

Face à l'avenir après cinquante ans: éditorial Looking Ahead After Fifty Years

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Article abstract

In North America, the first thing that springs to mind when one thinks of the concept of collective employee representation is the monopoly model of union representation. This model was first instituted in the United States in 1935, and some ten years later in Canada, and gives the majority union, once certified, the exclusive right to represent a bargaining unit of all or some of the employees of a given employer. Such exclusive representation applies to both collective bargaining and the application of collective agreement provisions. Consequently, collective bargaining through a certified union is presently the only means available to give employees as a group a voice in the running of a company. In other respects, employers can exercise their management authority at their discretion, provided of course that they comply with normal legal requirements. This legitimizes a certain autocratic approach in companies.

The North American model of employee representation, based essentially on the institution of unionism and on majority rule, the decisive factor in the representativeness of the certified union, has enjoyed near unanimous acceptance for close to half a century in the field of industrial relations. In recent years, however, it has been widely contested in both Canada and the United States, given the falling unionization rates in the two countries and the new challenges facing company management.

A number of alternatives to the monopoly model of union representation have been proposed in the United States and in Canada. They may be grouped into three main approaches, which we will present and analyze in turn. The first alternative calls for a return to market forces, and thus suggests a greater reliance on the initiative of employees and employers themselves. For instance, many employers have deemed it useful to encourage greater employee participation in their companies. These initiatives take different forms, such as quality circles and works councils.

Nevertheless, all these formulas to promote collective participation by employees suffer from the same weakness, namely, they depend mainly on Personal initiative and unilateral decisions by the employer. A related solution, intended to offset this problem of dependence on the employer's initiative, is to modify the strategies of the union movement by extending its representation activities to cover non-unionized workers, who are now excluded from bargaining units. Although this suggestion may have some merit, its application raises difficulties, in particular with regard to mobilizing this new category of members, the financial resources available to represent them, and their potential role in the union movement.

The second approach in the literature, originating mainly in the United States, suggests direct state intervention to require the establishment of an employee committee in every company above a certain size. This proposal, based on the European (and particularly the German) model, represents a complete break with the traditional North American model of employee representation. It is an attractive idea in itself, but we remain sceptical about its effectiveness, given recent experience with direct state intervention in Quebec.

Finally, the third approach, originating mainly in Canada this time, suggests different alternatives to make the current legislation more flexible and allow a greater role for unions within companies. Different proposals have been advanced, in particular that the strict requirement for an absolute majority in order to obtain union certification be abandoned, that certification be by sector, and that the Quebec System of extending collective agreements by means of decrees be enhanced. All these proposals imply a larger role for the union movement within our present day institutions.

Any alternative intended to increase collective participation by employees within their companies is desirable. However, it appears to us that unions are still in the best position to ensure true participation by employees, and this is why we are of the opinion that solutions for the future should be based on the institution of unionism. At the very least, this approach should be given further consideration.

Face à l'avenir après cinquante ans

Éditorial

Il y a cinquante ans paraissait le premier numéro du *Bulletin des relations industrielles*. Ainsi naissait la première revue universitaire au monde dans le champ des relations industrielles. Son objectif était de « renseigner objectivement ses abonnés sur les sujets d'actualité qui intéressent le Capital et le Travail ». Sous l'impulsion du professeur Gérard Dion, qui l'a dirigée de façon remarquable pendant plus de quarante-cinq ans, cette publication a connu plusieurs changements.

Publication mensuelle bilingue, le *Bulletin* devient la revue *Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations* en décembre 1950. Ce changement de nom marque des orientations nouvelles. Devenant trimestrielle, la revue vise alors à faire paraître des études plus élaborées. Cela se traduit par des numéros plus volumineux, dans un format nouveau. Chaque texte est reproduit dans la langue de l'auteur avec un résumé dans l'autre langue. En somme, le contenu devient de plus en plus scientifique.

En 1963, la revue fait peau neuve et adopte un nouveau symbole, la roue industrielle stylisée qui représente aussi encore le Département des relations industrielles. C'est également en 1963 qu'elle devient l'organe officiel de l'Institut canadien de recherche en relations industrielles, aujourd'hui l'Association canadienne de relations industrielles, avec qui elle entretient toujours des liens naturels. Soulignons ici que, depuis 1993, elle est aussi reconnue officiellement par l'Ordre professionnels des conseillers en relations industrielles du Québec.

Le processus d'évaluation externe, comme on le connaît aujourd'hui, débute en 1973. Chaque manuscrit est soumis de façon anonyme à au moins deux spécialistes de la question traitée. Le caractère scientifique s'accroît. Il faut souligner ici le rôle essentiel de ces nombreux appréciateurs anonymes, dont le sens critique et le travail rigoureux sont sollicités. En 1991, le Comité de direction et le Comité de rédaction sont renouvelés pour mieux refléter l'ouverture internationale souhaitée par le Département. Cinq personnes composent le Comité de direction et vingt-trois, de tous les coins du monde, composent le Comité de rédaction.

Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations a parcouru beaucoup de chemin grâce à une kyrielle de collaborateurs, et aussi grâce à ses lecteurs. À sa première année, le tirage était de 840 exemplaires; aujourd'hui, il est de 2 800. La revue est distribuée dans plus de trente pays et elle est répertoriée dans de nombreux index. Afin de faciliter sa consultation, des index de son contenu (et de celui des congrès des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval) ont également été publiés en 1963, 1970, 1980 et 1990.

Pour souligner le cinquantième anniversaire de son lancement, la revue a subi une cure de rajeunissement : une nouvelle couverture plus colorée qui rappelle que, dans notre domaine, nous travaillons essentiellement avec des personnes. La présentation même des articles a aussi été modifiée : une nouvelle typographie a été adoptée, plus légère, plus aérée, afin d'en faciliter la lecture.

La direction souhaite consolider la position de *Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations* parmi les principaux lieux de diffusion et d'échange dans ce domaine où il n'existe à peu près plus de frontières. Tout en visant l'amélioration de son contenu canadien, l'orientation actuelle vise à accroître le nombre d'articles présentant des recherches réalisées dans d'autres pays. La publication d'études comparatives internationales sera aussi encouragée au cours des prochaines années.

Dans cette voie, le Comité de direction entend adopter une attitude encore plus proactive afin de continuer d'améliorer son contenu. Il compte évidemment pour y parvenir sur l'appui et la collaboration continus des membres du Comité de rédaction dans leur milieu respectif. Une telle stratégie proactive s'impose dans le contexte actuel alors que le nombre de revues scientifiques s'est accru considérablement dans notre champ d'études, ce qui contribue à une saine émulation. Elle vise aussi à encourager la soumission de textes qui correspondent particulièrement bien à l'orientation souhaitée et qui contribuent à mieux définir la place de notre revue dans le champ des relations industrielles, entendues au sens large.

Cette orientation vers des thèmes stratégiques se traduit concrètement par la préparation régulière de numéros thématiques. Le plus récent (vol. 49, n° 4), sous la direction de Jacques Bélanger et de Gregor Murray, portait sur les syndicats et la restructuration économique. Le prochain, sur l'ergonomie et les relations industrielles, est actuellement en préparation sous la direction de Fernande Lamonde et de Sylvie Montreuil et paraîtra en 1995. Par la suite, l'un des numéros de 1996 devrait être consacré à l'un des thèmes abordés lors du 10^e Congrès mondial de l'Association internationale de relations professionnelles, à savoir les nouveaux modes de négociation, de résolution des conflits et de solution des problèmes.

Alors que les pages de cette publication ont toujours accordé une place très importante aux relations du travail, nous entendons aussi accentuer les efforts pour mieux représenter d'autres volets des relations industrielles et notamment la gestion des ressources humaines.

La direction entend aussi poursuivre son implication active au sein de l'Association internationale de relations professionnelles. Comme elle l'a fait lors des congrès mondiaux de Hambourg, de Bruxelles et de Sydney, elle organisera la rencontre des directeurs de revue lors du prochain congrès mondial, qui se tiendra à Washington du 31 mai au 4 juin 1995.

Finalement, la revue devra confronter les défis de la technologie dans le domaine de la diffusion des connaissances. Il faut continuer d'en suivre l'évolution et d'en étudier toutes les possibilités. Ce ne sont pas les projets et les défis qui manquent. La recherche constante de la plus grande qualité et le désir d'être utile à nos collaborateurs et à nos lecteurs demeurent les objectifs primordiaux de cette publication du Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval.

Pour le Comité de direction
JEAN SEXTON
Directeur

Looking Ahead After Fifty Years

Editorial

Fifty years ago, the first issue of the *Bulletin des relations industrielles* appeared. Thus was born the world's first scholarly journal in the field of industrial relations. Its objective was "to inform its readers, in an objective manner, about current subjects of interest to Capital and Labour". Under the remarkable leadership of Professor Gérard Dion, who served as editor for more than forty-five years, the journal underwent numerous changes.

Originally a bilingual monthly publication, the *Bulletin* became the journal *Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations* in December 1950. This change of name marked a new orientation as the journal started to appear on a quarterly basis and began to publish longer studies. The individual issues became longer and the format changed. Articles were now published in the language in which they were written and were accompanied by a summary in the other language. In short, the content took on a more pronounced academic character.

In 1963 the journal adopted a new look as well as a new logo, the stylized mechanical wheel which still serves as the symbol of the journal's institutional home, Laval University's Département des relations industrielles. In the same year, the journal became the official publication of the Canadian Institute of Industrial Relations, the forerunner of the present Canadian Industrial Relations Association, with which the journal maintains close ties. Since 1993, *Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations* has also been officially recognized by the Ordre professionnel des conseillers en relations industrielles du Québec.

The use of external refereeing began in 1973, with each manuscript becoming subject to blind reviews by at least two specialists in the subject matter, thus further enhancing the journal's scientific character. The contribution made by the numerous external referees over the subsequent years deserves special acknowledgement, for the journal relies heavily on their critical capacities and diligence. In 1991, the Executive Committee and the Editorial Board were restructured to better reflect the increased international focus which the Department felt was necessary. Five people now comprise the Executive Committee, while the Editorial Board is made up of twenty-three members from all over the world.

Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations has made much progress thanks to a steady stream of contributors as well as to its readers. In its first year, 840 copies of the journal were distributed; that number has now reached 2,800. The journal is distributed in more than thirty countries and its articles are listed in numerous indexes. As an aid to researchers, indexes of its contents (as well as of the contents of the proceedings of the annual Laval Industrial Relations Conference) were published in 1963, 1970, 1980 and 1990.

To mark its fiftieth anniversary, the journal has once again adopted a new look: on the outside, a new, more colourful cover serves as a reminder that in our field we work first and foremost with people. Inside, readers will find that the presentation of the articles has also changed: in particular, we have adopted a new, lighter typeface which we think is more pleasing to the eye.

As for content, the key task which faces us is to consolidate the position of *Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations* as one of the principal forums of publication and debate in a field where there now exist few if any borders. Not only do we wish to maintain the strength of the Canadian content of the journal, we also plan to increase the number of articles that present the fruits of research conducted in other countries. Publication of comparative international studies will also be encouraged in the coming years.

With this in mind, the Executive Committee will be more proactive in its continuing effort to strengthen the quality of the journal. The members of the Editorial Board will have a key role to play in helping to solicit submissions from leading researchers working in their areas. This kind of proactive strategy is becoming more important given the keen competition created by the increased number of scientific journals in our field. The Executive Committee also intends to encourage the submission of articles which treat issues of key importance and which highlight the role the journal wishes to play in the wider field of industrial relations.

One concrete step towards this focus on strategic themes will be the regular publication of special issues. The most recent of these (vol. 49, no. 4), under the editorship of Jacques Bélanger and Gregor Murray, focused on unions and economic restructuring. The next special issue, on ergonomics and industrial relations, is currently in preparation under the editorship of Fernande Lamonde and Sylvie Montreuil and will appear in 1995. The special issue to be published in 1996 will be devoted to new models of negotiation, dispute resolution and joint problem solving, one of the central themes to be treated at the 10th World Congress of the International Industrial Relations Association.

The journal's tradition of providing an outlet for labour relations research will continue, but we also intend to redouble our efforts to better reflect the full gamut of research in the wider field, notably in the area of human resources management.

The journal will also participate actively in the International Industrial Relations Association. Thus, continuing a role which we played at the world congresses held in Hamburg, Brussels and Sydney, the journal is organizing and will chair the meeting of IR journal editors at the upcoming World Congress, to be held in Washington, May 31-June 4, 1995.

Finally, the journal must face the technological developments which are beginning to change the way scientific information is diffused. We will continue to stay abreast of these changes and study how best to respond. There is no shortage of projects and challenges. The constant search for higher quality and the desire to serve our contributors and readers remains our principal objective.

For the Executive Committee
JEAN SEXTON
Editor