

Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



Malcolm C. BROWN : *Caring For Profit : Economic Dimensions of Canada's Health Industry*. Vancouver, The Fraser Institute, 1987, 182 pp., ISBN 0-88975-106-04

G rard B langer

L'avenir des relations industrielles dans les Am riques
The Future of Industrial Relations in the Americas
El Porvenir de las Relaciones Industriales en las Americas
Volume 44, Number 1, 1989

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/050486ar>
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/050486ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

D partement des relations industrielles de l'Universit  Laval

ISSN

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

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

B langer, G. (1989). Review of [Malcolm C. BROWN : *Caring For Profit : Economic Dimensions of Canada's Health Industry*. Vancouver, The Fraser Institute, 1987, 182 pp., ISBN 0-88975-106-04]. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 44(1), 291–292. <https://doi.org/10.7202/050486ar>

The last chapter examines the lessons to be learned from the Mondragon experience. In the North American context, worker cooperative faces the problem of "collective selfishness". The worker-owners are reluctant to include new workers as owners, when they retire or leave, because the original worker-owners recognize that they can increase the value of their share if the cooperatives resort to hired labour (non members). At Mondragon this problem does not exist, no stock is issued and the capital accounts of members are non-transferable, so members can not profit by selling stock to outsiders. The Mondragon experience also shows the need in a worker cooperative to balance the interest of members as workers and owners. The union can play a constructive role in representing worker's interests and balancing them against ownership interests. This will require unions in North America to move from their traditional adversarial role toward cooperation with management without becoming a tool of management. The Mondragon experience has also shown the importance of support structures that can buffer cooperatives in the economically troubled times, as well as the need to combine pragmatism with idealism. Because of the striking success of the Mondragon's experience, the question arises if the structures and policies and social processes be lifted out of the Mondragon's complex and applied elsewhere. The authors suggest that while the people who work within an organizational culture should be the ones to develop appropriate structures and policies, nonetheless certain elements of the Mondragon culture can be applied to other cooperatives and employee-owned firms. These include the future orientations of cooperatives, organizational self-criticism, a humanistic vision while confronting hard economic and technological realities. The authors conclude that the Mondragon experience has shown that it is not easy to meet this challenge but it can be done.

It is an extremely well written, well organized and easy to read book. For scholars and students interested in industrial democracy, employee ownership, and cooperatives, the book provides detailed explanations, diagrams, tables and case histories. For cooperatives and employee-owned firms elsewhere the book provides useful insights and the lessons that can be learned from the Mondragon experience.

Hem C. JAIN

University of New Brunswick

Caring For Profit: Economic Dimensions of Canada's Health Industry, by Malcolm C. Brown, Vancouver, The Fraser Institute, 1987, 182 pp., ISBN 0-88975-106-04

Le secteur des services qui représente plus de soixante-cinq pour cent de la production et de l'emploi n'a pas jusqu'ici reçu des chercheurs l'attention correspondant à son importance. Par exemple, durant ses vingt-cinq ans d'existence, le Conseil économique du Canada y a peu référé dans ses différents exposés. Pourtant, les deux secteurs nationalisés de l'éducation et de la santé représentent à eux seuls plus du sixième de la production.

Ce livre consacré à l'étude économique des soins de la santé fait partie d'une série de publications sur les services que produit le Fraser Institute grâce à une subvention du ministère de l'Expansion industrielle régionale. Il indique les différents problèmes économiques de cette industrie: importance des coûts des services institutionnels, stabilisation relative des dépenses au cours des années soixante-dix, dangers de la surspécialisation et de la médicalisation des services sociaux avec la croissance du nombre des médecins... En offrant une documentation chiffrée intéressante, il est une source d'information pour le non-spécialiste.

Malheureusement, les différentes parties du livre ne m'apparaissent pas former un tout très intéressant. L'absence d'un approfondissement analytique bien mûri se traduit par une série de morceaux détachés qui n'offrent pas un ensemble cohérent. Il y a ici beaucoup d'arbres de différentes qualités qui ne forment pas une forêt agencée.

En somme, ce livre d'économie de la santé ne réussit pas à se substituer au manuel de Robert G. Evans, *Strained Mercy: The Economics of Canadian Health Care* (Toronto, Butterworths, 1984, 390 pp.). C'est une contribution utile mais de deuxième rang pour celui qui désire maîtriser l'économie de ce secteur.

Gérard BÉLANGER

Université Laval

Thriving on Chaos. Handbook for a Managerial Revolution, by Tom Peters, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987, pp. XII + 561, ISBN 0-394-56784-6

Assuming that the present day markets change rapidly, the author advocates the companies not only to respond quickly to shifting circumstances but proactively to take advantage of them. It is necessary to constantly create new market riches, inspire and seduce the customers with novelties. Responsiveness to the client is a must. By creating **uniqueness** it is possible to remain a leader. Listening to the customers and using manufacturing as a marketing weapon it is possible to arrange the capability building blocks: the pursuit of a fast-paced innovation, the activation of the sales and service forces, the reinforcement of the market intelligence, the elasticity and adaptability of the production apparatus.

The applications-oriented small starts are suggested as the guiding premise to create in the long run a corporate capacity for innovation. It is necessary to promote committed champions who would lead to innovative process. A climate of purposeful **impatience** would be very helpful in the mobilization of the personnel and management. The quantitative innovation goals need to be established. The evident failures should be accelerated instead of wasting efforts and resources on the useless rescue operations. The close **cooperation** between production and service people needs to be promoted. Pilots should be assigned to all projects in order to assure the appropriate progress. Make word-of-mouth marketing systematic; organize new product/service marketing efforts around explicit, systematic, extensive word-of-mouth campaigns. New products and services should be promoted on a basis of multi-functions teams consisting of people from all primary functions: design, engineering, marketing, manufacturing, finance, sales, service, purchasing. Learning from the others, copying and adapting the positive examples in one's own company should be much encouraged (the practice of "creative swiping").

Modern companies need internal **flexibility** and this may be achieved mainly through empowering people: involving everyone in everything, using self-managing teams, listening to people, celebrating their achievements, recognizing the contribution of everyone, spending time lavishly on recruiting, training and retraining people, providing incentive pay for everyone, providing an employment guarantee, simplifying the formal structure and curtailing it, reconceiving the role of the middle manager (he/she should be a facilitator and functional-boundary smasher), eliminating bureaucratic rules and humiliating conditions. The mobilization of the human initiative and commitment at the grass-root level has a basic importance for the ability of the enterprise to handle necessary changes.