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*Unions in the Time of Revolution: Government Restructuring in Alberta and Ontario* by Yonatan RESHEF and Sandra RASTIN, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003, 279 pp., ISBN 0-8020-8753-1.

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faite au titre II n'est pas sans liens avec les lois de l'emploi qui portent sur ce rapport (titre III) et avec les recours qui en découlent (titre V). Mais c'est justement cette diversité qui fait en sorte que l'ouvrage peut desservir un auditoire aussi diversifié. On peut aussi regretter que le droit du travail de juridiction fédérale ne soit pas abordé. Il reste que cet ouvrage incarne parfaitement une

approche doctrinale combinant l'analyse rigoureuse des règles de droit et la prise en compte des facteurs sociaux qui en expliquent la teneur. Il s'agit d'une contribution essentielle en droit du travail et en relations industrielles au Québec.

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***Unions in the Time of Revolution: Government Restructuring in Alberta and Ontario***

by Yonatan RESHEF and Sandra RASTIN, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003, 279 pp., ISBN 0-8020-8753-1.

Although the contours of public sector labour relations in Canada in the 1990s have received some attention, little research has been done on the qualitative dimensions of public sector unions caught up in state restructuring, or on labour's response to neoliberal governments. Yonatan Reshef and Sandra Rastin's *Unions in the Time of Revolution* sets out to understand "what happens when a government promulgates policies that threaten the unions' vested interests in job and organizational security, and at the same time shuts the unions out of the political decision-making system" (p. 34). The authors focus on union protest against governments, a phenomenon distinct from routine contract negotiation and administration that usually involves workers across workplace and bargaining unit lines. Reshef and Rastin most often call this "collective action" (a rather specific and narrow use of a term that usually has much broader connotations). Through a comparison of the Ontario and Alberta experiences, their book aims to explore the conditions that encourage and discourage such political protest, its various forms, internal dynamics, effects, and the implications for unions of engaging or not engaging in collective action. It is both an effort to build theory, and a comparative analysis of labour political protests in two provinces

where Conservative governments acted decisively to achieve their neoliberal goals.

*Unions in the Time of Revolution* begins by briefly summarizing the main features of industrial relations in Alberta and Ontario in the context of each province's political culture, and by introducing the "Klein Revolution" in Alberta and Harris's "Common Sense Revolution" in Ontario. The authors then present a theoretical framework for understanding collective action. Rejecting social-psychological theories that focus on the decisions of individuals, they turn to the social movement theory of scholars such as McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, modifying this theory to take into account that unions today "are fortunate enough to have at their disposal a host of state-sanctioned institutions" (p. 36) and "are not intended to serve as vehicles of insurgency" (p. 202). Reshef and Rastin argue that collective action occurs as a defensive response to an "assault on union vested interests" (p. 44). A serious infringement of labour's "territorial rights and boundaries" (p. 44) is a necessary but not sufficient condition for collective action. Union responses are also shaped by the willingness and ability of labour leaders—"the critical agents of collective action" (p. 48)—to mobilize

apathetic members and maintain members' commitment to mobilization. The ability of leaders to do so depends on solidarity incentives, union organizational-administrative structures, communications networks, and the extent to which workers can be convinced to interpret their situation as unjust but open to change through collective action ("cognitive liberation").

Reshef and Rastin use this model, as well as research that draws on extensive interviews with union officials, to examine Alberta and Ontario provincial public service unions, teachers, the Days of Action in Ontario and the 1995 Calgary hospital laundry workers' wildcat, and the attempt of some Ontario unions to run a "strategic voting" campaign to defeat the Conservatives in the 1999 provincial election. The final two chapters refine the theoretical model and offer reflections on collective action. Reshef and Rastin conclude that, faced with governments committed to implementing their agenda despite widespread public opposition, union collective action is ineffective and the costs involved may make unions weaker service organizations. That said, mobilizing collective action may help union leaders win reelection. The authors suggest that a more cooperative approach to aggressive right-wing governments may be a better strategy for labour, especially in light of the limited options available to Canadian unions in electoral politics.

*Unions in the Time of Revolution* is the first book-length study to examine union responses to neoliberalism in a number of sectors and provinces in the 1990s. It wisely eschews rational choice theory in favour of efforts to theorize social mobilization in terms of structural conditions, organizational capacities and leadership. Some of its discussion of the chosen cases is useful, and the many quotations from interviews provide a window into what the union officialdom thinks about the difficulties of dealing with hostile governments. However,

*Unions in the Time of Revolution* suffers from several major flaws.

First, its contextualization of Ontario and Alberta labour relations within provincial political cultures rather than within histories of capital accumulation, state power, class formation and socio-political conflicts and more recent processes of capitalist restructuring leaves much unexplored and unexplained.

Second, the authors focus on union officials virtually to the exclusion of rank and file activists and members. At the heart of their theory of mobilization is the question of how official union leaders can persuade members to act, and then control them once they do. This treats workers as inherently passive and incapable of initiative. It is a theory as ahistorical and incomplete as the vulgar radical notion that workers are perpetually eager to revolt, but held back by treacherous leaders. Reshef and Rastin never engage with the relevant theoretical contributions of such researchers as John Kelly and Richard Hyman, or with recent scholarship on leadership and social movements.

Third, as a result of their theory, Reshef and Rastin never probe the ways in which the particular legal-administrative framework and kind of unionism established in Canada in the 1940s discourage self-activity among workers. Conservatism and "apathy" are assumed or asserted rather than explained. The authors end up crediting the mass mobilizations of the Days of Action to "union leaders' proficiency at mobilization" (p. 161). This completely misses the significance of the popular upsurge of anti-Tory sentiment in Ontario, manifested in, for example, the participation of many thousands of non-unionized workers alongside unionists in demonstrations.

Finally, on the issue of labour strategy, Reshef and Rastin's conclusion that cooperation with neoliberal governments may be advisable does not take

into account the effects that such an approach has had on unions in Quebec, the USA and the EU. The authors never consider whether the more appropriate lesson for unionists to draw from the Ontario and Alberta experiences is the need to develop the capacity to mobilize more powerful forms of labour collec-

tive action. These weaknesses make *Unions in the Time of Revolution* an interesting but ultimately disappointing study of an important subject.

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***La convention collective au Québec***

par Gérard HÉBERT, Reynald BOURQUE, Anthony GILES, Michel GRANT, Patrice JALETTE, Gilles TRUDEAU et Guylaine VALLÉE, Boucherville : Gaëtan Morin éditeur, 2003, 432 p., ISBN 2-89105-833-X.

Bien que rédigé par un collectif d'auteurs réuni autour de Gérard Hébert, on ne saurait considérer cet ouvrage comme une réédition ou une simple mise à jour du célèbre *Traité de la négociation collective* publié en 1992 par le regretté professeur. Tout en respectant la structure générale de l'ouvrage de 1992 et « bien que puisant largement dans les matériaux rassemblés par le professeur Hébert », les auteurs ont produit un livre neuf qui se distingue à bien des égards de son prédécesseur. En effet, le lecteur se trouve en présence d'un ouvrage allégé, mis à jour et enrichi.

Il faut bien convenir que le *Traité* avait beaucoup vieilli, ce qui n'a rien d'étonnant ni de déshonorant dans un domaine qui évolue aussi rapidement que celui du monde du travail. Parmi la somme de connaissances et de données qu'il réunit, certaines conservent toute leur actualité, notamment les longs rappels historiques qu'Hébert écrit en introduction à presque tous les thèmes qu'il touche. Cependant, une réédition ou, à tout le moins, une mise à jour s'imposait depuis un bon moment, ne fût-ce qu'en raison des modifications apportées à plusieurs lois du travail, en particulier au *Code du travail*, au cours des dernières années. Le livre avait aussi le défaut de ses qualités. Le fait, par exemple de regrouper dans un même livre les questions relatives au contenu de la convention collective et celles qui sont plutôt pertinentes à la négociation

collective avait pour effet d'en faire un ouvrage lourd et coûteux pour les étudiants, du moins pour ceux qui devaient se le procurer comme ouvrage de base dans un cours portant seulement sur l'un ou l'autre des deux grands thèmes abordés par le livre.

En faisant le choix de mettre leurs efforts sur la seule partie traitant de la convention collective comme instrument de détermination des conditions de travail des salariés et de définition des rapports entre les parties signataires, les auteurs ont fait œuvre utile permettant de mettre entre les mains de l'étudiant comme du praticien un ouvrage centré sur un seul objet principal, laissant le soin à d'autres d'aborder (ce qui est déjà fait) la question de la négociation collective comme telle, des pratiques qui la caractérisent et des diverses théories susceptibles d'en expliquer les contours. Ils ont également fait le bon choix en mettant moins d'insistance sur de longs développements à caractère historique qui marquaient le *Traité* de même que sur les références ou comparaisons constantes avec la situation prévalant aux États-Unis. Ce que le chercheur y perd en termes de rappel historique ou d'approche comparative et qu'il pourra trouver ailleurs de toutes manières, l'étudiant de premier cycle et le praticien y gagnent en actualisation de la présentation des différents sujets en regard de la situation qui prévaut au Québec.