

BOOK REVIEWS

WORKING THE NATION: WORKING LIFE AND FEDERATION, 1890–1914

Edited by Mark Hearn and Greg Patmore. Pluto Press, Sydney, 2001, vii + 345 pp., \$39.95 (paperback)

Now that the dust has settled on the centenary of Australian federation (1901–2001) celebrations, the publication of this book, launched in March 2002, is very timely. I say that because the objective of this edited collection, amongst other things, is to challenge the reader into thinking about the thousands of Australians who voted against federation and the various constitutional models during the 1890s. *Working the Nation* asks us to revisit those who actively campaigned against federation and who believed that it was not in the interests of the ordinary working man (or woman). These voices did not get much of a chance during 2001 when any dissent was quickly seen as un-Australian and unpatriotic. The fact that much of the nascent Australian labour movement in the 1890s was against federation, due largely to the limitations of the constitution, was lost during the orgy of congratulations and celebrations in 2001. Therefore this book is important for the federal story because it makes us recall how problematic the concept of federation was, that it was not supported by all and sundry, and that there was key opposition to it right to the end. And as Ray Markey points out in his chapter on the national, state and labour dimensions of federation, ‘labour’s association with federation was contradictory’ (page 113).

This edited book, and the conference from which the chapters originated, was sponsored by a grant from the National Council for the Centenary of Federation. The important overview chapter by eminent labour historian, Stuart Macintyre, outlines very clearly for us just why and how the nascent colonial labour parties argued against federation in the 1890s. Essentially, they viewed the proposed constitution as sub-standard as it did not offer equal citizenship rights for the ordinary working Australian (read male). One of the key concerns of labour officials was the structure of the Senate (or house of review) which, in their view, was dominated unfairly by the smaller, more conservative states. Initially, the labour movement was extremely suspicious of the concept of federation, of bringing together the six independent colonies, under a constitutional arrangement called the Commonwealth of Australia. Broadly speaking, federation was seen simply as a way for the capitalists to secure a monopoly over the working classes and that the model of federation was not democratic. But once federation was achieved, the newly created Australian Labor Party surprised everyone, including themselves, by doing well electorally and it soon became a key

advocate of the Commonwealth system, to the extent that when in power it attempted to expand Commonwealth powers through constitutional referenda in 1911 and 1913. Thus once federation occurred, the idea of a national federated market, national trade unions, political parties and industrial relations systems, within a wall of tariffs, labour market protectionism, and 'White Australia', resulted in real benefits for the working class and political advantage for the labour parties and labour movement generally from 1901 until it imploded over conscription during World War I.

After the important introductory chapters, the structure of the book is thematically driven, and divided into four sections—issues, institutions, place, and people—each containing three chapters by well-known Australian labour historians. The sections are prefaced by a brief introduction which succinctly articulates the major themes. All the chapters are well researched and well written, providing a scintillating set of discussions which reveal what a miracle federation really was! Rae Frances discusses the revised view of the industrial relations system for women workers, and asks what the alternatives were? When examined historically throughout the twentieth century, and within an increasingly deregulated marketplace, the industrial relations system, albeit not without significant flaws, looks decidedly better. 'Whilst women may not have done terribly well out of arbitration', she argues, 'they were certainly better off with the Court than without it' (page 42). The importance of localism and individualism are brought out particularly in the sections on place and people. These sections reveal how local studies and biographical examinations are integral to a real understanding of how the political processes of federation and working life were enacted at the grassroots, community-based level.

The book also includes a wonderful array of political cartoons from the period. Lenore Layman's chapter explains the origins of many of them, placing the political purpose of the cartoons within a contemporary labour framework. These are excellent for teaching purposes, providing a visual storyboard within which to articulate the multiple stories and personalities of the federation period. A time line from 1890–1914 and a further reading section at the back of the book are also included, making this book an invaluable source for students and teachers of labour history alike, as well as the general reader.

Working the Nation sits well with that other notable book that emerged from the centenary of federation by John Hirst (*A Sentimental Nation*, Oxford University Press, 2000). Both present refreshing perspectives and include new insights on old historical problems. My one quibble would be that the premise of *Working the Nation* is predicated on work meaning 'paid work'. One is tempted to ask what role unpaid labour, volunteer and domestic work played in the federation story? Nevertheless, *Working the Nation* is an invaluable addition and should be read by all those interested in the history of industrial relations and labour in Australia.

REKINDLING THE MOVEMENT: LABOR'S QUEST FOR RELEVANCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Edited by Lowell Turner, Harry C. Katz and Richard W. Hurd. Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 2001, vii + 408 pp., £13.50 (paperback)

This book is a collection of essays stemming from a recent conference held at Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations, one of the premier centres of industrial relations scholarship in the United States (US). Consistent with the stature of its host institution, this conference brought together some of the leading US thinkers (mostly young, at least as compared to the aging demographics of US industrial relations scholarship). This collection will probably be regarded by many as the most significant US 'labour book' since *Organizing to Win* (Cornell University Press, 1998), a conference-based collection also co-edited by Richard Hurd. The focus here is broader than organising, although organising is a central focus.

After a brief introduction from the editors, the book is divided into four main sections. Part I, 'Reinventing the Labor Movement', includes four essays. One by Turner and Hurd, and a second by Paul Johnston suggest that US labour should recast itself as a broader social-reform movement—'social movement unionism'—rather than the narrow business unionism it has often been seen as. A third chapter by Charles Heckscher suggests a permanently more rapid pace of economic and technical change has made obsolete traditional industrial unionism based on long term employment, and that unions need to develop a new model premised on such change. The final instalment in this section by Dorothy Sue Cobble interprets much of the same evidence as calling for a return to more occupational based union structures, drawing on the craft unionism that dominated the US labour movement from its early days until the 1930s.

Part II, 'Organizing Upsurge: Strategic and Structural Innovation', focuses on organising-related phenomena. Ruth Milkman and Kent Wong review four cases of organising among immigrant-dominated workforces in Southern California, finding that success stems from effective combinations of grassroots mobilisation and strategic union initiatives. Jill Kreisky examines central labour body (for example, city or regional union federations) efforts to play a larger role, an initiative promoted by the national AFL-CIO but subject to obvious problems in a labour movement dominated by autonomous national unions traditionally structured along craft and industry lines. Amy Foerster describes the development and evolution of the AFL-CIO's Organising Institute as part of broader structural changes the federation has attempted to revitalise US labour. Traditional autonomies are an issue here too, along with something of a culture clash as dedicated young organisers are injected into existing union structures. Bill Fletcher and Hurd address problems local unions are having in becoming 'organising unions', applying organisational change concepts that aid interpretation of specific developments among 14 locals.

Part III, 'New Strategic and Institutional Orientations', stresses three different strategies unions are using to maintain vitality. Kate Bronfenbrenner and Tom Juravich analyse several high-profile 'corporate campaigns' undertaken by the

Steelworkers' Union to combat concessions and union-busting efforts. Gary Chaison reviews union mergers and their effects on organisational vitality and member attitudes. Eric Parker and Joel Rogers examine coordinated union efforts to regain market share through a 'high road' strategy (skilled productive workers) for employers in a region devastated by losses of union jobs in the 1980s.

Part IV, 'Politics and Policy', consists of two essays that shift the focus to economic globalisation and how US unions and transnational union structures are responding. James Shoch reviews key US trade policy battles of the last decade (for example, the North American Free Trade Agreement), examining how unions were able to exert influence and assesses the limits of their influence in the context of Congressional politics. The second chapter by Lance Compa explores related issues but with an emphasis on efforts to incorporate labour rights in broader international forums such as the World Bank.

An afterword by Katz offers a brief critical review of the preceding contributions and some additional perspectives. Katz expresses particular scepticism about the prospects for social movement unionism as outlined by Johnston, and by his co-editors in their chapter. Drawing partly on an unpublished paper, Katz emphasises the diversity of challenges that unions face and questions the possibility of a 'one size fits all' revitalisation program. Instead, he emphasises how unique traditions of particular unions combine with their current diverse circumstances to call for varied solutions. This contrasts with prescriptions from some who, in simplified form, would have us believe that the 'organising model' is a universal solution to labour's ills. Katz's essay also offers a more sober tone regarding labour's prospects, concluding that 'union revitalization will be an extremely difficult uphill struggle' (page 349).

Many will recognise that several contributions in this volume are not so much new as updates or variations on themes that contributors have previously addressed in their own books. Voracious readers will thus find relatively little that is new here. Those less familiar with the previous works will find this collection a useful sampler providing ample citations to those and others in the consolidated references. Even those familiar with the previous works may find it interesting to see how the authors incorporate recent developments in their analyses and refocus (to varying degrees) on revitalisation.

The editors see this book as both scholarly *and* partisan: 'Admittedly, this is a partisan book, just as it is a collection of scholarly work. The authors, without exception, believe that a viable independent labor movement is essential in a democratic society' (page 3). In the same introductory passage, the editors emphasise that their own and their contributors' 'close personal contact with unionists and the processes we describe' provides a 'richness of perspective that is often missing in dryer, more detached scholarly writing' (page 3). Consistent with industrial relations traditions, the emphasis is on multi- and interdisciplinary perspectives focused on real world problems rather than abstract theorising or mathematical elegance often seen in the 'have theory, will travel' scholarship frequently offered from within particular disciplines. There is also an emphasis

on qualitative, historical, and case study perspectives, with little direct attention to more quantitative empirical research (although some of the citations reference some of this work directly).

This is something of a blind spot in the collection. Surely a book focused on US unions' revitalisation efforts could include some quantitative analysis of trends in organising activity and results. This would help to support its contention that the new (since 1995) AFL-CIO leadership's platform calling for 'massive additional resources and energy for both organizing and political action [has been] widely implemented' (page 2). Casual observation suggests scepticism about this claim. Although there clearly seems to be more rhetoric and attention devoted to organising, the results have not yet shown up in more representation election activity or persistently larger membership gains.

In a popular US movie/novel several years ago—*Field of Dreams*—an important repeated line was: 'If you build it, they will come'. In Britain, the Trades Union Congress claims that a recent poll shows millions of non-union workers say that the main reason they are not union members is that they have not been asked to join. Where this is going may be obvious. Even if unions make the massive resource reallocations to organising that AFL-CIO President Sweeney has championed, there is no assurance that US workers will respond by joining and forming unions. Of course, we won't know if it is 'not built', if the effort to organise is not put forth.

Without better data on organising efforts, however, it is impossible to know whether the organising focus has been matched with resources and other needed changes to achieve more prominent and ambitious organising goals. It is possible that many unions are in fact heeding the call to dedicate massive resources to organising while others have not, or that unions are uniformly increasing their efforts by a small amount (less likely). Again, more systematic data could be illuminating.

Heckscher notes in his essay: 'The focus on organizing by the AFL-CIO in the last few years has clearly not uncapped a powerful wellspring of desire for unionization' (page 59). This raises another neglected issue. In a sense, the emphasis from the Sweeney administration has been on the 'supply side'. Heckscher's comment reminds us that there is a demand side that is no less important. It may be built, and yet they may not come. More attention to workers' attitudes toward unions would make for a more complete analysis. Heckscher contends that American workers 'are organizing; they just aren't organizing unions' (page 75). This gets back to Katz's concerns about the diversity of employment models and the improbability of any universal union solution.

Of course it is easy to criticise a book for what it does not include, and one (or a team of editors) can only do so much in a single volume. This book is good at what it does. It does well in succinctly summarising some key lines of thought pertaining to the revitalisation of US unions, with particular emphasis on unions themselves and what they are doing, what they can do, and what they might do.

NARRATING UNEMPLOYMENT

By Douglas Ezzy. Ashgate, Aldershot, 2001, vii + 168 pp., £37.50 (hardback)

In this very readable book the author sets out to explain the relationship between the events of the lived experience of unemployment and its imaginative configuration as narrative. Ezzy argues that since unemployment stories are both a product of *what* happens to people, and also reveal *how* they react to what happened to them, narrative theory provides us with a perspective from which we can learn more about interpretations of the experience of unemployment in the construction and development of self-identity.

Ezzy backgrounds his undertaking with a summary description of the complex and well-documented literature on the social psychological effects of unemployment. He evaluates seven theories of the effects of unemployment on self-evaluation and concludes that they are all 'overly psychological' and their data too heavily reliant on self-report and forced response questionnaires.

Honing in on the notion that unemployment is not a 'static experience but a process', a 'status passage' or social transition (pages 24–25), Ezzy argues that the events of this particular kind of 'status passage' (unemployment) should be explored as a narrative constructed by the protagonist, the unemployed person. In chapter 3, he draws on narrative identity as conceptualised by Ricoeur, as well as theories of symbolic interaction and social construction, to build a framework for understanding and analysing the relationship between the objective events of lived experience and their subjective interpretation.

With a sound theoretical base and clear analytical structure in place, Ezzy sets out to interpret and reconstruct 38 narratives of job loss. His analysis of the narratives is based on theoretical sampling, from which he draws out concepts and categories on two levels: the events of lived experience (coded and compared so that properties—conceptual dimensions—and the relationship between properties and self-evaluations emerge) and the form of the narrative of the job loss as a whole. Ezzy categorises these forms as romance, 'job loss as a clearly positive experience' (page 46), tragedy, 'the undermining of an imagined and desired life plan' (page 77), or complex, 'narratives in which the meaning of the job loss is complicated by events in non-work roles (page 113). He further distinguishes between strong and weak romances, and traumatic, moderated, ironic and sustained tragedies. Interview subjects are shown to story their past, and sometimes re-story it, in order to integrate it with a future imagined by changing hopes and expectations. Whereas, for example, the romantic narratives construct an imagined future continuous with previous identity, the tragic narratives typically depict unemployment as a 'disruption to the desired story of their lives' (page 71).

Where Ezzy attempts to link these narratives with literary genres (chapters 4–7), I found the association always distracting and sometimes misleading. Tragic heroes in classical drama, for example, are neither (as Ezzy presents them) particularly 'flawed' nor entirely victims of circumstance. The 'harmatia' (page 78) from which he says they 'suffer', should be more aptly translated as 'an error of judgment'; tragic heroes suffer a change in fortune as an outcome of their own

mistaken choice of action. This is not a parallel that Ezzy intends to impose on his subject.

I also found it frustrating that Ezzy shares only small excerpts of the 38 narratives with his readers. Disembodied, these floating fragments can only depict glimpses of one-dimensional protagonists presented to us as an Ezzy-interpreted *fait accompli*. As readers we cannot intimately know these characters, we cannot explore their motivations, histories and relationships—as we would in the literary drama or novel from which Ezzy draws his nomenclature. Lifted from context, the multiple voices that might otherwise play through their stories are silenced. We do not begin to understand why and how each of these ‘characters’ came to construct their own unique stories from their variously shared life experiences, as Ezzy seems to recognise but without concern.

It is often unclear whether the person chose to leave or was sacked, or perhaps provoked management into sacking them. The lack of clarity about the cause of job loss in some narratives may reflect an attempt to hide the cause of job loss in order to preserve ‘face’. However, it may also simply reflect the complexity of the events’ (page 91). If it is indeed the stories that we tell ourselves about ourselves that guide our actions and our own responses to the outcomes of our actions, then we should know more about the contexts in which these protagonists shaped their accounts of their experiences of unemployment.

I also question the randomised assumptions scattered through this book: ‘Agnes’ for example, is said to not develop her interpretation in detail ‘because it would be inconsistent with the interpretation that she now gives to those events’ (pages 85–86). Or again, of ‘strong romances’ Ezzy says ‘the narratives are romantic because they represent an attempt to overcome an otherwise difficult experience through an heroic search for a new, or renewed, identity’ (page 59). Why should leaving a job a person dislikes, perhaps loathes, be assumed difficult? Further on Ezzy himself recognises that for some people being employed ‘may be almost irrelevant’ (page 112), and this despite an earlier (somewhat awkward) claim that ‘to be unemployed is to be, by definition, not something that a person should be’ (page 68).

Bruner (referenced by Ezzy several times in other contexts) reminds us that we assimilate narrative in our own terms, and that we account for the teller’s intentions in terms of our own background and knowledge, but Ezzy does not, in his analysis, acknowledge this facet of his own meaning-making. It is the author’s lack of reflexive comment on his interpretations of the narratives that tends to undermine some of his conclusions.

While a cursory reader might too easily dismiss the findings in this book (it is after all not surprising that those who choose to leave their jobs with a clear action plan in place feel positive about the future, that those who are unceremoniously dumped from a job that they enjoy feel depressed, and that those who leave with mixed feelings but hoping for something better feel disillusioned if the ‘better’ doesn’t eventuate), more thoughtful readers will identify with the perspective on meaning-making that Ezzy adopts. The role of narrative theory in explorations of the experience of unemployment is cogently argued.

Read this book, not because it will provide you with radically new insights into the experience of being unemployed, but because it reveals that although the narratives through which the unemployed processually construct and re-construct their life-stories are, as yet, largely unexplored; the route to this exciting territory has been sign-posted.

MASSEY UNIVERSITY

NANETTE MONIN

VOICES FROM THE SHOPFLOOR: DRAMAS OF THE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP

By Anne-Marie Greene. Ashgate, Aldershot, 2001, vii + 149 pp., £39.95 (hardback)

This research monograph seeks, as the author puts it, 'to demonstrate the utility of ethnographic research methods to industrial relations in the developing world'. To this end, the author provides case studies of two lock factories in the West Midlands of England, with data sourced from interviews and observations by the author during a period of two decades in the case of one, and a rather shorter period in the case of the other. The insights gleaned from these two case studies are then considered in the light of the ethnographic literature on industrial relations in the developing world. The body of the book comprises three main chapters which successively examine the issues of paternalism, gender and family, and collective action in the two factories.

There is much to like about this book. The author's argument that understanding workplace relations requires authors to immerse themselves in the relevant workplace culture may not seem profound but is worth repeating given, as the author notes, the increasing proliferation of quantitative studies. While such studies have their place and are undeniably the most reliable route to publication for academics hard-pressed by annual reviews, research assessment exercises, and other instruments of managerial inquisition in the modern university, the ethnographic study retains an important place in the field of industrial relations. Apart from its ability to capture much of the texture of workplace culture, it also gives the workers themselves a voice, one of the main goals of this book.

The main story presented in this book is the passing of an 'old world' as the two lock companies underwent ownership changes resulting in a transformation of the workplace culture. The old-style paternalism and piece-work systems gave way to the precepts of human resource management and flexible production. The new management teams who swept out the old point to the former set-up as hide-bound, fusty and inefficient. They might also point out that the workforce was rigidly defined on gender and racial lines (to wit, an entirely white workforce in an increasingly ethnically diverse English region). The workers, however, regret the passing of the old world.

The book is replete with interesting anecdotes from the workers which give a feel for traditional white English working-class life in the post-war decades. The author notes wryly that despite the widespread adoption of a host of 'communication techniques' by the new breed of managers, genuine interaction

between workers and managers at the factories has been much diminished and reciprocity has been replaced by depersonalisation. Management and the union convenors have sought to break the rigid sexual division of labour on efficiency grounds, with women encouraged to move into more skilled areas. Interestingly, both men and women proved remarkably sceptical about such moves, with most of the changes taking place only within the female and male clusters of jobs. The idea of 'appropriate' roles for men and women is still embedded in the workforces. Despite the fact that women received lower pay and were segmented into the lower-classification jobs, this was not a source of complaint; indeed, the only positive remarks on the issue of pay came from the female workers. Traditional piece-rate systems of work were supplanted by cell manufacturing and measured day work, again in an effort to force higher productivity. The result, interestingly, has been a relaxation of the pace of work and a cleaning-up of the factory workspace.

A constant theme of the study is the grieving by the workers at the passing of the old factory culture that had disappeared, most likely forever. They hark back to the earlier days of social clubs, sports teams and company welfare committees. They resent the fact that the companies no longer contribute to the life of the small town in which they are the major employers. The employers were driven by the need to cut costs. The outcome, however, was worker demotivation. The book clearly brings out that workplaces are dense social communities formed over decades with their own traditions and deeply-felt sense of what is appropriate and what is not.

I found the most interesting section of the book the different union cultures in the two factories. The union was the same in both cases, but the practices were very different. One factory represented something of a textbook case of how to maintain a lively workplace union culture—democracy, accountability, delegation of tasks, openness, and communication. It was also based on maintaining a distance from management and a belief in the efficacy of strike action. The result was members' pride in and loyalty to the union. The other factory was characterised by a convenor who 'knew what was best' for the members, who didn't trust the delegates to do anything right, who failed to communicate with members and who never gave straight answers to their questions. She was also perceived to be in cahoots with management. The result was resentment at the union and a belief that union action achieved nothing. This chapter alone would make excellent reading for any union delegates training course in Australia.

The author has caught the factories in what is most likely a transitional phase in their evolution. The ownership changes and the merger of the two parent companies testify to the ongoing reorganisation of business ownership and employer strategy in British manufacturing. The opening of production facilities in China most likely spells the beginning of the end for the two factories in their current form. It is possible that closure, the scattering of the workforce, and the destruction in the local economy and culture of this small industrial town will be the final outcome. It too, like many others in the West Midlands that enjoyed their heyday in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, will fall victim to what Marx and Engels called the 'constant revolutionising of production,

uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation' characteristic of the modern capitalist economy (see *Collected Works*, vol. vi, page 487). The juggernaut of globalisation will claim another victim.

Although there is much of interest in this work, there is a fundamental problem. The author sets herself the goal of demonstrating the value of ethnographic research in developing countries, but her primary research is exclusively of two factories in the United Kingdom. An attempt is made to deal with this fundamental disjuncture by weaving in the secondary literature on workplace culture in the developing world, using case studies of an Indian rayon factory, a Zambian textile factory, Ghanaian porters, Javanese factory workers, self-employed women's organisations in Bangladesh, and Filipina electronics workers. The problem is that, while interesting, these very much had the flavour of an 'add-on' at the end of each chapter, making for awkward exposition. It would have been much better to have separated these two studies, one an interesting report on the disappearance of a traditional paternalist workplace culture in Britain's West Midlands, the other a literature review of ethnographic studies of workplace relations in developing countries, pointing out their strengths and weaknesses, with suggestions by the author on how to advance the research method, bearing in mind the many difficulties addressed by the author towards the end of the book. It is possible that a stronger editorial hand would have suggested this option to the author. A more forceful review process might also have picked up the grammatical and typographical errors that abound.

In summary, this book does a useful job in tracking changing workplace relations within two factories and provides some interesting insights into the many levels at which the change occurred. Overall, however, the author fails to make the strongest case for her argument, that the ethnographic methodology is a powerful instrument for understanding industrial relations in the developing world.

UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

TOM BRAMBLE

THE CHAEBOL AND LABOUR IN KOREA: THE DEVELOPMENT OF MANAGEMENT STRATEGY IN HYUNDAI

By Seung-Ho Kwon and Michael O'Donnell. Routledge, London and New York, 2001, xviii + 217 pp., no price stated (hardback)

In days gone by, Korea was known as the 'hermit kingdom', reflecting the fact that during the Chosun dynasty (1392–1910) the country sought to remain closed to foreign powers, despite Western demands for diplomatic and trade relations during the nineteenth century. However, Korea was annexed by Japan in 1910 and remained under Japanese control until it was liberated 35 years later, at the end of the Second World War. Thereafter followed the bitter Korean War (1950–53) which resulted in the division of the country into the two Koreas—North and South. During the past 50 years, South Korea has experienced rapid economic and industrial development which resulted in it becoming one of the most prosperous countries in Asia and a member of the

OECD. Yet economic progress came at a cost and democratisation was only achieved in the late 1980s when civilian governments replaced military regimes.

A key to understanding the economic and political development of Korea in recent decades is the role played by the family-owned industrial conglomerates known as a 'chaebol' (or financial group), which dominated key sectors of industry and facilitated the development of internationally competitive Korean businesses. This book focuses on the Hyundai Business Group, one of the largest of the chaebols, with interests in construction, shipbuilding and automobile manufacturing. In a series of case studies, Kwon and O'Donnell provide a fascinating insight not only into the workings of the Hyundai group but also the management of their workers and relationships with the emerging union movement. The book examines the linkages between the growth strategies of Hyundai and the diversity of approaches adopted towards the management of human resources, industrial relations and the organisational work processes from the 1940s to the late 1990s.

The size of the Hyundai Business group and the diversity of its interests make it one of the largest conglomerates in the world, yet it still remains under the control of the founder, Chung Juyung, and his family members (although not without internal conflicts). Chung Juyung began as a shop-owner operating a rice wholesaling business in the late 1930s. He opened an automobile repair shop, which he called the Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Company, in the early 1940s, and then expanded into construction. When the Park military government embarked on a rapid industrialisation program in the 1960s, Hyundai was chosen as a representative construction company. This enabled Hyundai to accumulate capital and to move into other fields such as heavy and machinery industries, while remaining under the central control of the founder, Chung Juyung.

The major argument of the book is that the influence of the chaebol has been largely overlooked by many writers on Korean labour relations, who have tended to place greater emphasis on the role of the state. Such analyses have identified the subordination of trade unions by the state as a critical factor in the rapid industrialisation of South Korea. While not disputing the importance of the state, the authors argue that militant trade unions were present since the 1940s and that labour resistance during the period of rapid industrialisation facilitated the resurgence of independent trade unionism after 1987. The formation of trade unions was thus an unintended consequence of both the management strategies of the chaebol and the repressive policies of the state.

The book is structured in accordance with the chronological development of management strategy in Hyundai. This is divided into three phases: family and business expansion (1940–1960s), business diversity and concentration (1970s to early 1980s) and crisis and transition (early 1980s–1990s). The authors emphasise four themes as central to understanding the management of labour by Hyundai. First, the impact of environmental forces such as product and labour markets on the role of the state on Hyundai's business and labour strategies. Second, the contingent and complex relationship between these two aspects of Hyundai's

strategies. Third, the diverse and contradictory nature of Hyundai's approaches to labour-management relations. Finally, the evolution of labour-management relations in Hyundai during different phases in the development of 'chaebol capitalism'.

The authors provide a convincing argument that 'state-centred' approaches to the analysis of the development of Korean business and industrial relations have ignored the important independent roles played by both the chaebols and the trade unions. As they correctly note, although the state provided the regulatory framework, the chaebol and the unions determined industrial relations arrangements at the workplace (albeit after a long and continuing struggle). Yet it would seem that it is the interaction between the role of the state, on the one hand, and that of the chaebols, unions and workers, on the other, which has resulted in the development of a unique pattern of industrial relations in Korea.

While this book provides an excellent and illuminating account of the development of labour-management relations in the different areas of the Hyundai Business group, the authors are less successful in integrating their analysis with a particular conceptual approach. They observe that Alfred Chandler's strategy-structure framework is inadequate to explain the situation at Hyundai. Howard Gospel's work is more relevant in that he shows that structure can either facilitate or confine strategic activities, yet his approach is also inadequate. The authors conclude that a broad interpretation of forms of labour control is required to adequately explain the historical evolution, diversity and complexity of Hyundai's labour-management strategies. It would therefore have been interesting to see the authors take their analysis a little further and propose an alternative framework. Yet this should not detract from the great benefits which can be gained from reading this book and learning from the experience of Hyundai and the development of its labour-management strategies over the past 50 years.

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

RUSSELL LANSBURY

AGEISM IN WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

Edited by Ian Glover and Mohamed Branine. Ashgate, Aldershot, 2001, xviii + 382 pp., £47.50 (hardback)

'If people spend up to a third of their lives being educated and a third of their lives in retirement, that only leaves a third in work to support the rest . . . Do the Maths. It just doesn't add up.' (Alistair Darling, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, UK, Speech reported in *Financial Times*, 6 February 2002). All too often the tendency for young people to stay in education and training longer and the increasing life expectancy of people in many post-industrial societies are viewed, as in the foregoing comment, not as a cause for celebration but as a problem. From the point of view of many European countries, delayed entry into and early withdrawal from the labour market are seen as risks and costs, worsening the dependency ratio, raising public and private pension costs and threatening extra welfare expenditure over the longer-term. The debate is thus very much on as

to whether compulsory retirement ages (where they still exist) should be abolished, whether age discrimination legislation (where absent) should be introduced and if so, in what form, and how employers currently and in the future should manage the issue of age in the paid work context. In this light, the volume reviewed here is very timely and provides a broad range of both theoretical and empirical reflections on ageism in work and employment.

The edited book is composed of 15 chapters, which were originally given as papers at a conference under the same title, at the University of Stirling, Scotland in July 1986. These are joined by five other invited chapters and an introduction and conclusion by the editors. Like all edited collections there is some variability in quality and some repetition across the individual contributions. The book's great strengths are the breadth of coverage both in terms of theoretical and practical issues related to ageism and the wealth of comparative material covering Europe, Australia, and New Zealand with references to Japan and the US. The main weakness is the obviously light touch of the editors, which results in a slightly overlong volume and the repetition of basic demographic and labour market data and literature reviews in a number of the chapters. Nevertheless, there is something here for anyone interested in age and work and I will endeavour to give a flavour of this breadth below.

The avowed intention of the editors is to cover three main aims: to examine the causes of ageism and age discrimination in work, to describe the practice and experience of ageism, and lastly to consider some possible remedies (page 5). The book is therefore divided into three main sections, which cover these themes. The opening chapter by the editors provides a general, and very useful, overview of the area and relevant literature. This is followed by a thought-provoking chapter by Colin Duncan 'Ageism, early exit, and the rationality of age-based discrimination'. This contribution reminds us that putting all our faith in the so-called 'business case' for equal opportunities is potentially dangerous. The commercial pressures that may make it costly in the long-term not to select and develop the best human resources available (whoever they may be) may also, in other circumstances, provide a clear commercial rationality for preferring cheaper younger labour over more expensive older labour; or for not investing in young workers who will only become fully productive over the medium to long-term.

One of the more theoretical chapters by Ian Glover 'Ageism without frontiers' provides a very stimulating attempt to look at ageism both historically and comparatively. The comparisons across time and nationalities illuminate the complexity of the phenomenon being studied. This theme is taken up in many contributions—the difficulty of defining ageism or age discrimination when it appears that it can happen to any age group.

The chapter by Ann McGoldrick and James Arrowsmith 'Discrimination by age: the organizational response' reports on two interesting empirical studies, one on recruitment advertising, the other on management attitudes towards age. This chapter, along with many others, reminds us that age discrimination occurs across the age range, affecting especially those seen as too young or too old for the job in hand. As a subsequent chapter by Adelina Broadbridge 'Ageism in retailing: myth or reality' demonstrates, who actually constitute older workers is

quite sector or organisation specific; in retail it may be those over 40 years of age, in another sector 50 years might be seen as the dividing line.

From a British point of view the chapter by Jenny Hamilton 'Anti-Ageist legislation: the Australian experience' is very useful. As age discrimination is now on the horizon in the UK (due in 2006) and debate rages as to whether the existing equality commissions for gender, race and disability should be merged to form one commission covering these and age as well, the Australian case is particularly instructive. The contribution by Graham Elkin 'Ageism in 'Quarter Acre, Pavlova Paradise'—will she be right?' also provides some interesting examples of corporate responses to an ageing population and workforce, in particular measures designed by American corporations to recognise and help with employees' difficulties in managing paid employment and eldercare responsibilities.

The penultimate section of the book on remedies and prospects includes two very good chapters by Philip Taylor, 'Older workers and the cult of youth: ageism in public policy' and with Christine Tillsley 'Managing the third age workforce: a review and agenda for research'. Philip Taylor has a creditable track record of research in this area and the two chapters provide sophisticated and well-grounded accounts of the impact of government and employer policies on the situation of older workers. In the latter the two authors draw out an agenda for future research and in particular make a plea for more in-depth study of how the 'strategies of organising life courses of workers are developed and implemented at the level of the individual firm' (page 320).

This book certainly deserves to be in every University library as a basic resource for researchers and students alike interested in discrimination issues in general and ageism in particular. The accessible style of most of the contributions means that it should also appeal to a range of practitioners interested in these topics.

UNIVERSITY OF KENT AT CANTERBURY

SARAH VICKERSTAFF

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN SERVICE WORK

By Marek Korczynski. Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2002, xii + 237 pp., \$66 (paperback)

The post industrial economy is one where increasingly services provide a vast majority of the jobs and national income. The service industry continues to grow at an alarming rate. OECD figures published in 1996 indicate that between '1974 and 1994 employment rose by 9 per cent to 73 per cent in the USA, by 13 per cent to 71 per cent in Australia, and from 50 to 60 per cent in Japan' (cited on page 1). The competitive context of service work reveals that price and quality contain fundamental implications for service industry management. Pricing is instrumental in helping service managers to influence customer behaviour, with the benefits of good service quality far outweighing the costs. The author of this book suggests that there are five key attributes which characterise service work—intangibility, perishability, variability, simultaneous production and consumption, and inseparability (page 5). He stresses that the nature of service work, the way work is organised and the relationship among service workers, their

managers and their customers has a significant impact on human resource practices in service economy firms.

The major focus of *Human Resource Management in Service Work* is to provide an understanding of the wider contextual nature of service work and the implications for human resource management (HRM). Service work requires separate analysis emphasising the 'presence of the customer in the labour process' (page 194). Front-line customer contact jobs in the mass-customised and medium-customised market segments such as customer service representatives in call centres, tellers in banks, and nurses and nursing aides in hospitals, are examined. An interesting distinction is made between knowledge-based professional services such as management consultants and medical specialists (who are engaged in a process of knowledge transfer and developing direct client relationships) from those in the mass and medium-customised markets.

There are a range of approaches in the literature which seek to explain the different types and images of customer service work. The critical perspectives, whilst differing to some extent, do share a common theme. The 'McDonaldisation of society' highlights characteristics which are seen to be detrimental to workers. The arguments here centre around an alienating, highly routinised and efficiency-based logic. However, the 'new service management school' argue that the detrimental factors surrounding service work is a paradigm of the past and has been replaced by an 'empowerment approach' to service work where customers, workers and managers all 'win' when firms treat workers in a humane way. Chapters 2 and 3 set about examining these contrasting perspectives.

Chapter 2 examines the HRM literature on front-line work, particularly those espoused by the 'new service management school'. Predominantly unitarist in perspective, the author observes that it makes the assumption that a harmony of interests between parties naturally coincides, and that the presence of a 'satisfaction mirror' and the 'interpretation of a third party', being the customer, is the 'focus around which the interests of management and workers naturally coalesce' (pages 38–9). However, the author argues that such an approach does not adequately conceptualise potential key sources of conflict, which would give a more realistic representation of front line service work.

Chapter 3 discusses the critical sociological perspectives on service work as well as highlighting the feminist perspective. The implication of these perspectives for HRM are examined. Some of this work highlights the drive towards optimum efficiency and the increasing pressure on organisations to minimise labour costs. The author provides an important discussion on the implications for both HRM policy and practice. HRM policies tend towards bureaucratisation, and workers are 'dehumanised' and treated as 'robots'. Other work examined highlights the 'sovereignty' of the customer and the importance of customer 'legitimacy' to an organisation. The HRM implications for workers are that they see themselves as increasingly enterprising. It is the concept of market relations rather than rationalisation which is the overriding perception. Unfortunately for most workers, the author argues that the identity of service workers as risk takers is not supported by HRM practice where, for most, hierarchical employment relations still exist. Feminist analysis demonstrates that HRM policies are aimed

at achieving customer expectations where HRM practices directed towards subjecting 'workers to gender based servility' (page 55) is prevalent.

In chapter 4 the author provides a clear understanding of the customer, nature of the work organisation and how HRM practices are played out in the customer-oriented bureaucracy. Paradoxically, the customer is seen to be both rational and irrational and management's role is to create a fragile sense of order that generates profit. Customer sovereignty is underpinned at the front-line by both 'soft' and 'hard' HRM practices that highlight the importance of defusing tensions and servicing the rational and irrational aspects of the customer.

Chapter 5 illuminates three different kinds of front-line work, namely hospitality, call centre work and health care work and the role of HRM for these types of service work. Hospitality work is associated with a strong and deep relationship between service provider and recipient. The author indicates that the dual logic underlying this work is the need for management to keep labour costs to a minimum. In health care the introduction of new and non-medical management whilst ensuring a high level of quality in care is seen to be important. This pressure, and that associated with the private sector care, is increasingly leading to tensions between nurses and patients as patients seek to identify with this notion of customer sovereignty. Call centre work, by nature, is work at a 'distance' where the role of technology is fundamental to the labour process. The dual logic centres around 'rising expectations' but 'fewer staff' (page 93). HRM needs to find points of balance with respect to recruitment and appraisals for individual workers. Hospitality has dual structures where rationalisation and customer orientation are both crucial; tipping is central to the social order although it causes tension between workers and tends to create a vacuum which HRM increasingly tries to fill.

The author examines the customer oriented bureaucracy more closely in chapter 6 as applied to sales work. Extreme forms of sales work actively stimulate demand for customers rather than being customer focused. HRM has a peripheral role here. By contrast, other forms of sales work are a mixture of both sales and service. The HRM implications of restructuring service jobs to become more customer and relationship management orientated are essentially related to issues concerning the workforce wanting to preserve the autonomy process of sales work and with changes that are sought by management to the payment and culture systems. HRM is seen to have a difficult role in facilitating change and in establishing a fragile social order, given the competing demands (page 120).

Empowerment, control and emotional labour are the focus of chapters 7 and 8. They are key aspects to service work. The author stresses the dualistic nature of the bureaucratic measurement of work processes and that of developing and maintaining customer-related norms and values. Emotional labour is central to the customer-orientated bureaucracy and commitment from the workforce creates the need for the development of 'soft' HRM policies to be put in place. 'Soft' HRM policies to do with recruitment, training, performance appraisals and rewards are not easily separated from 'hard' HRM policies in which management increasingly are seen to be making the major decisions. The prevailing paradigm continues to leave front-line workers vulnerable.

Chapters 9 and 10 discuss the implications associated with women being over-represented in front-line work and the ways in which trade unions can overcome the fundamental segregation and disadvantage challenges facing women. Front line jobs are those where more often than not pay is low, part time employment is prevalent and career ladders are non-existent. Trade unions can have a meaningful role both in terms of challenging HRM systems and work organisation, and with developing key strategies aimed at enhancing the delivery of meaningful service for front-line workers.

In all, *Human Resource Management in Service Work* is a well structured and reflective work which is highly recommended for all those with an interest in HRM in front-line service work. The book addresses the contemporary HRM issues in front-line service work by way of a conceptual model that centres on an adequate sociological understanding of the work to which, and around which, HRM is applied. Creating a social order assisted in the analysis of key debates associated with 'hard' and 'soft' HRM. The relationship between rhetoric and reality is played out with different kinds of service work. Korczynski focuses on mass and medium-customised market segments. Identifying the 'points of balance' (page 201) for individual workers between the demands of quality and efficiency will continue to have wider implications for HRM generally. For the most part the service economy is a contradictory one where management and workers are torn between customer orientation and efficiency. Nonetheless, Korczynski has shown that HRM will have an increasingly important role to play in the evolution of this economy.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

CAROL ROYAL

CAN CLASS STILL UNITE? THE DIFFERENTIATED WORK FORCE, CLASS SOLIDARITY AND TRADE UNIONS

Edited by Guy Van Gyes, Hans De Witte and Patrick Pasture. Ashgate, Aldershot, 2001, xiii + 359 pp., £49.95 (hardback)

Tomes about the relevance of class are not new. Nonetheless, a book focused on the capacity of class to unite seems particularly relevant at a time when Australian society is subject to major pressures: a fracturing Australian labour market, a weakened union movement, on-going attacks on workers and working conditions, and the divisive manipulation of anti-refugee and overtly racist sentiments. And within both the union movement and the Labor Party there is a questioning of the utility and desirability of mutual links. With this in mind I looked forward to reading *Can Class Still Unite?*

The book is a compilation of 12 chapters plus an introduction and conclusion. Scholars will find absence of an index irritating because of the difficulty of cross referencing of common topics. Its focus is largely European, with chapters covering a broad range of topics from 'Class Identity in Contemporary Britain' to 'Union Participation in the Netherlands'. The authors adopt a wide range of research methodologies. A general theme of the book is that class has been central to the thinking of the European labour movement. Various chapters

engage with debates about the relevance of the concept of class as a unifying mechanism. Others discuss changes in occupational structure resulting from the decline of manufacturing and the rise of the service sector, the growing numbers of women and migrants entering the workforce, and traditional forms of work becoming increasingly atypical and precarious. The majority of contributors agree that a combination of such factors has resulted in workers becoming increasingly individualised and differentiated.

Yet the majority of contributors maintain that, despite apparent moves to increased 'individualism', there has been the creation of new and diverse 'communities'. This has not resulted in the 'death of class' per se; people still distinguish themselves from others on socio-economic grounds. The various authors argue that society is not classless, but rather that class has become multidimensional. Michael Vester refers to E.P. Thompson's contention that class relations have not been uniformly polarised and that the working class has frequently comprised diverse elements (page 45)—a reassuring point amid the discussion of how divided and sectarian working class interests have become.

Several contributors, such as Andrew Richards in his chapter 'The Crisis of Union Representation', discuss how factors such as unemployment and the decline of heavy industry have adversely affected unions and produced a 'crisis of representation'. He argues that with many 'outside' workers currently beyond the reach of unions, taking struggle beyond the workplace and into the wider community will also involve moving beyond traditional appeals to class solidarity alone (page 36).

What is missing from the general analysis is mention of social protest manifestations such as the million-strong demonstration by trade unions in Rome against Berlusconi in 1994, or the anti-capitalist rallies in Prague (September 2000). Such events were the precursors of the 300 000-strong anti-capitalist protest in Genoa in July 2001 and the rally of 2–3 million unionists in Rome in March 2002 to protest attacks on working conditions. Such demonstrations involve a diverse collection of interests, resistance to economic inequality, and opposition to the power of transnational corporations. Undoubtedly they take struggle beyond the workplace. An analysis of these movements to determine whether they represent merely short-term coalitions of inherently contradictory interests or, as appears more likely, are manifestations of class unity would be useful. David Adamson in 'Social Segregation in a Working-Class Community: Economic and Social Change in the South Wales Coalfield' takes up this point at a local level in his discussion of the emergence of collectivist strategies within marginalised communities.

Many chapters discuss—albeit in a fairly limited fashion—ideas for union renewal and modernisation in this increasingly fractured environment. Unions are urged to incorporate diversity in order to promote solidarity. As Guy Van Gyes notes in the introduction, 'If trade unions renew themselves in the right direction, class can still unite' (page 12).

Can Class Still Unite? certainly contains valuable insights into both the 'death of class' debate and how people respond to structural change. The last three chapters are particularly enjoyable: Ian Roberts and Tim Strangleman's study

of the British construction industry, David Ost's 'Class and Democracy in Post-communist Europe', and Sherry Linkon and John Russo's 'Lessons from the American Experience'. The focus of these chapters is not so much on what differentiates workers but rather on how the labour process creates common ground; on how occupational health and safety concerns can transcend individual differences and provide space for workers to organise collectively. Linkon and Russo, for example, outline what they believe to be the preconditions for class unity, such as the realisation that 'class will unite when it is understood that capitalism can not exist without class and that, while capital may be winning the battle over the restructuring of work and workplaces at the moment, it has not won the class war' (page 321).

Despite some reservations, this book contains a good overview of changes occurring in Europe and stimulates comparisons with Australian experiences of industrial and societal change. It provides useful material for those interested in the broad question of class and the problems of union renewal.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

ALISON BARNES

A FIGHTING UNION: A HISTORY OF THE QUEENSLAND BRANCH OF THE TRANSPORT WORKERS' UNION, 1907–2000

By John Kellett. Boolarong Press, Brisbane, 2001, xvi + 264 pp., \$20 (paperback)

With the publication of this book, the Transport Workers' Union (TWU) of Australia is well served by historians, if measured simply by the number of substantial works on the organisation. Following Mark Bray and Malcolm Rimmer's *Delivering the Goods* (Allen and Unwin, 1987) and Bradley Bowden's *Driving Force* (Allen and Unwin, 1993), John Kellett here provides a thorough account of the history of the Queensland branch. The union has maintained a comprehensive collection of its own records; painstaking research in this archive, together with interviews of several former and current officials, forms the basis of the monograph. Eschewing theoretical considerations, the author's intention is 'merely to record the events of the Branch's past'. This modest aim is exceeded, as those events are capably placed in their economic and political contexts. The result is good labour history in the traditional, institutional genre of the field.

According to Kellett, the principal force shaping the fortunes of the branch was its commitment to labourism—a belief that the welfare of workers could best be advanced by a firm union alliance with a Labor Party which, in its hopefully frequent and lengthy terms in government, would implement favourable legislation and, above all, maintain a strong arbitration system. From its inception, the TWU played a central role in the Queensland labour movement and in the Labor Party; at least until the 1980s TWU officials were prominent in its governing bodies. Whether faith in labourism was rewarded is questionable on the evidence of this study. On the one hand, the state arbitration system (unlike its federal counterpart) was responsive and accessible, state awards which covered the great majority of the union's members until the 1960s were relatively generous, and for the same period an expansive regime of union preference

sustained a high membership base. On the other hand, the TWU remained industrially and politically subservient to the powerful Australian Workers' Union (refusing to challenge AWU coverage of transport workers in the north of the state), the TWU officials' caution and conservatism stymied attempts to form organisational links with waterside workers, and, as the experience of other unions demonstrates, easy access to preference encouraged complacency in organising and recruitment. These traits also saw the TWU strenuously avoid industrial action either on its own account or in sympathy with other unions. One of the few openly critical comments the author makes about the TWU is that during the 1940s and early 1950s, when its affairs were dominated by the struggle between 'groupers' and 'progressives', the branch succumbed to the 'heavy fug of industrial conservatism'. This comment could be equally applied to the entire period of Labor rule (1915–29; 1932–57).

Indeed, one wonders whether the title of the book is employed ironically, for until the 1970s, most of the fights the union was involved in were either internal organisational battles, or associated Labor factional ones. It was only when labourism was abandoned in the face of conservative political ascendancy in Queensland and federally that the label becomes apt. The new industrial assertiveness which characterised the TWU in the 1970s and 1980s was also accompanied by bitter, personal and debilitating internecine struggle. One of the problems with the institutional approach to labour history is evident here—internal conflict among incumbent and would-be officials is chronicled in all its labyrinthine detail. However, less attention is given to analysing the concerns of the rank and file workers in a rapidly-changing world.

Even so, the picture of a transformed organisation in the 1990s emerges clearly and skilfully to justify the claim that the TWU in Queensland is one of the state's most successful unions. Suspicious of the Accord (and briefly disaffiliating with the ACTU), philosophically rejecting enterprise bargaining while successfully conducting direct negotiations with employers, and resisting the amalgamation push—the TWU has retained its identity and its membership has grown. This is attributed to an energetic recruitment drive, aggressive industrial campaigns and a concerted effort at official workplace presence. In the process, labourism has been discarded and nominal allegiance to the Labor Party does not disguise the fact that the branch is essentially an apolitical union. Major challenges remain, and are recognised as such, including the vexed issue of owner-drivers and long-haul driver safety (the latter may have deserved a little more consideration).

That this work is an authorised study commissioned by the union, raises the (possibly disingenuous) question of academic objectivity. Kellett is clearly empathetic with the union and with unionism. His admiration for the current Branch Secretary, Hughie Williams (who provides the foreword), is open and unreserved. Yet he acknowledges branch failures and his treatment of Williams' internal opponents during the turbulent 1980s and early 1990s appears fair. The argument that it was TWU action which was largely responsible for the 1998 'victory' on the waterfront, at least in Queensland, is debatable but not outlandish. My view is that the book's provenance has not materially affected its merit.

However, the book clearly needed tighter editing and proofreading. Typographical errors are legion: 'effected' is constantly used for 'affected', 'cited' instead of 'sighted', 'principal' less often becomes 'principle' while there is reference to 'Garath' Evans. At times, too, reliance on branch records causes problems. The description of Queensland's voluntary employment agreement legislation on page 214 is wrong in a number of respects: for example, voluntary employment agreements were introduced in 1987 by amendment to the *Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act* and not the *Industrial (Commercial Practices) Act*, and the minimum pay under such instruments was the award rate per classification and not the junior rate.

A Fighting Union may not always escape the limitations of its genre nor the risks of commissioned history. But it is a significant contribution to our understanding not only of its specific subject but also of unions in general, and of Queensland political history.

JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY

DOUG HUNT