

Robert Hutchens, David Lipsky and Robert Stern, *Strikers and Subsidies: The Influence of Government Transfer Programs on Strike Activity*

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Strikers and Subsidies: The Influence of Government Transfer Programs on Strike Activity, by Robert Hutchens, David Lipsky and Robert Stern, Kalamazoo, Michigan, W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 1989, 230 p., ISBN 0-88099-079-1

This book addresses a very important question — do government transfer programs such as unemployment insurance and welfare assistance in such forms as aid to family with dependent children and food stamps to strikers affect strike activity?

The authors pose their research questions and outline a research plan in chapter one of the book. Chapters two and three succinctly describe major tenets of the unemployment compensation laws pertaining to labour disputes in all states of the United States. Chapter four discusses the legislative history and judicial decisions related to the provisions of public assistance to strikers. Since these chapters present a detailed examination of the existing unemployment insurance systems and government transfer programs related to the labour disputes together with references to relevant judicial cases, they constitute an excellent institutional background for empirical analyses to follow. Chapter five discusses some of the received theories of strikes, derives hypotheses based on the main thrust of joint-choice strike model originally proposed by Reder and Neumann, develops an empirical model, and describes the research design including specification of measures of dependent and independent variables. Regression results are presented in chapter six, and policy implications examined in chapter seven.

The study found that a more generous unemployment insurance system causes a higher strike frequency. However, the study did not find any effects of aid to families with dependent children (AFDC), food stamps, and general assistance to strikers on strike activity. Since frequency is only one of the dimensions of strikes, the relationship between a more generous unemployment insurance programs and strike frequency may not be a sufficient basis for policy recommendations. Nevertheless, the authors have made some proposals for policy changes such that the parties be required to pay for the cost of strike activities. This is of course in line with the main thrust of the joint-choice model of strikes, and the authors are well aware of likely disagreements of some readers to such a proposal. They only hope that this would initiate public discussion on this important issue.

A few theoretical and methodological wrinkles in the study need to be noted. Even though the authors do not view the Reder-Neumann theory as the dominant theory of strikes, they adopt it anyway as they find this theory more appealing because it allows both sides — union and management — to decide on taking on or avoiding strike activities. However, the difficulties faced by the authors in finding a correct set of variables to explain strike behaviour under investigation (p. 158) may be the result of this choice. Strikes are a multidimensional phenomenon, and a unidimensional theory such as the one adopted here, is generally unable to satisfactorily explain such a phenomenon. Further, while the authors have fitted several sets of regression equations to test their hypotheses, they have not adequately addressed questions related to specification and stability of the estimated models. Given the expertise of the authors, one would have expected some diagnostic tests pertaining to coefficient restrictions, recursive residuals, specification, and stability conducted and the test results reported. The book contains not much of this kind of material. A minor point — the analysis is based on the data for the period 1960-1974. According to the authors, one of the reasons that the analysis could not be extended beyond 1974 was that “the government stopped collecting comprehensive strike data in 1981”. (p. 147) This reviewer wonders whether the data collected in 1980 did not cover the years beyond 1974 at all. The other reason, as noted by the authors themselves, that there were no interstate variations in transfer payment systems after 1974 seems to be a more convincing reason for selection of the time period of the study.

Despite some shortcomings and rather inconclusive nature of the findings, the book **Strikers and Subsidies** is a significant work. Hutchens, Lipsky and Stern have integrated institutional information and theoretical insights to develop empirically testable hypotheses pertaining to an important policy issue. Furthermore, even though the authors have tested the hypotheses related to welfare and strikes in specific reference to the United States, the issue is of significant interest in a comparative and international context as well. The authors should be congratulated for opening up a new line of inquiry. And this book should be of great interest and importance to economists, industrial relations specialists, and policy makers concerned with the issue of welfare and industrial conflict.

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Le vieillissement au travail, une question de jugement!, sous la direction de Héléne David, Montréal, IRAT, 1990, 209 p., ISBN 2-89248-020-5

En mars 1989, l'Institut de recherche appliquée sur le travail (IRAT) organisait un colloque sur le vieillissement au travail. Les communications des différents intervenants étaient ensuite mises en forme et publiées sous la direction de Héléne David (**bulletin n° 31-32 de l'IRAT**).

Pour qui s'intéresse au vieillissement au travail, ces actes sont extrêmement utiles puisqu'ils rassemblent en un seul document une foule de données et d'informations sur des aspects variés du vieillissement au travail qui n'ont jusqu'ici fait l'objet, au Québec, que de trop rares publications. Certains textes sont supérieurs aux autres mais dans l'ensemble la qualité du matériel présenté est élevée. De nombreux Européens, dont Anne-Marie Guillemard qui a participé à la soirée d'ouverture, ont d'ailleurs contribué au succès de ce colloque. Un seul reproche, ces textes nous apparaissent mal classés avec des titres de section qui ne correspondent pas toujours au contenu des articles correspondants. Ainsi, les articles traitant des politiques publiques et ceux se concentrant sur les politiques organisationnelles auraient gagné à être séparés.

Nous retrouvons dans ces actes les différentes dimensions sous lesquelles le vieillissement au travail peut être étudié. Un premier thème qui ressort, si l'on accepte de bouleverser l'ordre de présentation, est celui de l'analyse du marché du travail des personnes vieillissantes. À partir de statistiques françaises, Serge Volkoff brosse un portrait original de la place qui est faite aux salariés français dans l'appareil de production. Nous aurions souhaité une description du même genre à partir des données de Statistique Canada (par exemple celles rassemblées par Akyeampong¹). Malheureusement, les quelques statistiques canadiennes qui sont rapportées ici et là par certains auteurs ne sont pas analysées en profondeur. Par contre, Lyne McDonald montre comment la situation des travailleurs âgés est fort différente selon qu'ils se trouvent au centre ou à la périphérie (perspective duale) du marché du travail.

Les politiques publiques à l'égard des travailleurs âgés font l'objet d'un traitement abondant. Au Canada, l'assistance-vieillesse, les régimes de retraite publics et les régimes de retraite privés sont présentés par John Myles et Les Teichroew puis par Alain Pilon et Héléne David

1 E. AKYEAMPONG, «Older Workers in the Canadian Labour Market», *La population active*, novembre 1987, p. 85-120.