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*Equal Employment Policy for Women: Strategies for Implementation in the United States, Canada, and Western Europe*, edited by Ronnie Steinberg Ratner, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1980, 520 pp.

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ble participation des travailleurs aux décisions et la démocratie dans l'entreprise qui sont en cause mais bien des objectifs traditionnels de l'entreprise privée dans une économie capitaliste.

Il n'est pas facile d'émettre un jugement global sur l'ensemble de ce volume. L'auteur a tout à fait raison lorsqu'il formule l'observation suivante dans sa préface: 'there is a vacuum in the published literature, namely, case studies on the actual operation of legal and voluntary participative schemes in individual companies' (p. VII). Et il précise que ce livre représente un effort pour combler cette lacune. En ce sens, l'objectif a été atteint dans une bonne mesure puisque plusieurs études de cas apportent une contribution appréciable, notamment celles auxquelles nous avons référé de façon particulière. Toutefois, il est fort possible que le lecteur ne soit pas tout à fait satisfait pour autant, justement parce que ce volume ne constitue pas une unité, un ensemble cohérent, mais plutôt une collection d'essais et d'études de cas. Ces études de cas ont été réalisées par plusieurs collaborateurs de différents pays. Leur qualité est variable quant à la méthode et la profondeur de l'analyse. On ne discerne pas de problématique d'ensemble et l'auteur ne tente pas de faire ressortir les rapports, le fil conducteur entre les différentes études de cas. Dans une bonne mesure, les limites de l'ouvrage s'expliquent par son genre et aussi par son objet, puisqu'il touche à une gamme de sujets très divers.

**Jacques BÉLANGER**

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**Equal Employment Policy for Women: Strategies for Implementation in the United States, Canada, and Western Europe**, edited by Ronnie Steinberg Ratner, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1980, 520 pp.

Equal employment policies for women are a relatively recent phenomenon. During the last ten to twenty years, various facets of equal employment policy have been intro-

duced in an increasing number of countries. While the pattern of a separate, restricted and inferior position of women workers continues to be displayed with considerable uniformity across countries, variations exist in methods and stages of implementation of equal employment policy for women.

Ronnie Steinberg Ratner's text is a welcome arrival, offering unique perspectives on the international experience with equal employment policies. Indeed, it represents the first cross-national discussion of equal employment policy for women. Published in 1980, this book is a set of papers commissioned for a 1978 conference sponsored by the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women. The twenty-two papers provide analytic case studies and critical essays prepared by experts on equal employment policies in Sweden, West Germany, Austria, France, Great Britain, Canada and the United States.

The book is an important contribution to the evolving theory and analysis of equal employment policy. Its major flaw stems from the lack of a common approach to papers prepared by contributors. While Ratner, as editor, has managed to fill in gaps with two strong analytic chapters, one is left with several questions which the papers in varying degree fail to adequately address.

The opening chapter by Ratner provides an examination of the position of women in the seven countries. Aspects of the labour force position of women which are common to all countries are highlighted, such as the high degree of occupational and industrial segregation, rising participation rates of married women, differentially high unemployment of women compared to men, a persistent male-female wage gap and a high degree of part-time work.

The chapter also provides a discussion of the evolution of the two main facets of equal employment policy, equal pay and equal opportunity. Ratner then addresses within this chapter one of the most important topics in the book, namely, the **sources** of female labour market inequality. Her analysis of the

sources of female labour market inequality recognizes three approaches: (1) a discrimination model within which labour market inequality is perceived to result from specific unfair treatment of or discriminatory behaviour toward employees by employers; (2) an affirmative action model which recognizes discrimination as an inherent feature of the operation of the labour market, based on recruitment, hiring, training and promotion practices; (3) an expanding opportunities model which situates the sources of women's labour market inequality outside the labour market and instead considers lack of training and home and family responsibilities to be crucial variables.

After thus setting the stage she organizes the remaining chapters of the book in terms of policy tools and implementation tactics. Parts II and III examine various institutional strategies for implementing equal employment policy and the likelihood of their effectiveness.

The six chapters of Part II deal with the strengths and limitations of legislation and collective agreements as means of achieving equal pay and equal employment opportunity. Alice Cook discusses the interesting Swedish approach of a "solidarity wage policy" which seeks to reduce the gap between low and high earnings. This policy has not highlighted the issue of women's wages. Rather, unions have treated women's wages as a significant element of the problem of low wages. As of 1977 the gap between men's and women's earnings stood at less than 12%, giving Sweden the best record on narrowing male-female wage differentials.

The remaining five chapters deal with various legislative approaches to equal pay and equal opportunity. The package of law reforms on equal pay and equal opportunity enacted in France since the Second World War and their serious limitations are discussed by Marguerite Lorée. Peter Robertson and Marcia Greenberger set out U.S. thinking on the nature of discrimination and federal laws to combat sex discrimination. Robertson's discussion of the evolution of

the definition of discrimination from individual ill-will based on bias and prejudice to a recognition of systemic discrimination in employment practices is particularly illuminating. The U.K. strategy, which allows for several institutional mechanisms for dispute resolution, including conciliation and arbitration and the settlement of complaints in special labour courts called "industrial tribunals", is explored in chapters by Dipak Nandy and Jeffrey Jowell.

Part III deals with training and organizing women for equal employment. Strategies for equality in training are canvassed in Great Britain, Austria and Germany by Alice Cook and in Sweden by Berit Rollen. Barbara Wertheimer discusses the U.S. experience in training women to participate in leadership positions in unions and clearly points out the need to get women and therefore, hopefully, women's issues to the bargaining table. In the only chapter on the involvement of the women's movement, Lorna Marsden discusses the role of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, a voluntary association with a membership of over 130 Canadian organizations, in the development of Canada's equal pay for work of equal value legislation.

Part IV deals with the impact of government policies on personnel procedures and on employment patterns in private companies. Nancy Seear discusses the impact of British equal pay legislation on women in organizations. Changes in the range of jobs available to women in the United States are presented by Ruth Gilbert Shaeffer, based on a survey of over two hundred corporations. Rosabeth Moss Kanter proposes a framework for understanding structural influences on the position and mobility of women within an organization and then identifies its application to strategies for equal employment policy. Kanter outlines the actual application of this framework in a major corporation and concludes that for affirmative action and equal employment opportunity programs to be successful, they must be tied in more closely and clearly to issues of organizational effectiveness.

Part V explores the economic and social context of equal employment policy. Herta Daubler-Gmelin and Ralph Smith examine the impact of economic conditions on the employment of women and, more particularly, on the implementation of equal employment policy in West Germany and the United States respectively. The importance of coherent family policy for the position of women in the labour market is explored in chapters by Hilary Land and Rita Liljestrom.

Part VI focuses on future directions in equal employment policy with a chapter by Helen Remick on the concept of equal pay for work of equal value. Ronnie Steinberg Ratner's final chapter summarizes themes and issues and presents a number of unresolved issues and future policy directions. Two appendices on data needs (by Barbara Bergmann) and the use of the instrument of work analysis in implementing equal pay for work of equal value (by Christof Helberger) complete the book.

While useful country information is interspersed throughout the book, most of the essays neglect to discuss a fundamental aspect of equal employment policy, namely, assumptions about the source of female labour market inequality. In some cases, the conflict between equal employment policy and other policies and the glaring ineffectiveness of policies points to an incorrect analysis of the problem and/or inadequate policy implementation. In her first chapter, Ratner herself attempts to situate countries according to their assumptions about female labour market inequality, based on her typology of discrimination, affirmative action and expanding opportunities approaches. Ratner's conclusion, while commonsense, is nonetheless quite startling in terms of its implications:

"countries choose the approach that is least threatening to the power relationships among existing groups in the labour market and most consistent with past labour market policy". (p. 44)

In terms of Ratner's discrimination nexus, most countries initially adopt either a discrimination or an expanding opportunities approach to equal employment opportunity policy. This is not particularly surprising since the affirmative action approach, with its emphasis on systemic discrimination, requires a fundamental relocation of the locus of discrimination from individual behaviour to the structure of the labour market. As Ratner notes:

"This new definition has implications for power relationships in the market. Both employers and organized employees have a stake in maintaining that structure in its current form. Each will resist large-scale changes unless such changes will enhance their power position relative to the other social partner." (p. 45)

In order for public policy to be effective, it must utilize a strategy which addresses the problems it was intended to remedy. As long as the problem (in this case, the source of women's labour market inequality) is improperly identified, strategies will be misdirected or of limited use. Ratner points to misidentification of the problem as a major source of policy ineffectiveness but this idea does not receive the overall emphasis it deserves in the book. In her concluding chapter, Ratner calls for an affirmative action approach to equal employment policy which would attack the sources of systemic discrimination.

Another unfortunate underemphasis occurs in the consideration of the role of the women's movement in securing advances in equal employment policy. Ratner notes that:

"It is the political actions of women that prompt governments to pass laws and design programs, and trade unions to reach agreements with employers. Furthermore, it is the sustained pressure by women that causes these plans to be put into effect." (p. xx)

While Marsden's chapter on the Canadian National Action Committee on the Status of Women is illuminating, it would have been interesting to trace the actions and effectiveness of the women's movement in other countries in influencing equal employment policy (although this topic may command a book in its own right). If strategies for equal employment policy are chosen on the basis of their acceptability to the existing power structure, the pressure of the women's movement may be one of the few forces pressuring for effective policy based upon a clear understanding of the nature of the problem.

Ratner does not devote much space to a discussion of the evaluation of the effectiveness of policies. Mention is made, in her last chapter, of reduction in occupational segregation or decrease in the wage gap (or both) as measures of the effectiveness of strategies. However, it is not by any means certain that changes in these variables are linked causally to equal employment policy since they clearly can be affected by such variables as changes in the overall economic climate, general labour market policy, etc. As Nancy Seear notes in her chapter on equal pay and equal opportunity legislation in Great Britain:

"It is extremely difficult to isolate the impact of legislation from the many other variables affecting the position of women." (p. 266)

Clearly, this issue of measurement of policy effectiveness requires further consideration in some future work.

**Equal Employment Policy for Women** raises a number of interesting issues. One of these is the debate on the relative importance of two aspects of equal employment policy — equal pay and equal opportunity. Ratner points out that the order of development of these policies differed in the United States and in Western Europe.

In the United States, disillusionment with equal pay policy came about after equal opportunity laws had been in existence for several years but before they had been enforced to any great extent. In the countries of

Western Europe, equal opportunity policy grew out of an increasing understanding of the limitations of equal pay policy.

However, in some chapters the discussion of equal pay policy is based on the limited concept of equal pay for equal work rather than considering the potential of equal pay policy in terms of the concept of equal pay for work of equal value. Only in relation to equal pay for equal work can Marguerite Lorée say, in Chapter 3, that equal opportunity and equal access are necessary preconditions to achieving equal pay. While not directly attacking the problem of occupational segregation, the concept of equal pay for work of equal value seeks to eliminate the historical undervaluation of work done by women. It is quite possible that paying women according to the value of their work would also have some impact on occupational segregation by influencing attitudes about the value and ability of women workers.

Both Helen Remick and Alice Cook point to potential problems in implementing equal pay for work of equal value, particularly in terms of ensuring that fair job evaluation schemes are devised. Remick is particularly pessimistic about the possibility of implementing job evaluation schemes based solely on paying women for the value of their work:

"Implementation of any new system purporting to benefit preferentially any group but white males will be politically opposed by the groups in power." (p. 418)

An interesting theme developed in the book is the relation of family policy to labour market policy. Ratner points out the startling variation among countries in the degree to which policies that affect the family are made consistent with the goals of equal employment policy. Hilary Land provides a fascinating treatment of this relationship in Great Britain. She demonstrates clearly that underlying British family policy are assumptions about the division of responsibilities among family members which perpetuate conflict

between women's labour market and family roles and thereby lessen the effectiveness of equal pay legislation. In contrast, Rita Liljestrom discusses the integration of Swedish family policy and labour market policy based on a conception of the family as a symmetrical unit, with two parents and two breadwinners.

What resides after reading this book is a somewhat pessimistic view as to the ultimate success of equal employment policy in most countries. Apart from selecting approaches which are least controversial and most in line with status — quo interests, many countries' experiences have demonstrated the strength of the economic imperative in determining how far equal employment policy will advance. Various articles point out different approaches toward working women which appear in a growing economy versus one which is declining.

The "reserve army" concept remains strong, with gains for women in the labour market coming mainly in times of economic expansion. As Ralph Smith points out, it becomes increasingly difficult without a healthy labour market to increase women's share of employment in predominantly male sectors. Given the dismal prognosis in most countries in terms of strong and continued economic expansion, the outlook for successful equal employment policy appears rather bleak.

Ratner's final paragraph underlines the importance of this book:

"The development of equal employment policy for women is at a crucial turning point in most of the advanced industrial democracies. Over the next two decades, the parameters of policy in most countries will not only take form, but will also become more difficult to modify." (p. 438)

Clearly, analysis and understanding of the successes and failures of equal employment policy in other countries provide insights which will hopefully be used to im-

prove and expand existing policies. **Equal Employment Policy For Women** is a valuable first step in this direction.

Carole SWAN

Economic Research and Analysis  
Status of Women Canada

**Normes et déclarations de principes intéressantes particulièrement les travailleuses,**  
B.I.T., Genève, 1981, 138 pp.

Ce recueil rassemble en un seul document diverses normes et déclarations de principes adoptées sous les auspices de l'Organisation internationale du travail et intéressant particulièrement les travailleuses. Il ne comporte pas cependant tous les textes adoptés en la matière: «lorsqu'une norme ou un principe se retrouve dans plusieurs textes, seul le plus important, le plus complet ou le plus à jour est cité» (à la page 2). Des notes placées à la fin de chacune des sections du recueil renvoient aux autres textes pertinents.

En plus d'une importante section regroupant des textes de portée générale concernant l'élimination de la discrimination et la promotion de l'égalité de chances et de traitement ainsi que des textes de portée plus limitée concernant l'égalité de rémunération entre hommes et femmes, ce recueil contient aussi des sections sur la politique de l'emploi et la mise en valeur des ressources humaines, les conditions de travail, la sécurité sociale, les relations professionnelles et l'administration du travail.

Parmi ces divers textes, il importe d'attirer l'attention du lecteur sur les normes dont l'objet est d'assurer une protection spéciale à la femme — les normes protectrices — notamment dans des matières comme le travail de nuit et les travaux insalubres ou dangereux (aux pages 69 et ss.). Or, les normes protectrices sont aujourd'hui fortement remises en question car elles contribueraient selon certains à perpétuer des discriminations à l'égard des femmes. L'O.I.T. n'est pas demeurée insensible à ce point de vue. Une importante