

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



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**John P. WINDMULLER : *Collective Bargaining in Industrialised Market Economies: A Reappraisal*. Geneva, International Labour Office, 1987, 333 p., ISBN 92-2-105606-6**

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**Collective Bargaining in Industrialised Market Economies: A Reappraisal**, by John P. Windmuller et al., Geneva, International Labour Office, 1987, 333 pp., ISBN 92-2-105606-6

There are essentially two types of book-length studies in comparative industrial relations — multi-authored collections of country-specific analyses and single-authored studies of particular issues, processes or institutions. **Collective Bargaining in Industrialised Market Economies: A Reappraisal** is a hybrid of these two models.

The first half of the book, written by John P. Windmuller, consists of a comparative examination of collective bargaining (limited, unfortunately, to the private sector). After an introductory chapter on the «Origins and nature of collective bargaining», Windmuller covers, in rapid succession, «Structure and organisation of the parties», «Rules and procedures in collective bargaining», «The bargaining structure», and «The role of government». This comparative section concludes with a brief «Summary and Perspectives», in which Windmuller examines the implications of the key trends identified earlier.

The remainder of the volume contains reprints of ten single-country studies originally published in the **International Labour Review**. Sadly, Canada is absent, but space was found to cover Australia, Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Each of these chapters offers a quick tour through the institutional setting of industrial relations and a look at current trends.

As a contribution to comparative industrial relations research, the collection as a whole cannot be judged a resounding success. Quite simply, it combines the flaws of both of the traditional models without preserving their unique strengths. Windmuller's «comparative» study is necessarily an exercise in simplification and generalization. Presumably due to constraints on space, all he is able to do is sketch out the major configurations of collective bargaining systems, point to some interesting variations, and discuss several significant trends. Indeed, throughout his discussion there is an uncomfortable tension between the need to generalize and the need to analyze crossnational variation, a tension usually resolved in favour of the former. The country-level studies, although highly competent, are likewise too brief to explore in depth some of the interesting twists and turns of the late 1970s and early 1980s in specific countries.

However, the volume has a significant saving grace: it would serve as an excellent basic text for a course in comparative industrial relations. The very characteristics that will disappoint the comparative researcher will please the comparative teacher: the combination of broad, comparative-based generalizations with the country-specific detail of the later chapters; the succinct definitions and evaluations used by Windmuller to pull together the frequently intimidating array of variations in industrial relations systems into a brief, comprehensible overview; and the combination of Windmuller's grasp of the key central issues of collective bargaining with the intimate knowledge of individual countries displayed by the authors of the later chapters. All of these features make the book a useful tool through which comparative industrial relations could be introduced to students.

Now, if someone would only do the same thing for Eastern Europe...

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