

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



*Bad Time Stories. Government-Union Conflicts and the Rhetoric of Legitimation Strategies*, By Yonathan Reshef and Charles Kleim. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2014. 222 pages. ISBN 978-1-4426-4882-1

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Volume 70, Number 3, Summer 2015

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1033412ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1033412ar>

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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 review

Grenier, J.-N. (2015). Review of [*Bad Time Stories. Government-Union Conflicts and the Rhetoric of Legitimation Strategies*, By Yonathan Reshef and Charles Kleim. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2014. 222 pages. ISBN 978-1-4426-4882-1]. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 70(3), 585–587. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1033412ar>

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semble communément admise, Henri Eckert (p. 179) observe, au contraire, un retour du temps de travail dans les études, ce qu'il explique par l'effet combiné des conditions économiques, de la flexibilisation de l'emploi et de l'impératif de professionnaliser les études universitaires. En déconstruisant le discours politique autour du développement « d'un marché des services à la personne », Florence Jany-Catrice (p. 189) met au jour ses effets délétères sur l'obligation de disponibilité temporelle à laquelle les salariées de ce secteur sont soumises, ainsi que le renforcement des inégalités — en particulier de genre — qu'il opère. Dans la même veine, Patrick Cingolani (p. 201) examine le processus de rationalisation et d'externalisation des différentes temporalités sociales (éducation, loisir, etc.); la famille deviendrait, alors, une cellule de gestion de flux d'activités externalisées, soumise aux mêmes exigences de rendement que le travail et dont les femmes demeureraient les principales responsables et coordinatrices.

Pour conclure, dans un contexte où les questions entourant le temps de travail sont nombreuses et font largement débat, la pertinence de cet ouvrage est indéniable. Loin de réduire ces questions à la dimension objective et mesurable du temps passé au travail, les différentes contributions offrent un éclairage tout en nuances et en profondeur des évolutions récentes du temps de travail, de ses interactions avec les autres temps sociaux et de l'expérience telle que vécue par les travailleurs. Il problématise des enjeux majeurs comme le grignotage croissant du travail sur le reste de nos existences et interroge la valeur profonde de celui-ci. Il propose, également, des pistes de réflexion visant à sortir de la logique de marchandisation des temporalités. Cet ouvrage intéressera donc quiconque — chercheur, étudiant, travailleur ou politique — désireux de mieux cerner les relations entre temps

et travail. On regrettera, toutefois, qu'il soit question exclusivement de « travail salarié typique » dans ce livre, alors que d'autres formes d'emploi (notamment, le travail indépendant ou à contrat) se sont rapidement diffusées ces dernières années et conduisent souvent à une obligation de disponibilité temporelle des travailleurs. Dans cette mesure, il aurait été intéressant d'avoir une comparaison entre le travail salarié et d'autres statuts d'emploi. Par ailleurs, cet ouvrage aurait gagné à offrir une perspective davantage internationale sur le temps de travail, et non strictement française. En effet, on recense des évolutions similaires dans tous les pays industrialisés et des mouvements transnationaux de marchandisation des temporalités (par exemple, le recours à une main d'œuvre domestique provenant des pays en voie de développement) qu'il aurait été intéressant d'aborder. Malgré ces quelques critiques, cet ouvrage atteint pleinement l'objectif de mettre en débat la valeur du travail et du temps.

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### **Bad Time Stories. Government- Union Conflicts and the Rhetoric of Legitimation Strategies**

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It has long been established that public sector collective bargaining and union-management relations are tainted by a very strong dose of politics and that the proponents, at least for those who have the right to bargain and to strike, rely heavily on public support in order to steer settlements in their favour. As governments, provincial and federal, have embraced the politics of austerity and balanced-budgets from the early 1990s onward, the political nature of collective

bargaining in the Public sector has often been heightened by the ideological clashes between right-leaning governments bent on introducing permanent changes in public sector employment relations and working conditions and unions who attempt to push forward a social agenda based on expanding public employment and improved working conditions. These ideological and political differences have led to increasingly conflictual labour relations and government recourse to special legislation: either to impose settlements or at the same forcing an abrupt end to bargaining and job action. As the authors of a recent book have noted, Canadian Public sector collective bargaining has for some time been set within a context of adversarial, coercive strategies and tactics and union-management relation seem to be set in a context of permanent exceptionalism (Ross *et al.*, 2013). In such a context, it is to be expected both sides deploy a rhetoric and narrative meant to gain public support for their claims and depict adversaries not only as opponents in the bargaining arena but also as posing a threat to the interests of the broader public, public service users or the public purse.

In their book, *Bad Time Stories*, Reshef and Kleim propose an analysis of the means by which government and public sector unions attempt to gain legitimacy through appeals to the public and their own constituencies. The authors offer an analysis of legitimation efforts from both sides using seven case studies of public sector collective bargaining. The evidence is drawn from newspaper articles, speeches from the Throne, newsletters, budget addresses and legal awards. Legitimation strategies are multi-dimensional but have become increasingly widespread in the context of government commitments, regardless of political affiliation, to balanced-budgets. They question how the parties use language to advance their

positions vis-à-vis each other and stakeholders, and to discredit one another.

The book is divided in 10 chapters. Chapter one presents the analytical perspective and chapter two develops further the concept of legitimation, which is used as an analytical framework. Chapter three then offers a traditional discussion of government intervention in collective bargaining in the public sector and the limited range of strategic choices unions can draw from. Here, Alberta under the Klein government, Ontario and the “Common Sense Revolution” and British Columbia with Bruce Campbell’s government version of neoliberalism are presented as the trend setters for what has become a coercive, tough stance, government approach to public sector unions and collective bargaining. The seven case studies are then presented in chapter four. The authors make good use of tables to summarize the information and present the background to government intervention; the form of intervention and the outcome as far as electoral politics go. While in most cases the governing party at the time of the intervention saw its majority reduced in the following election, it still was re-elected to office an observation that again supports the claim made by Swimmer and Thompson that since the early 1990s it has become politically advantageous for governments to act tough toward their own employees and especially public sector unions.

As the authors clearly establish in chapter three, legitimation strategies can be of four types and each type forms the basis for each of chapters 5-8. Authorization strategies, legitimacy by reference to the speakers authority, have taken three forms: personal (vested in the status of the speaker or author), impersonal (vested in regulations or laws for example), and based on expertise when the speaker relies on expert advice from a third party. Rationalization legitimation strategies refer to

justifications based on the utility, goals or effects of a course of action and may be instrumental (by reference to the context of public finances) or theoretical when, for example, reference is made to “facts of life” (p. 14). The third legitimization strategy is moral evaluation when speakers call upon a specific set of values to justify the course of action. As the authors note in chapter 7, this is difficult to defend for the opponent since it rests on the good versus bad nexus or right versus wrong. It can also be a double-edged sword when, for example, it does not meet with acceptance from the intended audience. Mythopoesis, the fourth and final legitimization strategy discussed in the book, is about mythmaking or what is often termed narratives in support of a particular view of the world. An important point is that these legitimization strategies are often interdependent and not mutually exclusive. In chapter 5 for instance, they argue “the Achilles heel of public-authorization legitimization strategy is therefore the counter-argument that the speakers have been selective in their hearing, or that they only are speaking on behalf of a few people or, worse, on their own behalf” (p. 89). Tables 4 (main findings government) and 5 (main findings unions) on pages 95-98 present a useful synthesis and summary of the main findings regarding the prevalence and content of each of these legitimization strategies for the seven case studies. The pattern that emerges is that organized labour beats the war drums and attempts to mobilize its members and gain popular support. Governments then respond by retaliating with some or all four of the legitimization strategies before eventually intervening in the dispute.

Chapter nine offers an interesting counter-point to this account. Here, the authors discuss a few cases where government austerity measures and demands for roll-backs in working conditions did not trigger public support for union, where it is

the public sector union that demanded government intervention, or where government initially denies demands from stakeholders and pressure groups to intervene in a dispute. Chapter ten offers a summary of the evidence and arguments presented in the previous nine chapters of the book.

This book makes for an interesting read and offers an original lens through which we can understand the behaviour of the parties involved in public sector collective bargaining. The analysis of discourse as legitimization strategies allows the reader to go beyond the usual assessments based on bargaining structures and the ability for the state to set the rules of the game and eventually impose the preferred outcome. The material presented reveals a complex political process in which outside stakeholders and the wider population are understood as providing key support for one side or the other. An important short coming of this analysis is that it fails to incorporate the strategies deployed by government in the wider political economy and the ideological background driving elected leaders to choose the course of austerity. In a similar fashion it avoids any meaningful discussion of the shortcomings of traditional union strategies and the apparent inability to move the debate beyond the collective bargaining. As such the book is very much about the political discourse used to justify bargaining positions and government intervention without going beyond. This is more obvious in chapter 10 which offers a summary of findings rather than an analysis that would open avenues for further debate. The book does, however, provide for interesting and original insights on the populist politics that are center piece to public sector restructuring in the 21st century.

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