

Article

"[s.t.]"

Ouvrage recensé :

Byron D. EASTMAN : *Labour Market Theory and the Canadian Experience*. Toronto, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987, 350 pp., ISBN 077-4730-757

par S.A. Alvi

Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations, vol. 42, n° 4, 1987, p. 894-895.

Pour citer cet article, utiliser l'adresse suivante :

<http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/050380ar>

Note : les règles d'écriture des références bibliographiques peuvent varier selon les différents domaines du savoir.

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter à l'URI <http://www.erudit.org/apropos/utilisation.html>

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche. Érudit offre des services d'édition numérique de documents scientifiques depuis 1998.

Pour communiquer avec les responsables d'Érudit : erudit@umontreal.ca

Outre ces éléments nouveaux, 70% du volume est consacré aux droits collectifs du travail. On ne peut être surpris de cette répartition puisqu'il s'agit toujours de la source vive et dynamique du droit du travail.

Il suffit de parcourir la table des matières pour comprendre que les questions qui proviennent de l'Ontario sont abondamment traitées et de préférence, nous semble-t-il, à toutes autres. Bien que les auteurs affirment que cette quatrième édition serait «truly national», ils ont omis cependant le Québec.

Pourtant, n'y retrouve-t-on pas, en cette province, quelques institutions d'enseignement d'expression anglaise, n'y applique-t-on pas, comme partout ailleurs au Canada, le droit du travail fédéral et le Code du travail québécois ne répond-il pas lui aussi des mêmes sources historiques que les autres législations provinciales en semblable matière? Il nous faut constater que la langue crée une frontière plus efficace que bien d'autres.

Quant à l'usage de tant de décisions jurisprudentielles comme moyen d'enseignement du droit du travail, il relève de la méthode inductive propre à la Common Law. Ces centaines de décisions ainsi publiées et servies aux étudiants nous surprennent toujours au Québec. Une approche aussi intense du droit pathologique permet également de s'interroger à savoir si le futur praticien ne serait pas trop formé à l'exercice du droit du travail dans son aspect conflictuel et négatif tout en ayant une vue assez limitée de la dynamique qui résulte de l'ensemble des sources vives du droit du travail: lois, règlements, conventions collectives et pratique.

Fernand MORIN

Université Laval

Labour Market Theory and the Canadian Experience, by Byron D. Eastman, Toronto, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc., 1987, 350 pp., ISBN 077-4730-757

Labour economics has been treated by many as an extension of micro economics with a casual mention of labour being a very special resource and not an ordinary 'commodity'. As such, much of this treatment is confined to discussing labour market operations in terms, mostly, of the classical micro economic theory. Little attention has been paid to the institutional approach. Eastman, in this book, has attempted to integrate the institutionalist tradition with the theoretical approach of analysing labour market operations. It is expected that both instructors and students of labour economics will find the author's treatment very interesting and informative.

The book consists of twelve chapters, including one on rational expectations and the labour market (Ch. 10) and another on alternative labour market theories (Ch. 12). The readers may find most chapters divided into three parts. The author, first, introduces the subject matter. The approach is mostly theoretical and analytical. He relies heavily on the use of visual material (mostly graphs) with the occasional use of symbolic presentations (mathematical notations, etc.). This is followed by the empirical validations of the theoretical concepts, citing mostly statistical material and current Canadian problems and situations. Each chapter ends with references and suggestions for further readings.

There are certain features which make this book interesting and different from other North American texts: First, certain illustrative points and Canadian experiences are separated from other discussions in boxed inserts. Readers who are interested in Canadian experiences may pay special attention to these inserts; those not interested may ignore them. Secondly, it is

generally recognized that the treatment of 'demand for labour' in economic theory still remains rather unsatisfactory. Within this limitation, the author has made a sincere effort to discuss, in some detail, the long-run theory of labour demand, a topic which has received a very casual attention from many authors of books on labour economics. Third, though short, the discussion of rational expectations and the labour market (Ch. 10) is indeed a unique feature of this book. Finally, the supplement to chapter one provides readers with the basics of the regression analysis. This enables them to understand and appreciate results of some of the research studies, cited in this book, which are based on this tool.

The readers would have benefited much more from this painstaking efforts had the author presented the introduction in greater details. After all, it is in these three introductory pages that the author explains the important difference between human and all other resources. By implication, he also explains how labour economics differs from micro economics. Perhaps a chapter, incorporating enlarged introduction, would have been more helpful. The same may be said about the last chapter which discusses alternative labour market theories rather too briefly.

While the treatment of labour demand suffers from the inadequacy of attention it deserves, considerable developments have taken place on the supply side of labour. Unfortunately, the author pays more than proportionate attention to the mechanical and theoretical aspects of supply of labour; very little space has been devoted to the theory of population. Further, the author, for some reason, has ignored discussions on fertility and migration which have enormous impact on the supply of labour and social policies in Canada. Likewise, no mention is made of functional income distribution, a serious concern for the country's labour movement, although a very brief discussion of size distribution of income is presented in chapter 11.

It seems customary for most of the current generation North American text writers to fill pages with as many graphs and equations as possible. The writer of this text has done his part in presenting, what seems to be, an excessive use of graphs; some of which are complicated enough to confuse readers of basic understanding of such tools. Consequently, such readers, mostly students, spend a goodly amount of their time in deciphering these graphs. Little notice is, thus, taken and understanding created of the ideas and concepts that are their bases. Furthermore, often there is little association between some of these graphs and the practical situations they intend to explain. The result is confusion and frustration.

The book also suffers from certain errors which might be the result of the hurried schedule in producing it. For instance the budget line's slope is stated to be P_a/P_b (p. 13) whereas, in actual fact, it should be P_b/P_a . The same error is repeated on pages 14-15 involving the same notation. Further, on page 41, the definition of participation rate in the first sentence of para 3 does not agree with the illustration given in the following sentence. Nor does the cut-off age of 15 agrees with 14 in the last sentence of the same para. Also, the heading of the diagram 2.2 (page 44) starts with «Non Participation...», while the diagram itself shows the individual participates in the labour market to the extent of 35 hours per week. Similarly, income earned, as a result of increased wage, in diagram 2.4 (page 46) and explained on page 47, is OY_2 and note OY_1 .

In sum, it is easy to find faults with a major work like this text. However, a review will not be complete without mentioning its shortcomings if there are any. On the whole, the book is well written and well organized. It gives its readers wealth of information.

S.A. ALVI