

Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



Svein S. ANDERSEN : *British and Norwegian Offshore Industrial Relations : Pluralism and Neo-Corporatism as Contexts of Strategic Adaptation*. Aldershot, U.K., and Brookfield, Vermont, USA, Averbury/Gover, 1988, 213 pp., ISBN 0-566-055317

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[See table of contents](#)

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British and Norwegian Offshore Industrial Relations: Pluralism and Neo-Corporatism as Contexts of Strategic Adaptation, by Svein S. Andersen, Aldershot, UK, and Brookfield, Vermont, U.S. Averbury/Gover, 1988, pp. XIII + 213, ISBN 0 566 055317. With introduction by S.M. Lipset.

Crucial here is the distinction made between pluralism and societal corporatism of industrial relations. In the first case wage bargaining is decentralized, autonomous, and marketlike. Safety control is under the formal state supervision, and the individual citizenship rights are extended to the sphere of employment relations. In the second case, local wage bargaining is governed by a nested, prescriptive rule system that modifies and regulates local contingencies. Safety control rests on the negotiated tripartite authority, while implementation is delegated to the regulated parties. The author claims that differences between U.K. and Norway in the offshore industrial relations are actually rooted in the difference between pluralism and societal corporatism. The centralized and bureaucratized Norwegian version appears as more successful than the U.K. version.

Formal authority and voluntary compliance both provide in Norway a normative framework committing both state and societal actors; consultation is predominantly bipartite than tripartite; an overarching normative framework and procedures for consensual decision-making have replaced formal authority; formal state authority does not need to be much invoked; changes are felt throughout the whole system; actors' perspectives are more bounded than in pluralism; there is much potential for restructuring when the system breaks down; choices are linked to the activation of the rules of the game that define the general direction of actions; options are always socially constructed alternatives; there are normative constraints on public expressions of opinion and behaviour.

Differences in assumptions about economy-state relations definitely play much role in industrial relations as this may be illustrated by a different approach to the offshore industrial relations in U.K. and Norway. Political culture specific for a given society, as well as the nature of organizational strategies applied at the local, regional and national levels both make much difference. Cooperation and compliance with institutionalized rules are characteristic for Norway, when on the other side confrontation and the exploitation of strategic contingencies are typical for U.K. «British and Norwegian industrial relations are constituted by different norms of social rationality, and these norms structure perceptions of problems and strategic opportunities» (p. 26). Corporatist players look for payoffs at the system level; the tripartite negotiations deal with specific rules and guidelines.

The differences existing among various market economies in the field of industrial relations are not adequately acknowledged in the professional literature and in this respect this book represents a considerable contribution. Within the corporatist arrangement the necessity to remain at the level of an established **consensus** is a major concern. Some evident inequalities may be ignored as long as the public exposure of them would endanger consensus. The necessity to deal with foreign partners creates difficulties as this may be illustrated in the Norwegian offshore activities. On the other hand, the peaceful character of industrial relations becomes much reinforced.

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