

Relations industrielles

David PEACH, David KUECHLE : *The Practice of Industrial Relations. 2nd Ed.*, Scarborough, McGraw, Ryerson, 1985, 407 pp., ISBN 0-07-548909-0

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Volume 42, Number 1, 1987

URI: [id.erudit.org/iderudit/050300ar](https://doi.org/10.7202/050300ar)
<https://doi.org/10.7202/050300ar>

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Publisher(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

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

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Solomon, N. (1987). David PEACH, David KUECHLE : *The Practice of Industrial Relations. 2nd Ed.*, Scarborough, McGraw, Ryerson, 1985, 407 pp., ISBN 0-07-548909-0. *Relations industrielles*, 42(1), 222-223. <https://doi.org/10.7202/050300ar>

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Dynavac Pty (vacuum equipment, maker and importer)

Previous owner has sold company to employees, who elect their own management and plan their own jobs.

Propafilm

ICI imported technology and planned a new factory before appointing the factory manager who with operations personnel made the plant «conducive to involvement, participation and morale».

Queensland Motor Vehicle Registration Branch

A head office group installed semi-autonomous work groups which increased productivity but eventually had to give direction of the groups to branch staff to solve operating problems of the groups.

State Electricity Commission of Victoria

The union was willing to yield some of its authority over health and safety inspection so a program could be implemented with employees directly exercising control over health and safety conditions.

Victoria Railway Workshops

Unions have asked for a greater role in planning workshops in order to make them more competitive with the private sector.

Welvic Plant

This ICI plant had used semi-autonomous work groups for some time. Recently, unions and management had to make some adjustments in work allocations to improve quality and expand the plant.

The situations described in these case studies are certainly not unique to Australia. The high level of labor management cooperation and objective reporting by case writers are quite outstanding and should be of interest to specialists in industrial relations in many countries.

Bernard PORTIS

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The Practice of Industrial Relations, Second Edition, by David A. Peach and David Kuechle, Scarborough, McGraw Ryerson, 1985, 407 pp., ISBN 0-07-548909-0

The Practice of Industrial Relations, Second Edition is a text suitable for use in either an introductory graduate or undergraduate course in labour relations. The main strengths of the book are its crisp narrative, excellent treatment of practitioner concerns and its stimulating case studies.

Substantively, the book is at its best in the chapters on labour legislation, union organizing and on the grievance procedure. Contemporary practices in these areas are described and analyzed in a way that enables the student to bring penetrating analysis to the cases at the end of the chapters.

The cases are what makes this text stand out. For example, while lengthy, the McDonald Containers case permits the instructor to take the class step-by-step through a relatively complicated set of negotiations. The examples of various aspects of the bargaining process are clear and the instructor is aided by an excellent Instructor's Manual.

It would be useful, however, if some of the cases were written to directly encourage bargaining or grievance arbitration simulations. That is, the authors might provide more specific guidance on how these situations could be presented in class. A separate collective bargaining simulation would also be helpful.

The major weakness of the book is a lack of conceptual depth in key chapters. For example, while the chapter on historical developments is well paced and interesting to read there doesn't appear to be a unifying theme. Perhaps Common's market thesis could be used to tie various events together. Also, the chapter on negotiations would benefit by more discussion of Chamberlain's bargaining power model.

Finally, certain cases require more background in the body of the text. The issue of sexual harassment discussed in Young Products Ltd. does not get sufficient attention in the narrative. Similarly the Darthom Industries case might be better understood if the text contained a more comprehensive discussion of the Quality of Worklife concept.

Overall, the authors are to be applauded for updating and making available such a readable work.

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La struttura organizzativa del movimento sindacale, Dalle origini al 1949, par Maurizio Ricci, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1986, 250 pp.

Dans son ouvrage sur «La structure organisationnelle du mouvement syndical. Des origines à 1949» en Italie, l'auteur, en dépassant — dans une ample et intéressante introduction occupant le quart du volume — la période limite de son étude, nous explique (p. 58-59) comment «la naissance et l'évolution successive des conseils d'usine peut être surtout interprétée comme une affirmation de nouveaux groupes sociaux (immigrés du Sud et des zones pauvres du Nord) au sein de la force de travail et, de là, du mouvement syndical. Il s'agit, en définitive de l'émergence de nouveaux groupes (synthétisés efficacement dans l'expression de l'**ouvrier-masse**) qui, pendant une phase historique bien délimitée, deviennent prépondérants dans le cadre du mouvement syndical. On voit se modifier, ainsi, le rapport syndicat-classe: en fait, l'**ouvrier-masse** influence ou, même encore, conditionne nettement les choix des confédérations, en supplantant, ainsi, l'ancienne leadership».

Plus récemment, le leader de la Confédération générale italienne du travail (CGIL), Antonio Pizzinato, rappelait qu'à l'assertion de certains milieux patronaux, selon lesquels les syndicats ne peuvent plus être le sujet qui négocie le nouveau mode de travailler, il fallait riposter en rendant protagonistes les techniciens et les chercheurs, et non plus l'«ouvrier-masse» des années '60 et '70.

Aussi, était-il utile, au moment où les syndicats vont, à des degrés divers, dans tous les pays industriels, à la croisée des chemins, objet d'un formidable défi qu'ils n'ont pas su encore relever, et qu'on s'interroge — à tort ou à raison — sur leur survie, de se tourner vers le passé et essayer, par une investigation pertinente, d'éclairer la naissance et l'évolution de cette forme d'associationnisme, qui n'a pas fini de faire parler d'elle...

On s'aperçoit vite, en lisant Ricci, que la crise du syndicalisme a été passablement récurrente. Ainsi (p. 146), «les années précédant immédiatement la première guerre mondiale, sont caractérisés par des changements notables dans le système économique et dans le marché du