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Non-Union American Plants in Britain Their Employment Practices

**P.B. Beaumont
and
B. Townley**

This paper examines, through an analysis of survey evidence, whether U.S. non-union plants in Britain are significantly more likely to have certain work practices currently associated with non-union establishments in the United States.

The results of a number of general surveys of industrial relations phenomena in Britain have indicated that foreign owned plants have been relatively 'progressive' or 'innovatory' in the sense of being, for example, to the forefront in the development of single employer bargaining structures¹, and in having a relatively well developed personnel management function². In addition to these findings, there have been a number of industrial relations studies specifically concerned with foreign owned plants in Britain. These specialist studies have been overwhelmingly concerned with two basic questions: (i) the strike frequency of foreign owned plants compared to their British counterparts: and (ii) the degree of centralisation/decentralisation in industrial relations decision making within these particular organisations. There are various criticisms that have been made of these specialist studies, most notably their narrow focus³ and essentially atheoretical ap-

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1 See, for example, D.R. DEATON, and P.B. BEAUMONT, «The Determinants of Bargaining Structure: Some Large Scale Survey Evidence from Britain», *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, July 1980, pp. 202-216.

2 See, for example, P.B. BEAUMONT, and D.R. DEATON, «Personnel Management in the Management Hierarchy», *Management Decision*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1980, pp. 203-211.

3 Neil HOOD and Stephen YOUNG, *Multinationals in Retreat: The Scottish Experience*, Edinburg University Press, Edinburg, 1982, pp. 24-25.

proach⁴. To these criticisms we would add a further one, namely the fact that they have concentrated overwhelmingly on unionised establishments. In Hamill's recent study, for example, fully 21 of the 30 foreign owned plants in Britain that he studied were unionised⁵.

This concentration is particularly unfortunate given that the trade union movement in Britain has long cited certain foreign or, more specifically, U.S. owned firms as being among the leading non-union employers in the country⁶. The firms most frequently cited in this regard include IBM, Hewlett-Packard, Gillette, Kodak (now unionised), Texas Instruments and Motorola. The union concern about such non-union establishments has grown considerably in recent years. This is because, according to the unions, establishments of this type are growing in number, particularly in the so-called high technology industries, and are seeking to maintain their non-union status through the use of employment practices that have proved effective for such purposes in the United States⁷. There are even suggestions, albeit ones based on little empirical evidence, that both the individual employment practices and overall management style associated with these firms are becoming something of a model for British owned establishments to follow. For example, Purcell in a recent article has claimed that «the sophisticated paternalist companies especially those that are foreign owned are increasingly used as a model for employee relations policies, as witnessed by the growth in quality circles»⁸. Similarly, a recent study of industrial relations tendencies in the current recession in the Northern region of England observed that⁹:

Perhaps even more unusual for the North in a region which has been said to «stand(s) for a working class tradition», one can see the adoption of «positive employment policies» in at least twelve large companies in the region. These policies incorporate non-recognition, at least formally, of unions. We note again that the workforces of these companies have been drawn almost exclusively from the traditional industries of the region and that the union culture and tradition of the former industries does not appear to have been transferred with the workforce.

4 J. HAMILL, «Labour Relations Decision Making Within Multinational Corporations», *Industrial Relations Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 2, Summer 1984, pp. 30-34.

5 J. HAMILL, «Multinational Corporations and Industrial Relations in the UK», *Employee Relations*, Vol. 6, No. 5, 1984, p. 12.

6 See, for example, *Annual Report of the TUC*, 1967, pp. 129-132.

7 See *Report of the STUC Conference on the Future of Trade Union Membership*, May 1984.

8 John PURCELL, «The Management of Industrial Relations in the Modern Corporation: Agenda for Research», *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. XXII, No. 1, March 1984, p. 12.

9 David BRIGHT, Derek SAWBRIDGE and Bill REES, «Industrial Relations of Recession», *Industrial Relations Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 3, Autumn 1983, pp. 27-28.

The sort of employment practices being referred to above are those that are typically held to characterise a union substitution, as opposed to union suppression, strategy. The essence of the former strategy, which is apparently enjoying a good deal of favour among non-union firms in the United States at the present time¹⁰, seeks to limit job dissatisfaction, and hence ultimately the employee demand for unionisation, through the use of the following policies¹¹:

- (i) wages and fringe benefits equal to, or greater than, those paid comparable unionised workers in the industry and/or labour market;
- (ii) a high rate of investment per worker in human support programmes such as training and career development;
- (iii) advanced systems of organisational communication and information sharing;
- (iv) informal mechanisms for, or encouragement of, participation in decision making about the way work is to be performed;
- (v) development of a psychological climate that fosters and rewards organisational loyalty and commitment;
- (vi) rational wage and salary administration, performance appraisal, and promotion systems that reward merit, but also recognise the relevance of seniority;
- (vii) non-union grievance procedure (usually without binding arbitration);
- (viii) location of new production facilities in rural or other weak union areas wherever possible; and
- (ix) in some cases, use of employee selection devices to avoid workers most likely to be pro-union.

In short, if non-union U.S. owned plants in Britain are (i) increasing in number and are (ii) generally subject to relatively centralised influences in decisions about their employee relations strategy and policies, then one could expect to see such practices spreading beyond the confines of the relatively small, 'household' name group of firms mentioned earlier, (e.g. IBM, Hewlett-Packard, etc.) that has traditionally practised them in Britain. The potential importance of looking at this question of the spread of non-union U.S. practices in Britain is suggested not only by the unions' view of such an occurrence, but also follows from Kochan et al's observation that the debate over whether industrial relations practices can be ex-

¹⁰ See Fred K. FOULKES, *Personnel Policies in Large Non-Union Companies*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1980.

¹¹ Thomas A. KOCHAN, *Collective Bargaining and Industrial Relations*, Richard D. Irwin, Homewood, Illinois, 1980, p. 185.

ported may well be an important topic of analytical research in the 1980s¹². There currently exists some empirical evidence, albeit somewhat preliminary in nature, on the attempted export of various U.S. non-union practices to Canada¹³. And the present paper presents the first set of such evidence for Great Britain.

The research approach adopted here differs from that of previous studies of foreign owned plants in Britain which have asked personnel respondents to rate the degree of centralisation/decentralisation in various aspects of their employee relations decision making; in our view such an approach, perhaps particularly in non-union firms, runs the risk of researchers being given responses with a strong 'public relations' element biased in favour of decentralisation. The approach adopted here is to examine, through an analysis of survey evidence, whether U.S. non-union plants in Britain are significantly more likely to have certain work practices (e.g. quality circles) which we know are currently strongly associated with non-union establishments in the United States. If such a relationship is apparent, it would appear difficult to simply dismiss it as coincidence; in our view it would constitute quite strong support for the view that such practices are being consciously exported.

THE SETTING FOR THE STUDY

There are three possible scenarios regarding the spread of U.S. non-union practices to Britain. The first is that they have not spread at all. The second is that only non-union, U.S. plants in certain industries and/or regions of the country have adopted such practices, whereas the third scenario is that such practices are being adopted by these particular establishments regardless of any industry or locational influences. These differing, possible scenarios are examined here through an analysis of questionnaire returns from surveys conducted in two different regions of Britain, namely Scotland and the North-West of England. The questionnaire utilized in the two surveys sought information on the presence (or not) of various policies and practices which were indicative of a human resource management strategy which attempts to redefine or broaden the traditional understanding of the contract of employment beyond the simple cash nexus to incorporate notions of mutual obligation and responsibility between

¹² Thomas A. KOCHAN, Daniel J.B. MITCHELL and Lee DYER (eds). *Industrial Relations Research in the 1970s: Review and Appraisal*, IRRA, Wisconsin, 1982, p. 356.

¹³ See, for example, R.J. ADAMS, «Industrial Relations and the Economic Crisis: Canada Moves Towards Europe», *Research Paper No. 233*, Faculty of Business, McMaster University, January 1985, p. 27.

employer and employee; the ultimate aim being to bring about an employee-organisation identification process that will limit any demand for unionisation. The basic information obtained from the questionnaire (a copy of which is available upon request) largely covered policies (ii) — (v) listed earlier.

The original survey was done in Scotland where both media and trade union discussion has suggested that a relatively high proportion of recently established firms, particularly in the high technology industries, are non-union, U.S. owned ones. This view receives strong support from the results of a recent survey of some 133 U.S. manufacturing plants in Scotland which indicated that 44 per cent of these were non-union, with this figure rising to between 63 and 86 per cent in the various high technology industry categories¹⁴. The picture of Scotland suggested here is particularly interesting given that this region of the country certainly does not have any tradition of community or political sentiments unfavourable to unions; quite the contrary, as any evidence of inter-regional differences in union density in Great Britain indicates that the North of the country (including Scotland) is relatively highly unionised¹⁵. This background would seem to imply that any U.S. firm seeking to set up and remain non-union in Scotland must rely overwhelmingly on its own internal employment policies, rather than on a larger political and social environment (such as exists in the 'right to work' states of America) to ensure such an outcome.

In order to try and assess the generality of the survey findings from Scotland, and hence which of the earlier three scenarios was more accurate, a similar exercise was undertaken in three New Town locations in the North West of England; New Towns are essentially relatively small, free standing locations designed to reduce the pressure of population and industry demands on large, metropolitan centres, such as London, Glasgow, Liverpool, etc. The reason for choosing these new town locations was firstly that employment growth is increasingly taking place outside the large metropolitan centres of the country¹⁶, and secondly that employment growth in new towns is particularly associated with the establishment of new plants and firms¹⁷. In short, new town locations are likely to offer the

¹⁴ Scottish Development Agency, *Labour Performance of U.S. Plants in Scotland*, 1984, p. 11.

¹⁵ See G.S. BAIN and P. ELIAS, «Trade Union Membership in Great Britain: An Industrial Level Analysis», *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, March 1985.

¹⁶ See Charles HANDY, *The Future of Work*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1984, p. 85.

¹⁷ See, for example, Robert A. HENDERSON, «The Employment Performance of Established Manufacturing Industry in Scottish New Towns», *Urban Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3, August 1984, pp. 295-316.

sort of 'greenfield site' advantages which may be particularly attractive to U.S. plants wishing to operate on a non-union basis in Britain. There could also be a considerable number of non-union, British owned firms in such locations. This is because the work of regional and urban scholars suggests that newly established firms are especially likely to be set up by 'entrepreneurs' who were previously employed in small plants in the same area of the country¹⁸. This small plant background is likely to be a non-union one which raises, in turn, the possibility, not to say likelihood, that these new 'entrepreneurs' will wish their own organisation to be a non-union one. In view of this possibility, the present study could add to our existing knowledge of non-union firms in Britain more generally, a result that would be highly desirable given that the employment practices of non-union firms in Britain, be they British or U.S. owned, have been so little studied by industrial relations scholars; for example, the latest version of Hugh Clegg's well known industrial relations text book devotes little more than a page to such firms¹⁹. Specifically, we hope to identify to what extent, if any, the employment practices of non-union, U.S. owned plants overlap with those of British owned, non-union establishments.

THE BASIC SURVEY FINDINGS

The questionnaires were distributed through means of postal surveys. In Scotland the sampling frame was drawn from the internal records of the Scottish Development Agency, a quasi-Governmental body specifically concerned to attract and assist the establishment of new plants and firms in the region. In the North West the sample was drawn from lists of firms and plants in the New Towns which were provided by the relevant administrative bodies there. The basic characteristics of the two samples are set out in Table 1:

¹⁸ See Stephen FOTHERGILL and Graham GUDGIN, *Unequal Growth: Urban and Regional Employment Change in the UK*, Heinemann, London, 1982, pp. 116-128.

¹⁹ H.A. CLEGG, *The Changing System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1979, p. 102.

TABLE 1
Basic Sample Characteristics

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Scotland Survey</i>	<i>North West of England Survey</i>
% manufacturing sector	92	67
% U.S. owned	32	10
% non-union	57	62
% single plant (in UK)	67	60
% established post-1976	44	77
Mean size	257	42
Total responses	63	194
% response rate	72	25

As research instruments, the two surveys would appear to usefully complement each other, in the sense that the Scotland survey obtained a high response rate, but involved a small absolute number of observations, whereas the North-West survey had a much lower response rate but was a much more reasonable sized sample in absolute terms. The two surveys were similar as regards the proportion of single, independent establishments and non-union plants, but differed in a number of other respects. The Scotland survey was considerably more manufacturing sector dominated, had a larger average plant size, considerably more American owned establishments and had a lower proportion of more recently established plants.

The first set of substantive results from the surveys indicate the percentage of establishments having the various work practices and arrangements listed in the questionnaire. These are presented in Table 2:

TABLE 2
Percentage of Establishments with Listed Work Practices and Arrangements

<i>Work Practices</i>	<i>Scotland Survey</i>	<i>North-West of England Survey</i>
Staff status	43	55
Flexible recruitment	—	65
In-plant training	60	45
Job evaluation	32	31
Autonomous work groups	13	16
Profit sharing	17	15
Value added scheme	6	16
Share option scheme	9	9
Joint productivity committee	13	11
Joint consultation committee	41	40
Joint health and safety committee	67	36
Problem solving groups (e.g. quality circles)	30	24
Employee Briefing groups	71	—

—: Not asked in this particular survey.

There is a strong similarity of findings between the surveys, in terms of the proportion of establishments with many of the listed work practices. Witness, for example, the similar figures for job evaluation, autonomous work groups, profit sharing and share option schemes, joint productivity and joint consultative committees. The only notable differences occur in the case of staff status, in-plant training arrangements, value added schemes and joint health and safety committees. However, an important difference emerges when we consider the proportion of establishments having differing numbers of the listed practices. These figures are set out in Table 3:

TABLE 3
Percentage of Establishments with Various Numbers of Work Practices

<i>Number of Work Practices</i>	<i>Scotland Survey</i>	<i>North West of England Survey</i>
0	6	2.5
1	8	12
2	8	15
3	18	23
4	19	10
5	21	12
6	6	10
7	6	6
8	5	3
9	3	2
10	—	1.5

Here we find that the largest single category of establishments in the Scotland survey had 5 work practices, whereas the largest single group in the North West study had only 3. On this basis it would appear that the Scottish sample is rather 'more progressive' than that in the North West of England. The term 'on this basis' is emphasized here because we need to explicitly acknowledge the existence of two assumptions involved in this sort of 'practice counting' exercise. The first assumption is that respondents indicating the presence of a particular work practice are talking about essentially the same thing across establishments. A simple question about the existence (or not) of certain work practices should pose relatively few difficulties across establishments when their basic arrangements are relatively homogeneous in nature (e.g. joint health and safety committees); where basic arrangements are rather more heterogeneous (e.g. employee briefing groups) we can be rather less certain that we are comparing like with like. And secondly, in seeking to identify the common organisational characteristics (if any) of the 'more progressive' establishments we are according each individual work practice or arrangement equal weight and importance. For example, an establishment with a joint health and safety committee and a joint consultative committee is held to be essentially the same as an establishment with autonomous work groups and quality circles. These assumptions need to be borne in mind when considering the results to be presented in Table 4; the second assumption is, however, relaxed when we consider the relationship with the various individual work practices.

The difference apparent in Table 3 may be due to some of the compositional differences between the two sets of respondents that we observed in Table 1. This possibility led us to pose the following questions: (i) did establishments with a relatively large number of work practices in the Scotland survey have certain organisational characteristics in common? and (ii) were these particular organisational characteristics similarly associated with a relatively large number of work practices in the North West survey? Accordingly, we differentiated establishments with 5 or more work practices from those with less than 5; this particular point of division followed from the fact that 5 was the largest single category of respondents in the original Scotland survey (see Table 3). The possible influence of a considerable number of organisational characteristics was examined through means of correlation analysis, although our particular interest was obviously with the results for non-union status and U.S. ownership. The results obtained are set out in Table 4:

TABLE 4
Correlations Between Organisational Characteristics and
a Relatively Large Number of Work Practices (i.e. 5 or more = 1)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Scotland Survey</i>	<i>North-West of England Survey</i>
Employee size	0.03423	0.34002*
Size of personnel department	0.22094*	—
Presence of personnel department	—	0.16733*
U.S. owned	0.26295*	0.06016
Non-union	0.23429*	-0.23414*
Age of plant	-0.14347	0.06005
Single plant status	0.11066	-0.22900*
% female employees	—	0.08497
Relocation	—	0.07510
Manufacturing sector	—	-0.02884

*: significant at the .10 level or better

—: not asked in this particular survey

In the Scotland survey the establishments with a relatively large number of work practices were U.S. owned, non-union and had a relatively large sized personnel department. The relevant characteristics of establishments with exactly the same number of work practices in the three New Towns of the North West of England were different; here the association was with relatively large sized, unionized, multi-plant establishments and those with a specialist personnel department. The finding of particular interest to us here is the different sign on the non-union variable in the two surveys.

SOME MORE DETAILED FINDINGS

The fact that non-union firms in Scotland had a relatively large number of work practices, whereas the opposite was the case in the North West, is relatively easy to explain when one examined their associated (or not associated) characteristics. The fact of the matter is that the non-union establishments in the two surveys were really quite different in type. In the North West, non-union plants were significantly associated with small size ($r = -0.4358$, $p < 0.01$), single establishment status ($r = 0.28586$, $p < 0.01$), and recent establishment ($r = 0.43794$, $p < 0.01$), with no relationship being apparent with U.S. ownership ($r = -0.08026$). In contrast the non-union plants in Scotland were not significantly associated with size ($r = -0.12463$), single independent status ($r = -0.03689$) or age of establishment ($r = -0.16900$), but were significantly associated with U.S. ownership ($r = 0.23905$, $p < 0.10$). In view of this latter association it is very largely the non-union establishments in the Scotland survey that are examined in further detail in this section.

The first point to note here is that non-union status in the Scotland survey was positively associated with the individual work practices of (i) common staff status ($r = 0.39796$, $p < 0.01$) and (ii) autonomous work groups ($r = 0.353150$, $p < 0.01$); in addition U.S. ownership (itself significantly non-union) was positively associated with the existence of problem solving groups, such as quality circles ($r = 0.54066$, $p < 0.01$). (In the North West survey the only positive, as opposed to negative, association between non-union status and an individual work practice was with the case of staff status i.e. $r = 0.15166$, $p < 0.05$). The importance of the association with autonomous work groups and quality circles is particularly important when one recalls the earlier listed set of policies practised by non-union firms in the U.S.A. This point is returned to in our final section where we consider a research agenda for the future.

There were in fact some 36 non-union plants in the Scotland survey and when we examined them in some detail we found that they fell into two basic groups, differentiated according to ownership and size. The first group consisted of 15 U.S. owned establishments, with an average size of 414 employees, while the second comprised 17 British owned establishments (mainly single independent establishments) with an average size of 59 employees. The very considerable size difference between the two groups of non-union establishments raises the strong possibility that their work practices, and hence underlying human resource management strategy, will be very different. An investigation of this possibility revealed, firstly, that the average number of work practices in our U.S. non-union establishments in Scotland ($N = 5.5$), exceeded the average number for the British owned non-union establishments in Scotland ($N = 3.5$). Furthermore, fully 67 per cent of the U.S. non-union establishments in Scotland had 5 or more of the listed work practices, whereas the comparable figure for the British non-union establishments in Scotland was only 41 per cent. As regards the individual work practices, the results indicated in Table 5 were obtained:

TABLE 5

Comparison of British Non-Union and U.S. Non-Union as to Work Practices

<i>Work Practices</i>	<i>British Non-Union</i>	<i>U.S. Non-Union</i>	<i>Sample as a Whole</i>
1. Employee briefing groups	71%	73%	71%
2. A joint consultative committee	41%	47%	41%
3. A joint health and safety committee	18%	93%	67%
4. A job evaluation scheme	24%	40%	32%
5. Problem solving groups (e.g. quality circles)	12%	67%	30%
6. A joint productivity committee	12%	13%	13%
7. An in-plant training scheme	47%	80%	60%
8. A profit sharing scheme	24%	27%	17%
9. An added value scheme	6%	7%	6%
10. A share option scheme	12%	20%	9%
11. A common staff status arrangement	59%	53%	43%
12. Autonomous work groups	18%	27%	13%

There are a number of observations that can be made about the above figures. The first is that the U.S. non-union establishments have in all cases but one (i.e. staff status arrangements) more of the listed work practices than the British non-union establishments; the differences, however, are relatively small in the case of some of the work practices (e.g. an added value scheme) given the size of the base numbers involved. Secondly, the most common work practices differed between the two groups of non-union establishments. For the British non-union firms the most common practices were employee briefing groups, staff status arrangements, a training scheme and a consultative committee. In the case of the U.S. non-union establishments, the most common practices were a joint health and safety committee, a training scheme, employee briefing groups and problem solving groups. And finally, when a comparison is made with the figures for the sample as a whole, the U.S. non-union figures are always above the sample average, whereas in a number of cases the British non-union firms fall below it.

Before outlining a possible agenda for the future the major findings of our analysis to date may be briefly summarised. It would appear, particularly from the North West of England survey, that a relatively high proportion of recently established plants in Britain are likely to be non-union. These tend to be very much small sized, British owned, single independent establishments. They do not appear to be much influenced by U.S. non-union employment practices as they have a relatively small number of work practices; their relatively small size may be viewed as a sufficient guarantee of them remaining non-union so that they have little incentive (and/or the resources) to follow U.S. non-union practices. In contrast, the number and particularly the nature of individual work practices associated with U.S. owned, non-union establishments would suggest that such practices have been exported to Britain; the implication regarding the degree of centralisation in such organisations, with regard to employee relations strategy is obvious. The findings from Scotland, in contrast to those from the North West, indicate that only where these U.S. non-union establishments constitute a relatively sizeable proportion of any sample will non-union status be positively associated with a relatively large number of work practices; it is nevertheless worth noting that when we examined the nine U.S. non-union establishments in the North West survey, we found that they had an average of 5.3 work practices which was above the average for the North West survey and very similar to the relevant figure for the U.S non-union establishments in Scotland.

A RESEARCH AGENDA

There would appear to be at least two major lines of future research opened up by the findings presented here for U.S. owned, non-union establishments. The first is the need for a more detailed examination of the nature of workplace organisation in the U.S. non-union establishments that were particularly prominent in the Scotland survey. In the United States it would appear that more flexible forms of work organisation, such as broader banded and fewer job classifications, fewer wage grades, greater flexibility in job assignments and movement of people across jobs, characterise such establishments and that it is these particular arrangements that pose a major challenge to a trade union movement traditionally orientated to detailed job regulation²⁰. Moreover, it has been argued that the incentives for the adoption of such flexible forms of work organisation have fundamentally more to do with product market and technological influences and changes than with simply a union avoidance motive²¹; the latter is nevertheless an important, not to say expected, outcome. This perspective would suggest that reference to Burns and Stalker's²² concept of an organic, as opposed to mechanistic, management system could be a useful analytical tool for understanding the human resource management strategy and policies of such firms. For example, Burns and Stalker particularly stressed the importance of the rate of technical and product market change as a stimulus or incentive for the adoption of an organic management system. In addition to identifying the relevant incentives for the adoption of such a system, the framework for understanding the mix of personnel policies set out by Murray and Dimick²³ indicates the importance of the other side of the coin, namely the conditions or factors that enable the adoption of a particular human resource management approach. For example, Murray and Dimick lay particular stress on the role of the degree of organisation slack in providing a 'cushion' which allows the mix of personnel policies to be shaped by certain values of senior management. This may well be a particularly important factor for the non-union U.S. firms con-

²⁰ See Thomas A. KOCHAN and Harry C. KATZ, «Collective Bargaining, Work Organisation and Worker Participation: The Return to Plant Level Bargaining», *Proceedings of the Industrial Relations Research Association*, Spring 1983, p. 528.

²¹ Thomas A. KOCHAN and Michael J. PIORE, «Will the New Industrial Relations Last? Implications for the American Labor Movement», *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, No. 473, May 1984, p. 183.

²² Tom BURNS and G.M. STALKER, *The Management of Innovation*, Tavistock Publications, London, 1959.

²³ V.V. MURRAY, and D.E. DIMICK, «Contextual Influences on Personnel Policies and Programs: An Explanatory Model», *Academy of Management Review*, October 1978, pp. 756-757.

sidered here, given that Kochan has suggested that a union substitution approach is mainly likely to be followed by establishments operating in an environment of rapid growth and high profits²⁴.

The second line of future research involves similar survey work being undertaken in other regions of Great Britain. This is essential in order to see whether the type of U.S., non-union firms that we have particularly identified in Scotland has a sizeable, numerical presence in other parts of the country. Discussion in the media, for example, suggests that such firms increasingly characterise the high technology industries which are disproportionately located in the M4 corridor between London and Bristol, in some parts of Wales and in Scotland. Further survey work along the lines undertaken here could identify the numerical extent of such U.S. owned, non-union plants in Britain, and the extent to which they are concentrated in the particular areas or regions suggested above. If such a pattern of spatial concentration is confirmed it could have a number of far reaching implications for both industrial relations practitioners and researchers in Britain. To take one possible example; if a sizeable number of U.S. owned non-union firms in an area began to influence the practices of British owned firms in the same locality, this could lead to the emergence of area or regional based 'systems of industrial relations' whose differences are of a magnitude that trade unions in Britain have never encountered in the past. This sort of issue will, of course, only be worth examining if some of the more immediate research suggestions outlined above are taken up in the not too distant future. Hopefully this will prove to be the case.

Les entreprises non syndiquées américaines en Grande-Bretagne et leurs pratiques en matière d'emploi.

Les travaux récents portant sur les établissements dont des étrangers sont propriétaires en Grande-Bretagne ont mis l'accent sur un nombre assez limité de questions (comme la fréquence relative des grèves) et se concentrent presque exclusivement sur les établissements syndiqués. Cette concentration est particulièrement malheureuse, compte tenu du fait que de nombreuses entreprises ordinaires non-syndiquées en Grande-Bretagne sont la propriété d'intérêts américains (comme IBM) et que l'importance et l'influence de tels établissements en ce pays ont, semble-t-il, augmenté considérablement au cours des dernières années. Selon les syndicats et de nombreux spécialistes en relations professionnelles, les entreprises américaines

²⁴ Thomas A. KOCHAN, «Towards a Behavioural Model of Management Under Collective Bargaining», in Gerard B.J. Bomers and Richard B. Peterson (eds), *Conflict Management and Industrial Relations*, Kluwer, Boston, 1982, p. 199.

établies récemment recourent à des pratiques en matière d'emploi que les compagnies mères ont trouvé efficaces pour limiter le désir des employés de s'associer. Cet ensemble de pratiques en matière d'emploi et d'accommodements divers constitue ce que l'on désigne sous le nom d'approche de substitution au syndicat. C'est en ce sens qu'on parlera de l'exportation des tactiques antisyndicales américaines en Grande-Bretagne.

Cet article repose sur les constatations d'une enquête factuelle qui a examiné le nombre et la nature des pratiques en matière d'emploi communes aux usines américaines en Grande-Bretagne. Les enquêtes ont eu lieu dans deux régions différentes du pays, soit l'Écosse et le nord-ouest de l'Angleterre, ce qui permet d'estimer qu'une telle diffusion des pratiques en matière d'emploi est plus qu'un simple phénomène localisé, c'est-à-dire confiné à certaines industries et à certaines régions. On a d'abord choisi l'Écosse comme premier point de l'étude parce que les syndicats et les médias ont porté beaucoup d'intérêt aux établissements non-syndiqués appartenant à des américains, principalement parmi les industries de haute technologie. Trois localités caractéristiques (des villes neuves) du nord-ouest de l'Angleterre ont fait l'objet d'investigation parce qu'elles possédaient probablement des usines nouvellement établies et qu'elles offraient l'avantage d'un site rural susceptible d'attirer des entreprises désireuses d'être éloignées de l'influence des syndicats, bien que ni l'une ni l'autre de ces régions n'aient de traditions non plus que d'opinions politiques qu'on puisse tenir pour anti-syndicales.

L'examen de nombreuses pratiques en matière d'emploi qu'on retrouve dans ces établissements et dans ces entreprises (63 en Écosse et 192 dans le Nord-ouest de l'Angleterre) révélait qu'une situation de non-syndicalisation était présente dans un nombre relativement considérable d'entre eux en Écosse, mais qu'elle n'était pas apparente dans le Nord-ouest de l'Angleterre. Cette différence était attribuable à la connexité marquée entre l'état de non-syndicalisation et de la propriété américaine en Écosse, connexité qui n'existait pas dans l'échantillonnage d'entreprises du Nord-ouest de l'Angleterre. Les établissements américains non-syndiqués en Écosse étaient particulièrement caractérisés par la présence de groupes de travail et de groupes formés en vue de résoudre les problèmes comme les cercles de qualité. Le nombre assez considérable de petites entreprises dont les propriétaires étaient britanniques dans le Nord-ouest était vraiment peu influencé par les pratiques en matière d'emploi dont la direction était américaine. Comme conclusion principale, on peut dire que c'est seulement là où les établissements sous contrôle américain étaient relativement grands dans l'échantillon que l'on trouvait le statut de non-syndicalisation relié à un nombre assez marqué de pratiques en matière d'emploi novatrices.

On a esquissé un programme de recherches en deux parties. Celui-ci faisait valoir la nécessité d'une enquête dans d'autres régions de la Grande-Bretagne et, en deuxième lieu, soulignait également la nécessité d'études qualitatives plus détaillées sur la nature de l'organisation aux lieux de travail dans les établissements non-syndiqués qui étaient la propriété d'entrepreneurs américains en Grande-Bretagne. Une attention particulière au cours de ce travail devrait porter sur l'identification des facteurs clés qui seraient à la fois de nature à encourager et à faciliter d'adoption d'accommodements flexibles dans ces établissements.