

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



*International and Comparative Employment Relations: Globalization and the Developed Market Economies* edited by Greg J. BAMBER, Russell D. LANSBURY and Nick WAILES, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, London: Sage, 2004, 454 pages, ISBN 1-4129-0125-1 (pbk).

Roy J. Adams

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decision to devote two chapters to professional and white-collar workers. While this appears to have been motivated by a desire to update Lipset's 1962 study on these workers' attitudes towards unions, the chapters are redundant. It would have been better to have integrated the findings into a single chapter. It would have also been more interesting if the authors had examined the attitudes of other hard-to-organize workers (e.g., service and part-time workers). Another concern is the

occasional failure to provide timely data (e.g., the use of 1995 figures on public employment in Canada and the United States and 1997 figures on health care costs as a percentage of GDP).

These limitations aside, this is a provocative and interesting book that should appeal to anyone interested in differences in unionism in the two countries.

**JOSEPH B. ROSE**  
McMaster University

***International and Comparative Employment Relations: Globalization and the Developed Market Economies***

edited by Greg J. BAMBER, Russell D. LANSBURY and Nick WAILES, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, London: Sage, 2004, 454 pages, ISBN 1-4129-0125-1 (pbk).

This book is an update of the popular text whose last version appeared in 1998. Structurally it is identical to the last edition. There is an introductory chapter, 10 country studies, a conclusion and an excellent, extensive statistical appendix.

The introductory chapter by Greg Bamber, Russell Lansbury and new co-editor, Nick Wailes, contains a brief discussion of the nature of the subject, reasons for studying it and pitfalls of comparative analysis. The authors also review several frameworks for approaching the subject including John Dunlop's IR Systems Framework, collective bargaining as an organizing concept, the convergence hypothesis and critical political economy. They also denote, as a major theme of the book, "the impact of globalization on employment relations."

The core of the book consists of country chapters written by scholars generally recognized to be among the most outstanding in their respective nations. Most have also been involved in comparative research projects or are active in organizations such as the International Industrial Relations Association and thus are sensitive to international analysis.

Contributors include Mick Marchington, John Goodman and John Berridge from the UK; Harry Katz and Hoyt Wheeler from the USA; Mark Thompson and Daphne Taras from Canada; Russell Lansbury and Nick Wailes on Australia; Janine Goetschy and Annett Jobert from France; Olle Hammarström, Tony Huzzard and Tommy Nilsson from Sweden. Yasuo Kuwahara contributed the chapter on Japan and Young-Bum Park and Chris Leggett the one on South Korea. New authors include Sarafino Negrelli and Peter Sheldon doing Italy and Berndt Keller writing on Germany.

Although the authors define employment relations as comprehending labour relations and human resource management, the basic organizational framework for each chapter appears to be Dunlop's IR Systems Framework. After describing the economic, political and social climate, the authors commonly discuss the role of labour organizations, employer organizations and the state and the interaction between them including prominently "collective bargaining, arbitration and other forms of job regulation." In addition, each chapter contains a section on contemporary concerns in which such "human resource" issues as

employee involvement, deregulation and labour market flexibility are discussed.

One of the strengths of this book is that it provides an update of the state of industrial relations in a sample of developed market economies. Among notable general observations is that trade unions, caught in the vice of increasing global competitiveness, government belt-tightening and restrictive monetary policy, generally continue to experience hard times. Among national developments that stand out is the deterioration of German institutions discussed eloquently by Keller. His data suggest that although the much studied and heralded codetermination system is not about to sink, it has sprouted some serious leaks. Another major development is the contrary-to-general-trend revitalization of Swedish industrial relations as the Swedes continue to amaze the world with their ingenuity and creativity. Despite the withdrawal of the Swedish Employer's Federation from established institutions of cooperative economic management, at the industry/sectoral level new cooperative institutions have been invented and appear to be functioning well. Also notable is the continuing inability of Japan to pull out of an economic slump that is now nearly a decade and a half old, amidst continuing debate about the influence of Japan's unique industrial relations practices on that situation. In the United States, organized labour continues to grow weaker despite the high hopes for reinvigoration that were held by many when new and progressive leadership gained ascendancy in the 1990s.

With nearly 200 countries in the contemporary world and huge variations among them, choosing countries to include in a book of this sort, with a view towards providing the reader with a good sense of the variation that exists, is an impossible task. One would think, however, that an important criterion for inclusion would be the degree of contemporary interest in the industrial rela-

tions practices of particular countries. Among countries attracting considerable attention recently (more so than some of those included, it seems to me) are Ireland, the Netherlands, South Africa and China. Ireland and the Netherlands have aroused interest because of their economic success and the imputed connection of labour institutions and practices to that success. South Africa is of high interest because of the role of labour relations in its transition from apartheid to democracy and because of the strong role of labour in governing the new nation. China is emerging as an economic super power and thus understanding more about that country's employment practices is of growing interest. From my perspective as a teacher of comparative industrial relations, inclusion of these countries (in lieu of some of those included, if necessary) would have made for a better book at this point in time.

As a text, this book comes up short in a few additional respects as well. First of all, no introductory course on comparative IR would be complete without a section on international institutions such as global union and employer federations and the tri-partite International Labour Organization. The authors do not completely ignore this requirement but their brief and incomplete discussion is, incomprehensively, tucked into the "conclusions" chapter.

Another drawback from a teaching perspective is the dearth of truly comparative material. Many of the most interesting issues are transnational in character and many of the most important lessons are those to be drawn from systematic international comparison. For example, employment relations developments at the European Union level, rather than at the level of any particular country, have been of high interest for some time but one gets only a fragmented sense of those developments from a reading of the country chapters in this book. Union density is

a prime example of a comparative issue crying out for systematic comparative analysis. It varies enormously – from 80% in Sweden to under 10% in France. Students want to know why. To their credit, the editors do ask each author to provide an explanation for the density situation in his or her country. But the sum of such idiosyncratic explanations is not the equivalent of careful theory-based comparison. On such issues, the teacher and student get little help from this book.

Despite its limitations and quirks, *International and Comparative Employment Relations* is the most widely used text in comparative industrial relations. Through four editions, its market has continued to grow and it is now being translated into other languages. It is hard to argue too strenuously with the editors' apparent desire not to tamper with a winning formula.

ROY J. ADAMS  
McMaster University

***La chaîne invisible. Travailler aujourd'hui : flux tendu et servitude volontaire***

par Jean-Pierre DURAND, Paris : Éditions du Seuil, 2004, 387 pages, ISBN 2-02-062881-3.

Les changements dans le travail soulèvent bien des questions quant à l'émergence d'un nouveau modèle productif et ses effets sur les salariés. Même si les chercheurs sont de plus en plus unanimes à reconnaître l'émergence d'un nouveau paradigme productif, ils admettent que celui-ci conserve d'importantes affinités avec le taylorisme. Dans bien des cas, mais avec des méthodes nouvelles, les objectifs demeurent les mêmes : la réduction des coûts, la chasse aux temps morts et le contrôle sur le procès de travail. À ces objectifs traditionnels, les nouveaux modèles cherchent à intégrer la flexibilité du travail et la participation des salariés. Selon Jean-Pierre Durand, le modèle qui réussit cet arrimage est celui à flux tendu. La thèse défendue est la généralisation des principes de ce modèle à l'ensemble des industries et des secteurs d'activités. Le paradoxe que l'auteur veut expliquer se trouve entre l'incessante rationalisation du travail et l'implication accrue des salariés.

Deux questions inspirent cet ouvrage : (1) Comment les entreprises ont-elles réorganisées la gestion du travail et les politiques de mobilisation afin de satisfaire aux exigences du modèle à flux tendu ? (2) Pour quelles raisons les salariés acceptent-ils des exigences plus

élevées de performance ? Le paradoxe est le suivant: les conditions de travail se dégradent et les salariés retirent plus de satisfaction de leur travail. Durand propose de comprendre ce paradoxe en recourant au concept d'implication contrainte selon lequel, dans le système de production à flux tendu, les salariés n'ont pas d'autre choix que de s'impliquer selon les attentes de l'employeur.

D'abord, les entreprises utilisent des techniques de gestion des ressources humaines dans une approche qui individualise la relation salariale. L'auteur regroupe ces pratiques sous le modèle de la compétence qui inculque aux salariés la discipline requise dans un système de production à flux tendu (chap. 3). La mobilisation du personnel s'appuie également sur un régime de segmentation du travail qui nourrit l'espoir d'un emploi permanent chez les uns et les craintes de sombrer dans la précarité chez les autres (chap. 5). Pour rendre compte de cette réalité, Durand utilise la notion de fluidité qui désigne les conditions de passage d'un statut d'emploi à un autre. Pour les uns, le risque d'expulsion vers la périphérie sert de levier à la conformité aux attentes de l'employeur, alors que pour les autres, c'est l'espoir d'obtenir un poste