

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



*Industrial Relations, the Economy and Society, 4<sup>th</sup> ed.*, By John Godard, Concord, ON: Captus Press, 2011, 505 pp., ISBN: 978-1-55322-235-4.

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procédural (obligation du 1 %, normes professionnelles), ce qui correspond assez, me semble-t-il, au concept d'*institutionnalisme*.

Ce livre identifie également certains problèmes concrets auxquels le Québec est loin de s'être attaqué avec toute la vigueur que d'autres déploient. L'auteure rappelle ainsi notre intérêt général à l'égard du développement des PME au sein desquelles se concentre une bonne partie de la main-d'œuvre peu qualifiée. Elle évoque aussi la contribution potentielle des services aux entreprises des réseaux scolaires qui pourraient être mis davantage à contribution. Par ailleurs, le défi que le législateur a imposé au gouvernement en permettant la mutualisation des entreprises à des fins de formation, ce qui représente un intérêt pour les petites essentiellement, s'inscrit aussi dans cette dimension du débat. Jusqu'ici, on a surtout privilégié la création de mutuelles par les comités sectoriels de main-d'œuvre qui ne sont pas bien placés, par la dimension nationale de leur mandat, pour offrir des services de proximité, contrairement à des organismes qui ont davantage un caractère régional ou local.

Il reste à voir comment notre milieu peut tirer le meilleur parti d'un tel ouvrage, au-delà de l'enrichissement qu'il représente pour un cours comme celui qui se donne en relations industrielles sur les politiques publiques en formation. En plus d'offrir une vision d'ensemble, il représente un réservoir de questions qui restent à approfondir, à débattre, et, il faut l'espérer, à résoudre, ce qui n'est pas simple à réaliser alors que les gouvernements sont accaparés dans bien d'autres champs d'action (santé, éducation, environnement, etc.) par d'autres problèmes dont plusieurs sont également d'une grande complexité.

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**Industrial Relations, the Economy and Society, 4<sup>th</sup> ed.**

By John Godard, Concord, ON: Captus Press, 2011, 505 pp., ISBN: 978-1-55322-235-4.

*Industrial Relations, the Economy and Society* is a large book: 505 pages and 16 chapters. From a cursory viewpoint it has a conventional and staid format. Despite what it looks like and how it will be classified, it would be diminishing to describe Godard's latest work as an introductory text about employment relations. The freshman textbook label, to the extent that it implies a predictable list of regularly updated topics and standard decontextualized discussion, is inadequate and understates the work's contribution for, at least, three reasons. First, there is sophisticated although straightforward and well-reasoned background associated with key subject matter. Second, as the fourth edition in a series, the work has evolved to a point where it has isolated the most important elements of our discipline and gives a strong sense of focal versus marginal material. Third, the book is critical but not brazen, partisan, or agenda-pushing. In relation to this third matter, Godard has established his work as particularly polished and professional; he has made sharp distinctions between matters of empiricism, theory, and frames of reference. In so doing, he places the employment relations student in a good position to see that there are a plethora of legitimate ways to interpret data and observations. He subtly shows that labour management is a multi-actor enterprise where values and priorities, formalized through a frame of reference, create meaning. A good example of this is showcased in the first chapter where the notion of a perspective is defined and five key archetypes are identified. In the second chapter, entitled *The Broader Debate*, Godard explains that his aforementioned perspectives only focus on the employment relationship and represent differing main concerns about matters such as conflict and liberty versus equality exclusively in relation

to that institution. On the other hand, in the second chapter, he delves into the historical origins of broader systems of belief; the frameworks of Marx, Durkheim and Weber. He makes the case that how we see employment relations is nested in how we see the world and that how we see the world is mostly categorical. The narrative is very instructive. The reader is implicitly invited to take a position, become a critique, and then adopt another position.

In the study of employment relations, Godard's work leads by example. It does not prescribe what is important but rather presents expository discussions. This is particularly so when it comes to points of methodology. For example, the book does not say that it is important to reflect on an object of an analysis from multiple perspectives. Rather, it does just that and covertly, but very convincingly, teaches us that things seem different when the vantage point changes. There are many examples of this. One concerns unions. Chapters seven and eight formally deal with organized labour; although the reader has already been primed to have rudimentary appreciation of the subject matter. The *exposé* of unions is systematic. The discussion is structured so that it moves back and forth between matters of philosophy and matters of operation and practice. The book is not necessarily pro-union but, somewhat uncannily, leaves an impression that a strong and independent system of employee advocacy is indispensable.

Insofar as methods are concerned, another case of leading by example concerns history. Certain of the book's key discussions reveal, without stating so, that it is not possible to gain an adequate understanding of touchstone employment relations debates and controversies without knowing what went before. This leaves the reader with a sound developmental sense of the subject matter and gives the impression that, when it comes to labour management, issues are not really resolved but merely temporarily patched-up in one party's favour. I know from previous

reading that John Godard is a respected international authority on labour history. He is an expert on the details but also has skill at making sense of the long-arc of unfolding events and identifying themes. He has not wasted these talents in this latest work. The implicit lesson for us, the reader, is that the study of employment relations is inextricably entwined with understanding the past.

For the seasoned employment relations scholar, Godard's work is as much about epistemology as it is about its stated content. Through its ordering of topics and aforementioned implicit emphasis on the difference between data, theory and paradigms, it shows both what is important as well as how to go about teaching and learning. This latter process dimension of the work is not identified as an explicit goal but appears as a serendipitous fillip. However, it is clear to me that it would not be possible to have a book that makes such an important contribution to education without the penmanship of a particularly competent and experienced scholar. In summary, Godard's work is a truly great textbook – mostly better than others I have seen recently. It is particularly appropriate for more mature students, for example MBAs, who may be formally grappling with employment relations for the first time and who, when considered as a group, come from dissimilar ideological and professional backgrounds. I use the book regularly and have not yet gained all that it has to offer.

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### **Visages de l'intérim en France et dans le monde**

Sous la direction de Rachid Belkacem, Cathel Kornig et François Michon, Paris : Éditions L'Harmattan, 2011, 455 p., ISBN : 978-2-296-13723-3.

Cet ouvrage a pour visée principale de proposer un bilan des connaissances relativement au travail intérimaire, principalement en France mais également ailleurs dans le