

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



*Competition and Collective Bargaining in the Needle Trades, 1910-1967*, by Jesse Thomas Carpenter, Ithaca, The New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, 1972, 910 pp.

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Volume 28, numéro 3, 1973

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/028432ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/028432ar>

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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

Peach, D. A. (1973). Compte rendu de [*Competition and Collective Bargaining in the Needle Trades, 1910-1967*, by Jesse Thomas Carpenter, Ithaca, The New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, 1972, 910 pp.] *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 28(3), 670–670.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/028432ar>

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Même si le sujet n'est pas nouveau, la solution idéale à ce problème n'a pas encore été trouvée. Il reste donc encore beaucoup de travail imaginatif à faire. Cet ouvrage est une contribution valable et constitue un document de travail nécessaire à celui qui veut continuer de travailler dans ce domaine.

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**Competition and Collective Bargaining in the Needle Trades, 1910-1967**, by Jesse Thomas Carpenter, Ithaca, The New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, 1972, 910 pp.

In this exhaustive study, Volume XVII of the Cornell Studies in Industrial and Labor Relations, Professor Carpenter details the development of the industrial relations system in the needle trades.

The labour movement has long sought to take labour out of competition. In a group of industries where, at least until very recently, the only significant potential cost differential between firms was the cost of labour, the desire for total organization by the unions can readily be seen, as can the potential for using the collective bargaining process to regulate competition.

Professor Carpenter shows how manufacturers, through their employer's associations, and the unions in the needle trades have worked closely together over many years to advance their mutual interests. The basic goal of the relationship has been to eliminate cutthroat competition, basically by enforcing uniform labour standards. Of course, the goal has not always been easily met. The almost atomistic structure of the industry as well as the ease of entry and exit, meant that the unions were the only really stable entities involved and also that continuing relationships were difficult to maintain.

The book describes what have been continuing attempts to regulate competition through collective bargaining and the elaborate joint machinery — inspection, mediation, arbitration, and fines

(as well as unilaterally imposed strikes) — used by the parties to enforce the agreements reached between employers' associations and the unions. The agreements reached concerned themselves with a far wider ranging agenda than that usually associated with collective agreements, including such items as prices and relationships between manufacturers and their suppliers and sub-contractors.

Obviously, collective bargaining arrangements such as those in the needle trades can run afoul of the antitrust laws. Professor Carpenter describes the problems the parties have faced in avoiding government prosecution, particularly since the Allen Bradley decision of 1945. One of the parties' responses to anti-trust pressure has been to make the arrangements between them much less explicit, and the richness of detail which characterizes the author's description of collective bargaining activity prior to World War II is of necessity missing in the later chapters.

Canadian readers seeking information on the operation of the same unions in collective relationships in Canada will find no material in this book on the subject. It is exclusively devoted to U.S. experience.

Nevertheless, the story of collective bargaining in the needle trades is a fascinating one, and anyone interested in understanding how involved collective bargaining can be and how large an agenda it can involve itself with would be advised to examine this book. Certainly, anyone interested in understanding collective bargaining in the needle trades would find it indispensable.

One very minor criticism is that the book fails to be a really complete record of the development of collective bargaining practices in the needle trades. It would not have taken much more time or space to briefly trace the development of some of the unions and some of the industries prior to the Brandeis Conferences of 1910 which marked the beginning of the intermingling of trade relations and industrial relations in the garment industries.

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