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Social Movement Unionism as Union-Civil Alliances: A Democratizing Force? The New Zealand Case

Le syndicalisme et les alliances civiles-syndicales : une force de démocratisation? Le cas de la Nouvelle-Zélande

Sindicalismo de movilización social como Alianzas sindicales civiles: ¿una fuerza de democratización? El caso de Nueva Zelandia

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Résumé de l'article

Cette étude prospective évalue les accords entre syndicats et groupes civils en Nouvelle-Zélande (NZ). Elle se concentre sur la participation du Conseil des syndicats néo-zélandais (*Council of Trade Unions*-CTU) aux trois coalitions relatives au salaire minimum vital, au travail décent et au programme environnemental. Elle examine trois courants d'idées (soit la démocratie libérale, la démocratie participative et la pensée radicale) dans le cadre de ces coalitions auxquelles le CTU et ses syndicats affiliés participent, ainsi que leur signification au niveau des pratiques syndicales, des relations entre les participants de la coalition, des milieux de travail et, enfin, de la société en général.

Grâce à ces études de cas, nous constatons que les coalitions civiles auxquelles participent le CTU et ses affiliés ne constituent pas des traits déterminants des activités syndicales en Nouvelle-Zélande. Parmi les alliances existantes, un sentiment domine quant à leur contribution au progrès des intérêts communs, mais, du côté syndical, un but davantage orienté vers le renouveau du syndicalisme prédomine. Toutefois, les alliances étudiées traduisent un engagement envers divers principes démocratiques à différents niveaux de l'organisation. Pour leur part, les tendances radicales émergent grâce aux activités *ad hoc* et aux objectifs recherchés par ces alliances, et non pas par leurs procédés ou configurations institutionnels. Fondamentalement, il appert que le mouvement syndical s'efforce, d'une part, de survivre en se concentrant sur les salaires et les conditions de travail, et, d'autre part, étant donné sa position de faiblesse, il tente de tendre la main aux groupes civils dans le but de contrecarrer l'hégémonie néo-libérale. À partir de nos observations, nous concluons que le concept de démocratie radicale de Laclau et Mouffe (2001) pourrait être prometteur dans le cadre de futures coalitions auxquelles participerait le CTU, particulièrement sur le plan des divers intérêts communs partagés par le syndicalisme et les autres groupes civils. Cette vision concerne, notamment, les engagements moraux, le changement social, l'organisation et la stratégie des coalitions visant à bâtir une contre-hégémonie basée sur une participation qui va du bas vers le haut et qui pourrait, ainsi, venir contrecarrer les thèses néo-libérales dominantes dans les milieux de travail et dans les autres sphères de la vie.

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Social Movement Unionism as Union-Civil Alliances: A Democratizing Force? The New Zealand Case

Jane Parker and Ozan Alakavuklar

New Zealand's labour movement has shed members in recent decades and encountered strong challenges to its bargaining power and political influence, reflecting socio-economic, legal and political developments informed by globalization, deregulation and institutional change. Union revival strategies have emphasized the advancement of organizing and recruitment methods as well as legislative developments, but with limited success.

This study focuses on the democratic arrangements underpinning union organization and efforts to develop and sustain alliances with campaigning civil society organizations in terms of union revival and the change that they bring about. Empiricism and qualitative materials on three alliances involving NZ's peak union body, the Council of Trade Unions, are examined through the lenses of liberal, participatory and radical democracy approaches.

The study findings and prognosis have shared and unique implications for union federations interested in rethinking the axes on which their and other groups' democratic behaviour and agency turn.

KEYWORDS: social movement unionism (SMU), trade unions, peak body, liberal democracy, participatory democracy, radical democracy, civil alliance, coalition-building, New Zealand.

Introduction

Union membership in New Zealand (NZ), a small, service-focused economy, nearly halved between 1991-1994. This followed the de-collectivising effects of anti-union legislation—most potently, the *Employment Contracts Act* (ECA) *1991* (Jess, 2016)—and dismantling of a century-old arbitration machinery, starting with the *Labour Relations Act 1987* which outlawed compulsory arbitration. Col-

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lective bargaining at the enterprise rather than national and sectoral/industry levels was also emphasized, and the scope of collective bargaining in NZ's private sector declined against a backdrop of extensive legislation on individual employment rights, which eroded the incentive for employees to join unions (Estlund, 2013). The cornerstone of current NZ employment statute, the *Employment Relations Act* (ERA) *2000*, reflects the enacting Labour Government's (1999-2008) view of the inherent inequality of bargaining power in employment relationships. Unlike the ECA, which emphasized individual bargaining, it promotes both collective and individual bargaining (though, like its predecessor, it stresses bargaining at the enterprise level).

Notwithstanding this *Act*'s intended recalibration of parties' bargaining power, its introduction of a 'good faith' notion to guide employment relations and bargaining, and growing employee numbers in NZ's labour market, the percentage of employees as union members reached an historical low (357,120 or 17.7%) by 2016 (NZ Companies Office, 2016). Most union members (81.6%) now belong to the 10 largest Council of Trade Union (CTU) affiliates, reflecting union amalgamations to mass resources and legislative developments. Union membership has also increasingly concentrated in the public services, with women constituting three-fifths of all members (Statistics NZ, 2016). Older workers form a larger proportion (Ryall and Blumenfeld, 2014), with those nearing retirement not being replaced fast enough (Edwards, 2016). Furthermore, the impact on NZ of the global economic decline (2008-13), although 'shallow' when compared with other industrial economies, saw its economy contract by 3.3% between late 2007 to mid-2009, and a shift in relative bargaining power away from unions towards employers, impacting on wage and non-wage outcomes (Blumenfeld, 2016). Longer term, national tripartism receded such that, until the current administration's election in September 2017, unions did not have the government's 'ear' as they did several decades ago.

NZ union revival efforts have varied in emphasis and level of strategic intent from recruitment and US-style organizing and enterprise-level partnerships through organizational restructuring and the (re-)development of political and institutional conduits to the pursuit/prevention of collective labour law changes (Parker, 2008, 2011). Another, relatively minor strand of union response to which some international scholarly attention has been paid (e.g. Frege, Turner and Heery, 2004; Tattersall, 2018, 2010; Croucher and Wood, 2017; Ibsen and Tapia, 2017) concerns alliance-building with civil (non-labour) groups and movements.

Alongside the instrumental motives of unions to gain power, such union revitalization initiatives may contribute to their (self-)democratization, as well as that of workplaces and society at large (Camfield, 2007; Hyman, 2016). This study

examines the relationship between unions and democracy with the NZ case. We introduce radical democracy as an alternative perspective with which to analyze union alliances and their transformative potential (cf. its prevalence in parts of Europe and a recent call for a radical refoundation of Europe, e.g. Balibar, 2017). Since much has been said about liberal- and participatory-style union democracy (e.g. Michels, 1915; Lipset, Trow and Coleman, 1956; Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin, 1995; Voss, 2010), we emphasize their main characteristics before elaborating on "radical democracy" (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001) as a conceptual tool with which to re-think unions' roles. A key study contribution resides in unfolding the interplay of radical democratic elements along with liberal and participatory democratic principles in union strategy, alliances and social change.

We argue for the potential of radical democracy for strategizing and organizing in the case of NZ's CTU, drawing on CTU alliance cases to sharpen and substantiate our claim. The interpretative paradigm is underpinned by our CTU and affiliate research, and we claim that the peak body has genuine characteristics to study in regards to alliance-building. We now outline major streams of thought on democracy to frame and conceptualize a discussion of such alliances.

Unions and democracy

Unions are often held up as important bulwarks against anti-democratic tendencies, particularly in relation to work organizations, and it has been a theoretical and practical matter to advance gains or not lose them (e.g. Friedman, 2009). Their internal operation also exhibits elements of liberal and participatory democratic arrangements.

Liberal and participatory democracy

Liberal (representative) democracy operates under the principles of classical liberalism and has long dominated the systems of democracy in many Western countries, including NZ (Mulgan and Aimer, 2004). Through its distinctive set of institutions, the (political) voice of individuals is expressed via representative processes, and decisions are often based on majority rule. While liberal democracy has variations, elected assemblies are core to its operation within unions and beyond, with debate, majority agreement and other policy-making leading to the enactment of regulation. Leaders may be elected by members or elected representatives, and these representatives may be organized in different ways (e.g. in a federal arrangement, elected democratic authority and representation is devolved more towards local assemblies). Unions thus affect, and are part of, a political process within liberal democracies. Taylor (1989: xiv) even argues that liberal democracies can only be constituted with free and independent union

movements as pressure groups though they are "secondary to political parties and supplicants of the state" (Fairbrother, 1996). Fairbrother also outlines other conceptions of unions within liberal democracies (e.g. as business unions, see McIlroy, 1988); and as agents to challenge the structure and procedures of liberal democracy, with "a political potential that has seldom been realised" (Fairbrother, 1996, para. 4).

Participatory democracy emphasizes the broad involvement of constituents in the direction and operation of political systems. Indeed, 'democracy' implies that people are in power; participatory democracy seeks to create opportunities for all constituents or members to be actively involved and meaningfully contribute to decision making, having greater political representation than via traditional representative (liberal) democracy. Pateman (1970) observes that union democracy as active direct democracy at local and other levels, combined with highly accountable representative systems more generally, can provide an important foundation for building a participatory society. Equally, for a democracy to exist, a participatory society must exist, including not only politics but all spheres of society. For some, the type of involvement and empowerment needed for a participatory model accents the need for technological tools that enable the accretion of views (Shirky, 2008) while others caution against overreliance on such (Ross, 2011).

The current practices of liberal democracy, and to some extent participative democracy, have been criticized for not encouraging people's influence over decision-making processes at different levels due to rising corporate power, narrowing of democratic action merely to voting every few years and prioritization of the needs of the market over the social (Brown, 2015; Herman and Chomsky, 2010; Hyman, 2016). Some scholars have recently asserted that participatory democracy should refocus on community-based activity within the domain of civil society, often based on the view that a strong non-governmental public sphere is a precondition to the emergence of strong liberal democracy (e.g. Chambers and Kymlicka, 2002; Seligman, 1992). Indeed, in 2011, considerable grassroots interest in participatory democracy was generated by the Occupy movement. Unions have spearheaded or been party to such movements, including from the first moments of Occupy protests in NZ (e.g. BBC, 2011), and NZ unions' involvement emphasized a grass-roots, participatory approach to seeking wider social transformation.

Within most unions and union centres, an array of arrangements, theoretically, support an orientation towards participatory democracy. They include participatory membership meetings; committee meetings; assemblies of strikers; and member education. Different scholars stress different participatory features (e.g. Lipset *et al*. (1956) emphasize organized opposition, while Levi *et al.* (2009) point

to decentralization), while a purported level of scholarly consensus in the nature of features such as a formally democratic constitution; organized opposition; decentraliza- tion (local autonomy, rank-and-file decision making); election of officials; a close- knit 'occupational community'; equality of salary, status, skill and education be- tween members and officials; and free communication (Voss, 2010, Stephenson, not dated) reflect conventional liberal-style democracy.

Drawing on liberal and participatory approaches, Michels (1915) observed that unions, as democratic organizations, were likely to become oligarchies because of their growth, scale and consequent need for specialized officials. This division of labour could distance the rank-and-file from their leaders, causing them to struggle to understand their activities. Irrespective of a group's democratic beginnings, this eventually develops into oligarchies with engorged bureaucracies (i.e. the 'iron law of oligarchy'). Critics of Michel's general law suggest that it can be surmounted and that there are exceptions (e.g. Fitch, 2011; Gouldner (1955) on the *ongoing* struggle between oligarchy and democracy, Lipset *et al.* (1956) and Seidman (1958) on the International Typographical Union's non-conformity with oligarchic tendencies via organized opposition to its leadership). However, as Baccaro (2008) notes, the union democracy literature has typically not explicitly examined the relationship between unions' internal organization and their collective choices and behaviour. For his part, Streeck (1988: 313) observed a trade-off between efficiency and (organizational) democracy and a consequent need for oligarchic labour organizations. 'Too much' or the 'wrong kind' of democracy was "shown to be detrimental to the collective interest" and that, in democratic interest associations, things do not always and necessarily proceed democratically.

Articulated or not, the tenets of participatory and liberal democracy have long informed the internal organization and external goals of unions in NZ and beyond. These approaches may manifest alongside activity informed by radical principles and we now examine democratic thinking that challenges capitalist arrangements themselves.

Radical democracy

Following Marx, Harvey (2010) argues that capitalism is a ceaseless process of accumulation that searches for voids to occupy and turn into capitalized assets until a moment of crisis due to a limit to expansion. This is currently indicated by the gentrification of cities, financialization/marketization of former public goods, commoditization of the environment, rising inequality and new forms of control of labour to extract more value (Harvey, 2014; Moore, 2015; Piketty, 2014). From this perspective, union decline reflects the overt appropriation of labour, value and wealth during the neo-liberal phase of capitalism (Harvey, 2005), with NZ a

key neo-liberal experiment (Kelsey, 2015). While in some nations the inception and early decades of unionism belonged to a revolutionary movement to end capitalism (e.g. Laroche (2015) on France), elsewhere, including in NZ, there has been greater debate as to who should be the agent(s) of change to a society organized around capitalist principles.

While many argue for class struggle (Harvey, 2007) and prefer a political economic analysis of class as a basis (Wright, 2009), as a milestone in critical theory and practice, Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) post-Marxist Radical Democracy framework introduces hegemonic struggle in the realm of politics while dislocating an essentialist and economically-determinist reading of the 'working class'. The authors advocate an irreducible plurality of political struggles with which to radicalize and deepen democracy, and counter "the new forms of subordination" (p. 161) via new social movements (i.e. multiple antagonisms). This leads to constant reformulation of the social and political spheres, and defends the collaboration of various, on-going struggles—including but not limited to working-class struggle—emerging and transforming power relations.

This retreat from the primacy of the working class has been criticized for radical democracy being approached as an ideological/political construct detached from economic/material relations without any particular subject (e.g. proletariat). Laclau and Mouffe's perspective has also been faulted as a reformist movement, which is not capable of radically transforming/overthrowing capitalist relations (e.g. Geras, 1988; Wood, 1998). However, considering unions' limited radicalism, ongoing struggle for basic rights and being at a crossroads in terms of their relevance for the political agenda, we find value in their radical democratic framework. In particular, a neo-Gramscian focus on hegemony through discursive struggles over meaning and emphasis on the importance of other social movements with their multiple, shifting interests are noteworthy contributions with which to re-imagine alternative alliance-building initiatives against neoliberal capitalism.

Within this conceptual framework, Laclau and Mouffe (2001) present the contingent and dynamic nature of politics. For them, radical democracy is not about tactical alliances or union revival, but rather agency, change, organizing and strategy to build an inclusive counter-hegemony, and to embrace the radical potential of social movements and collaboration so as to argue for a politics from below that challenges dominant assumptions in various spheres of life driven by market forces. For them, radical and plural democracy should be extended to a wider range of social relations by tackling 'redistribution' and 'recognition' issues through radicalizing demands for liberty and equality in society—as an extension of previous democratic revolutions. The issue is, thus, not only about the wealth redistribution, but also recognition of other social, economic and environmental issues as a result of the externalization of the costs of capitalist development,

and interrogation of how these issues and strategies of struggles are conveyed in relation to hegemonic assumptions. This also means acknowledging the plurality of constructed subject positions (Mouffe, 2008) in social movements organized around, for instance, gender and the environment. As Mouffe and Holdengräber (1989: 42) argue, "It is not a matter of establishing a mere alliance between given interests but of actually modifying the very identity of these forces", with each group seeing itself "as equivalently disadvantaged by existing power relations" (Purcell, 2009a: 159).

Laclau and Mouffe (2001) argue for the appropriation and radicalization of elements such as civil society, the state, liberty, the political or the social through new social movements as a part of hegemonic struggle. This kind of engagement also means a constant, but partial, transformation of those elements because of the tensions between "interdependence and autonomy, obligation and freedom, unity and multiplicity, sameness and difference" (Purcell, 2009b: 301). Such a struggle builds a counter-hegemony so as to transform current power relations built upon agreement and consensus. It thus also represents the current hegemonic order, which is based on exclusion of the other—those who are excluded from the political sphere (Mouffe, 2005). While consensus may be an appealing characteristic of neo-liberal democracies, its imposition may conceal existing oppressive power relations. For democracy to be pluralist and inclusive, society needs adverse positions and dissensus as the signifier of different struggles. Instead of a universally-accepted consensus, which by nature is non-inclusive or oppressive to some (in the case of a neo-liberal agenda), Mouffe (2005) advocates a public space where various hegemonic constructions and adversaries can be questioned as a natural outcome of radical and plural democracy.

Articulation is a key concept here in explaining the role of the discursive, contingent nature of hegemonic struggles. Hence, it is a matter of creating 'chains of equivalence' (i.e. building collective unity in the form of shared meaning, in different moments of time, even between contradictory social groups through articulation). For a moment, through articulating a vision or a political position about specific issues (i.e. employment relations, role of businesses in a society, climate change, immigration), a new hegemony over the meaning can thus be established by bringing different groups together for political mobilization and social change. Contu, Palpacuer and Balas (2013) describe, for instance, how multiple actors (e.g. unions, communities, plant managers) were aligned through chains of equivalence, with an articulation based around anti-globalization to resist the shutdown of a MNC plant. In their study of an industrial dispute, McLauglin and Bridgman (2017) argue how, through chains of equivalence, one articulation by the director Peter Jackson (based on films, the movie industry and national identity) was favoured by the public over the CTU's campaign to protect

workers' rights. Hence, for unions, it is a matter of becoming part of hegemonic struggle through articulations about contested issues and aligning with other social movements by creating chains of equivalence.

Unions can form a new contingent where hegemony can be built up in a new realm where diverse subject positions resist, circulate, re-formulate and institutionalize democratic discourse in response to capitalist subordination (Smith, 1998). Here, we see the potential for a new type of politics through union-civil alliances, suggested by Hyman (2016: 22) as a "counter-offensive: a persuasive vision of a different and better society and economy, a convincing alternative to the mantra of greed, commodification, competitiveness and austerity, a set of values which connects with everyday experience at the workplace … by engaging with campaigning and protests movements."

Union-civil alliances and democracy

However, Fletcher and Gapasin (2008) suggest unions are likely to be ambivalent about linking with organizations outside the organized labour movement; or rather, ideological differences within the leadership, and wider activist and membership constituencies may inhibit consistent alliance-building. For peak bodies, these problems may be compounded by a lack of power resources over affiliates (Bean, 1994).

Yet, the same challenges might be those that unions envisage coalitions can resolve. Frege *et al*. (2004) assert that, at heart, union-civil coalitions are attempts to access resources controlled by coalition partners, including physical and financial resources, networks, expertise, legitimacy, and the capacity to mobilize constituencies and popular support. Coalition-building is regarded as a secondary union method to support unilateral regulation of the labour market, collective bargaining (e.g. mobilizing community support of strike activity) and legal regulation. However, even this 'tactical' collaboration can have an unintended democratizing aspect (e.g. a union may come to better appreciate, even adopt, a partner's aim(s) and approaches alongside its own) though, as the authors note, relationships between unions and their allies have often reflected an accent on shared interests.

Beyond instrumentalism and symbolism, Frege *et al.* (2004) also acknowledge coalitions as the reach of union activity from job regulation to wider social/political change: "(A)s such, it can reinforce a broad conception of union purpose, seen particularly in the labour movements of continental Europe, and allow unions to engage as civic actors" (p. 4). Similarly, Tattersall (2010) distinguishes between coalitions that are positive-sum (i.e. build the power of unions and community organizations while achieving social change) or more 'transactional'; and the ex-

tent to which they integrate into state policy-making as a coalition of interest or of protest, with implications for the democratic principles that underpin these pursuits. Scipes (1992) regards union-civil alliances as a 'third type' of unionism, distinguished from economic and political concerns, that takes a broader perspective in which workers' struggles form part of a wider effort to qualitatively change society. Dibben (2004) suggests that social movement unionism (SMU) as a form of union alliance can entail internal grassroots democracy; reaching out to other social groups and pursuing broad, social justice aims; and a struggle against the excesses of international business and their neo-liberal hegemony. Camfield (2007) concurs that the praxis of SMU is most effective for union renewal in the case of public unions in the Canadian context, reinforcing union democratization and forming a basis to resist neo-liberal reforms. For his part, Webster (2006: 195) argues that SMU is "an appeal to workers that goes beyond the employment relationship to the totality of their lives, as consumers, citizens, family members and women."

The literature clearly uses the SMU term with multiple meanings. Observing this, and drawing on our earlier work, we define SMU as: "unions' significant engagement beyond matters of job regulation with wider social and political change" (Parker, 2008: 562-563) involving civil alliances. Our conception of SMU fits with Dibben's (2004), includes the union organizing model and overlaps with community unionism in its endeavour to integrate workers, unions and the labour movement into broader, multi-level coalitions where parties support others' dynamic goals to achieve social and economic justice. This definition also aligns with Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) view of social movements, with their different articulations, agencies of resistance and various subject positions, as an on-going, contingent and fragile hegemonic struggle. A radical-democratic perspective might assert that, despite inherent tensions and complexities, unions building alliances (i.e. creating chains of equivalence) with other civil groups helps to jointly politicize social issues. These efforts can turn into experiments that challenge current democratic practices for unions, communities and societies to become more inclusive and transformative of power relations at organizational and social levels. As via other conceptions of democracy, other civil groups' *modus operandi* and interests may influence, and be influenced, by unions' own (shifting) democratic principles.

We thus hypothesize that the CTU and its affiliates' internal operations and civil alliances are informed by, and seek to externally progress, various (including more radical) democratic arrangements. Indeed, the CTU and some affiliates have recently sought critiques of their strategy, agenda, capacity and activities *via* the establishment of an annual CTU Union Leaders' forum. At the inaugural forum in 2010, academics and senior unionists noted that there was little

consensus about union solutions and strategies. Further, a paper delivered there observed a union 'representation gap'; suggested directions for phased change in building a modern union movement, noting that union capacity needs to be built considering the social and economic context of a nation and globalized world; and argued that union legitimacy includes the quality of internal democracy (Rasmussen *et al.*, 2010). SMU was also observed as a potential avenue for helping define a strategic direction model for unionism, with the CTU setting and leading the union agenda. Also referenced was Kloosterboer's (2007) evaluation of 'what worked' for other union movements in terms of organizing new groups, social justice objectives, coalitions and a 'battle of ideas'. Furthermore, the paper generated lengthy debate and discussion, including on alliance development and different models of democracy, among senior NZ and overseas unionists, policymakers and academics at the forum. Priming of the union movement to contemplate alternative ways forward is also suggested by the CTU's own recent work. For instance, its submission to the NZ Labour Party Future of Work Commission (set up by Labour while in opposition) noted that the "active role of unions and unionists in other progressive parties and movements", and that "when the union movement is weak, reactionary social, income and power inequalities emerge" (CTU, 2016a). The organizing agility of CTU elements exhibited in the NZ Occupy Movement in 2011 also implies the application of and potential for alternative approaches.

By examining NZ scholarship and several alliances involving the CTU with regard to democratic approaches, we seek to establish which approaches coexist or prevail, the scope of their impacts, and the likely trajectory of union-civil alliances in NZ.

The CTU, alliance-building and democracy

Background and prior study

Surveying advanced economies, Frege *et al.* (2004: 137) observe that alliance-building with non-labour and -state movements/bodies "has long formed part of labour's repertoire." In NZ, however, such activity, whether as unionism concerned with job regulation or reaching out to other groups as a 'sword of justice' role (Flanders, 1970), has never been a core trait. The scant, local empirical research (e.g. Newman and Jess, 2015; Newman, Tunoho and Brown, 2013; Parker, 2011) also focuses on individual affiliate cases, stressing the need for CTU civil alliance analysis.

As background, the CTU was formed in 1987 by a merger of the private sector Federation of Labour and public sector Combined State Unions. In the 1990s, it became more accountable to its larger affiliates in a process of centralization

(e.g. its Executive ceased to be generally elected but was instead appointed by sector representatives from larger unions). This development might be regarded as a pragmatic, oligarchic tendency, creating distance between the CTU's leadership processes and smaller affiliates while seeking workable representative democratic arrangements with which to formally represent other unions. Arguably, the limited hierarchy and relative 'nimbleness' of NZ's labour movement and CTU, due to their small scale, may check against an inclination to not give voice to all affiliates and rank-and-file.

Further, under the leadership of Ross Wilson (President) and Paul Goulter (Secretary) (2000-07), there was a move towards a more professional organizational approach, further developed after 2007 by the late Helen Kelly, elected as president on a platform of 'SMU' (Brookes, 2009), and then the late Peter Conway, as CTU Secretary (Richard Wagstaff and Sam Huggard are the current President and Secretary respectively). Meanwhile, the affiliate number of the largest union confederation in NZ shrank from 43 (with 445,116 union members) in 1991 to 25 (311,570 members or 87.5% of all union members) by 2016 (Centre for Labour, Employment and Work, 2016).

As per the wider NZ union movement, alliances involving the CTU have received relatively little attention in union revival or democracy literature. A study in 2010, involving interviews with CTU senior officials, affiliate officials and industrial relations academics, found that alliance-building was beginning to percolate the union movement but was not really implemented as part of overarching CTU or union strategy (Parker, 2011); much of this activity was characterized as reactive and *ad hoc*. Further, there was no articulation of what such developments meant in terms of encouraging particular democratic arrangements, either in the CTU or its coalitions.

Where they had engaged, the CTU and affiliates' civil alliances (e.g. around work-centred issues such as pensions and part-time working) were perceived by informants to form a strand of and support activity for wider union revival within existing democratic and political arrangements. This activity, including organizing, recruitment and political initiatives, was seen as driven by shrinking union membership, resources and political influence (i.e. an instrumental approach, Frege *et al.*, 2004). Despite the longevity of these arrangements, informants were "under no illusion as to the considerable constraints on the CTU's capacity […] to shift itself or affiliates towards a wider role via civil alliance-building" (Parker, 2011: 400). These constraints included internal factors (e.g. some of the CTU's relationships (e.g. affiliates' defensiveness, reduced resources in the face of falling membership amid private sector decline); and a 'culture gap' between union bodies (at once procedurally bureaucratic and organizationally efficient) and the more informal *modus operandi* of some allies. Neither appeared to register a significant

influence on the other in terms of their outlook on democracy or organizational expression. Arguably, this could partly reflect the utilization of existing CTU/alliance features (e.g. its cohesive leadership; the relative flexibility of a smaller union peak body; the concentration of networks in NZ) to facilitate union-civil responses, rather than their radicalization so as to challenge a neo-liberal environment as an 'antagonism' that has undermined union status since the 1980s.

Nonetheless, a "growing sense of urgency in the union movement of the strategic need to widen the CTU's relations with outside groups" (Parker, 2011: 401) was observed by study informants, suggesting the current timeliness of examining on-going cases of CTU-civil alliances with regard to democratic approaches.

ILO Decent Work Agenda

The International Labour Organization-ILO's (1999) *Decent Work Agenda* comprises four elements: creating jobs; guaranteeing rights at work; extending social protection; and promoting social dialogue. Conjointly, they emphasize better work, workplaces and societal cohesion (e.g. work is seen as "directly related to peace"– ILO, 2017).

Whilst the penultimate NZ Labour Government (1999-2008) promoted the initiative, the last National administration (2008-2017) voted against an international labour convention to establish fundamental rights for Domestic Workers at the ILO in Geneva in 2010, and reduced state support for decent work programs, including at international level. Nonetheless, the CTU has continued to encourage others to engage with the program. For instance, it recently issued a report about the Decent Work initiative in NZ with regard to insecure work, emphasizing its intricate connection to wider society which "pays for [it] in the form of increased child poverty, reduced participation from people in their communities, greater levels of debt, poorer health and educational outcomes because of family instability, and weaker local economies" (CTU, 2013: 47). It also recommended that the *Decent Work Agenda* principles should be supplemented with locally-derived measures that reflect the culture, aspirations and resources of a given region or industry; improvement of income support mechanisms for insecure work; reform of government procurement to promote decent work; and strengthening of union campaigns and bargaining to support secure work.

On the latter, the CTU's recommendations included the promotion of "community campaigning to break down the barriers between work and community and to promote unions as social justice organisations" (p. 62). It also called for employers to recognize employee commitments outside of work, noting that "demands being made on workers' time on a 24/7 basis are harming society" and the need to promote their "recognition of the value of social inclusion and

participation" (p. 66). This is, thus, an endeavour to encourage unions to extend their externally-oriented role beyond economic to actively support the inclusive, interdependent aims of "multiple antagonisms" via participative coalition (i.e. participatory initiatives to potentially radical ends). And the issue of work might itself be seen as democratized in that it becomes a key, rather than exclusive or primary, feature of how a decent living can be defined, positioning unions' primary struggle and aims alongside and supportive of those of other movements.

Moreover, the CTU fortified multi-party support for the Labour Party's Future of Work Commission. Involving political, academic, union, employer, industry and consultancy representatives, the Commission marks the emergence of a new representative arrangement and potentially countervailing force within NZ's existing liberal market economy and democracy. A major plank of its work concerns the decent work agenda, and references the CTU's (2007) *Vision for the Workplace of the Future* which recognizes the significance of life *outside* work via an array of interrelated issues, aims and proposed initiatives. With precarious work and under-employment in NZ still rising; weakened employee protection provisions; and the diminution of liberal democratic mechanisms with the ebbing away of national-level tripartism (Haworth, Rasmussen and Wilson, 2010), this work reflects a search, if not fleshed out by practice, for multi-level coalitions of both interest and protest (Tattersall, 2010). From a radical democratic perspective, it seeks to politicize employment relations through wage structures and work arrangements, and mobilize related parties to fight for a 'better life', even within extant socio-economic conditions.

Living Wage campaign

Recent campaigning on the Living Wage—the income needed to provide workers and their families with the basic necessities of life and to enable them to live with dignity and participate as active citizens in society (Glickman, 1997)—shows that NZ unions form a significant, but not dominant, coalition partner at participative (grass-roots) and more representative levels. This activity focuses collaboration on workplace and wider struggles—including those of the working poor, faith-based groups, community groups and unions—by seeking to leverage decent lives via decent pay, albeit via usually the development of liberal- and participative-style democratic institutions and processes. These institutions and processes both work with and challenge the state to seek longer-term social change, however. The CTU and certain affiliates such as the Service and Food Workers' Union (now part of the E tū union) have actively supported the campaign (e.g. advocating a Living Wage with greater security of hours). The union movement's participation in the broad church of the Living Wage Movement of Aotearoa NZ (LWMANZ) is also reported to have been with a vision of union renewal (Newman and Jess, 2015).

Focusing on grass-roots activity, both representative and participatory mechanisms have helped advance the Living Wage cause. For instance, individuals and groups can join a Local Living Wage Network that "encourages and promotes a Living Wage, develops the capacity of local leaders to build a powerful voice in their organisation, and takes action to transform the lives of workers in government and businesses in NZ" (LWMANZ, 2018a). Local Living Wage Boards also bring together member organizations to make decisions about the strategic direction of local campaigns, and comprise elected representatives from faith-based, union and community/secular groups. The LWMANZ also runs training sessions for stream leaders to help support "the development of building power in civil society to win a more just and fair future for our communities" (LWMANZ, 2018a). On the 'business side' of campaign operations, examination of their participatory democratic elements reveals that Living Wage employer accreditation, managed by LWMANZ, requires that employers engage with a union. This could be construed as 'less democratic' (i.e. inclusive) for some (e.g. unorganized workplaces) while promoting local-level democratic practices in organized workplaces via two-way communication and participation by Living Wage advocates (unions) and rank-and-file.

However, there is an absence of tripartite machinery through which to mandate the (democratic) inclusion of the Living Wage issue at the national political level (cf. the UK where, as well as unions being more evidently in the vanguard of longer-running Living Wage campaigns, see Prowse and Fells, 2016), the Conservative government essentially appropriated the terrain by bringing in a living wage statute for workers aged 25 and above. This state-led initiative could be construed as 'undemocratically-derived' and indicative of Streeck's (1988) conception of reduced freedom of collective action (including that by unions) *vis-à-vis* state policy).

Via the Living Wage campaign, there is, thus, modest 'stretching' of the CTU and union movements' democratic fabric (e.g. increased participation, particularly at local levels) so as to work effectively with other civil groups. Whilst this has occurred within the capitalist status quo, the LWMANZ (2018b) suggests the potential for a radical project and social transformation (e.g. it appeals for support to "help us all transform the lives of workers and their families together," with the Movement organizing "through groups because groups build the power of civil society, bringing together thousands of people who share a common goal of reducing poverty and inequality in NZ"). This also aligns with the principles of radical democracy wherein, at a moment, a hegemonic struggle is taking place (i.e. chains of equivalence through the necessity of a living wage), involving various parties (e.g. employers, unions, community groups) who may have contradictory positions.

An environmental agenda

The CTU recently stepped up its policy development, alliance work and emphasis of connections between workplace and wider issues and responses. In February 2016, it made a submission on the priority issues of the *NZ Emissions Trading Scheme Review 2015/16* (CTU, 2016b: 1), being "gravely concerned at the effect of climate change and [did] not believe that the Government is doing enough to contribute to world efforts to combat it." The peak body noted that the effects of climate change and measures to reduce it "impact working people in their jobs and their communities unfairly, and measures must also be taken to address" (p. 1) falling real average wages, a consequential drop in consumption, and slowing investment. In place of a piecemeal approach, a set of policies was recommended, stressing "an integrated approach" to climate change issues, emissions reductions, and labour, economic, industry and social issues.

These recommendations accommodate multi-stakeholder involvement at all levels rather than an effort strongly coordinated from the centre, suggesting the potential to recalibrate the extent to which participatory and inclusive democracy approaches inform practice and progress. Yet, the environmental agenda and its pursuit are problematized by seemingly intractable differences in affiliate, as well as civil party, positions on complex issues (e.g. Hampton, 2015; Obach, 2004). This could be exacerbated in NZ, which has high levels of worker and population diversity and, thus, potentially greater interest divergence.

The challenge of developing a cogent, broadly-supported strategy *via* inclusive, democratic arrangements was underscored by Douglas and McGhee's (2016) NZ study. From interviews with leaders from 11 CTU affiliates, they reported that all informants saw the peak body and union movement as important stakeholders and leaders in this sphere but, also, that individual unions were not in a strong position to progress policies regarding climate change. Some had not even begun to address it within their formal structure or register it as an issue, as their members had shown little interest in raising related matters. Unions' lack of preparation, the authors suggested, reflected the neo-liberal environment in which a sustained undermining of workplace rights had narrowed the role that unions play in workers' lives. Union leaders were also said to be concerned that a shift towards social issues like climate change would adversely affect membership. However, "the continued focus on the short gains of wages and conditions will be pointless if in the middle to long term members' jobs ceased to exist" (Douglas and McGhee, 2016: para 7; cf. Vachon and Brecher, 2016), underscoring the strategic, time-sensitive imperative for a broader change agenda and more radical approach.

Indeed, the urgent nature of certain environmental issues could be seen as a rationale for overriding coalition activity that seeks to accommodate a wider

range of issues, if not interests. Arguably, in this vast sphere, the complexity of such suggests that participatory democratic processes involving direct member activity and groups gathering members' viewpoints will need to work in concert with more representative (oligarchic?) approaches at higher levels to enable coalitions to act in a time-effective way. As Laclau and Mouffe (2001) emphasize, radical democracy concerns agency, change, organizing and strategy to build an inclusive counter-hegemony and to embrace the radical potential of social movements and collaboration to argue for a politics from below that challenges dominant neo-liberal assumptions in different spheres, including the environment. Given the current economistic emphasis of the CTU and affiliate members, this seems unlikely to occur other than via a radicalized democratic approach. Hence, it is again a matter of politicization of the environmental issues and becoming part of the hegemonic struggle through chains of equivalence created by other movements.

Indeed, endeavours to prioritize critical environmental issues might encourage a regeneration of a once-core, internal, participative democratic function of the CTU and its affiliates: the provision of education, particularly via technological and institutional means that involve a range of constituent groups. Technologically-enabled activities might be more nimble (e.g. using an array of venues, timeframes and teaching modes; working flexibly with communities; learning by doing to maximize participation), in turn educating unions themselves about developing their own spaces around democratic practice. A stronger educative function could, thus, help drive participative democracy and more socially-transformative thinking, and potentially, the action of a more radical agenda in which labour and others consider the adoption of more radical forms. As noted by the ILO (2007: iii), improving the provision of union education "will help the movement [and its allies] to create the new knowledge it needs to face the challenges ahead." Union training programs, for instance, might be actively re-orientated to incorporate SMU notions for understanding wider union purpose and development *via* multi-stakeholder engagement. Analytical sessions could help to identify nexus points between unions and other parties' priorities and practices so as to assess the strategic and operational feasibility of their coordinated pursuit (Holgate, 2015) and challenge capitalist relations.

Discussion and concluding remarks

Our analysis indicated that NZ's union parliament and affiliates have engaged in various forms of alliance. This activity has not constituted one of their core characteristics, and has occurred more modestly than in some countries (also Parker, 2011). Most coalitions involving the CTU have primarily involved its affiliates, employer groups and, sometimes, the state; and for the union movement,

focused on job regulation; workplace issues; and staving off further membership decline. Indeed, overseas analyses also concur that, where unions have relatively weak political and institutional supports, as in NZ, they have moved toward organizing and rank-and-file mobilization, as well as civil alliance-building (e.g. Baccaro, Hamann and Turner, 2003; Hyman, 1999). SMU as union-civil alliances (our focus) seeking these pragmatic ends remain vital as NZ workers encounter legislative changes that undercut unions' ability to effectively collectivize, represent and keep members; production and work design changes linked to sectoral, technological and skill-set shifts; growing and largely employer-driven flexible use of labour (Rasmussen, Foster and Murrie, 2012); increasing job insecurity and under-employment; and the retreat of social welfare protection. They are also necessitated by the diversity of the NZ workforce and, thus, workers' interests (Ressia, Strachan and Bailey, 2018; Sayers and Ang, 2013).

An examination of several CTU/affiliate-civil coalitions (around climate change; the Living Wage; and Decent Work) indicated growing recognition of such union revival campaigns as connected to the progress made by other civil groups in the face of neo-liberal hegemony. Our cases emphasize incidents of change-seeking via both conventional and more novel liberal and participatory democratic arrangements within existing capital-labour relations (Table 1). The pursuit of social and institutional change far from reflect cohesive/integrated views about capitalist transformation involving coalition parties overhauling their own organization or relations. However, elements of the democratic basis of their internal organization and connections have been tweaked for varying durations by such engagement, driven by the need to find ways to work with groups who may operate differently at various levels. Such examples build on our evidence of CTU and affiliate self-review. As Edwards (2016: 1) observes "the ground has moved so far underneath it that a fundamental shift in how unions operate and who they represent may be needed," and Voss (2010: 369) argues that "a key problem faced by unions today—how they might best aggregate the interests of diverse workers and represent new constituencies—is also fundamentally a democratic concern, one that can be addressed only by broadening our understanding of union democracy." Stephenson (not dated: 1) succinctly notes, "only a democratic union will operate to its members' full advantage." Critical here is the space to recognize and experiment with combined democratic approaches in the short and longer terms, and to regard such efforts as strategically imperative in the face of time-sensitive, significant workplace, economic, societal and political developments.

Our findings showed that extant scholarship has not really considered the meaning of peak union coalition activity in NZ for its internal organization or alliance relationships in relation to different models of democracy. However, the

TABLE 1

Alliance cases, democratic elements and outcomes

Alliance cases	Elements reinforcing liberal and participatory democracy	Elements reinforcing radical democracy	(Anticipated) outcomes
Decent Work (workplace-based) Living Wage (workplace-based)	Defending arrangements to secure basic rights for work and workplace (Process) Extending pluralist agenda and interests of workers (Process) Working for better representation of workplace issues with the involvement of multi-parties (i.e. the state, employers, communities) (Process)	Campaigning and reaching out to communities to promote unions as social justice organizations which would become a base for building (counter-)hegemony (Process) Establishing connections with other work-related parties to challenge the neoliberal agenda of work (i.e. precariousness) (Process)	**Union** Performing as a democratic civic organization while securing economic gains **Union-civil relationship** Expanding influence and membership base from a union perspective, being open to collaborate with other social justice organizations **Workplace** Protection, and secure work **Wider** Societal cohesion, justice and inclusion
	Defending the living wage as a requirement for workers and families to participate in social life which would help participatory citizenship establish in the society (Process) Building representative mechanisms to give voice related to pay (e.g. Local Living Wage Network) (Process)	Politicizing and to some extent radicalizing wage relations between the employer and the workers through diversity of organizations (Process)	**Union** Democratic civic organization participating in a societal cause **Union-civil relationship** Learning from each other and reinforcing solidarity Expanding membership base **Workplace** Just pay **Wider** Active citizenship, social inclusion, fair society and the potential for a radical agenda

TABLE 1 (following)

Alliance cases, democratic elements and outcomes

Alliance cases	Elements reinforcing liberal and participatory democracy	Elements reinforcing radical democracy	(Anticipated) outcomes
Environmental Agenda (non-workplace based)	Giving voice on behalf of the environment and suggesting policies for change (despite the ambiguity of the priorities) – representing the needs of environment (Process)	Call for a multi-stakeholder involvement for a social and ecological transformation (Process) Moving towards SMU to build an inclusive and collaborative (counter-) hegemony to challenge socialisation of environmental costs of neoliberal capitalism (Process)	**Union** Non-economistic perspective, becoming more responsive to others' agenda, getting out of workplace **Union-civil relationship** Base for SMU and potential for collaborating with a wider group of social and environmental movements **Workplace** Impact on company policies and practices **Wider** Taking action against global warming Challenging capitalist dynamics through coalition building and education

cases here highlight that the CTU, like many union centres and larger affiliates, embodies liberal democratic and oligarchic tendencies and tensions, reflecting an efficiency and (organizational) democracy trade-off (Streeck, 1988). It needs to lead and represent well. But its leadership over and for its affiliates has diminished due to a host of internal and environmental factors in recent decades.

Given and despite such challenges, can different permutations of union-civil alliances help to overcome, for example, a widespread 'anaethetization' of dissent (reflecting and reproducing coalitions involving labour that are weakly integrated into state power-making– Frege *et al.*, 2004)? On the one hand, the CTU derives some flexibility from its small scale (less organizational complexity) and concentrated system of networks in NZ; these institutional and contextual advantages have had modest enabling and democratizing effects. On the other, it is a relatively weak union centre with few power resources, and members and representatives whose focus is primarily economistic. However, these factors may come to be overridden by the urgency of some developments (e.g. in the natural environment) that necessitate concerted responses. Whilst individual unions and the CTU itself are not monolithic, but complex structures comprised of diverse individuals with multiple memberships and allegiances, inherently, alliances emerging from/with unions can form the basis for radical democratic ideals.

In practice, the CTU and affiliates' alliance efforts around issues such as decent work, the living wage and environmentalism are yet to define democratic efforts for emancipatory strategies. However, aspirational aims exist, the pursuit of which could be facilitated, for instance, by the revitalization of union education (see Parker and Alakavuklar, 2018) and greater use of 'nimble' technologies with transformative and democratizing potential for coalition projects. Even under conditions of constrained choice, they may offer some scope to challenge the atomizing and mollifying power of neo-liberalism and existing socio-economic, political and institutional arrangements (Clawson, 2008), with the potential for union renewal and transformation (Serdar, 2012) to emerge from increasingly radicalized and politicized collective associations (e.g. Yu, 2014).

Conceptualization of a more transformational project has been stultified, and a survivalist mode encouraged, not only by factors within but also those which are external to unions, including neo-liberal economic and regulatory conditions; austerity; declining employment in industries where private sector unions have traditionally been strong; a restructuring of employment, with the rise of precarious, gig economy and increasingly automated work; and unions' struggle to engage younger workers and expand into growth sectors. Apparently, the current socio-economic conditions for union revival are not promising (Croucher and Wood, 2017).

However, these features and the rise of (neo-)conservatism, inequality, environmental destruction, in-work and wider poverty, and housing and refugee crises actually stress the need for unions and their civil partners to immediately and fundamentally examine their purpose and democratic tendencies. Despite challenges due to differences between unions and other organizations (Köhler and Jiménez, 2015), doing so fits within unions' wider capacity to "[embrace] alternatives to their time-honored traditions" and continuously reinvent themselves so as "to survive as effective 'continuous associations'" (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2013: 205). As noted, recent CTU and some affiliates' initiatives reflect cognisance of the need to seek strategic (re)direction by assessing rather than dismissing alternative approaches, including SMU and radical democratic arrangements, to strengthen their position and successfully coalesce around dynamic workplace and societal interests.

The winds of change are blowing in NZ (e.g. duPlessis-Allan (2018) effuses that our new Labour government "is starting to feel like one of revolution. It has taken the status quo, scrunched it into a ball and thrown it in the bin"). In this context, civil alliances involving the CTU may grow their influence on state and other party behaviour. And the import and time-sensitivity of the case issues for many of us behove serious contemplation of radical ideas and SMU as possible alternatives to default options such as populism; a reformed radicalized labour in NZ becomes less 'another wish' and more strategic imperative.

Thus, unions and other actors in an on-going struggle might more often identify themselves as 'social movements' aiming to challenge the power of the state and capital, and seek social transformation (Fairbrother, 2008), with peak bodies (or Central Labour Bodies) encouraging this approach. A broader understanding of union democracy(ies) and its interplay with the principles guiding coalition parties at all levels is needed, furthering not only working-class democracy. Beyond unions, the struggle for radical democracy is underway and it may be only a matter of time, resources and effort before new (counter-)hegemonic blocs are built through politicization of contested issues such as income, climate change and alternative economies (Alakavuklar and Dickson, 2016; Jaques *et al.*, 2016).

Over two decades ago, Waterman (1993) argued for the potential gains of SMU being conveyed *via* working class and non-/multi-class democratic movements. This does not undermine the importance of capital-labour conflict (cf. Upchurch and Mathers, 2012) given that the idea of radical democracy does not fully exclude the notion of socialism (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001). Laclau and Mouffe acknowledge how capitalism creates inequalities and limits self-development so that socialist struggle against it is a necessary moment for radical democracy. However, a project of radical democracy should go beyond the limitations of previous experiences of liberal democracy and socialism, assuming that there are

other struggles to learn from and with which to collaborate. Subsequent thinking might consider whether and how radical democratic pursuits by new social movements can draw on/accommodate other democratic principles by negotiating their identities and considering others' demands in the ongoing pursuit of the democratization of life (Smith, 1998). Radical democracy as a theoretical tool and means of organizing can aid unions and broader democratic struggle against neo-liberal hegemony. Future research might, thus, examine further examples of union-civil alliances to refine our typology (Table 1) for NZ and other contexts.

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SUMMARY

Social Movement Unionism as Union-Civil Alliances: A Democratizing Force? The New Zealand Case

This exploratory study examines union-civil alliances in New Zealand (NZ). It focuses on the involvement of NZ's peak union body, the Council of Trade Unions, in three civil group coalitions around the Living Wage Campaign, Decent Work Agenda and Environmental Agenda. It assesses how the CTU and its affiliates' coalition involvement are informed by and seek to progress liberal (representative), participatory and/or more radical democratic principles, and what this means for organizational practice; the relations between the coalition parties; workplaces; and beyond.

Through case discussions, the study finds that civil alliances involving the CTU and its affiliates do not reflect a core trait of union activity in NZ. Among the union-civil alliances that do exist, there is a prevailing sense of their utility to progress shared interests alongside, and on the union side, a more instrumental aim to encourage union revival. However, the alliances under examination reflect an engagement with various liberal and participatory democratic arrangements at different organizational levels. More radical democratic tendencies emerge in relation to *ad hoc* elements of activity and the aspirational goals of such coalitions as opposed to their usual processes and institutional configurations.

In essence, what emerges is a labour centre and movement which, on the one hand, is in a survivalist mode primarily concerned with economistic matters, and on the other, in a position of relative political and bargaining weakness, reaching out to other civil groups where it can so as to challenge the neo-liberal hegemony. Based on our findings, we conclude that Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) view of radical democracy holds promise for subsequent coalitions involving the CTU, particularly in the context of NZ workers' diverse interests and the plurality of other civil groups and social movements' interests. This view concerns *on-going* agency, change, organizing and strategy by coalitions to build inclusive (counter-) hegemony, arguing for a politic from below that challenges existing dominant neo-liberal assumptions in work and other spheres of life.

KEYWORDS: social movement unionism (SMU), trade unions, peak body, liberal democracy, participatory democracy, radical democracy, civil alliance, coalition-building, New Zealand.

RÉSUMÉ

Le syndicalisme et les alliances civiles-syndicales : une force de démocratisation? Le cas de la Nouvelle-Zélande

Cette étude prospective évalue les accords entre syndicats et groupes civils en Nouvelle-Zélande (NZ). Elle se concentre sur la participation du Conseil des syndicats néo-zélandais (*Council of Trade Unions*-CTU) aux trois coalitions relatives au salaire minimum vital, au travail décent et au programme environnemental. Elle examine trois courants d'idées (soit la démocratie libérale, la démocratie participative et la pensée radicale) dans le cadre de ces coalitions auxquelles le CTU et ses syndicats affiliés participent, ainsi que leur signification au niveau des pratiques syndicales, des relations entre les participants de la coalition, des milieux de travail et, enfin, de la société en général.

Grâce à ces études de cas, nous constatons que les coalitions civiles auxquelles participent le CTU et ses affiliés ne constituent pas des traits déterminants des activités syndicales en Nouvelle-Zélande. Parmi les alliances existantes, un sentiment domine quant à leur contribution au progrès des intérêts communs, mais, du côté syndical, un but davantage orienté vers le renouveau du syndicalisme prédomine. Toutefois, les alliances étudiées traduisent un engagement envers divers principes démocratiques à différents niveaux de l'organisation. Pour leur part, les tendances radicales émergent grâce aux activités *ad hoc* et aux objectifs recherchés par ces alliances, et non pas par leurs procédés ou configurations institutionnels. Fondamentalement, il appert que le mouvement syndical s'efforce, d'une part, de survivre en se concentrant sur les salaires et les conditions de travail, et, d'autre part, étant donné sa position de faiblesse, il tente de tendre la main aux groupes civils dans le but de contrecarrer l'hégémonie néo-libérale. À partir de nos observations, nous concluons que le concept de démocratie radicale de Laclau et Mouffe (2001) pourrait être prometteur dans le cadre de futures coalitions auxquelles participerait le CTU, particulièrement sur le plan des divers intérêts communs partagés par le syndicalisme et les autres groupes civils. Cette vision concerne, notamment, les engagements moraux, le changement social, l'organisation et la stratégie des coalitions visant à bâtir une contre-hégémonie basée sur une participation qui va du bas vers le haut et qui pourrait, ainsi, venir contrecarrer les thèses néo-libérales dominantes dans les milieux de travail et dans les autres sphères de la vie.

MOTS-CLÉS : syndicalisme, mouvement social, centrales syndicales, démocratie libérale, démocratie participative, pensée radicale, alliance civile, coalition, Nouvelle-Zélande.

RESUMEN

Sindicalismo de movilización social como Alianzas sindicales civiles: ¿una fuerza de democratización? El caso de Nueva Zelandia

Este estudio exploratorio evalúa las alianzas entre sindicatos y grupos civiles en Nueva Zelandia (NZ). El estudio se concentra en la implicación del Consejo de sindicatos neo-zelandeses (*Council of Trade Unions* - CTU) en tres coaliciones en torno a los temas del salario mínimo vital, el trabajo decente y la agenda del medio ambiente. Se examina hasta qué punto la participación del CTU y de sus afiliados en la coalición se inspira de los principios de tres corrientes de ideas, esto es, la democracia liberal, la democracia participativa y el pensamiento radical. Se aborda igualmente, la significación de dichas influencias a nivel de la práctica organizacional, de las relaciones entre participantes de la coalición, de los medios de trabajo y de la sociedad en general.

Gracias a estos estudios de casos, se constata que las coaliciones civiles a las cuales participaron la CTU y sus afiliados no constituyen una característica central de la actividad sindical en Nueva Zelandia. En el seno de las alianzas existentes, domina un sentimiento respecto a su contribución al progreso de los intereses comunes, pero, del lado sindical, predomina un objetivo más instrumental de promover la renovación sindical. Sin embargo, las alianzas estudiadas traducen un compromiso con los diversos principios de la democracia liberal y participativa a diferentes niveles de la organización. Por su lado, las tendencias más radicales emergen gracias a actividades ad hoc y a las aspiraciones formuladas por las alianzas en oposición a los procedimientos habituales y las configuraciones institucionales.

Aparece de manera fundamental, que el movimiento sindical se esfuerza, de un lado, por sobrevivir concentrándose en los trabajadores asalariados y las condiciones de trabajo, y, de otro lado, dada la posición de debilidad el intenta tender la mano a los grupos civiles con el objetivo de desafiar la hegemonía neo-liberal. A partir de estas observaciones, se concluye que el concepto de democracia radical de Laclau y Mouffe (2001) podría ser prometedor en el marco de futuras coaliciones a las cuales participaría el CTU, particularmente en el plano de diversos intereses comunes compartidos por el sindicalismo y los otros grupos civiles. Esta visión concierne, especialmente, los compromisos morales, el cambio social, la organización y la estrategia de coaliciones con miras a construir una contra-hegemonía inclusiva que fomente una política que va de abajo hacia arriba y que podría ser capaz de desafiar las concepciones neoliberales dominantes en los medios de trabajo y en las otras esferas de la vida.

PALABRAS CLAVES: sindicalismo, movimiento social, centrales sindicales, democracia liberal, democracia participativa, pensamiento radical, alianza civil, coalición, Nueva Zelandia.