which the union mobilises membership support through accentuating hostility against management. Consequently the system emphasises confrontation more than problem-solving.

All this, the author argues, is increasingly out of date. Indeed the remaining union strength is largely concentrated in the shrinking sectors in which the old conditions still prevail. Elsewhere the make-up of the labour force is rapidly changing. Female employment is growing and along with it new demands to accommodate work to family needs. The number of white-collar, professional and semi-professional workers is also expanding, yet few of these "in-between" workers identify themselves as "workers"; neither are they managers. Another growing aggregation for which the standard US industrial relations system makes little provision consists of contingent (part-time, on-call, contract, and temporary) employees who have few rights.

Even were all these demographic and occupational groupings unionised, their interests are so divergent that it would be difficult for them to form a united front. Thus the old assumption that there are only two parties of concern in labour relations, unions and management, is no

longer valid. Instead there are a multiplicity of interests which the present system fails to recognise.

Further reducing the appeal of unionism, the US Congress passed a series of civil rights laws outlawing discrimination on the basis of age, sex, ethnicity, or disability. These laws perform some functions which were originally the union's. On the other hand, they introduce a rigidity in labour relations which is to no one's benefit.

Beyond this, rapid changes in markets and technology have changed the nature of much work. Brains are now required, often more than brawn. In the interest of competitive advantage some leading companies are experimenting with delegating substantial problem-solving discretion to their employees. In the most advanced of these experiments departmental and functional groups are largely autonomous and resolve differences among themselves through negotiation, with little top-management coordination. Hecksher calls this form of organization "managerialism" and sees it as a partial model for labour relations generally. Meanwhile it detracts from the demand for traditional unionism.

To help resolve unions' problems, the author proposes the development of a new form of representation which he calls "associational unionism." This would combine the autonomy of managerialism with the independence from management provided by unions. What associational would mean in practice is rather fuzzy. This much is clear: associational unions (AUs) would be based on specific occupational, demographic or other interests, for example, one for women, another for African-Americans, and still another for insurance adjusters, etc. Presumably a person might belong to several AUs. AUs might represent employees of a number of companies, the unemployed, and even customers and environmental groups.

Differences among AUs and between AUs and employers would be settled through multilateral negotiations. The government would establish general standards for employment, but leave the details and modes of implementation open to negotiations. Negotiations over issues of widespread concern, such as wages, would be separated from those of interest to only a small group of workers. To pressure negotiators to reach agreement, AUs would be allowed three forms of clout: conventional strikes, civil suits alleging violations of general standards, and publicity - but all would be used only as last resorts when other forms of conflict resolution failed. Hopefully strikes and suits would be less common than now.

It has been nine years since the work was first published. What has been its impact? The author's thesis has received fairly general acceptance as a partial explanation for union decline (his explanation was not entirely original), but his concept of associational unionism found few takers. As he recognises, getting either unions or management to change may be difficult. In his 1996 introduction he confesses to being more pessimistic than earlier. Though there is much talk of union organizing and of cooperative union-management "partnerships", there is little interest in changing union structure.

Though Hecksher sees few immediate grounds for hope, he is optimistic for the long-run. The continued public support for laws protecting individual employee rights indicates a rejection of *laissez faire*. The increasing need for worker involvement is likely to lead to an

ever-growing employer acceptance of various forms of participation. But will unions play a role in this? I wonder.

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Jacques Belanger, P.K. Edwards and Larry Haiven (eds). Workplace Industrial Relations and the Global Challenge. New York: Cornell University Press, 1994. ix, 325pp. ISBN: 9-780875-463285.

The analysis of workplace industrial relations and management processes has a long history, probably initiated by Robert Owen but developed in a systematic way by G.D.H. Cole. Nevertheless, there has been relatively little attention paid to the approach compared to others. The prevailing analytical norms have been instead inspired by the Webbs, Dunlop and Donovan and have focused upon plural and cooperative systems of industrial relations or have been inspired by the radical critique of Hyman and more recently by Edwards, Burrawoy, and Littler who have focused upon contestation. While these authors have often considered workplace-level relationships the analysis has been located within, and overshadowed by, an emphasis upon more central and general processes.

This book is more in the tradition of Cole, and represents for Edwards at least a change in perspective. Even though it is concerned with broad issues like globalisation and comparative analysis it nevertheless focuses centrally upon the processes of workplace relationships and the meanings attributed to them by those who participate in the processes. The introductory chapter, written by the three editors, is especially valuable. It is a well-written contribution that sets out to explain and justify the methodological and theoretical positions underlying not only this collection of readings, but more generally, the provision of a systematic analytical approach for the study and comparison of workplace industrial relations.

The initial chapter provides a useful exposition of the rationale for the utilisation of an ethnomethodological approach in studying workplace industrial relations. It also presents an analysis of workplace relationships from the perspective of the dialectic of antagonistic co-operation. Given this theoretical and methodological rationale, students of workplace industrial relations (who are too frequently given collections of workplace data to make sense of and no codex for making sense of it) would do well to read the chapter.

The book has, however, more to recommend it than its first chapter. Part of the book's value lies in the fact that, unlike many edited books of readings, the authors and editors manage to achieve a coherence and consistency across the discrete contributions. It also offers a comparative perspective that is unusual in the workplace-focused literature. This provides a challenge for the authors. Since the issue of globalisation is a major theme for the work the

reliance upon case-study material raises questions about our ability to generalise from case-study material, no matter how rich the data is. Generally this challenge is met.

The offerings of the individual authors all contribute positively to the themes of the book. They all compare workplace processes in at least two countries but vary in regard to the number and nature of workplaces compared. They also vary in regard to the extent to which they emphasise the relevant theoretical and methodological issues that are the focus for the book. For example, Edwards's chapter focuses more attention upon the processes of job control than upon the methodological issues whereas Frenkel's chapter is stronger on the methodological issues. Those familiar with the work of both will not be greatly surprised by this.

Most of the contributions examine northern hemisphere cases. As a result they lose some opportunity for enrichment of the comparisons. It would have been nice to see for example, in view of the changes that have taken place in New Zealand, a chapter that reflected upon some local case(s). This would have also made it of greater direct significance to the local audience. It is also notable that the publication date for the book was 1994 and that it was based upon a conference held in Quebec, Canada in 1991. Nevertheless, its central messages and the specific insights offered throughout the case analyses have not significantly dated.

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Paul Dalziel and Ralph Lattimore. The New Zealand Macroeconomy: a briefing on the reforms. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996, xiii, 129pp. ISBN: 0-19-558330-2.

While much has been written about the New Zealand economic reforms since 1984 by passionate advocates for or against the reform programme, there is a dearth of studies setting out the experience clearly and dispassionately. Paul Dalziel, who has gained a reputation for criticising some of the reforms, and Ralph Lattimore, who holds a more favourable view, have worked together to provide a patient account of the data on the New Zealand economy before and during the reform period. They have updated their very slim first edition, and in the process added a considerable quantity of discussion material, topic by topic, doubling the length of the book.

Like the first edition, the book is centred around a series of charts providing a comprehensive view of the economy. In this edition there are 28 charts covering the period from 1960 to 1995. Following an opening chapter explaining the overall performance indicator of GDP and setting the international context of the terms of trade and real interest rates, Dalziel and Lattimore examine the performance of the economy in economic growth, inflation, unemployment and the balance of payments during the pre-reform period, 1960 to 1984, against the average for the 17 smaller members of the OECD. On this scale the New Zealand

economy performed reasonably well up to the mid-1970s, but then deteriorated with pronounced cycles in real GDP, continuing high inflation, growing unemployment and large current account deficits. In response to this worsening performance economic policy became increasingly interventionist, particularly in the hands of Robert Muldoon who was Minister of Finance from 1967 to 1984 with only a three-year break from 1972 to 1975. This interventionism imposed a political business cycle on the economy and failed to improve any of the performance indicators in a sustainable manner.

The decision to reform the economy is handled in the space of five pages in Chapter 3, with an emphasis on the agreement struck at the Economic Summit Conference in 1984 to move from a tightly regulated economy to one far more open to the impact of the changing world market.

Chapters 4 to 8 provide a fairly detailed account of New Zealand's experience during the reform period from 1984 to 1995, built around a series of charts covering the period from 1960 to 1995. These chapters are arranged by policy topic: international trade, monetary, fiscal, industry and labour. The story is well told, though the detail on policy reform varies from chapter to chapter.

Chapter 9 sets out the reforms very briefly, in chronological order, alongside the four performance indicators. Major reforms were generally limited to 1984-87 and 1990-93, the first terms, respectively of Labour and National Governments. The reforms coincided with a long period of slow growth and rising unemployment, followed by economic recovery. Despite the improvement in all four economic indicators, and the emergence of budget surpluses, Dalziel and Lattimore take a wait and see approach, concluding that "it is still too early to make a final judgment on the overall benefit of the reforms."

In the final chapter Dalziel and Lattimore consider the future management of change in the economy, covering a wide range of issues. They are always careful in revealing their view, though perhaps their "most economists believe" gives some of the game away. This is one of the most thoughtful discussions of the impacts of reforms, and of the options facing New Zealanders, available. Have the reforms improved the functioning of the economy? Instead of providing answers, the authors conclude that a lot of careful economic research is still required. The dozen topics suggested, however, will take economists decades to work through.

The book concludes with a six-page section on "Further Reading", sufficient to satisfy any reader wishing to read further on any topic, and a data appendix including all the annual and quarterly series used in the book.

At times the mask of even-handedness slips a little. The authors are clearly concerned over whether the productivity performance of the economy has been enhanced, the wisdom of advocating increased competition in all cases in a small economy like New Zealand, the effect of tight monetary policy on the real exchange rate and the impact of a more market-orientated economy on social cohesion and the position of low-income groups.

The New Zealand Macroeconomy must be the best book produced on the reforms to date, at least for the non-specialist reader. The reforms are patiently discussed, the data are faithfully produced and the questions over the future are thoughtfully presented.

Everyone concerned with economic reform and its benefits and costs will benefit from reading this short book. Advocates for economic reform should become more aware of the work still to be done before we can be sure that we have significantly improved the performance of the economy. Opponents of reform may be disappointed to find the need for reform so readily accepted, but they will be mollified by discovering that economists take their concerns over some of the effects of reform quite seriously, and that so many questions are still open for debate.

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Daniel S. Hamermesh. Workdays, Workhours and Work Schedules: Evidence for the United States and Germany. Michigan: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 1996. x, 155pp. ISBN: 0-88099-170-4.

How we divide our time between home and work is of interest to all of us, particularly employers and government policy makers. Although Hamermesh's book analyses the work situation in the USA and Germany, his findings may well be replicated here, and so are relevant for New Zealand decision makers.

He laments that most research of the labour force in the post-war period has not utilised instantaneous time use, i.e. snapshots of what people are doing at a particular moment in time. The standard analysis has focused on studying time at work integrally, i.e. how time is allocated into separate activities over a relatively long time interval, such as weekly hours of work. An integral approach is useful if it is assumed that people work a standard eight hour day, and a five-day week. But it fails to establish how people spend their time per day and days of work per week. Given the major changes in work patterns in recent years, as a result of the extensive deregulation of the labour market in Western economies, not least New Zealand's, an integral analysis is deficient. His study utilising an instantaneous time methodology helps remedy this deficiency.

Hamermesh found that a large proportion of the labour force in the USA and Germany work evenings, i.e. between 7pm and 10pm, or on a night shift between 10pm and 6am. And, only about two thirds of workers in each country put in between seven and eight hours on a typical working day. Such data would probably apply to New Zealand, particularly since the advent of the 1991 Employment Contracts Act. Thus the stereotype of eight hour, 9-5, working days is not as prevalent as might be believed. Another sacred cow is the five days, Monday to Friday, working weeks: but in the USA one quarter of the workforce (one seventh in

Germany) work less or more days. His point is that there is a need to focus on the more important question of actual times of the day, and days of the week that people are at work, rather than on aggregate weekly totals of working hours. He argues it is necessary to establish those factors that determine days, hours and daily schedules.

Of those employees working unsocial hours, e.g. night shifts, there are a disproportionately high number of workers who have little human capital, are young black workers in the USA, or immigrants such as Turks in Germany. One could hypothesise that the equivalent workers in New Zealand are Maori, the less educated and young European New Zealanders, and Pacific Islanders.

A crucial influence on labour market outcomes is the effect of family structures and characteristics. Working couples naturally enjoy having their leisure hours together at the same time. The arrival of children creates problems. The author argues that this has a bigger effect on days of work rather than daily hours worked. It seems more convenient to add extra hours of childcare each day, rather than arrange another day of care. He suggests that childcare subsidies should be focused on reducing the mother's costs of working additional days, as opposed to costs of additional daily hours.

The explosion of women into the workforce in most Western countries over the past thirty years has consequently brought a need for appropriate childcare policies. There is clearly a requirement to help women maximise their participation at work, and attain equal employment opportunities. Barriers to women participating freely in the workforce also represent barriers to employers wanting to attract the most highly skilled employees, and thus it is in the employers' best interests to minimise such obstacles.

This book is pertinent for policy makers in New Zealand, in that it shows the importance of gathering information about how both men and women spend their time at work, at a particular moment in time. This is relevant for other issues over and above childcare, like job creation, overtime work, and length of workdays and work weeks.

But his policy proposals also invite a more critical note. In keeping with most authorities on the subject, the author adopts the conservative position that women are the primary childcarers, and so appropriate policies need to be developed to help them ease their way into the workplace. But it needn't be limited to this position. Society might consider encouraging men to assume more responsibility for direct childcare, which means abandoning time-honoured assumptions and practices that men must work outside the home to provide for the family. In other words, whilst removing outdated attitudes which "tie women to the kitchen sink", we might loosen men from being "tied to the workbench", and also give them the opportunity and choice to look after the children, or have a career, or both. This entails a massive reversal in social attitudes.

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Christian Bratt. *Labour Relations in 18 Countries*. Stockholm: Andren & Holms Tryckeri AB, 1996. xxxpp. ISBN:

This book was originally published in Sweden in 1970. It briefly covers the industrial relations situation of 18 countries. Six other countries including New Zealand are mentioned, but only in a superficial manner. The European Union has an extended introduction that explains clearly the role this organisation has played in the reformation of the European labour market in the 1990s.

A brief introduction is given on each country. Trade unions and employers' roles are examined. The labour market and the basics of the industrial relations system are analysed, and detailed relevant statistics are provided. The coverage is uneven and sometimes quite dated.

Australia is shown as a country with union traditions drawn from its British roots. The bargaining system is described as "somewhat unique" as it has been primarily regulated through compulsory conciliation or arbitration. There is discussion of much of the Accord era under the Federal Labor Government.

Austria is a recent member of the EU. Noted is compulsory membership in the Chambers of Labour for all waged and salaried workers (with the exception of public sector employees). The "social partnership" is credited with maintaining a peaceful labour market. The heart of this concept is the Parity Commission. This Commission, headed by the Chancellor and involving employers, labour and agriculture, is a central forum in the development of social and economic policy and of industrial relations outcomes.

Canada has a strongly decentralised industrial relations system. Thirty percent of employees are unionised. There is no federal employers association, however a number of umbrella organisations engage in discussions with employees and government. Labour law is regulated separately by each province, though most provincial systems look not unlike the United States collective bargaining system in important respects.

Denmark was the first Nordic country to join the EU. Today over 70 percent of employees belong to a union. The relationships between unions and employers continue to be centred on agreements between central organisations.

Finland also has a high level of union membership, approximately 80 percent. This is against the common trend of dropping membership in most other industrialised countries. Bargaining is conducted within a three level structure, but the system remains heavily centralised.

Other countries discussed in this volume include France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the USA.

Tables and graphs support all information completing an easily read reference book. This book would be of use to industrial relations students looking for an overview of a wide range of approaches to industrial relations in a changing industrial relations world. As noted, the treatments are uneven and some seem dated. Students would need to look elsewhere for more

indepth information on national industrial relations systems in which they develop an interest. But this little book might whet the appetite.

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