

# REVIEWS

## REVIEW ARTICLE

### *Contemporary Industrial Relations in Industrialized Market Economies: A Review Article*

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In more ways than one, Industrial Relations has been under pressure for at least two decades. For example, union membership and bargaining coverage have been on the decline in several English-speaking countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and the Canadian private sector. In addition, the number of university departments with the name "Industrial Relations" seems to have declined. Certainly several established programs have changed their names to departments of employment relations or human resource management.

And now the term Industrial Relations has disappeared from the title of what is very likely the most widely used comparative textbook. The new name of the book edited by Greg Bamber and Russell Lansbury is *International and Comparative Employment Relations*. Greg and Russell justify the name change not on the basis of the decline of major IR institutions but rather because "the editors and authors of this book see industrial relations as dealing with all aspects of the employment relationship, including human resource management (HRM)." Employment relations, we are told (p.1), "is used in this book to encompass aspects of industrial relations and HRM."

Denotation of the stuff being considered has always been problematic for those involved with the labour field. At McMaster University for several years we defined Industrial Relations as the combination of labour relations (covering union-management relations, collective bargaining and related phenomena) and personnel management, the old name for human resource management (covering such issues as recruitment and selection of employees, compensation and benefits, etc.). At one point Tom Kochan of MIT defined Industrial Relations as the study of "all aspects of people at work." Noah Meltz and I used that definition and denotation in our book on *Industrial Relations Theory* and Industrial Relations is still the name used by the major international association in the field - the International Industrial Relations Association - and of most of the national associations that are affiliated to it (Adams, 1993). Oh well, maybe the new term is a bit less ambiguous than Industrial Relations. A seat companion of mine on a trans-Atlantic flight once mistook the field for the study of relations between industries!

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It is one thing to change nomenclature, quite another to change actual content. So, if you are an instructor who has used past editions of Bamber and Lansbury you may be concerned that Greg and Russell have transformed the book into some sort of a hybrid treatment of comparative labour relations and international HRM. Not to worry. There is the occasional reference to issues sometimes classified as HRM (e.g., flexibility) but the focus of the book continues to be on union-management relations.

When you read the first chapter you may get another unwarranted fright. Greg and Russell review several different approaches to comparative whatever you want to call it: industrial relations systems, convergence theory, political economy (but not French Regulation), strategic choice, and a section entitled "reconceptualizing comparative employment relations" in which they discuss the comparative HRM study organized by the group at MIT. It focused on work organization, skill formation, compensation and employment security.

This might give you the impression that you will have to actually follow these threads through all ten of the countries in the book. You don't. The chapters are still organized, as they have been since the first edition in 1987, in accordance with what looks to be a kind of simplified IR systems framework. Each chapter has an introductory section which varies in length and content but generally talks about the political, economic and historical context, discusses relevant aspects of unions, employers (and their organizations) and government policy, considers processes of interaction including prominently but not exclusively collective bargaining and reviews selected current issues.

Although a good deal of research relevant to comparative indus...oops - employment relations is reviewed in the introductory chapter, I don't assign it to my students because I find that going through material that is not developed further only confuses them. However, if you cover these issues you may be glad that the authors have summarized them for you.

For the most part, I have no problem with the substance of the material discussed in the first chapter but there is a major exception. One section is entitled "Decentralization of bargaining" and the first sentence reads "Since the mid-1980s there has been a trend toward less-centralized forms of collective bargaining in most IMEs". My reaction on reading this sentence was an indignant "hmmph!"

Both Greg and Russell are subscribers to my *Comparative Industrial Relations Newsletter* and during the past several years I have been trying, by reference to numerous studies, to put an end to this widespread but entirely inaccurate perception. It is certainly true that in the past decade or so more has been happening at lower levels of the bargaining structure than had been happening before the Great Recession of the early 1980s. But the term "decentralization" suggests that less is now happening at higher levels and that is simply not the general case. Instead, interaction between labour, management and

government has become more articulated. There is more happening at lower levels but not at the expense of activity at higher levels. Here are some data from the International Labour Organization's 1997-98 *World Labour Report* on the phenomenon:

Country	Trend at National/sectoral level of bargaining	Trend at Company/plant level of bargaining
Canada	decrease	increase
UK	decrease	increase
Australia	decrease	increase
United States	stable	increase
Germany	stable	increase
France	stable	increase
Sweden	stable	increase
Italy	stable	increase
Japan	stable	increase
the Netherlands	stable	increase
Belgium	stable	increase
Denmark	stable	increase
Ireland	increase	stable
Switzerland	increase	n/a
Spain	increase	increase

All of the countries included in the second edition of Bamber and Lansbury are also included here: Britain, United States, Canada, Australia, Italy, France, Germany, Sweden and Japan. The same authors as last time are all represented but in several cases they have picked up one or more new co-authors. For the UK John Goodman, Mick Marchington and John Berridge have joined Ed Snape and Greg Bamber. Olle Hammarström has teamed up with Tommy Nilsson in the writing of the chapter on Sweden. The concluding chapter is no longer written exclusively by Oliver Clarke. Instead, Greg and Russell join with him and Peter Ross has become part of the group, which includes Bamber and Gillian Whitehouse, assembling the Appendix. There is also a new chapter on South Korea written by Chris Leggett and Park Young-bum.

All of the country chapters do the job of introducing students to the key characteristics of the IR system. The current issue sections are really too short to do justice to the issues covered but they provide a kick-off that each instructor may build upon.

The final chapter is entitled "Conclusions". I don't understand why it is called that except that it is customary to use the term in relation to the last chapter of any book. Since the core of this volume is descriptive rather than analytical there are not really conclusions to be derived. Nor is the content consistent with what one would expect in a chapter so designated.

The final chapter attempts to "synthesize the development of employment relations in these countries - with occasional references to the experience of other countries - and to identify some important trends during the decades since the Second World War". What Oliver, Greg and Russell talk mainly about here are the key forces affecting industrial relations since the end of World War II. They review the main characteristics of the IR systems that emerged from the war, how the systems evolved in the inflationary 1960s and 1970s, how the recession of 1980-82 brought that raucous era of union growth and militancy to an end and how, subsequent to the recession, unemployment shot up, union power declined and employers in many countries seized the initiative in IR.

It seems to me that this material might be better off at the beginning of the book. The logic would be: "Here is an overview of what's happened in IR since World War II, now lets have a look at specific case studies to see how the pattern has played out in them".

There is also a section in the last chapter on "international aspects of employment relations". It reviews key international union and employer institutions and governmental and quasi-governmental organizations such as the ILO, NAFTA, the WTO, and the EC (but there is no discussion of the OECD) and multinational developments such as the effects of globalization on unions and the effects of the growth of multinational firms on industrial relations. This material certainly has nothing to do with "conclusions" and would be more rationally placed in a separate chapter. I would like to see it expanded too. Research and dialogue around globalization is exploding and deserves more than a few paragraphs.

Although the content of the chapter on South Korea is fine, the country does not fit very comfortably into this volume. It has been on an entirely different trajectory along with its "Little Tiger" companions and developments and issues there are quite distinct from those confronted in the other Industrialized Market Economies (IMEs) covered in the volume.

Instead of South Korea, the addition of New Zealand would have usefully complemented the countries covered (and I am not saying that because of the journal for which this article was written). Some of the most important industrial relations developments anywhere in

the world during the past few decades have occurred in the land of the kiwi. Indeed, I don't see how students can really get an accurate sense of Australian developments during the 1990s without first reviewing New Zealand developments since the 1980s.<sup>1</sup>

The government policy of favouring "individual employment contracts" over collective agreements goes entirely against the grain of post-World War II ILO norms. It is also contrary to the emergence of international consensus regarding core human rights in employment in the context of the debate over freer global trade.<sup>2</sup> Individual employment contract policy as a response to global competitive forces was first worked out in New Zealand and has now spread to Australia and has been the subject of considerable discussion in some northern hemisphere countries. These issues certainly deserve to be discussed in comparative courses. There are a few references to New Zealand in the Australia chapter but not nearly enough to convey the profundity of the developments there.

On continental Europe too the choice of countries might be reconsidered. Germany and Sweden have to be in any comparative volume because of their notable IR innovations. The UK is justified because it is where IR institutions first began to take shape and its general approach has had a large influence on the world both as an example to be copied or avoided and as the result of its transmission across the British Empire. France was also a colonial exporter of IR institutions and in addition, because of the persistence of leftist militancy in its unions, it provides a nice counterpoint to the more ideologically settled movements further North and East. But why include Italy? What lessons are comparative students to learn from a study of that country that they are unlikely to learn from the overall experience of the others on the list? If there is a clear rationale for its inclusion I would like to have had the editors lay it out in black and white.

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<sup>1</sup> Among the important books on the New Zealand experience are Raymond Harbridge, (ed.), *Employment Contracts: New Zealand Experiences*, Wellington, NZ: Victoria University Press, 1993; Mark Bray and Nigel Haworth, *Economic Restructuring and Industrial Relations in Australia and New Zealand: A Comparative Analysis*, Sydney, Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Teaching, 1993; Ellen J. Dannin, *Working Free, The Origins and Impact of New Zealand's Employment Contracts Act*, Auckland, Auckland University Press, 1997 and the symposium on New Zealand's Employment Contracts Act in the *California Western International Law Journal*, volume 28, number 1, Fall 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Key developments are reviewed by Anne Trebilcock in "What future for social clauses?" paper presented at the World Congress of the International Industrial Relations Association, Bologna, Italy, September 1998. See also, Roy J. Adams, "Collective Bargaining: The Rodney Dangerfield of Human Rights". Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Industrial Relations Research Association, New York City, 4 January 1999. Forthcoming in the association's proceedings.

Nor am I convinced, despite my residence and national allegiance, that Canada belongs in this book. It is true, as Mark Thompson points out in his chapter, that Canada has become less like the US in recent decades but from the European or Australasian perspective Canada is still not that much different. Discussion of the Canadian variant of the IR model known as Wagnerism within the US chapter would probably do the trick.

Among the countries drawing a great deal of contemporary interest in Europe are Ireland and the Netherlands. Ireland has begun to be referred to as the Celtic Tiger<sup>3</sup> because of the very rapid economic growth that it has experienced in the past decade. A consideration of the role of IR in that development is certainly warranted. Also, a contrast of Irish and British IR during the past few decades might prove very interesting and instructive.

In the Netherlands labour, employers and government have worked together in order to turn around a system experiencing double-digit unemployment to one with a very low rate of joblessness. Indeed, Dutch social partnership institutions, approaches to worker participation and social programs have been exemplary for many decades without attracting sufficient attention by comparative industrial relations scholars. A third country well worth study by comparative students is Denmark whose industrial relations institutions have helped to produce some excellent social and economic results.

This may not be the ideal textbook but few texts can meet that exalted standard. Many teachers have found previous editions of this book to meet their needs and those that have will most likely be happy with this edition too.

The decline of collective bargaining coverage in the UK and the US and thus of the extent of worker representation is the main focus of Brian Towers' *The Representation Gap*. The widening gap "means that only one out of six US employees, and one out of three British have access to the independent representation of their individual and collective interests".

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<sup>3</sup> "This is a punning reference to the longer-established term tiger economy, which has been used for about fifteen years to describe the more successful small Asian economies. The original tiger economies were the Four Tigers of Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea, which have been joined more recently by others that include the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia (though these, with Hong Kong, have suffered substantial economic reverses this year, which have affected many Western financial markets). The Celtic Tiger is the Republic of Ireland, which has benefited very greatly from its membership of the European Union, both through financial aid and through inward investment by companies opening factories in the country to gain access to European markets and take advantage of the country's low rate of corporation tax. As a result, Ireland claims to have been the fastest-growing economy in Europe over the past decade, admittedly from a low base (though some critics claim the figures have been inflated through a sneaky tendency of some multinationals to pretend output comes from Ireland in order to pay less tax, a technique known as transfer pricing). The term is mostly confined to British and Irish business and financial circles, and must be classed as jargon."

From Michael Quinion's "World Wide Words" web site:

<http://www.quinion.demon.co.uk/words/turnsofphrase/tp-cel1.htm>

Should that concern us? Brian believes that it should because (p.118) "Industrial Democracy can be regarded as an extension of political democracy" and thus the decline in democratic representation at work is also a move away from strong political democracy. In historical perspective it is a backwards move in the direction of authoritarianism. Referring favourably to the case that I made in *Industrial Relations Under Liberal Democracy* Brian says that (p.118): "If citizens have a fundamental right to be included in the making of decisions which affect their interests then they have an equally fundamental right to be a part of the rule-making processes which regulate their working lives".

Towers notes that much research has been carried out in the US and the UK on the relationship between unions and economic efficiency. After reviewing it he finds that, despite the usual caveats, the weight of the evidence strongly supports a positive relationship. He emphasizes, however, that the case for worker representation does not hinge upon this research. Instead, "The democratic functions of trade unions justify their existence without requiring them to deliver on enterprise efficiency even though their members would consider themselves ill served if their economic and employment needs were neglected"(pp.141-142).

Other chapters in the volume address the economic and political contexts in which the representation gap has widened including a review of key developments in both countries since the end of World War II. There is also a chapter that looks specifically at the research on union decline in the two countries and one that reviews proposals, for both unions and governments, put forth to turn the tide.

US developments since the beginning of the Clinton Administration in 1992 do not bode well for strategies that depend on the actions of unions themselves. The Clinton government has been unwilling or, because of Republican control of Congress, unable to push through legislative changes that might turn things around and despite a new union leadership officially committed to new organizing, unions in the US have continued to decline.

Decline has also continued in the UK during the 1990s. At the time when Brian finished up his book early in 1997 Tony Blair was about to lead a new Labour government into power. But Blair's policy did not call for vigorous encouragement of unions and collective bargaining and since taking office no such policy has emerged. Instead the new Labour government has decided to leave in place most of the legislation introduced by the Thatcher-Major governments since 1979 that has fettered and weakened the unions. The Blairite policy is officially to encourage labour-management cooperation but since labour's bargaining power has been much reduced whatever cooperation that occurs will most likely be on management's terms.

Also, with the blessing of the Trades Union Congress, the new government is about to introduce a union certification policy modelled largely on the US in which unions denied recognition could appeal to a government agency that would have the power to compel bargaining if a majority of the relevant employees wanted it. Majoritarianism has been a

disaster in the United States and Canada eliciting not voluntary recognition but rather the juridification of the recognition process hardening the denial of bargaining (Adams, 1995). Towers notes that (p.7) "it is at least arguable that the legal framework intended to protect and encourage collective bargaining in the USA now largely does the opposite". As a result this policy initiative does not bode well for a revival of union prospects in the UK and the closing of the representation gap.

Brian concludes on a pessimistic note, "In the USA, public policy rarely approaches even benign neglect and in Britain it took a decidedly hostile turn in 1979 with the prospect that collective bargaining may never recover full public support, even under Labour; and should the Conservatives resume government, even after a long interval, hostilities will likely resume."

Although he does not review it because it is an event that occurred only after the publication of *The Representation Gap* there is at least a ray of hope on the horizon. In the summer of 1998, the International Labour Organization unanimously adopted a Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.<sup>4</sup> Among the principles designated to be fundamental human rights were freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively. Optimistically, this action, which represents the culmination of a decade's global dialogue on the norms that the international community considers to be essential in an economically more open world, will result in new social and legal pressure being placed on the US and the UK (and the other English-speaking IMEs as well) to conform.

Given the emergence of a strong international consensus designating core labour rights as human rights the encouragement or toleration of sub-standard labour conditions should be a political liability in the new global political economy. The US and the UK stand to be accused of attempting to gain an illicit trade advantage by doing so.<sup>5</sup> For the near future it will be up to unions and non-governmental human rights organizations to invoke the norms and social sanctions embodied in the consensus. The challenge is to use the international documents and institutions to best effect. Should they be successful, norms with respect to human rights in employment should follow the path of racial equality, women's liberation and gay rights resulting in opposition to collective bargaining being considered as unethical as overt racism, sexism and gay-bashing.

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<sup>4</sup> Available at the ILO's web site: [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org). See also the Anne Trebilcok (1998) and Adams (1999) articles cited elsewhere in this paper.

<sup>5</sup> This has already begun to happen in the context of the NAFTA Labor side accord. See submission number MEX 9802 under the North American Agreement on Labour Cooperation which alleges failure of US labour law to protect workers' rights in the Washington State apple industry thereby providing the businesses involved with an unfair advantage in the export of apples to Mexico.



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**Raymond Markey and Jacques Monat (eds). *Innovation and Employee Participation through Works Councils: International Case Studies*. Avebury: Aldershot, 1997. 450pp. Index. ISBN: 1-85972-434-5.**

There are direct and indirect forms of employee participation in organisations. *Direct* forms are task-related participation, self-managing teams and the like, in which the participant may discuss and make decisions about the topics under discussion. Usually this concerns consultations about the execution of one's own task, even though in many organisations task-related participation often is an informal platform for discussing company policy in general. Direct forms of employee participation are becoming more and more important, primarily due to the nature of the production process. For an increasing number of forms of service and production, co-operation with and attuning to colleagues is becoming increasingly important. Moreover, it is also a means to do justice to the involvement of employees with their organisation. Direct employee participation is therefore becoming more significant as an area requiring management attention.

In the past, the development of works councils and employee participation was regarded with Argus' eyes. The labour union movement was based on the notion that employees

in the organisation occupied a dependent position, and as a result were perhaps not capable of an effective promotion of interests, and certainly not where conflicts were concerned. That is why paid union executives appeared who negotiated about the (primary) terms of employment. Now task groups and quality circles mean considerable competition for the unions' own position in guarding *indirect* forms of employee participation. It seems that there has been a shift here over the last few years. Keeping track of the connections between unions, works councils and other forms of employee participation is constantly on the agenda of the social partners.

Seen from this angle, it is understandable that Markey and Monat have collected various articles concerning employee participation, which is developing in an international context. The book is the result of the efforts of researchers who were involved with the conferences of the Worker's Participation Study Group of the International Industrial Relations Association (IIRA), which met in Sydney (1992), Helsinki (1994) and Washington (1995).

It is impossible for me to discuss all twenty contributions here because, if one goes through the articles, one is confronted by the large heterogeneity and variations that currently occur. Nevertheless, Western Europe occupies a prominent place, because this continent has historically fulfilled the role of pioneer in the rise of works councils as a special form of employee participation.

In their introduction, Markey and Monat observe that the book "provides some evidence for the spread of works councils from their European origins. Recently, works councils acquired an international dimension with the setting up of councils on a voluntary basis in various multinational enterprises, and the European Directive of 22 September 1994 requiring the presence of such councils under certain conditions" (p.6).

The introduction of works councils in multinationals has been, in certain cases, a very rapid affair. Recently Volkswagen decided (the first car producer in the world to do so) to start off a worldwide works council. This works council will act on behalf of 280,000 employees in 35 offices. The European Directive appears to have played a stimulating role in this. The initiative for the directive was taken by the Dutch social democrat Henk Vredeling, who, as an EU commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs, presented a proposal regarding the informing and consulting of employees in companies with a transnational form of organisation. "Article nine of the actual Directive clearly stipulates that the central management and the European Works Council shall work in a spirit of co-operation with due regard to their reciprocal rights and obligations".

The most important issue that repeatedly returns in Markey and Monat's collection is, of course, that concerning the role of trade unions in a co-operative work environment. The question about the extent to which works councils can display bargaining characteristics currently leads to heated debates in Europe and elsewhere.

"Co-operation and mutual support between unions and works councils can be observed in some European countries, whereas in other cases the association between unions and works councils is not always successful. In Eastern Europe, employers and the State still sometimes utilise employee participation and works councils in particular as an alternative to unionism".

The first two parts of this collection deal with the developments in Western and Eastern Europe (part three dwells on Africa, Asia, America and Australasia). The European Directive appears to have been fuelled by the German or, in other words, the Rhineland practice, in which consultations between the social partners are supported by a legal framework where industry-level collective agreements provide a framework for more detailed agreements at works council level. On the other hand, the Anglo-Saxon approach has proved to be a struggle for Western Europe; works councils still have little influence, and a decent legal framework is lacking. For years the unions in the British variety have regarded with scepticism continental European experiments that showed how the activities of works councils could even provide conditions for trade union influence to grow. The functioning of the British voluntarist model is illustrated with an Irish case: The Guinness Brewery council. A fundamental principle of this voluntarism is that employers clearly prefer non-institutional and non-representative, direct production-oriented forms of employee participation. In the Irish case, that situation has changed due to the introduction of a *minimum* level of legally imposed structures. The Irish state has assumed, in its capacity as a legislator, a minimum but supportive role in the development of the industrial relation system, shifting away from the British model. This has influenced the functioning of the Brewery Council at Guinness in a very positive way. "The council has enabled both management and the unions to develop an environment of mutual trust . . . It has provided a forum for the diverse union groups to discuss common issues in a non-conflictual setting. It has enabled management to establish effective lines of communications with worker representatives outside the collective bargaining arena, making decisions more acceptable to all within the brewery" (pp.119-120). This, however, does not seem to be the case in the other pillar of the voluntaristic model: the United States of America.

The book contains an extract of the Dunlop Commission report on employee participation in America. It clearly shows that, in a few companies, employee participation has become a common phenomenon that shows positive evidence for improving efficiency and productivity as well as job satisfaction and increasing quality of working life. Democratic participation and co-operation between equals, however, still has to be encouraged to a large extent. Nevertheless, the former Secretary-Treasurer of the American Federation of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organisations (AFL-CIO), Tom Donahue, has some doubts about all these modern forms of employee participation, because "American management today believes that worker participation can somehow be divorced from worker representation, that participation is a substitute for representation" (p.272). Donahue emphasises that this cannot be the case. In its report *A Call to Partnership*, the AFL-CIO urges the unions "to take the initiative in stimulating, sustaining, and institutionalising a new system of work organisation based upon full and equal labour-management

partnership" (p.275), but this does not mean that "all adversarialism in labour-management partnership can vanish completely" (p.277). Laws should be approved by way of a revitalisation of existing labour. New ways should be explored "to reform our labour laws so that workers in the US would have a real right to organise into unions" (p.279).

Only then, in his opinion, will there be a solid basis for referring to it as employee participation. He does not much appreciate systems of participatory management that "refer to call management-controlled participation", but pleads in this context for "democratic participation achieved through labour-management partnerships" (p.277).

In Australia, the unions were also traditionally suspicious of employee-participation schemes as being a management plot. But in the eighties the tide turned, and when Labour came into power a consensus approach to government arose. A willingness to tripartite consultation and planning grew, also where it concerned employee participation by way of committees on the basis of mutual trust between the parties. But Markey and Reglar do not rule out that, in the Australian steel industry, "the mutual benefits of trust and co-operation between management and employees may potentially threaten the links between unions and workers on the shop floor" (p.385). Let us not forget that unions quite often face difficulties in obtaining "hard, unencumbered or neutral data, because management, which has a particular agenda, tends to filter information for the consultative committee meetings" (p.372).

The same seems to be the case in New Zealand, where unions only appear to lend support to employee participation in a few cases. Rasmussen points out that, under the influence of the extensive economic deregulation of the 1990s, one should expect little support from the legislator in promoting policy-related participation with employees in New Zealand. Consequently, direct forms of employee participation are only propagated by management under the banner of securing "quality, innovation and adaptability to changing customer needs". There hardly seems to be any real employee decision making concerning key strategic issues. "In the absence of European-style legislation on employee participation, there is obviously a reluctance amongst New Zealand organisations to open strategic decision making to employees" (p.401).

This book offers a fascinating survey of the institutional structures and formats within which all sorts of forms of employee participation develop. Those structures also show an historical and cultural diversity. The editors underline the fact that legislation has an important role to play in ensuring the neutrality of participative structures free from the impositions of whichever party is favoured by the balance of industrial power (p.417). "The creation of a multinational superstate in the form of the EU has had a major impact upon the spread and form of works councils in multinational enterprises in Western Europe" (p.417). Although the Dutch contributors to this book admit that the Directive can stimulate a patchwork of international links, they believe that the European directive will, in the long term, develop into a more coherent system of European Industrial Relations (p.84).

And finally, it might turn out to be an example to be copied on other continents. After having studied the institutional *structures* and formal *arrangements* of which this book has been the final result, it is time for the IIRA to study seriously the specific *processes* that take place to improve employee participation at (inter)national levels. The tensions between direct and indirect employee participation will not be immediately resolved, but *democratic dialogues* between colleagues with so many culturally and historically different backgrounds should be promoted to that purpose. In this respect, it is interesting to mention the initiative of the Swedish Work Environment Fund that promoted research in the 1980s on the improvement of democratic dialogues within organisations. That research programme was based on the thesis that a restructuring of communications can be an efficient approach in changing patterns of working life and improving employee participation in organisational change.

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***Raymond J. Stone (ed). Readings in Human Resource Management: Volume 3. Brisbane: John Wiley & Sons, 1998. 401pp. ISBN: 0-471-33837-0.***

With few exceptions (and they shall remain nameless), the quality of the forty contributions in this volume is generally high, in terms of substance, relevance and writing style. Few of the contributions are original to this volume, but that is to be expected in a reader. One might hypothetically cull most of this content from a search of the journals, but Stone has performed a significant service in doing the work for us. The seven sections of the volume, perhaps appropriately, cover traditional functions of personnel, but the contributions within the sections emphasize present-day changes and emergent issues rather than the traditional and the tired.

My first quibble is that the title of this volume should be *Readings in Australasian HRM*. To fail to note this is to hide the conceptual centre and primary contribution of this book. The main audience for this reader will be HR and related classes in Australia and New Zealand, where the goal is to understand the world from an Australasian perspective. General issues in the area of HR are addressed (including the central debate of whether there is a distinct body of knowledge to be called HR). A variety of mainland Asian countries are represented in the readings. Still and all, the perspective represented throughout is that of an Australian or New Zealander looking at the world of commerce. For those in this situation, the present volume will prove distinctly useful.

The publisher's practice of creating a multi-volume series will perhaps constrain applicability of this volume. Classroom use generally limits one to ordering a single volume of readings. Were the volumes directed at different market segments – a general reader, then others on specific topics for instance – this distinction might permit better selection on the part of instructors. As packaged, it seems this series would best suit library purchases, where a multi-volume set is more appropriate to user needs. Multiple volumes without specific subtitles, along with the aforementioned omission of the qualifier "Australasian" in the title, may hinder adoption by instructors. I would, however, encourage regionally-based educators to consider this volume for adoption.

Two remaining quibbles. With the notable exception of a contribution authored specifically for this edition by Stewart Clegg, critical perspectives on organizations are quite lightly represented (as opposed to, for instance, the recently published *Strategic Human Resource Management: A Reader*, Mabey, Salaman & Storey, eds., London: Sage, 1998). Overlapping with this, representation of American and UK authors is quite light. Both countries' writings are reflected, for the most part, only indirectly as they appear in the work of Australasian workers (meaning Australian; New Zealand is virtually unrepresented). On the one hand, this regionalizing of the discourse is a distinctive contribution of the book, which contributes to an indigenous, rather than colonial, body of knowledge. At the same time, it is generally conceded that the idea of "Human Resource Management" is an American export product and the usefulness of this export has been hotly debated among UK scholars. Greater representation of a few key writings from American and UK theory would be useful.

That said, it is a strong plus that this volume is almost entirely focussed on the most transformational changes taking place in the world of the large, multi-national business. One might argue that large-organization employment represents only a privileged subset of the work done in Australasia, especially outside the major cities. I would respond that the HRM concept has been constituted as a large-organization phenomenon. It does not cover the entire world of work. This should be more of a caveat to instructors to think about supplementing their course material than it is a criticism of the editors, who have gathered contributions that fairly represent the major debates.

Analogously, outside of perhaps seven or eight urban areas, entry to the *industrial* world is as relevant to Australasian students as is the imminence of post-industrialism. As an American living in a rural New Zealand city, I have learned that students growing up within farming, small-community reality have a logic of lived experience within which the "common sense" of an industrial society of expertise, social stratification, consumerism and interpersonal competition is often alien and alienating (nor does entry to this world unambiguously constitute "progress"). The present volume of readings is silent on these changes in social reality, changes which make the possibility of a personnel function meaningful (cf., Jacques, 1996, *Manufacturing the Employee*, London: Sage). But, again, this may be taken more as a caveat for educators than as a criticism of the present volume.

Overall, the strengths of the volume are good topic selection, regional focus and representation of multiple Asian countries. The weakest areas are packaging, critical perspectives and historical contextualization. The strongest consideration for the book from among these qualities is the regional focus. The over-representation of texts and other writings from the UK and America in the study of commerce is one of the significant problems the region faces in developing management knowledge suited to the problems of the region, rather than to the needs of the G7 powers. Imported texts are generally hideously, but silently, colonizing in that their authors seldom label the knowledge they contain to be culturally, economically or historically contingent. It is, then, up to us to determine in what ways it is desirable to come into line with global practices and in what ways it is more appropriate to develop indigenous knowledge. The present volume is a useful step toward the realization of this goal by helping to redress the under-representation of locally developed perspectives on global phenomena and in giving us much to discuss.

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**Paul Blyton and Peter Turnbull. *The Dynamics of Employee Relations*. Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1998. 404pp. ISBN: 0-333-67985-7.**

This is the second edition of a book which first appeared in 1994 as part of the Macmillan *Management, Work and Organisations* series. As such it claims to be a textbook aimed at postgraduate and post experience courses but also suitable for final year undergraduate modules. The authors have updated their case material, statistical data and large sections of the text to 1997, as well as refining their arguments from the first edition. One major change since the first edition has been the election of a Labour government in Britain, which the authors believe has "placed employee relations at the heart of its agenda".

The authors prefer the term employee relations to industrial relations as a way of circumventing prior mis(conceptions) that industrial relations is solely about trade unions and strikes, and moreover only about male manual full time workers in manufacturing or extractive industries. Through employee relations Blyton and Turnbull wish to convey the study of the employment relationship and the need to examine this across the full range of industrial sectors, covering both sexes, varying hours of employment and both unionised and non-unionised employees. However, by continuing to focus on the collective aspects of the employment relationship the authors distinguish employee relations from personnel management and human resource management with their focus on the individual at work. They seek to examine not only the efficiency of organisations, the control of labour and the resolution of conflict, but also, the interests of workers, the conditions of their labour and

the remuneration of their effort. Thus the central argument of this book is that it is "the creation of an economic surplus, the coexistence of conflict and cooperation, the indeterminate nature of the exchange relationship and the asymmetry of power - not the institutions of trade unions, employers' associations or government agencies, that makes the subject matter of employee relations distinctive".

The other defining feature of this book is *dynamics* and here the authors are careful to present both continuity and change in British employee relations and utilise the concept of the spiral of time (as opposed to linear or cyclical metaphors) to demonstrate the interplay between change and continuity rather than change or continuity which may be found in other works. This interplay is for example demonstrated in chapter three which analyses the dynamic context of employee relations; a context which shapes but does not determine the precise nature of these relations.

Taking these perspectives, the book is divided into four parts - theory and context of employee relations, the actors in employee relations, interactions and outcomes, and a final part which assesses the future direction of employee relations. In many respects this structure could be found in other textbooks. A distinctive feature of Blyton and Turnbull is the use of major case studies at the beginning of each chapter in parts two and three to frame and illustrate the content. One of these, on trade union recruitment and organising, is new; others have been refined since the first edition. Blyton and Turnbull use their approach to employee relations to examine and analyse the routes and options adopted by management to achieve their need of securing a productive and cost-effective workforce; to analyse the decline of union membership since 1979 and assess the prospects for union renewal; to contrast the negative role played by Conservative governments over two decades with the potential positive role that the state might play in employment relations; to assess the significance of collective bargaining in regulating the employment relationship and the changes that have taken place in its structures and outcomes; to offer explanations of a shift from employee participation to employee involvement; and analyse industrial conflict to show the need to consider more than just strikes as a manifestation of it. In all this they offer careful and considered analysis of recent decades in British employee relations, but drawing upon European and American examples to offer contrasts and insights. They draw upon a wide range of research studies and any advanced student of the employment relationship will find a full coverage of significant and recent research in these pages.

In the final chapter the authors seek to explore the future direction of employment relations. They did so at a time when a Labour government had just been returned with a landslide majority and their preface records anticipation from this event. But they are wise to stress the twin forces of change and continuity in their conclusions about the position of management, unions and the state. They do however point out that Labour's proposals are vague, if not contradictory, so that Labour can promote regulation of the labour market through a statutory national minimum wage and recognition procedures, and advocate partnership and fairness at work, but can also intend to retain labour market flexibility and Tory employment laws on union governance and strike action. Writing after



eighteen months of that government we can see grounds for caution. The proposed minimum wage is only £3.60 per hour with less for those under 21, and there appears to be backtracking on the union recognition procedures. While opting back in to the Social Chapter may, as Blyton and Turnbull argue, exert an indirect European "demonstration" effect on employee relations in the UK, the examples management, government, and some unions drew upon in the two previous decades from North America and Japan have not gone away. The pattern of employee relations will continue to reflect both change and continuity. The book remains an excellent analysis of employee relations in Britain and the lessons and discussions of their analysis may well be of relevance to the situation in New Zealand.

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