

REVIEWS

Ursula Huws (ed.) Action Programmes for the Protection of Homeworkers: Ten Case Studies from Around the World. International Labour Office, Geneva, 1995. 142pp. ISBN: 92-2-109189-9.

The rapid proliferation of home-based work in recent years, in both developing and developed countries, is symptomatic of the fragmentation and globalisation of production and work over the 1980s and 1990s. Another facet of the brave new post-Fordist world which promises flexibility and advantages to both worker and employer, but often delivers a downward spiral of cut-throat competition and a return to almost Victorian working conditions in the back streets and suburbs of prosperous cities. This collection of ten case studies from eight different countries shows, once again, the close connection between social disadvantage and labour market exploitation. But it also documents some innovative and courageous methods of organising collectively against the odds of isolation, language disadvantage and legal invisibility.

As Huws notes, homeworking cannot be isolated from its social and economic context. On the demand side, the removal of international tariff barriers leading to intense competition, company restructuring and sub-contracting, and new technology which automates some production tasks out of the hands of workers while others are passed to the cheapest hands available on the global market. On the supply side, homework is taken up for economic reasons too - the need for an income, however low. But also for social reasons which limit options - responsibility for dependants at home, lack of childcare, racism or fear of it, low skills or inability to speak the required language, isolation and lack of alternative employment.

The case studies come from countries as different as the Philippines and India, and as close to home as Australia. They are about women making garments, doing electrical assembly, rolling or packaging cigarettes, making boxes, making shoes and leather goods, preparing mail-outs - a West Yorkshire Homeworking Unit has recorded over 100 different jobs carried out in home in their region.

In Australia, it is believed there are twice as many outworkers as factory based workers in the clothing industry. Many are new immigrants or refugees, who work at home because of child care responsibilities, cultural traditions or because it seems preferable to the treatment they have received in the factory environment. Initially the Clothing Trades Union, now the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia, tried to limit work outside factories, and lobbied for award clauses requiring outworkers to obtain permits. However, the grounds for a permit were based on the employer's reasons rather than the outworkers', such as lack of transport or child-care. Many would need to name more than one employer, or might not know his identity. Lack of a permit provided employers with a means of intimidating outworkers. By the mid-1980s it was realised that women working at home out of necessity could not be blamed for the conditions they worked under; and that new strategies were needed with this hidden workforce.

The union began lobbying to regulate outwork through variations in industrial awards, and provided outworkers, employers and community workers with information about outworkers' new rights. In 1994 a new campaign included collaboration between major clothing industry employers, the union and the Department of Industrial Relations to identify employment of outworkers by assessing the number of workers that must be needed to make the number and kind of garments being produced. An outwork information campaign in 12 languages targeted both small employers and outworkers, delivered through a network of community workers and ethnic radio and other media. There was also a phone-in advocacy service, also in 12 languages, over two months. In addition, a range of appropriate community organisations were asked to nominate members for training to act as designated industrial relations information officers in their community.

The Canadian case study is about organising a new local branch for Chinese garment homeworkers, under the ILGWU associate membership programme (for workers with no collective bargaining relationship with the employer). The single most important reason these women gave for homework was lack of affordable childcare. Most had worked in a garment factory before pregnancy; half were supporting other dependants, usually outside Canada. They were paid piece rates, earning an hourly average a third below the statutory minimum, while their employer evaded unemployment fund and pension contributions. They worked an average of 46 hours a week, but this fluctuated between 16 and 100 hours on demand. The ILGWU recognised the need for new tactics. It raised money and union contributions for a Chinese speaking organiser, and formed the Homeworkers Association as a "pre-union", advertising its services and hot-line through the Chinese and Vietnamese press and radio, and alongside newspaper ads for outwork. Besides providing help on industrial and legal rights, it organised social teas and family summer outings. The ILGWU worked closely with other community and women's groups, to raise the situation of these workers as a public issue for labour law reforms. In 1992 a postcard campaign was organised around the release of the names of designers and clothing companies using homeworkers under illegal conditions.

These are the two case studies from countries whose economy and dominant culture are closest to our own. All the case studies focus on solutions, rather than problems. They document the strategies and struggles of reaching out to isolated workers, identifying and meeting their needs, political lobbying for legal recognition of these people as workers entitled to minimum protections. All the projects involved training, in work skills, and in language, leadership and management. Other programmes trained advocates, interpreters and union or community workers. Because homeworkers are often among the poorest, lowest skilled and most vulnerable people, often the starting point was to provide counselling and training or other forms of help, to develop the assertiveness and self-esteem to make changes, start new initiatives, confront employers or become active in the community.

Outworkers in New Zealand are just as invisible as in any of the countries discussed here. Homework was how our mothers and grandmothers made their "pin money" in the days when women "didn't work", as Anne Else notes in *False Economy* (Tandem, 1996). And how women at home now with dependent children or dependent elders still supplement a single family wage, or a sole parent benefit, to survive. In 1985 some of the moral majority women who came to disrupt the Auckland Forum setting priorities for the new Ministry of Women's

Affairs stayed to express their indignation about law changes under Rob Muldoon which had exempted homework from the industrial awards.

In the early 1990s there was a flurry of media attention given to more middle class forms of homework, and the new lifestyle possibilities presented by technology which could connect home and office, but little research. Nicola Armstrong's doctoral work at Massey uncovered the downside of "telework" and professional jobs done by women and men from home, in long hours and lack of separation from the work environment.

There is even less discussion or documentation of working class outwork jobs - envelope stuffing, small assembly tasks, packaging, and especially garment piece work. Yet even before the Employment Contracts overturned the blanket coverage of award wages, union organisers were reporting widespread subcontracting, much of it parcelling out to be done in garages and kitchens, following the mid-1980s downturn in the clothing industry.

Penelope Foggo, in a 1991 Masters thesis at Waikato, analysed the 1986 Census industry and occupation figures to conclude that, of those working at home, "tailors, dressmakers, sewers, and upholsterers" or "spinners, weavers, knitters and dyers" who were employees were overwhelming female and tended to be older than the workforce average. A small number of interviews showed women with family responsibilities doing knitting and garment piece work, for very long hours and little pay. A situation typical of these women, reflecting the "false economy" of the "flexible workforce", is that: "It is not possible to go out to work with a new-born baby. My husband is on call 24 hours a day and doesn't know whether he will be home or not. It is difficult to fit in two people's jobs with erratic hours and being home for the children." (p.96)

An essential step in the case studies reported by Huws is gaining recognition of homeworkers as legitimate workers entitled to legal protections. This is essentially the same politico-industrial strategy as the recent legal battle to prevent homehelp workers being categorised as independent contractors, rather than as employees of state social services. Homehelps are isolated as individual workers but are no strangers to union organising in New Zealand. They were well on their way to achieving an award before the Employment Contracts Act.

The similarities between these examples from New Zealand and these case studies serve to illustrate why the lessons from organising isolated, low skilled and often socially marginalised workers in countries remote from ours can be of use to us in New Zealand, and why the ILO has undertaken a series of activities to collect and disseminate this kind of information.

Linda Hill

Alcohol and Public Health Research Unit
University of Auckland

A. Bequele and W.E. Myers. *First Things First in Child Labour: Eliminating Work Detrimental to Children*. Geneva: International Labour Office, 1995. xx, 163pp. ISBN 92-2-109197-X.

Industrial relations scholars perceive themselves as being concerned with the interactions of various individuals, groups and organisations involved in the world of work. Over the years there has been a series of more or less vigorous debates concerning "how" or "what" is involved in studying the world of work. Differences have emerged between protagonists from different disciplinary backgrounds, between "internalists" and "externalists", the micro (workplace) and macro (a nation state or system as a whole), and there is more to industrial relations than institutions, or less for those who are in the vanguard of human resource management.

Having said this, it is interesting to report that, for the most part, industrial relations scholars have eschewed research into issues associated with child labour. This is particularly noteworthy given the concerns of Sidney and Beatrice Webb in *Industrial Democracy* (first published in 1897 and which is regarded as constituting the birth of industrial relations as a discipline) with individual bargaining and the dangers of parasitism and both individual and societal degradation and degeneration. Despite a steady stream of publications by the International Labour Office on child labour, most of this research has been conducted by non-industrial relations scholars - from sociology, anthropology, political science/economy, law and human rights. Privileged industrial relations scholars from the west have turned a 'blind eye' to the phenomenon of child labour.

If for no other reason, *First Things First in Child Labour* by Bequele and Myers is an important work because it draws attention to the problems and hazards experienced by child workers. While such data is not provided by the authors, the International Labour Office estimated in 1995 that there were more than 200 million children (persons less than 15 years of age) working. A survey of 104 of the world's largest nations conducted by Charles Humana in the early 1990s found that 65 breached international human rights' instruments concerning the right of children to be free from work (Charles Humana, *World Human Rights Guide*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1992). Beside child labour being widespread, many are subjected to work which is both physically and psychologically damaging. Bequele and Myers document examples of the physical and sexual abuse experienced by children as prostitutes, domestic labourers, "street kids" and scavengers, in agriculture, factory, construction and associated areas of work. They also point to the widespread practice of children sold or forced into slavery, or "bonded" labour, resulting from the poverty and destitution of families.

In an epilogue, the authors list three reasons, or what they call "frustrations", for writing this book. The first was their "lingering sadness" concerning the wasted lives of children forced to do work "totally inappropriate" to their growth and personal development. Second, "seething anger" at "predatory adults" who "inflict great injury, even deliberate cruelty" and "get away with it". Third, they want to highlight problems experienced by children in particularly hazardous situations - those "trapped in bonded labour, toiling in heavy construction, or abused in domestic service or prostitution" (pp.159-160).

First Things First in Child Labour presents "a quick, action orientated overview" and "is meant to be readable to the general public" as well as child advocates, policymakers and programme administrators (p.vii). It makes use of case material, contained in boxes, to highlight various issues associated with child labour.

The authors point to the complexity of the problems associated with child labour and/or its eradication. While they bemoan its extent, their essential position is to direct scarce resources to those children most at risk. Given the systemic nature of child labour they call for an integrated set of programmes to be applied in different situations, according to the needs of the child workers concerned. The authors highlight the need for greater co-operation between government and non-government organisations. In particular, they point to the need of the latter to continuously apply pressure on governments to protect and pursue the rights of children. Bequele and Myers maintain that, "It is a sad reality that governments are sometimes so influenced by entrenched economic and political forces that they tend to abandon the defence of the weak under pressure from the strong" (p.50).

This book makes for depressing reading. The descriptions of conditions children work in, the hazards they face, the treatment they receive from adults, the indifference of governments and the enormity of the problems involved, leaves one with a sense of helplessness. Without resources it is difficult, if not impossible, to develop labour inspectorates to regulate, let alone eradicate, child labour; or provide even "basic" educational facilities to stem the seeming tide of children who find themselves forced to work. As a counter to feelings of depression the authors provide advice on strategies to harness public opinion in support of reforms, and examples of various programmes developed by non-government organisations and activists, with limited resources, who have helped to turn around the lives of children.

Bequele and Myers have provided a very useful and readable account of what can only be described as a blight on the human condition. It appears that child labour, in all probability, will be a continuing, if not worsening, problem as both the developed and developing world find themselves subjected to the forces of international competition. For industrial relations scholars, *First Things First in Child Labour* will serve to provide a broader, or fuller, meaning to the term "the world of work", and return to issues raised by the pioneers of the discipline, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, almost 100 years ago.

Braham Dabscheck

School of Industrial Relations
University of New South Wales

Peter Cappelli (ed). Airline Labour Relations in the Global Era: The New Frontier. Ithaca, New York: ILR, 1995. xiii, 250pp. ISBN: 0-87546-344-4.

Early in 1993 I received a call from Seth Rosen, Director of Advocacy at that time for USALPA, the Airline Pilots' Association of the United States of America. He had heard and read a paper presented by Terry Arnold, of Air New Zealand, to the New Frontier Conference in Washington and was wanting to hear from us in NZALPA about just how bad had been the "hit" we had taken in the Pilots Contract of 1992 with Terry's company. From that conversation we in NZALPA came to read the paper that appears in chapter six.

It is interesting from our point of view, how the description of that contract and its actual practice and outcomes differ but that is another story.

The book is, as you might suspect, mainly focused on the United States experience and draws mainly from experiences and occurrences within the USA.

In the years 1978 through 1993 the USA aviation labour market underwent profound change, stress, hardship and unhappiness for many employees. That process continues. The commentators whose papers appear in this compendium were amongst those uniquely equipped and informed to describe the forces and events at work during that period shaping what is today the world aviation structure that is inevitably going to continue to also shape the New Zealand aviation scene.

The rise of the mega carriers, a predictable and indeed predicted outcome of deregulation (in harsh contradistinction to the expected and prognosed outcomes by Alfred Khan of the Civil Aeronautics Board when the 1978 Deregulation steps were taken) has to some extent settled down the forces described in this book influencing labour relations. The United Airlines Employee Share Ownership scheme is a case in point. The mega carrier rise, the tendency for these airlines (and alliances) to cut across state boundaries and the predictable future decline in bilateral capacity negotiations to multi-lateral (groups of states) and perhaps "open skies" has, and will continue to, lead to less real competitiveness, the opposite intention of the 1978 Deregulation.

In that respect this book points the way, allowing its readers to draw from those papers information from which future labour relations outcomes might be predicted.

The mega carrier/alliance is far more likely to give rise to oligarchy than real competitive free enterprise with its attendant outflow of "energy" and relative "chaos" such as described herein for the last 18 years, particularly in the USA, (the last ten years also in this country). While the careful analyses described in some chapters are empirically based, the trend described that labour relations will settle down in the aftermath of the "shakeouts" is accurate.

The student of this subject will find value in this collection.

Mike Talbot
President, New Zealand Air Line Pilots' Association

Mark Hearn and Harry Knowles. One Big Union: A History of the Australian Workers Union 1886-1994. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 377pp. ISBN 0-521-55897-2.

The Australian Workers Union (AWU) was formed in 1894, from an amalgamation of earlier shearers and general labourers' unions. It rallied in favour of unionism, payrates of £1 per hundred sheep and eight-hour days; and against work practices where shearers forwarded pastoralists a £1 deposit to secure a shed, and where workers had to provide their own combs and cutters, and put up with appalling living and working accommodation. The union used strategies other than direct action to achieve these objectives from the 1890s. The AWU pioneered direct union representation at the Political Labor League conference in 1899. It was also arbitrationist, strongly supporting the 1904 Federal Arbitration Act. But above all, the AWU grew by amalgamation. Union after union agreed to marry it. There is a handy map of the complicated unions at the federal level (pp.xiv-xv). Despite all these amalgamations covering "a myriad of callings", it is argued that shearing influences and the "bush ethos" dominated the union. Even in the 1980s when shearers comprised a mere five percent of the AWU membership they contributed a disproportionate number of the union officials (p.307). This book argues that their influence was national, too. From 1920 until the 1960s the AWU was the largest and most powerful union in Australia. It dominated the union movement and the Australian Labour Party (ALP). In the mid 1960s the AWU contributed about £30,000 annually to the ALP, provided the services of 70 paid officials during elections and cultivated cosy arrangements between the ALP and the AWU. This One Big Union's White Australia, arbitration and anti-communist policies influenced the nation. This book argues that the "bush ethos" tradition died hard. The official discrimination against new members on the basis of race was not abandoned until 1972. The bush ethos was finally challenged in 1993 when a strong urban manufacturing sector amalgamated with the AWU.

Having said that, this book gives plenty of evidence for the continually contested nature of the AWU's paramount position. The AWU had to ward off white-anting throughout this period. On the one hand, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) set out to rival its influence from 1927 and attempted to take over the mantle as the One Big Union. The AWU finally affiliated to the ACTU in 1967. On the other hand, Labor Party faction-fighting and splitting was uncontrollable. The AWU lost the battle for control of the NSW ALP to the Lang Labor machine in the 1920s although it remained influential in Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the federal ALP with significant politicians such as Theodore coming from its ranks in the 1930s and 40s. Later, it recovered its NSW position, and lost it federally. After purging its own ranks of radicals in 1944 and 1951, AWU leader Dougherty urged ALP leader Evatt in his national attack on the "industrial groupers" in 1954 after the narrow Labour loss in the federal election. Evatt's attack paved the way for "The Split" which saw the Australian labour movement divide and the ALP out of power until 1972. The AWU had not intended this. Nor had it planned for other cosy political relationships to end. AWU state secretaries were commonly presidents of state ALP branches. This ended in Queensland in the 1950s over the three weeks holiday issue and in NSW in the 1960s. This book, then, navigates the complex tale of a controversial union whose dominance was not seamless.

Such a significant Labour institution has not been ignored by other historians. Indeed in John Merritt's magisterial account, *The Making of the AWU*, he seeks to explain the union's foundations in a "complex interplay of institution, technological, economic and social forces". Although he intended to take the history further, Merritt found that he used up his word limit just getting going, and only examined the period to 1911. The AWU commissioned Mark Hearn and Harry Knowles to be "not only comprehensive and accurate" but also "readable and entertaining" and appealing "to people who have neither an academic nor a professional interest in the subject". They succeed in many ways. This is a colourful story with biographical insights, strike camp wars and messy ballot box corruption sagas. It complements the existing historiography, going for breadth rather than depth. Its breadth rather than depth approach might be controversial because of its defence of the classical union history writing. It focuses on the predominantly male unionists, politics and institutions. It is not an in-depth study of race, gender, class-consciousness, non-union working-class social movements and communities. The authors defend the place of old-fashioned accounts of trade union histories. As a teacher of Australasian labour history this is an excellent overview history which fills a gap in the literature. Debate is not wholly eschewed even if its answers to the debates it raises are short and not comprehensive. It engages with the debate derived from Hobsbawm and Pelling over craft versus industrial unions. Where does the AWU fit in? Ray Markey suggested that the AWU was defensive and restrained the militants and Hearn and Knowles tend to accept this view. Second, it asks whether the AWU's support of the "Australian Settlement", the populist political reformism at the turn of the century (White Australia, tariff protection, compulsory arbitration) was a sell-out of working class. The New Left historian Humphrey McQueen suggested this, rejecting the Old Left view that it humanised capitalism, benefiting workers and families. This account asks if there were a revolutionary militancy to be betrayed in favour of Parliamentarianism and laborism. Third, it asks whether the AWU's adherence to arbitration was misguided. Merritt argues that arbitration ensured the organisational stability of the AWU. Hearn and Knowles are less sanguine that the "officials" faith in arbitration was amply rewarded. They argue that the AWU had mixed success in arbitration process and can understand why workers thought the system was letting them down on occasions.

My major qualm is the connection of the union with the Australian social order. Those of us on this side of the Tasman who read the foreword to this book by the Joint National Secretary of the AWU that the "history of the Australian Workers Union in many ways embodies the notion of being Australian" will smile wryly. Of course, the history of this particular trade union ought to be a history of "a set of values which transcended the industrial nature of the union" (p.8). If the AWU helped to fashion the "Australian soul" (and there is romanticism over this issue), it has to be argued that it helped to fashion the "New Zealand soul" too. Australia's "largest union" is part of our history, too. The Australian shearers' secretary, Temple, and organisers Cook and Slattery also crossed the Tasman Sea, following the shearers' intercolonial seasonal labour market, to form a branch of the Amalgamated Shearers Union of Australasia in Canterbury. William Guthrie Spence, the great union organiser who was instrumental in forming the intercolonial unions which were involved in the 1890 Australasian-wide Maritime Strike even wrote an account of *My Trip to New Zealand*. Of course, it behoved the union to organise New Zealanders who lurk in the early parts of the book as strike breakers (pp.67-8). Ironically in the 1910s-1920s the

New Zealand Workers Union (NZWU) refused to support the Alliance of Labour and "One Big Union" in New Zealand. The two unions were led, literally, by brothers. Ted Grayndler led the AWU for 29 years while Charlie Grayndler led the New Zealand Agricultural and Pastoral Workers Union/NZWU 1916-1923. The two unions would have amalgamated "except for legal complications" (p.128). The relationship remained close, nonetheless. The New Zealand branch allegedly made up one-tenth of the AWU membership in 1921 (p.146) although these figures are highly debatable. The editor of *Maoriland Worker* complained that the NZWU's decision to affiliate with the "Australian One Big Union" meant "abdicating to an Australian body its right to control industrial organisation in New Zealand", weakening New Zealand unionism and burdening the Australian movement. (Editorial, *Maoriland Worker*, 25 January 1922: 2). In 1924 the NZWU finally affiliated with the Alliance.

Of course there is no room in this book for Australasian-wide or regional enquiry. Yet the compulsory arbitration system, the White Australian policy, the male breadwinner wage, the shearers organisations - such important aspects of the Australian soul - were all Australasian institutions. Of course the Australasian labour market shrunk in the 1920s as "crutching, contracting and the gradual breakdown of the July-December shearing season created more opportunities for year-round shearing". Just as the federation drought saw a generation of Australian shearers migrant permanently to New Zealand, the 1970s economic depression in New Zealand saw shearers migrant permanently to Australia. And it resulted in a major social issue. In the 1970s and 1980s New Zealand shearers were castigated as undermining the traditional mateship and shearing traditions with their wide-combs. The AWU repeatedly lobbied the Federal Government to restrict the employment of New Zealanders in the Australian shearing industry in the decade after 1982. Separate Tasman nationalisms disguise commonalities in the historical experience and their interactions. It is part of an unfortunate tradition. This book points to many of these connections even if it does not concentrate upon them.

Melanie Nolan

Department of History

Victoria University of Wellington

Deborah Oxley. Convict Maids: The Forced Migration of Women to Australia. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 339pp. ISBN: 0-521-44677-5.

A book, the opening sentence of which is "White Australia has a very short history", demands attention. In that first sentence, Deborah Oxley alerts the reader to the fact that this historical piece is part of the challenge to and rewriting of a conventional methodological and historical framework. Oxley makes a very fine contribution to modern scholarship with this work, not only through her meticulous and painstaking archival research but also, and at least as importantly, through her pushing at the boundaries of historiography. What she has attempted here is to produce a gendered account of colonial economic development. Be prepared for all the historical research necessary and all the academic reframing possible. Instead of simply producing colourful accounts of individual convict women, with all the depravity, injustice, hardship and ostracism one might imagine, interesting and important as such accounts are, Oxley has worked at synthesising aggregate information about convicts with a coherent inquiry which tries not only to complete gaps in previous information about Australia's convict origins, but seeks to rewrite those origins from a gendered perspective.

Possibilities for investigation include individual histories explored in detail, a shipload of women convicts being surveyed, or a large number arriving between set points in time at one location can be studied. Early records, kept since 1810 and stored as registers by the Admiralty, were sketchy and held only basic information on the length of a convict's sentence without even specifying the offence being punished by transportation. By 1828, however, thanks to legislation and requests from colonial Governors for more information, very careful records were being kept, including age, marital status, the existence of children, trade or profession, observations on the prisoner's temper, details about level of education (whether they could read or write), and the date and place of trial. There is enormously rich data collected in the various "hulk lists", "indents", surgeon-superintendents' hulk lists (which were the notes on each convict gathered by the surgeon-superintendent in charge of the health and behaviour of convicts on the ship during the voyage to Australia), and final interrogation reports by the muster-master upon arrival in Australia. It is these final "convict indents", the leather-bound volumes of the ship's musters, which form the basis of the archival research which Oxley conducts.

These "pre-photographic passport" records are so detailed that one must be tempted to tell individual stories because of the human interest in each one. Oxley outlines that temptation by describing one Elizabeth Coltman who had been transported for seven years for stealing silk, a first offence. She outlines the circumstances of four of Elizabeth's shipmates. The significant departure that Oxley then makes, however, is to ask just how representative Elizabeth and her shipmates Hannah, Caroline, Rachel and Harriet were of the other women on board that ship or of other women transported on other ships. She introduces the reader to 6,876 convict women, focusing on the peak period of transportation to New South Wales from 1826 to 1840. These women are well over half of all the women transported to New South Wales and a quarter of the total who ever sailed to Australia. Oxley's contribution is in her aggregate approach. She maintains, persuasively, that this allows her to investigate a bigger picture, that is, a framework of the economic and social development of colonial Australia. This framework enables her to ask such questions as what types of criminals these were, what skills convict women brought to Australia, what type of labour supply they

constituted and how they compared with English and Irish working women left behind and with free immigrant women to Australia.

The history of Australian convict origins has been a subject much discussed by historians. Oxley herself catalogues much of the previous analysis in an effort to contextualise her own. The nineteenth century disdain of convicts was replaced in early twentieth century literature by the notion of convicts as "more sinned against than sinning", the products and victims of an unjust and oppressive legal system, political rebels and morally innocent villagers. George Arnold Wood was the most influential historian in this regard, coming to the Chair of History at the University of Sydney in 1891 from contemporary British research into village labourers, state welfare and trade unionism. Three decades after a significant article by Wood appeared, the debate on convict origins began to alter. The research coming out of the 1950s and 1960s, based on new quantitative methods applied to the convict indents, concluded that convicts belonged to a professional criminal class. The convict women were professional prostitutes, who lived entirely by crime, choosing not to engage in legitimate employment. The "stain" on the psyche of Australia was being resurrected through the application of new research methods and new source data. This work, Oxley says, had a profound effect on Australia's historiography with serious implications, one of which being the disappearance of convicts from classic texts on Australian economic history. The research of the 1970s and 1980s began to break down this view of the "deformed stratification" of Australian society with the work of feminist historians such as Miriam Dixon and Anne Summers, among others. The picture of all convict women as drunken prostitutes was rejected as a class-based accusation not bounded in fact.

Oxley asks how it is that such depraved origins (if they were so) could result in colonial success. How could one resolve this apparent tension in the literature between convict backgrounds and characters (perceived as negative) and convict achievements (perceived as positive)? In pursuing her answers to these questions, Oxley outlines her methodology in Chapter One in a way which is painfully self-conscious but which gives the reader the greatest confidence that she has examined her methods most rigorously. This provides the essential foundation for the following chapters which examine the notion of criminality (Chapters Two and Three), giving fascinating descriptions from archival sources as the question of what sort of women these convicts were is investigated. The array of detail about particular convict women makes this riveting reading, but one is always reminded of Oxley's wider purpose, to arrive at an economic analysis on the basis of the aggregated stories of these women. The book then looks at the convict women as workers, constructing an inventory of the skills women brought with them. Nearly half (45 percent) of the women were deemed "skilled", and a further 31 percent "semi-skilled", with only 23 percent classified as "unskilled". All kinds of trades were represented; there were six schoolmistresses, four fruit dealers, four publicans and two poultry dealers, all categorised as "semi-professional". None was "professional", unsurprisingly.

Chapters Five and Six provide the broader economic backgrounds of Ireland and England from which the convict women hailed. Oxley attempts to discover where these convict women fitted into their indigenous economies. The Irish women were literate and numerate by contemporary Irish standards; they were healthy, trained as domestic servants and farm workers and not factory workers. They had reskilled as the economy underwent structural

change and Oxley considered them to be well suited to the circumstances and opportunities which lay before them in Australia. As for the English women convicts, they too were skilled and literate, at least as talented as the women who were left behind. They were not political rebels seeking to join a subversive criminal class; but they were not factory workers either. The English convict women were domestic servants and occasionally tradeswomen.

Chapter Seven examines what skills were required by the emerging Australian colony. Free women immigrants are compared with the convict women and an assessment made of the relative merits of the two supplies of labour. The gender imbalance in the new colony caused the authorities to recruit women as immigrants, as they had done in New Zealand also. Oxley concludes that if the publicity from the immigration societies was a true reflection of the skills needed in the new colony, then both free women and convicts were necessary. "Immigration promoters embarked on a deliberate and seemingly successful policy of attracting a group of single women much like convict women: young domestic and farm workers, with a smattering of other trades" (p.196). As Oxley says, "Britain sent out convict maids. Fortuitously, maids were in demand" (p.197).

All of this information and descriptive analysis leads inexorably on to Oxley's concluding chapters. Her discussion of the misconceptions about the origins of white Australia held by historians, economists and social commentators in Chapter Eight is consummate: she drives home the gendered nature of the constructs which were used to describe convict women at different times in their historiography. In a significant innovation, the productive and reproductive capabilities of the convict women are integrated rather than separated and constructed as the determinant of Australia's subsequent economic fortune. Oxley asserts that their absence from Australia's economic history has left a tale half told.

Her final chapter (Chapter Nine) draws together the thematic and archival strands of this work. With the same self-conscious rigour that she applies to her chapter on methodology, Oxley reiterates the criminal-class hypothesis which she has successfully disproven, and summarises that set of gendered value judgments which she has successfully exposed as limited and limiting.

Convict Maids is one of those works from which there is no going back. Oxley has established a conceptual, theoretical, methodological and empirical framework which has set new benchmarks for historiography. Not only is this reworked doctoral thesis accessible, fascinating, and beautifully written, it is consistent with the best of the innovations in modern historiography. Where it is repetitive, it is so to good effect. Economists, historians, labour market analysts and human resource managers can, and should, learn equally from Oxley's work.

Maryan Street

Director, Centre for Labour Studies
University of Auckland

Christian Berggren. Alternatives to Lean Production: Work Organization in the Swedish Auto Industry. Ithaca, New York: ILR, 1993. 286pp. ISBN: 0-87546-317-7.

One could almost be forgiven for thinking that the model of lean production proposed by Womack, Jones and Roos (1990) was indeed the "[one] best way" to organise. Almost, that is, if it was not for the likes of Berggren who provides, in this book, a convincing and thorough argument against the TINA (there is no alternative) school of lean production.

The book is well written, well documented, free from jargon, and well arranged to provide both general and specific coverage of the development and nature of the "Swedish Trajectory" in the automotive industry. It profiles the "innovative production design and work organization, and the competitive and labour market pressures that brought Swedish auto makers to develop this model". This edition, prefaced with a update for the paperback edition, informs the reader of the continued, if not heightened, relevancy of the Swedish experience in the face of shutdowns of principle plants.

While there is a tendency to see Volvo's experiment with humanistic manufacturing at its *Uddevalla* and *Kalmar* plants as noble, but ultimately ineffective in the face of the sheer efficiency of the lean production model, Berggren shows that it is far too early to make such a judgement. He provides an account of Swedish work organisation that shows that there are genuine possibilities for ways of working that are not just flexible for managers but also for employees. These possibilities are not simply for humanistic work organisation but *competitive* humanistic work organisation.

After a brief introduction, Berggren proceeds to outline the nature of the "dominant industrial paradigm of the 1980s, the Japanese production system". Berggren refers to this paradigm as *Toyotism*, alluding both to Toyota as a paradigm case of this new system and that it represents what he suggests is a "complex extension of Taylorism". Berggren identifies that, while on the surface there are striking similarities between the Japanese practices and the European discussion of new production concepts, "the real content of these two approaches is very different". He makes his case for these differences through exploring a number of themes that he returns to throughout the work; multitasking versus reskilling, increasing work strictures, visibility as a means of increased control and the ambiguous concept of teamwork. This section concludes with a useful outlining of both positive and negative features of the lean production system.

The next few chapters outline various aspects of the Swedish automotive industry including the relatively small scale production of cars and large scale production of heavy vehicles, the market players, and the prominent role of the labour market and the trade unions in the emergence of the Swedish model. These chapters provide useful insights into the case studies of six plants of manufacturers Scania and Volvo offered on the following chapters.

Amid the various interesting details of the case studies, Berggren constructs and employs a simple model for describing the production design and organisation in the different plants. The model attempts to represent, on the x-axis, the trade-off between the reduction of costs associated with increasing humanism of the work process and the advantages that were so

important to the development of the Fordist system, plotted against on the y-axis, types of organisation ranging from the traditional authoritarian type workplace to the integrated team work type organisation. Berggren profitably employs this rudimentary model (with ample qualification) throughout the case studies providing especially useful points of reflection concerning the debate over multitasking versus reskilling.

Of especial note from the case studies is the evidence they provide, and the:

strong refutation of the view, propagated by the uncritical adherents of the Japanese production system, that the progressive reduction of repetitive and subdivided work structures contributed nothing to workers' satisfaction and well being. A recurrent theme among assemblers performing short-cycle work is the desire for holistic work. As one female sub-assembler stated, "It's been my dream to assemble a complete vehicle - to learn more, to see how everything is connected." The evidence for the plants proves that she is not alone in her feelings (p.220).

Berggren's central argument through the case studies is that the increasing humanisation of work does not come at the expense of efficiency. He argues, in contrast to the TINA of the lean production argument, there is the possibility of doing it otherwise and still being competitive. The choice is not between humanism and competitive success.

The options are there. Firms have choices concerning their work organisation and their production design. Further their decisions have important implications for the future quality of working and social life. To make these choices, however, it is essential to know the alternatives and not to simplify the problem. No one practice is suitable for all firms or all workers (p.255).

Berggren's book provides a valuable contribution to increasing the awareness of the choices that are possible in work organisation and production design. An invaluable addition to the bookshelf of anyone who is concerned with work organisation and wanting solid, empirically based analysis of real alternatives to lean production.

References

Womack, James P., Jones, Daniel T. and Roos, Daniel (1990), *The Machine that Changed the World*, New York, Rawson and Associates.

Shayne Grice
Department of Management
University of Otago

William J. Sonnenstuhl. Working Sober: The Transformation of an Occupational Drinking Culture. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996. xiv, 143pp. ISBN: 0-804-8348-4.

Coping with excessive drinking at work

If families often seem to lack a worked out and agreed policy for handling excessive drinking, the same is so often the case at work. A number of people may have some degree of knowledge or concern about a colleague's drinking over a period of months or years. But if the organisation lacks an explicit policy and if those who have a partial knowledge of the problem do not share their knowledge or for some other reason fail to support each other in potential coping actions, then the organisation's coping strategy is likely to be one of inaction or, if the person concerned is dismissed from employment, one of avoidance.

Some companies nowadays have explicit, written company alcohol policies, often written into an employee assistance programme. The requirements of such policies and the lengths that need to be gone to to ensure clarity and cohesion in the process of accepting and implementing them have led to the growth of an employee assistance programme industry. Such a policy should include not only an assurance that any employee identified as having an alcohol or drug related problem adversely affecting the work situation will be offered assistance in obtaining advice and what other help is considered necessary and an opportunity to discuss the matter once the problem has become evident, but also provisions to refer the matter to the disciplinary procedure if the employee concerned either denies the existence of the problem, refuses the offer of help, or discontinues a course of treatment, and continues with or reverts to an unsatisfactory level of conduct or work performance. It calls for a combination of support and help and discipline, kindness and firmness.

William Sonnenstuhl has written a number of books and articles about employee assistance programmes for problem drinkers in the United States, and he is explicit about the coping strategies that he believes successful programmes embody. The strategy he describes he terms constructive confrontation or supportive confrontation since it involves two parts. The first, confrontative, involves reiterating expectations of satisfactory work performance, reminding the employee that he or she is not fulfilling these expectations, and stating clearly that continued unacceptable performance is likely to lead to formal discipline. The second, constructive or supportive part, involves setting up a social support network within the workplace that expresses concern and emotional support, emphasising that employment can continue if performance improves, and suggesting an alternative course of action that the employee can take.

Of particular interest are the dilemmas and struggles that are involved in reaching a strategy which combines continued support for the user with confrontation. Sonnenstuhl writes of workplace arbitrators who have oscillated between supporting disciplinary procedures so long as they were administered according to the book and reversing disciplinary actions on the grounds they believed alcoholism was an illness. It has required many years of work on the part of many people to put together company policies which combine support and confrontation.

Most employee assistance programmes exist within organisational systems with clear management authority structure. Managers clearly have an advantage over colleagues when it comes to the confrontative part of supportive confrontation. But one example of a programme which Sonnenstuhl describes in detail - *Working Sober: The Transformation of an Occupational Drinking Culture* - is a peer programme involving prevention committees made up of voluntary worker-based teams that carry out education, and when deemed necessary, constructive confrontation of co-workers. In this book Sonnenstuhl explores the working lives of the men who build tunnels. Taking time to develop a lucid cultural framework for the role of alcohol in the work setting - all-pervading and central to role identification and maintenance - he tells the story of how an excessive drinking culture was turned into an abstinent one (in the workplace).

He writes very well and in a style which captures the reader, unusual in this subject matter. It is an American story and there is a great deal of recent American history of liquor laws. For a New Zealand context, his writing is at its weakest when he allows Alcoholics' Anonymous and a disease model understanding of dependence to be his only framework. As large-scale on-site drinking tolerated by management should surely be rare, if not unheard of, in this country most may find it of little relevance to the more common problems of the individual. For those interested in alcohol, the culture of drinking, the grim and at times heroic tales of the men who build tunnels or the transforming revolution of a pervading workplace practice, this book can be commended.

This story is a continuation (at least since 1988) of a Sonnenstuhl theme: the basic elements of social life are the giving of compassionate support to encourage compliance with norms on the one hand, and the compassionate application of sanctions to discourage noncompliance on the other.

Ian MacEwan

Director of Treatment and Professional Development,
Alcohol Advisory Council