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Voici donc un ouvrage qui aborde l'étude de la représentation syndicale sous un regard nouveau, mais qui est difficilement accessible au lecteur non initié. Il constitue une contribution à l'avancement des connaissances en la

matière et est d'un intérêt incontestable pour les chercheurs qui s'y intéressent.

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***Temporary Work: The Gendered Rise of a Precarious Employment Relationship***

by Leah F. Vosko, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000, 380 pp., ISBN 0-8020-4792-0.

*Temporary Work* by Leah Vosko analyzes the history and recent growth of temporary work in Canada. It examines the relationship between varied forms of temporary work and the erosion of terms of employment for the standard employment relationship (SER). Furthermore, the author uses archetypes of feminized employment (more casual, lower pay) to characterize this trend.

Professor Vosko examines two dimensions of temporary work: (1) it is brokered (by a recruiter or staffing service); and (2) it is precarious in several ways—it may be unstable, it places workers in a weak bargaining position, and it severs workers from mechanisms of social protection.

The book begins with a review of how Canada and other industrialized countries experienced shifts in social and political norms governing the employment relationship during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. If the SER represents a successful move away from the commodity status of labour power during the post-WWII period, the recent growth of Temporary Employment Relationships (TER) represents a retrenchment from it.

To better understand the modern TER, Vosko writes the history of labour market intermediaries in Canada. This very useful history chronicles the intimate connection between labour market intermediaries and immigration to Canada. Private Employment Agencies, the precursors of the modern temporary

help industry (THI), played a significant role in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in recruiting and placing immigrant male labour for agriculture and industry, on one hand, and female labour for domestic work on the other. In that period, activism from labour, immigrant communities, and the state itself succeeded in limiting the commodity status of labour through policy and practices contributing to building the SER. However, these efforts were most concentrated and most successful in (native) male dominated occupations thus leaving women in female dominated occupations working in less regulated and more vulnerable conditions—a result which now “haunts” workers of both genders because the TER replicates many of the features of female-dominated employment.

These conditions made possible the rapid growth of the modern THI from the 1940s to the 1970s. The industry enabled large employers who adhered to the SER for their primarily male workforce to build “dualism” in their employment systems. Because the THI’s recruiting practices first targeted white middle-class married women, the latter considered by labour and capital as “secondary” workers, this management practice could escape scrutiny. Thus grew the THI “below the radar screen” of conventional collective bargaining and public policy. The attention of male-centered labour activism and policy-making was turned elsewhere.

Chapters 4 and 5 document the growth of the THI during the 1980s and 1990s in Canada. Vosko argues that the rapid growth of the THI during the period represents the use of TERs as an integral part of workforce management tools and no longer as a stop-gap measure. The author relies upon qualitative interviews with workers, client firms, THI industry and government officials. Vosko argues that the growth of the THI is not only a means of extension of the TER to growing numbers of workers but that it extends “feminized” terms of employment (read casual, unprotected) to an increasing share of the workforce, including male workers.

In Chapter 6, Vosko explores the current state of regulation of the TER in Canada and internationally. The author identifies the main challenge of regulation for all provincial and national governments as well as for supranational authorities (International Labour Organization, European Union) as that of providing health and safety protection, benefits, and security to workers employed via triangular temp relationships (worker-staffing service-customer business). Resting her argument on evidence from national legislation in selected European countries and elsewhere, the author makes the case for Canada’s national and provincial governments to adopt a regulatory regime for TERs that differs from that for the SER but need not result in inferior protection, benefits, and security for the latter. The chapter characterizes the 1997 ILO Convention on Private Employment Agencies as a missed opportunity. It entailed the abandonment of the historic support of a public monopoly on job placement and acknowledged the role of private intermediaries *without* specifying a framework for allocating responsibility among the two key “employer” parties to the relationship—the service provider/staffing service and the customer business. In contrast, some EC member countries clarify employer responsibilities and

provide stronger protection and benefits for workers in TERs (for example prohibiting the use of temporary workers in strike situations). For Canada, the author advocates several steps such as the explicit delineation of the “employer-related” responsibilities of each party to the TER, equal treatment provisions, and mandated conversion mechanisms to enable temporary workers to transition to SERs.

To further highlight the role of the state in legitimizing the role of private job brokers and in fostering the adoption of the TER as a parallel normative model, Vosko analyzes the Ontario “Workfirst” social policy (chapter 7). The program uses private temporary agencies as brokers for public assistance recipients who are subject to work requirements. Vosko argues the program conveys legitimacy to temp work (recipients cannot turn it down without risking sanctions), and contributes to tracking recipients in the limited range of low quality temp jobs.

Chapter 8 discusses policy and collective bargaining models for remedying the fragmentation of the labour force that has increased with the growth of TERs. Vosko revisits the historical roots of fragmentation in Canada—the differential treatment of immigrants and women workers by employers, unions and policy makers. The author explores what are now well known limitations of the existing post WWII framework for worker representation in Canada (as well as the United States) namely bargaining unit definition along “community of interest” criteria (separating nonstandard workers from others and weakening their bargaining power) and worksite based representation (ill suited for temporary workers). She then assesses the potential of varied models for occupation-based and geographically-based representation as well as looser forms of worker affiliation to unions. Other strategies include reviving union-centered hiring halls, or forming

worker-centered businesses, all for the purpose of creating viable alternatives to private employment agencies. In the end, all of these approaches must combine with policy action to benefit all workers.

In all, this volume provides a comprehensive analysis of the historical roots and current consequences of temporary employment. It engages the reader in consideration of the historical contingency of employment relationships. It warns readers of recent increases in the commodification of labour, and of the consequences of swings in the power pendulum between capital and labour and of the on-going renegotiation of restraints on labour

commodification. Of particular use to students of industrial relations, labour studies, labour economics, sociology, and public policy, the volume highlights the key role that the state and supra-national authorities play in defending (or not) worker bargaining power in the labour market. The volume includes a particular warning to unions and other worker rights organizations that the gender and race/ethnicity blinders which led them to ignore working conditions for women and immigrant workers have resulted in weakened bargaining power for all workers.

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***Travail, famille : le nouveau contrat***

par Marie-Agnès BARRÈRE-MAURISSON, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, collection Folio Actuel, 2003, 196 pp., ISBN 2-07-042748-X.

This book deals with work-family balancing and family division of labour issues from a societal perspective, taking into account employment and unemployment issues as well as fecundity and childcare issues in different societies. The analysis is centered on France, but also examines the situation in other countries, for comparative purposes.

The author studies the relationship between work and family and considers that the two spheres should be considered simultaneously, although many disciplines and researchers consider work and family separately. It must be recognized that recent development of studies on work-family balancing issues in many countries, particularly the U.S. and Canada, has increased interest in a simultaneous consideration of family and work, which is precisely what the theoretical thrust of this book is about.

The book underlines the need for a new approach to family and work issues, and the author stresses the need for a linkage between the two spheres, rather

than the usual separation observed in many works. The author presents the need for an analysis centered on the articulation between production and reproduction spheres and indicates this is necessary in the present context characterized by demographic, economic, social, and political challenges. The principle of "family division of labour" is seen as a key to reading the various socio-economic phenomena of our societies as well as their evolution. The book demonstrates and supports the different assumptions underlying the theoretical construct of "family division of labour."

The first chapter highlights how professional life and family life are simultaneously private and public challenges. On the basis of her previous research on various types of couples, in several sectors, the author shows how firms also use the family division of labour in their employment policies. She also indicates that there are three models of work-family relations based on the major role of one actor. In the first model, the family