

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



W.W. DANIEL, Neil MILLWARD : *Workplace Industrial Relations in Britain. The DE/PSI/SSRC Survey*, London, Heinemann Educational Books, 1983, 338 pp., ISBN 0-435-83191-7

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In the introduction to this book the authors state that "the main focus is on industrial relations and associated legislation". In my view, industrial relations is a multidisciplinary subject and it is generally accepted that political and economic factors alone cannot explain adequately the whole field. In an industrial relations system there are three major actors: labor, management and government. The authors ignore the history and structure of management, the second principal actor. Nor do the authors provide any information on the informal aspects of behaviour in organizations, such as interactions between workers and management or perceptions and involvement of workers on the shop floor. This in my view is a major shortcoming of this monograph.

In summary, this monograph provides useful general background information on political, economic and labor climate in India, but it is not a monograph on industrial relations.

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**Workplace Industrial Relations in Britain**, by W.W. Daniel and Neil Millward, The DE/PSI/SSRC Survey, London, Heinemann Educational Books, 1983, pp. XIII + 338, ISBN 0-435-83191-7.

This is the 1980 survey covering public services, private services, nationalized industries and the private manufacturing sector; all workplaces included into the survey have at least 25 employees. It is based on interviews with both managers and employee representatives.

According to the survey, ownership is the main source of variation in the extent of union recognition. In the nationalized industries union membership is almost universal and the position of unions is strong. Also in public administration the recognition is very

widespread. In the private sector recognition is lower but densities are higher relative to levels of recognition compared with public administration (p. 279). In the private sector independent establishments are substantially less likely to recognize unions than establishments which constitute the parts of larger organizations. There is a substantial growth in the requirement that people should be members of trade unions in order to obtain or retain their jobs; 27 per cent of people are in the closed shops and only among the manual workers even 44 per cent.

The data produced by the survey show evidently the growing scope and depth of **organization** in the British industrial relations. The acceptance of unionism by the public sector has its major impact on the private sector, especially the large companies. For example, outside public employment, there is a strong and consistent tendency for a **closed shop** to be more common the larger is the number of people employed on site. Independent of the establishment size, there is also a strong tendency for the closed shop to be more common the larger is the size of the total organization of which the establishment is part (p. 282). The check-off arrangement (deduction by the enterprises of the trade union dues from the payroll) becomes more and more common. The role of union stewards is emphasized, especially regarding the power of their local committees through which they are able to exercise pressure on the management as well as on the union.

According to the survey, the bulk of personnel work is done by people who are not specialists. Formal educational or professional qualifications play little part. At the same time there has been a substantial growth of joint consultative committees (available in 37 per cent of workplaces) which is at odds with the traditional view of the British system of industrial relations. The shop steward representation is on the increase. Over one half of the employees are in the workplaces that have a joint consultative committee and trade union recognition.

The process of joint consultation develops more and more within the framework of an integrated system of representation based upon trade union recognition. Unions and staff associations appoint all representatives for 45 per cent of committees.

There have been substantial developments to promote on a voluntary basis some worker involvement in decision making. One quarter of surveyed establishments show some initiatives in this respect. The joint health and safety committees appeared in one half of the establishments. "Despite evidence of different kinds of initiative in relation to worker involvement, many managers provided workers or their representatives with little or no information on the financial position of the establishment or business and there were also indications that failure to provide such information was associated with a generally poorer industrial relations climate" (p. 289).

The fast progressing formalisation of industrial relations procedures is evident and unavoidable in the relationships between unions and management. It leads to some dissatisfaction among the worker representatives and contributes to the negative assessment of industrial relations in general.

There is a great diversity of pay determination, as well as there are the traditional differences in this respect between the blue collar workers and the white collar workers. Payment by results makes establishments more vulnerable to strikes. About six per cent of workplaces are subject to picketing.

In addition to strikes, several other forms of conflict happen in the establishments. One of the potential sources of conflict is the relative autonomy of the levels of pay. There is not a consistent relationship between levels of pay and any of the measures of the financial or market circumstances of establishments. The larger the establishment, the higher people are paid. The higher the proportion of women employed, the less people are paid. There is some tendency for earnings to be higher in places where the level of

union organization is high. All these regularities show that payment and productivity do not go necessarily together, and this produces several tensions.

With the growth of enterprises both formalisation and specialisation play a major role. The growth of employment in larger enterprises leads to greater formality in industrial relations practices and more specialised staff (p. 297). With the prolonged crisis, large establishments suffer employment cuts and this fact may have a major impact on industrial relations.

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**The Dynamics of White Collar Unionism: A Study of Local Union Participation**, by Nigel Nicholson, Gill Ursell and Paul Blyton, London, Academic Press, 1981, 268 pp., ISBN 0-12-518020-9

Cet ouvrage sur la démocratie syndicale mérite une attention particulière, d'abord à cause de l'objet d'étude mais surtout pour la qualité de la recherche empirique. Trop peu de recherches empiriques ont porté sur des syndicats de cols blancs, un segment considérable des mouvements syndicaux contemporains. Celle-ci porte sur une section locale du plus gros syndicat de cols blancs en Grande-Bretagne, The National and Local Government Officers' Association (NALGO). La très grande hétérogénéité des effectifs de cette section syndicale de 6 000 membres, travaillant pour le gouvernement local à Sheffield, ajoute une dimension particulière. Toute organisation syndicale groupant à la fois des salariés et des cadres aux occupations, professions et statuts aussi diversifiés est complexe, et son processus décisionnel s'avère d'un grand intérêt pour les sciences sociales.

La recherche a été réalisée par une équipe interdisciplinaire de la Social and Applied Psychology Unit, de l'Université de Sheffield. Le cadre d'analyse s'inscrit dans