

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



Sidney P. RUBINSTEIN : *Participative Systems at Work : Creating Quality and Employment Security*. New York, Human Sciences Press, 1987, 180 pp., ISBN 0-89885-338-9

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The last chapter — unions and sexual harassment — is probably the most interesting from the point of view of the students of Industrial Relations. The author raises troublesome questions such as whether unions have lived up to their role as protectors of «underdogs» when it comes to sexual harassment? What should unions do when a union member claims harassment by a fellow union member or by a union official? Have unions acted as «model employers» when it comes to dealing with harassment of employees of their own union? A lively discussion of issues raised by these questions makes this chapter especially worth reading.

Professor Aggarwal has written a book on sexual harassment in employment in Canada for both legal scholars and human resource managers — a task that is not easy even for the seasoned authors. The author's writing style and his ability to clearly state complex issues have made this book very useful for both lawyers and human resource managers. Union officials would also benefit considerably by reading this book.

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**Participative Systems at Work: Creating Quality and Employment Security**, by Sidney P. Rubinstein, ed., New York, Human Sciences Press, 1987, pp. 180, ISBN 0-89885-338-9

This is a very useful collection of writings linking worker participation with quality and employment security. In the introduction senator Bill Bradley emphasizes the urgency of a substantial change for the better in the labour-management relations. S. Rubinstein, president of Participative Systems, Inc. presents his broad experience in quality control and the practical application of the participative problem solving concepts at the shop floor level and up the hierarchy. He also offers a design of a total plan system of worker participation. The second part is devoted to the specific participatory projects implemented in the 34 shop floor teams of workers and supervisors in the Riverdale plant, several teams of the joint union-management cooperation in the Ethicon's Somerville (N.J.) plant. The reports are supplemented by the testimony of one management executive and one trade union official; both of them explain problems and advantages of the union-management cooperation.

In the third part S. Camens, assistant of the president of the United Steelworkers of America, describes the need to democratize industry, Lynn Williams, president of the same Union lays out his justification for having unions involved in work reforms, and finally John Hoerr, a journalist, provides the assessment of the worker participation movement in general.

Innovations discussed in this book definitely require skilled and devoted **consultants** who would facilitate and monitor the complicated process of introducing a new system. In Sweden this function is quite often fulfilled by academic workers who cooperate with management as well as the trade union. In Yugoslavia one of the major weaknesses is the shortage of reliable consulting which would translate the general ideas into the shop floor reality. In the U.S. there is much consulting in the field, but the example presented in the book is particularly convincing and reliable.

It is necessary to gain the support of all interested parties, particularly the middle management and the local trade union unit. There are several barriers to overcome which originate from the lack of mutual trust, vested interests really or only potentially endangered by the innovation, lack of experience in the application of the joint problem solving pattern, different perspectives appearing at different levels of the hierarchy. All these sensitive areas necessitate

the use of consultants who would understand well the sensitivity of people and the complications of various issues. Anybody interested in the introduction of management-trade union participation will gain much reading this book.

The participative structure for manufacturing proposed by S.P. Rubinstein is impressive. The central policy committee provides the main platform. The individual departments have their own advisory committees. However, the participatory practice actually occurs in the multitude of specific teams which need to be adequately formed, focused, consulted, and evaluated. There is much to be done by consultants, but they are not supposed to substitute workers, managers and trade unionists. As facilitators, the consultants are supposed to keep their distance from the process of decision-making.

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**Plant Closings: A Selected Bibliography of Materials Published Through 1985**, by Harold E. Way and Carla M. Weiss, Compilers, Ithaca, NYSSILR, Cornell University, 1988, 206 pp.

Ce sujet des fermetures d'entreprises n'est certes pas nouveau. Il revient et reviendra encore régulièrement sur le tapis. Toute personne intéressée à étudier cette question est à prime abord consternée par l'immense documentation disponible.

Cet ouvrage a le principal mérite de regrouper les principaux titres ayant pour objet l'étude d'un ou plusieurs aspects des fermetures d'entreprises. C'est un outil de travail utile qui présente des études de cas, des résultats de recherche et un certain nombre de questions litigieuses en matière de politique publique.

Les auteurs ont recensé livres, thèses, rapports gouvernementaux, documents de travail et articles inclus dans les revues scientifiques, professionnelles ou d'intérêt général et dans les journaux syndicaux disponibles dans les différentes bibliothèques de l'Université Cornell et surtout dans la très bien équipée Martin P. Catherwood Library de l'Industrial and Labor Relations School de cette université.

Cet ouvrage comprend trois parties: d'abord, une bibliographie alphabétique par nom d'auteurs suivie ensuite d'un index sujets et enfin d'un index d'auteurs.

Le principal défaut de cet ouvrage est de présenter presque exclusivement des titres en langue anglaise. On en retrouve certes quelques-uns en langue française, mais leur place est marginale dans l'ensemble des 820 titres recensés.

Il s'agit ici d'un ouvrage de référence utile à tout observateur des fermetures d'usines et de leurs conséquences.

**Jean SEXTON**

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