

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



Jozef WILCZYNSKI : *Comparative Industrial Relations. Ideologies, Institutions, Practices and Problems under Social Systems with Special Reference to Socialist Planned Economies.* London, The Macmillan Press, 256 pp., ISBN 0-333-33430-2

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Volume 40, numéro 1, 1985

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/050125ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/050125ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0034-379X (imprimé)

1703-8138 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

Matejko, A. J. (1985). Compte rendu de [Jozef WILCZYNSKI : *Comparative Industrial Relations. Ideologies, Institutions, Practices and Problems under Social Systems with Special Reference to Socialist Planned Economies.* London, The Macmillan Press, 256 pp., ISBN 0-333-33430-2]. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 40(1), 190–192. <https://doi.org/10.7202/050125ar>

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cost of the German labour hour has doubled, among others, due to the growing load of social costs. The market economy remains in conflict with the welfare economy; there is not any effective way to eliminate the misuse of various welfare activities by people who actually do not deserve them; politicians in order to remain popular defend various privileges or even extend them; in order to defend their living standard, many taxpayers involve themselves into activities not accepted by the state (moonlighting, tax evasion, etc.); there is no economic incentive to keep welfare services cheaper and more efficient.

These are very important and difficult problems of the modern welfare state; even more dramatic are the difficulties of the omnipotent socialist state bureaucracy in the Soviet bloc countries. Goodsell is right showing that the public administration is not necessarily so malfunctioning and sinister as its critics claim. However, he should make his readers aware of the challenges facing the public administration which make necessary organizational innovation. (See Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *The Change Masters*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1984). It is not enough to defend public administration but it would be worthwhile also to show new developmental potential hidden in the alternatives to bureaucracy.

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**Comparative Industrial Relations. Ideologies, Institutions, Practices and Problems Under Different Social Systems with Special Reference to Socialist Planned Economies**, by Jozef Wilczynski, London, The Macmillan Press, pp. VIII + 256, ISBN 0-333-33430-2

This book, written by the late professor of economics at the University of New South Wales at Duntroon/Australia/, has a very broad scope and contains a large amount of information. The role of labour within

various social systems is presented. Employment, unemployment and labour mobility, work discipline and conditions of work are covered in a cross-cultural perspective. Next follow trade unions and collective bargaining, industrial democracy and workers' participation, technology and labour, wages, incentives and living standards, inflation and labour, industrial disputes, international migrations of workers.

This is an ambitious attempt to cover the whole world scene and make the readers aware of the global dimensions of industrial relations. The comparative study of this field is long overdue even with the existence of the International Institute of Labour Studies in Geneva since 1960.

The author does his best to be informative and neutral but he is only partly successful in this respect. Missing is a developmental perspective which would show the nature of civilizational confrontations and transformations arising from them.

The contrasting features of capitalism and socialism are stated by the author already at the beginning but the readers are not warned how actually misleading these concepts may be. The author admits that «both capitalism and socialism have been departing from their original extreme models» (p. 5) but he comes to a very doubtful conclusion that these two systems become increasingly similar to each other. Another debatable view of the author is that the idealistic Marxian goals largely explain the policies and practices of the socialist countries today (p. 7). He quotes various sources from the communist countries without enough criticism regarding the reliability of facts and sincerity of insights. The author makes the readers aware that the communist party élite on many occasions has proved to be insensitive and even vindictive to popular demands for better working and living conditions (p. 12) but this does not prevent him to treat socialism as a highly socialized system. Too much dependence on empirical facts quoted uncritically from various sources and not

enough analysis and explanation seem to be the major weaknesses of this book otherwise quite valuable.

The strongest side of the book is in comparisons of structural characteristics between various types of societies. Labour force participation is higher in the communist countries due to the mass mobilization of societies in order to implement the ambitious goals. Labour turnover varies widely from one country to another, irrespective of the social system; in general it is higher, the higher stage of economic development; it is usually highest in construction, transport, trade and industry, and lowest in agriculture, forestry and public administration. Under communism there is a tendency to replace penalties and formal restrictions by incentives because the former appear to be counter-productive. Working hours are shortest in the West and longest in the developing countries, with the communist countries roughly in the middle. All around the world authoritarianism prevents a genuine humanisation of work, and dissatisfied workers indulge in absenteeism. Collective bargaining is most developed in the industrialized West and least in authoritarian systems.

There is a growing interest in industrial democracy but its implementation remains restricted or distorted; the socialization of the means of production has not overcome the employee-employer conflict or workers' alienation either; in the communist countries the degree of workers' participation in management is surprisingly small, except in Yugoslavia; the concentration of power at the top of the hierarchy effectively prevents any substantial initiative and participation at the bottom; when workers are less educated and less assertive, participation can function effectively only with the support of strong trade unions; the experience of workers' participation has resulted in neither the spectacular gains to the workers nor in disastrous effects on production and social organization; unreserved workers' participation in management is not feasible under a centralized system.

The higher the stage of economic development, the higher the proportion of the working population engaged in industry and services. The labour productivity is generally growing but there are several obstacles in this respect based on the specificity of a given system (for example, hoarded labour under communism); in both free market and the command economies technological unemployment hidden or open has become a major problem; for example, in the CMEA countries hoarded labour constitutes from 5 to 20 per cent of total employment.

As a matter of fact, Marx's prediction of the increasing immiseration of the proletariat has not eventuated. Under state socialism there is a conflict of interests between the rulers promoting investments at the expense of consumers and the actual producers who are skillfully using the formal incentive system to improve their actual wages without necessarily producing more; though informal bargaining in this respect is a fact of reality. In the total work incomes the role of fringe benefits is growing, but under communism authorities tend to enhance the effectiveness of individual material incentives in order to produce more; the incentive differentiation is greater in the case of managerial and specialist personnel than in the case of blue collar workers and the office personnel. The share of incentive in total wage earning under communism is large, and in fact surprising, when taking the ideological commitment to egalitarianism. Considerable income disparities do exist under capitalism as well as under socialism; however, under socialism personal income disparities are smaller and the spread in wage scales is generally narrower. Under the economic reform the disparities have tended rather to increase in most socialist countries, which contrasts with the capitalist tendency for the differences rather to decrease (p. 149).

The standard of living of the working people depends not only on the level of development and the resource potential but also on the proportion of national income devoted to consumption, defence expen-

diture, working time, taxes, savings, availability of goods and services on the market, actual productivity of labour, the distribution of personal income, social consumption (formal and actual), availability of jobs, etc.

Inflation appears both under capitalism and socialism and is rooted in the growing contradiction between the demand and the supply. Under socialism, the governments have much more power to withstand the pressure towards higher real wages; capitalist market economies tend to give preference to fighting inflation rather than unemployment, whilst in the socialist centrally planned economies full employment takes precedence over inflation (p. 175).

In capitalist countries the level of industrial disputes is greater the lower are the extent and degree of development and participation of the labour movement in political and management processes substantial social and economic inequality is also a contributing factor (p. 182). Under state socialism there is a general tendency to restrict strikes or exclude them entirely. The more industrialized and democratic a country, the more elaborate a system of dispute settlement it has (p. 189).

There is around 20 million migrant workers in the world, mostly in North-Western Europe, U.S., and West Africa; some labour-importing countries heavily depend on them, and also several labour-exporting countries heavily depend economically on the transfer of savings; however, labour migration has only a marginal effect on the economic modernization of labour-exporting countries.

The above mentioned general observations done by Wilczynski should inspire much more comparative research. As already mentioned, the models of socialism and capitalism offered by the author do not look as satisfactory.

Official libertarian intentions and the reality of command and centralization under «socialism» when taken together lead to a quite perplexed model. In some respect the

«command» economies as understood by Heilbronner, have several common things, does not matter is it communism, nazism, democracy at war, or a racist state. On the other hand, a mild form of state socialism, as for example in Hungary or Yugoslavia, has many common features with the free market economies.

The author probably has taken too seriously the official declarations of the communist countries in the construction of his own scheme of comparative analysis. In several places of the book he makes critical observations and comments regarding the practice of socialism (elimination of free unions, low wage policy, lack of actual participation, etc.), but at the same time he does not correct his own model taken for granted. If in the individual cases there is so much difference between ideal and reality, then why still to treat the ideal as the basis of an interpretive analysis? One of the reasons of inconsistency is the fact that the author probably incorporated the Polish events (Solidarity, etc.) later on when the basic framework of analysis was ready.

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**Beyond Mechanization: Work and Technology in a Postindustrial Age**, by Larry Hirschhorn, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1984, 187 pp., ISBN 0-262-08132-3

«Robots can't run factories». With that almost reassuring opening Hirschhorn, senior researcher at the Management and Behavioral Science Centre of the University of Pennsylvania, takes us through the history of mechanization, Taylorism and the assembly line aspect of Fordism (but not the overall approach of and to Fordism itself — see below) and now the big jump from automated continuity of production to the application of cybernetics to the control of the product, the producer and the process of production.