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**Relations industrielles**
**Industrial Relations**

# Paul THOMPSON : *The Nature of Work. An Introduction to Dabates on the labour Process.* London, The Macmillan Press, 1983, 305 pp., ISBN 0-333-33027-7

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Volume 39, Number 3, 1984

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/050071ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/050071ar

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Publisher(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0034-379X (print)
1703-8138 (digital)

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Cite this review

Matejko, A. J. (1984). Review of [Paul THOMPSON : *The Nature of Work. An Introduction to Dabates on the labour Process.* London, The Macmillan Press, 1983, 305 pp., ISBN 0-333-33027-7]. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, *39*(3), 641–642. https://doi.org/10.7202/050071ar

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labour's reaction to the unemployment question will be dealt with. It is not. To have included this aspect would have been most useful but could, as well, have been another book. While the book deals with Canada, short shrift is given to Québec and the Maritime region. The Québec gap might have been partially filled by consulting Claude Larivière's *crise économique et contrôle social; le cas de Montréal 1929-1937.*

Three other points merit mention. These are questions of qualification. Selected jobless unrest is rightly given attention; on the other hand, no mention is made of the march of the unemployed on Edmonton City Hall in 1932 that contributed to the federal government's paranoia. It is stated that the agrarians supported immigration (p. 32); unfortunately, the agrarians were not a solid bloc and most opposed immigration because of the threat it posed to the weakened farmers' position during the 1920s. In a similar vein care must be taken with figures and geography. The village of Swansea may have been one of the wealthy suburbs of Toronto and had only 5-8% on relief (p. 83). It, however, divided naturally. Probably 100% of the jobless (European origin) were in the south and between the Canada Sewer Pipe Company, the sewer pipe pond, Stelco and the Toronto city dump; thus the figure is misleading.

Then there is the question of semantics. Yet it is more than that. Even though Liberal and traditional economists are loath to use the term depression because of what it connotes; historians must use it to describe the situation. If there is a depression and a slight improvement occurs followed by a regression surely one has fallen back to the depression rather than recession (pp. 187-8).

This is a fascinating book that should stimulate discussion and additional research. The presentation is balanced, although it is clear that Struthers is a centralist. The conclusion is sound and notes that thirty-five years later the federal government's attitude towards unemployment has changed little. The study merits a wide readership beyond the academic community. Struthers is to be commended for his investigation and solid insight into the Canadian dynamics of state intervention.

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**The Nature of Work,** An introduction to debates on the labour process, by Paul Thompson, London, The Macmillan Press, 1983, pp. xvi + 305, ISBN 0 333 33027 7

This is a summary of the literature dealing with management-labour relations mainly from a leftist position. Labour process is understood as the means by which raw materials are transformed by human labour, acting on the objects with tools and machinery: first into products for use and, under capitalism, into commodities to be exchanged on the market. It is in the interest of the employers, to incorporate the crafts, knowledgeable practices and elements of job control held by workers into the functions of management, or operation of machinery. Employers direct work tasks, discipline and reward workers, and supervise and evaluate their performance in production. It is in their vested interest to dominate over labour, and this domination takes more and more the form of the incorporation of science and machinery within the expanded scale of production. All this happens not only under capitalism but also in the state socialist societies. The work control in both cases remains a 'contested terrain'. In order to achieve its goods, management has to manufacture the consent, in addition to the application of power. By the process of labour deskilling, task control, displacement of production (to the places free from unions) and technical progress, management perpetuates its dominance. On the other hand, workers continue a whole variety of resistance in order not to allow their position to weaken too much.

According to Thompson, the policy taken by the unions becomes more and more obsolete. Trade union actions inhibit class consciousness and reflect work divisions. The experience of working people today is much different than long ago, when Marx formulated his analysis of the transformation of the class in-itself to the class in-itself. «The working class has to be subject to cultural, ideological and political factors outside the immediate sphere of production which act on the ability of highly divided workers to find common interests and a unity of purpose» (p. 236). In the labour movement emphasis should be put on prefiguring new relations of production by subverting and changing forms of hierarchy and organization of production (p. 244). New forms of bargaining and industrial democracy should be encouraged as a more viable politics of production which integrates resistance of workers with transformation of the workplace reality. The passivity of traditional trade unionism in this new field is a sign of weakness and immaturity when taking into consideration the rapidly changing world of work.

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**Japan's Reshaping of American Labor Law,** by W.B. Gould, Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press, 1984, 193 pp., ISBN 0-262-07091-X

L'auteur, professeur à Standford Law School, avait présenté il y a deux ans une excellente vue d'ensemble du contenu et de la mise en oeuvre de la législation américaine du travail: *A Primer on American Labor Law*. Des séjours prolongés au Japon l'incitent cette fois à comparer les principaux aspects du droit et des institutions du travail de ce pays aux situations correspondantes dans le sien. Le contenu américain de l'ouvrage est en effet important, l'objectif demeurant néanmoins la présentation de l'autre système.

L'occupation américaine du Japon sous l'autorité du général Mac Arthur devait entraîner l'adoption, en 1945 et 1946, de grandes lois du travail présentant certaines analogies avec le droit américain. Mais, l'ensemble du système japonais actuel se démarque profondément de ce dernier: telle est, pourrait-on dire, la thèse de l'auteur. Le titre qu'il donne à son ouvrage masque en partie cette réalité, selon ses propres propos: «... the Department of State's decision led to Japanese labor legislation — major portions of which resemble American labor law, although the resemblance is one of form rather than substance and although the similarities must be seen in light of Japan's historical and continued adherence to the civil-law tradition, particularly that of Germany and France.» (p. 19)

Les premières pages décrivent d'une façon générale la perception japonaise du rôle du droit et du judiciaire dans la société, le phénomène syndical, axé le plus souvent sur l'entreprise, la diffusion de l'autorité dans celle-ci, l'importance de l'emploi permanent dans la grande entreprise, la propension au consensus, qui favorise la consultation, mais non l'arbitrage ... On fait ensuite un bref historique de l'adoption des trois grandes lois du travail de l'après-guerre, sans allusion véritable à la situation antérieure: la loi sur les syndicats, régissant les rapports collectifs du travail, celle mettant en place les commissions de relations de travail, chargées non seulement de voir à la répression des atteintes au droit d'association, mais également de régir une importante activité de conciliation et, enfin, celle portant sur les normes minimales du travail, qui, au-delà de ses prescriptions explicites, oblige les employeurs à déterminer de façon détaillée les conditions de travail.

Si certains aspects de cette législation rappellent le droit américain, par exemple, l'énoncé de pratiques déloyales de travail à la charge des employeurs, en particulier le refus d'engager la négociation collective, la similitude n'est que partielle. D'abord,