

Corporatism, Participation and Society
Corporatisme, participation et société

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Article abstract

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After having located industrial democracy within the broader debate on corporatism, the author examines the attempts made to institutionalize developments of industrial democracy.

To pin-point the chain of events which has led to developments in worker participation going hand in hand with a trend toward corporatism, we need to first look at the dynamics of their mutual interaction. As Poole (1975) writing on corporatism points out:

“The history of industrial relations during the post-war period in Western Europe, ..., has reflected the development of a system of values in which economic growth has tended to become not only a principal aim of working people but also a basis of legitimacy of government itself. This in turn has fostered a progressive, conflicting but equally a parallel development of both bureaucratic and democratic currents. The desire for an improved standard of living by the members of labour movements has helped to foster the continuing increase in the role of the state in the management of the general economy and for attention being paid to labour productivity and industrial efficiency among a progressively more bureaucratic managerial and administrative personnel. But accompanying these trends has been, too, the growing power of indigenous labour movements. This has facilitated the parallel pursuit of workers’ participation and control strategies by the membership; a development partly brought about by structural movements, partly by emergent values, but also partly by the desire for control being rooted in the nature of labour movements themselves. But ironically, ..., there have been further attempts to institutionalize developments of industrial democracy in an increasingly systematic and, indeed, bureaucratic fashion.” (Poole, 1975: 339.)

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** This paper is based on part of a study carried out at the request of the Commission of the European Communities which was part of a research project into the participation of workers and their representatives in undertakings in the determination of working conditions and work organization in the Member States of the Community and Sweden — A final report will shortly be prepared, and will be published by the Commission on completion.

This paper will argue issue with this latter statement in so far as such attempts to systematize have, as yet, proved less than successful. But first, however, we have to locate industrial democracy (as a catch-all term) within the broader debate on corporatism. Can it be seen as a 'logical' extension of attempts to bring about a greater degree of order at plant and company level over work-organization and manpower-deployment? As the term 'corporatism' has indeed been mooted here (see for example Crouch and Pizzorno, 1977; Crouch, 1979), this paper tries to ask if 'participation' is its *mirror-image* at the micro-level.

Worker participation can of course be seen as part of a post-war trend in industrial relations towards *formalization* of collective bargaining (cf. Sorge & Warner, 1980). To be sure, the post-war years saw more formalized plant-wide pay agreements (Clegg, 1979: 445), and later these took on a company-wide format, as successive governments advanced and retreated on the incomes-policy front (cf. Brown, 1978).

Taking a bird's-eye view, the classic British industrial relations view has often seen participation as synonymous with collective bargaining. As Clegg (1979: 151) puts it: "Taken literally, it (participation) might be held to include the whole of collective bargaining...". The reason for this is that bargaining "gives employee representatives a share in managerial decisions" (1979: 151). It might, again, more specifically be used for *extensions* to the bargaining process. We may well view these trends as part of the move towards greater 'professionalisation' of workplace relations (see Brown, 1978; Hawkins, 1978). Indeed, as Hyman (1979: 7) suggests:- "Any serious moves towards 'participation' (whether by legislation or through incorporationist strategies by major companies) are likely to extend such developments further."

But is this merely a search for greater professionalisation for its own sake? A dynamic interpretation is again suggested by Poole (1975) who believes that: "collective tendencies are undoubtedly encouraged by the growth of large-scale enterprises and technological operations. This is first because managements may increasingly seek paternalistic practices in order to avoid damaging conflicts with specific segments of workers, and second, on account of the fact that union organization is facilitated by the growth in scale and complexity of modern industrial tasks. It may also be, as Durkheim hinted, that such collectivist trends in the long run encourage the emergence of a comparatively egalitarian ethos, or at least, in the elevation of the principle of justice to a much higher level than obtained previously." (Poole, 1975: 347.)

It would be an easier task to link these tendencies if indeed there were a *symmetrical* relationship; but is this the case? In order to decide this, we have to look at the back-drop of industrial relations in Britain, 'bargained corporatism' at the macro-level (see Crouch, 1979), and its impact on the workplace. Crouch characterizes this as involving: "acceptance by unions of several strategies which, compared with liberal collectivism (free collective bargaining), constitute a set-back for (workers') interests. But it also holds out the chance of advances. Unions are tempted — and frightened — by corporatist developments to sacrifice some of their entrenched but narrow and unambitious achievements in exchange for the possibility of greater political influence and more and broader power for their members in the work-place, but at the same time to accept more restraint, a more obvious role for the unions in restraining their members, more state interference and fuller acceptance of the industrial order and its priorities." (Crouch, 1979: 189.)

THE GENERAL BACKGROUND

Degrees of worker-influence in the co-determination of working conditions in British firms can only be comprehended *vis-à-vis* this wider background. It is quite clear from any of the general descriptions of this system (for example, Clegg, 1979; IDE, 1981 b.) that it is rather different from its other European counter-parts. The law plays a limited part in the way in which British industrial relations in general operate, and how worker-influence in specific areas has expanded in the context of 'bargained corporatism'. Not only must we look for para-legal areas of influence, but we must also take into account the distinction between the formal and the informal systems of industrial relations (Donovan Report, 1968).

This is *not* to say that the law is absent from British industrial relations, but that its role is bounded (see for example, Warner, 1981); and further reforms of industrial relations law are now being discussed, especially with respect to secondary picketing and union immunities.

Looking beyond purely legal requirements, we must take into account at least three stages of influence in the system. First, actual "joint regulation"; second, ongoing "tactical incursion" into managerial prerogative; third, potential "strategic extension" of bargained or otherwise sanctioned involvement. There are many issues in which workers have a say under the present *status quo*, although these vary from one specific context to another. There is, however, a common pattern in which many issues are jointly regulated through collective bargaining, although these are not

necessarily always written down. There is a core-area regarding wages and conditions which tends to be more formalized than other areas such as those involving work practices. There is rather more than would meet the superficial glance here, and in many ways British workers can be said to have considerably increased their influence — either directly or indirectly in this way. Beyond this, there seem to be a number of areas where further incursions into managerial prerogatives concerning shop-floor decisions have taken place or are potentially capable of doing so. Indeed, advances have been made in such areas as working conditions, safety, and so on. It is in the wider areas of influence where one might be likely to see a possible strategic extension of worker-influence, although this has not to date come about to any significant extent (see Heller *et al.*, 1979).

There was a clear desire in a national random household sample (recently carried out by my colleagues and myself) for greater involvement in each of three major decision-areas, particularly working conditions (see Heller, *et al.*, 1979: 26). Although there was a good proportion of respondents *not wanting* involvement in capital investment decisions (53%), only 10% of all replying did *not want* to be involved in decisions concerning work conditions (see Table 1). Shop-floor respondents accounted for 60% of the respondents; half were members of a trade union.

TABLE 1
Actual and Desired Involvement in Respective Decisions

	<i>Working Conditions</i>		<i>Permanent Transfer*</i>		<i>Major Capital Investment</i>	
	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Desired</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Desired</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Desired</i>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
No involvement	25	10	41	21	77	53
Some involvement	52	52	41	48	15	31
'Power' involvement	23	38	18	32	9	16
(% base)	(1,667)	(1,592)	(1,483)	(1,399)	(1,606)	(1,468)

*within the plant

As far as any erosion of managerial prerogative is concerned, this has been by custom and practice for the most part. It is only recently that, for example, the engineering unions obtained a "*status quo*" provision in their National Agreement, indeed as late as 1976. As there is no general Labour

Code in Britain, this is not generalizable across the board, and is therefore restricted to the very specific sectors of industry. In practice, there is a great deal of joint regulation by collective bargaining. Moreover, the degree of joint regulation will perhaps depend on the strength of organized labour in the labour market. Until recently, the reasonably high degree of full employment probably extended this intensity of joint regulation, as well as its scope; however, the recent tightening of the labour market, with increasing unemployment, is likely to halt its extension. As far as legal requirements are concerned, national coverage occurs less often, for example in such areas as health and safety.

Over much of the last few decades of 'macro-corporatism', it looked as if the Labour Government at least over the period would not only ensure full employment, but would also lead to legislative safeguards with respect to workers' rights. Indeed, apart from the Conservative interregnum of 1970-1974, there was a considerable extension of such rights (see Hawkins, 1978; Clegg, 1979). Moreover, it looked as if given the sympathetic climate towards the setting up of formal industrial democracy schemes and specifically the proposals of the Bullock Committee *Majority Report* (1977), there might be a clear advance in the area of worker involvement in decision-making, not only at the shop-floor level, but also with respect to plant-level, and indeed enterprise-wide decision-making (see T.U.C., 1974). Whether or not this would merely formalize at least the existing shop-floor level practices is another question. The hope was that the *de jure*, statutory extension of worker-influence in decision-making, at whatever level, would be more readily realizable and enforceable nationwide than the *de facto* development of specific areas of joint decision-making, be it joint regulation of *status quo* matters or something more ambitious for the future in the form of workers' control (cf. Poole, 1978: 8-9).

It is perfectly true that over the post-war period, and particularly the 1970s, advances had been made albeit at the *informal* level, but not always necessarily limited to the following areas. These include the introduction of new technology; the re-structuring of production; the organization of work itself; the organization of working hours; the protection of the working environment; rewards systems and economic participation; and last, staff policy.

At this stage, we must point out that there are four logical possibilities where an extension of workers' influence could occur in each of these areas. In the first, if it is originally at the initiative of the workers themselves, or their representatives. In the second, if it is encouraged from the management side. In the third, if it is urged by both sides. And in the fourth, if it is

encouraged by neither side, but by an outside party (such as the State). We are not making any distinction here between informal and formal, although it is likely that at least at the early stages such changes may have come about more by custom and practice.

As we have seen from our initial look at the general nature of the British system of industrial relations, the likelihood of any major legal initiative in these areas would not look very likely, at least *a priori*. However, as we shall shortly see, there has in fact been a legal impetus with respect to a number of these issues, particularly for example Health and Safety at Work legislation (1974), which came into force in 1978 (as far as the organization of the working environment is concerned), although at the time of writing, most small firms have not appointed safety representatives. It is even the case, with respect to dismissals and redundancies, that the *Employment Protection Act* of 1975 would be relevant (as far as the restructuring of production, or at least an aspect of it, might be concerned, or as far as staff rights are involved). It is true to say that the law may affect some aspects of these decision-areas to some degree (see Heller *et al.*, 1979: 82-98), but this will only be rather minimal in most cases except the specific ones we have cited (see Table 2).

A further distinction has to be made where any changes in the areas described above have been initiated as a result of overseas models. In most cases, however, the changes have been indigenously generated, although it is worth noting that there have been a number of these which have been managerially initiated for the most part as a result of developments which have occurred in the United States on the one hand, or Scandinavia on the other. The Quality of Working Life (QWL) movement is now an international network. Flexible hours come to mind in the former case; and autonomous work groups; and so on, as far as the latter is concerned. There have also been quite a number of British experiments in say, job design (Klein, 1976; I.L.O., 1979a and 1979b). Continental European examples have played some part, particularly as far as the German laws on co-determination, and the general impetus towards harmonization as set out in the Fifth Directive of the Commission of the European Communities are concerned (see IDE, 1981a).

It is also worth pointing out that the workers' representatives who have been involved in many of these decision areas are not (at least in the British system) necessarily part of the formal union machinery (see Clegg, 1979), although senior management have taken the initiative in recent years to strengthen worker influence by ratifying closed-shop agreements. Even under a Conservative Government the picture has hardly changed in this respect.

TABLE 2
Legal Overview

<i>Decision-Area</i>	<i>De jure employee influence</i>	<i>Degree</i>
(a) Technological innovation	No specific law as such, but <i>Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act</i> , 1980 may be invoked, with respect to dismissals and redundancies. It depends on the consequences of the introduction of new machinery (see b, c, and d).	low
(b) Re-organization of production structures	As above. If consequences result in no implications for workers, except transfer of jobs, limited legal involvement. If redundancies etc. follow, several laws are relevant.	low
(c) Work organization	No specific law as such, but see a, b, f and g.	low
(d) Organization of working hours	<i>Women, Young Persons & Children Act</i> , 1920. <i>Hours of Employment (Conventions) Act</i> , 1936. <i>Factories Act</i> , 1961. <i>Equal Pay Act</i> , 1970. <i>Sex Discrimination Act</i> , 1975.	low
(e) Working environment	<i>Health & Safety at Work Act</i> , 1974. Also, <i>Factories Acts</i> since 1875, especially 1961. <i>Offices, Shops & Railway Premises Act</i> , 1963.	medium
(f) Economic (rewards) participation	No specific law as such, but profit-sharing may be affected by <i>Finance Act</i> , 1978.	very low
(g) Staff policy	<i>Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act</i> , 1980, may be invoked. <i>Disabled Persons Act</i> , 1944/88. <i>Race Relations Act</i> , 1968/76. <i>Equal Pay Act</i> , 1970. <i>Sex Discrimination Act</i> , 1975. <i>Contracts of Employment Act</i> , 1963.	medium

See also AIKEN, 1975; HELLER *et al.*, 1975: 82 ff.; GUERRIER, 1976, amongst other sources.

The role of the shop stewards in Britain has been extensively described and it is not untrue to say that they are often in the front-line as far as the extension of worker influence is concerned in the areas which have been set out above. Since 1972, half the manufacturing plants with over 50 employees have taken steps to formalize the position of their shop stewards. The degree of *direct* worker influence may however be guided by certain specific laws (or if not, official codes of practice) on at least *some* issues.

This may be true for example as far as redundancies and dismissals are concerned (as far as the re-structuring of production or the introduction of new technology is concerned). However, it is likely, to have resulted from a managerial initiative with, for example, flexible working hours (as far as the organization of working hours is concerned); in the case of the re-structuring of tasks (as far as the organization of work is concerned), although these will often be negotiated with unions *via* the workers' representatives, whether formal or informal, and therefore subject to joint regulation. It has proved extremely difficult to introduce any change in any of these decision areas outside the ambit of joint regulation, except in industries where unionization is very low (it is around 55% on average) or in white-collar contexts where fewer workers are organized. Since the recession, managerial power has, however, been enhanced. In the 1970s, the general trend was towards the *extension* of worker-influence in the areas above; however in a new decade, is the tide now turning?

SURVEY EVIDENCE

The empirical evidence from field investigations (see most recently, Heller *et al.*, 1979; IDE, 1979) seems to suggest only a modest level of actual involvement either directly or indirectly in Britain. Other evidence adds to the picture. The Industrial Relations Research Unit at Warwick University, for example, found that in recent years employers have often taken the initiative to bring senior managers and shop stewards together on joint consultation committees. In a third of these cases, the worker representatives were exclusively appointed by union channels. A Department of Employment study (Knight, 1979) found that three-quarters of the companies studied had J.C.C.s somewhere in the firm, but only half at company-wide level. Joint decision-making was prevalent on wage issues, but not changes in working practices. The *total* amount of involvement according to our own study (Heller *et al.*, 1979: 20) was "astonishingly low", however, and trust between people showed a marked decline over the last decade (Heller *et al.*, 1979: 48-49).

Has joint consultation thus taken on a new lease of life (Knight, 1979; Hawes & Brookes, 1980, for example)? This may have occurred in a number of ways. Consultative company-wide councils, for instance, emerged as an important development in the seventies (among other things) to deal with closures and redundancies. Consultation often increases in downturns according to one view (see Ramsey, 1977). Experiments took place in larger firms facing pressure on profits. Their deliberations went beyond the traditional joint consultation model. The CBI, the employers' federation,

reported in 1977 that a survey of their members shows that the *majority* of big firms had given the *right* to information and consultation, with 16% of companies with more than 1,000 employees having participation agreements (see Clegg, 1979: 156; also Dobbins & Pettman, 1979: 22-28).

There can be some doubts about this view in so far as since unemployment has grown drastically, managerial reactions have been increasingly *unilateral*: whether this will be a long-term trend, is difficult to say, or whether attitudes are hardening on both sides.

There appears to be no clear evidence that the desire for revolutionary, rather than reformist, changes in the workplace finds widespread support (cf. Pelling, 1969; Halsey, 1972; for the historical background). Only a very small minority (5%) of a sample interviewed in Autumn 1978 believed British society "must be radically changed by revolutionary action" (*Euro-baromètre*, 1979). The so-called "affluent worker" (see Goldthorpe *et al.*, 1969) may want 'pie' in the pay-packet, not 'in the sky'; or so it is believed.

Given the nature of the industrial relations system (past, present and even future) then, it may *not* be possible to view participation as *independent* of a wider set of variables which many writers have placed at the heart of their explanations of how the system works. However, how far it can be regarded as *the* central independent variable (see IDE, 1976; 1979; 1981 (a) and (b)) is another question. It may, for example, be seen as a *contextual* variable, subsumed under the 'historical' inputs to any model of advanced societies (see Shonfield, 1965; Giddens, 1973).

Some have argued that it is the *power* of organized labour in collective bargaining that has led to its incorporation in managerial decision-making. Trade unions in Britain have tended for a long time to see the process of collaborative decision-making as one of bargaining, at most levels. Thus, it could be construed that what is occurring in Britain is "merely a reconstruction of collective bargaining at new levels, *although to do so would take the term beyond its presently accepted meaning*" (italics added). Indeed, important developments are happening at the plant and company levels, "and that country's industrial relations problems cannot be resolved except by giving major attention to those levels and to the mode of collective bargaining" (Thomson, 1979: 53-54; see also Brown & Terry, 1978).

It is difficult to precisely quantify the relationship between those areas of worker-influence gained by on the one hand statutory means, as opposed on the other hand to collective bargaining. We have seen the comparatively limited extent of *de jure* participation in the British system of industrial relations, *vis-à-vis de facto* reality over specific issues.

The country thus appears to rank very low in any listing of as many as 12 European countries for either *formalization of participation at the workers' level* (rank = 11), and *intensify of de jure workers' level participation* (rank = 11) as reported in a recent study (see IDE, 1979: 279-280). Britain seemed there to belong to a low profile pattern which was indicated "by relatively low scores for all groups with only minor peaks for top management and representative bodies. No one group tends to be favored by existing rules" (1979: 279). Yugoslavia topped the list for *de jure* workers' level participation, followed by Finland, Norway and West Germany.

The ranking for *de facto* participation was, by contrast, less depressed in the same study. Britain appears there as ranking *sixth* for worker influence over 16 decisions, and *seventh* for representative bodies (IDE, 1979: 281). For actual involvement, over the same range of decisions, Britain ranked joint *second* (with the Netherlands), with only Yugoslavia topping their score (IDE, 1979: 288).

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Could anything be done to help formal statutory provision for participation in the British system? A White Paper on industrial democracy presented to Parliament in the late Spring of 1978, the most recent statutory proposal, fared badly in the legislative queue. The Government at the time had already reached an impasse with both the CBI and the TUC, in any case. The White Paper suggested *gradual* progress towards a worker-director system and clearly defined statutory rights on employee consultation and disclosure of company information. This did not please either the employers or the unions. Help was also to be given to not only producer-cooperatives, but also to employee profit-sharing schemes — largely due to the influence of the 'Lib-Lab' pact. The pressure for progress towards industrial democracy in the nationalized sector was to continue, and the White Paper amplified this. The Post Office adopted a worker-director scheme (but has later dropped it). *However, the momentum towards a Bullock-type solution has now generally declined*, even though an evolutionary view (see Elliot, 1978, for example) prevailed. The probability of steps towards a statutory institutionalization of industrial democracy under the present Conservative Government appears to be rather low (see Warner, 1981).

During the years since the Bullock Report was published, it is true that debate about worker participation has become less vocal. It can now be said to be a low-key issue. At the top level, it may be argued, worker participation is *not* for the most part seen as a panacea to the issues of inflation, low

growth, balance of payments, unemployment and so on. At the micro-level, it is similarly *not* seen as relevant to immediate increases in wage rates and salary levels, manning levels or redundancies, profitability or investment. Industrial and occupational earnings differentials appear to have become again pre-occupations. Strikes also spectacularly increased over the 1980 period, but then moderated. Away from the main issues, the long-term necessity for re-structuring British industry, avoiding de-industrialization and self-sufficiency in energy over the medium term seem to be priority problems. Serious discussions of these issues has not yet adequately taken account of the role worker participation might play here in their resolution.

The overall impression of British industrial relations however appears to be one of relative if deceptive stability, with union membership stable even marginally declining due to unemployment; managers, women and white collar workers wanting to take part in traditional collective bargaining as established in the public sector and amongst the strongly unionized blue collar, private sector. There are few apparent reasons to think that likely changes in government or union leadership or shop-floor activity will drastically alter this state of affairs over the next few years. Under the present Conservative Government, unions are likely to become more protectionist if present unemployment levels persist or increase. All this means hanging on to what you have, not trying to alter the basis of legitimation or the extent of participation.

This sectionalist conjecture is supported by an acute appraisal of the post-war scene, noting that: "The market continued to be the regulator of both political and industrial relations until the mid-sixties. Since then, economic stagnation and inflation have, together, created a new situation which we can describe as the spread of politics into the economy. Unions have become more militant, and have extended their organizations far beyond the industrial proletariat. The state has become less parliamentary and more the centre of attempts to incorporate and pacify competing economic interests — all of whom are recalcitrant corporatists. And localized conflict is rife. The old struggles have shifted back to the workplace and the locality where they began, and where horizons are narrowest and objectives most sectional". (Halsey, 1978: 147.)

This conclusion, however, may be balanced on the other hand by the view: "Industrial democracy has been described as a process of building a social base for democracy. The argument of having no alliance with capital hinges on the belief that any contract thus forged will have an inbuilt bias. But for a strong trade union movement to turn away from industrial democracy despite the treacherous risks is to shun a crucial additional weapon in the struggle to have that contract fairly drafted". (Wintour,

1977: 5.) The 1978 White Paper represented a step in the direction of such evolutionary change, but it was faced with a great deal of inertia to overcome.

Another survey (Parsloe, 1980) suggests that worker participation and works councils had almost dropped from sight as strong potential areas of conflict, at least in the view of industrial relations specialists (N = 150). The future flashpoints for 1980 seemed to be "bread and butter economic issues" (Parsloe, 1980: 17). On a four-point scale, wage and salary increases came top (3.5), shorter hours next (2.9), restoration of differentials (2.8) jointly with manning-levels. Scoring last, were setting up Health and Safety Committees (1.2), worker participation (1.1) and last, forming works-councils (0.8).

Informed opinion may, however, help to keep interest alive in what one editorial writer dubbed "a wider agenda than strict control of the money supply" (*Guardian*, May 19, 1980). Indeed, both Labour and Liberal Parties have endorsed the ethical case for more workers' involvement: "Sceptics about industrial democracy argue that there is no proven demand from the workers themselves for a greater control over decisions, and opinion poll findings reinforce the view. That is a powerful argument against the imposition of industrial democracy by government, but it is no argument against its encouragement. The lack of demand for workers' participation is probably more apparent than real. Since the end of the sixties, there seems to have been increasing complaint from employees about poor and inflexible working conditions and lack of job satisfaction. Yet in the same period there has been a pronounced increase in militancy over wages — even though we are more affluent than at any time in our history. Paradoxically, the lack of job satisfaction may have spurred wage militancy, and may continue to do so unless alternative channels are created."

It can be argued that the proper choice for this Government is to encourage a wide range of experiments: "Further tax concessions, publicity and information about best practices would all help to renew interest. The gathering recession has unfortunately provided a convenient excuse (not only in Britain) for governments to soft pedal industrial democracy. But that excuse looks threadbare when reform might provide part of the solution to the intractable problems of our industrial relations." The appeal of the projected Centre party to public opinion is partly built upon a belief it would give workers more say in running their firms, in fact the second most important policy attracting support (*Observer*, February 1, 1981).

Concluding Remarks

This paper has tried to look at developments in the area of workplace participation as they have developed in relation to parallel corporatist trends. While the British experience has led to several strands of *de facto* industrial democracy emerging, there has been no statutory institutionalization thus far. This is not to say that the law has been absent from UK industrial relations, but no clear, straightforward mirror-image of corporatism has yet developed at the micro-level. Thus some form of micro-corporatism may be emerging in a *de facto* manner, but there are no legal structures to buttress it as exists in other parts of the European Community. We have as yet no coherent empirical theory of corporatism available, but even so such a theory must ultimately take into account developments in the workplace. The theory will have to link both micro- and macro- corporatist trends and structures; but the major problem to overcome is that scenarios in Britain do not unfold in very neat patterns. There is a political 'stop-go' cycle which affects both micro- as well as macro-corporatist developments, such as attempts to impose some form of incomes policy and/or productivity bargaining schemes, or encourage this or that type of industrial democracy, and we should also take into account which political party is in office for to pretend this does not count is rather misleading. So, the problem is not only one of *systematization*, but also *synchronization*. This is confounded by changes in economic policy which affect the state of the labour market, for when it is 'tight' attempts at both *de jure* and *de facto* worker-influence have a better chance of succeeding. Clearly then, as far as the next straws in the wind are concerned, we shall have to wait and see.

Any conclusions for *policy-making* must, of course, remain tentative. There are strong arguments for building on existing institutions and practices. It will not be easy to 'import' solutions. Before moving towards experimenting with workers on boards, it seems sensible to consolidate and extend the role of collective bargaining bodies, such as JCCs; to reinforce and expand the powers of Health and Safety Committees; and further specify policies relating to areas such as the introduction of new technology, for example. All these developments may need stronger statutory backing.

It will, no doubt, take some time for the *de jure* position to catch up with *de facto* reality, although as we have tried to show, the variance (and even ambiguity) on each of these is sufficient to generate misleading impressions regarding the degree of worker-participation in the United Kingdom. It is certainly possible to further clarify the *de jure* position *vis-à-vis* harmonization with Britain's partners in the Community by legislative action. What better place to start with than workplace participation? The deter-

mination of *working conditions* is one area where a clear research consensus can be found regarding the evidence of a strong desire for greater worker influence and involvement (see Hespe & Wall, 1976; Heller *et al.*, 1979, *etc.*).

It can be argued that by adopting a *lowest common-denominator* strategy, policy-makers will have a greater chance of success than previous attempts at harmonization. There is little to lose by such an approach, and it may provide a consolidation of both the existing *de jure* and *de facto* positions, and possibly their integration. Later, such an attempt at harmonization can be extended into wider decision-making areas, whatever shape such micro-corporatist developments take.

Thus, the quest for a new 'fraternal' framework within which industrial relations can be conducted must continue. As Halsey has recently concluded:

"A heroic age of universalist political controversy has ended. Freedom, the truly precious inheritance, is preserved. Equality has been displaced by a political search for economic growth: and the problem of fraternity is still with us." (Hasley, 1978: 147.)

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Corporatisme, participation et société

Cet article traite des changements qui peuvent se produire en Angleterre dans le domaine de la participation des travailleurs à la vie des entreprises parallèlement à la croissance des tendances corporatistes qui se répandent en Europe continentale.

Alors que l'expérience britannique a conduit à plusieurs réalisations favorables à la démocratie industrielle, il n'y a guère eu émergence d'institutions proprement dites qui se soient implantées. Ceci ne signifie pas que la loi ait été absente du domaine des relations professionnelles en Grande-Bretagne, mais aucune orientation claire vers l'établissement d'un régime corporatiste ne s'est dessinée. Si l'on peut noter que certaines formes de corporatisme sont apparues dans les faits au niveau des entreprises, il n'existe pas de structures juridiques pour les étayer comme on en trouve dans les pays de la Communauté économique européenne en général.

Nous ne disposons pas de théorie empirique en matière de corporatisme, mais nous croyons qu'une pareille théorie, si elle devait exister, devrait tenir compte de ce qui se passe en milieu de travail. La théorie devrait encore faire le lien entre les tendances micro et macro-corporatistes, et le principal problème à surmonter sur ce point en Grande-Bretagne, c'est que les scénarios ne se présentent pas sous la forme de modèles bien ordonnés. On y observe un cycle «marche-arrêt» qui est de nature à influencer aussi bien les développements micro-corporatistes que macro-corporatistes, par exemple, des tentatives en vue d'imposer certaines formes de politique des revenus ou de productivité, des plans de négociation, différents types de démocratie industrielle. De plus, il faut encore tenir compte du parti politique qui détient le pouvoir. Il ne s'agit pas uniquement d'une question de systématisation, mais encore de synchronisation. Enfin, les changements dans l'orientation de la politique économique qui exerce une influence sur l'état du marché du travail bouleversent les données. En effet, lorsque la demande est forte sur les marchés, il est compréhensible que l'influence des travailleurs grandisse.

Par conséquent, mieux vaut-il demeurer dans un état d'expectative. Toutes les conclusions relatives à la formulation de politiques générales restent d'ordre expérimental. Il y a de forts arguments qui militent en faveur des institutions et des pratiques actuelles. Aussi, il ne sera pas facile d'imposer des solutions importées d'ailleurs. Par exemple, avant de faire l'expérience de la participation des travailleurs aux décisions des conseils d'administration, il semble qu'il soit nécessaire de consolider et

d'accroître le rôle des organismes de négociation, de renforcer et de généraliser les pouvoirs de comités de santé et de sécurité au travail, de mettre au point les politiques à établir dans certains domaines comme l'introduction de nouvelles technologies dans les entreprises, tous développements qui peuvent nécessiter le support d'une législation.

Il faudra sans doute quelque temps encore avant que l'état de droit rattrape la réalité des faits, même s'il est possible par l'action législative d'établir un équilibre entre ce qui existe en Angleterre et dans les autres pays de la Communauté économique européenne.

Pourquoi ne pas commencer par l'établissement d'une certaine participation des travailleurs en milieu de travail? La détermination des conditions de travail est un domaine où l'on peut en arriver à un consensus en matière d'influence et d'engagement de la part des salariés.

Il est plausible que, par la recherche du plus bas commun dénominateur, les hommes politiques aient plus de chance de succès. Il n'y a rien à perdre si l'on tente une semblable formule qui peut aider à rapprocher l'état de droit de la réalité des faits, quitte à en arriver plus tard à une harmonisation complète.

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