

REVIEWS

S. Kessler and F. Bayliss. Contemporary British Industrial Relations. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992. xvi, 291 pp.

This is a book which will be welcomed by those in New Zealand interested in contemporary issues in industrial relations, academics and lay persons alike. It is a text-book which firmly and clearly paints a picture of post-war British industrial relations in the context of politics and the economy and, against this background, simply and clearly demonstrates the changes that have taken place in the 1980s.

Essentially the book is a structured commentary, set up under topic headings, which tells a complex story in a compelling fashion. It is difficult to present chronological material in an interesting way without using appeals to ideology, but this has been achieved by several means. First, the language is simple, often informal, direct and easily comprehensible, and there is an easy flow to the presentation. Second, the authors have drawn together the relevant contemporary academic research material and presented it in simple tabular form or as illustrative comment; for those who want an overview of the period without having to undertake a vast literature review, this aspect of the book is excellent. Third, the book is organised thematically and is interspersed with summaries and conclusions. There is never a foray into obscure detail. Finally, the authors' and readers' own memories are directly acknowledged as, say, when the tale of the Miners' Strike is recounted.

The story is presented simply. By the end of the 1960s, there was an "established consensus" in Britain whereby collective bargaining was recognised as the major method of conducting industrial relations by unions, employers and governments. However, strains were apparent even at this stage. For example, the site of much bargaining activity was local and this meant that senior officials of both union and management experienced some loss of control of the workplace. In particular, however, the slowing down of economic growth meant that unions were likely to break this consensus to maintain rates of increase in real incomes. The 1970s, unsurprisingly therefore, saw attempts by governments of both persuasions to control growing worker militancy, both by legislation and partnership. The 1979 "Winter of Discontent" marked the failure of these efforts and the end of consensus. Militant unionism is seen by the authors as the reason for the triumph of the Conservatives in the 1979 General Election.

The main part of the book is concerned with presenting and explaining the effects of the next decade or so of Conservative rule on that industrial relations scene. The authors have made very comprehensive use of recent research in the area but have also included the results of their own work: semi-structured interviews with over 40 major industrial relations practitioners. Their findings suggest, first, that a combination of persistent high unemployment and anti-union legislation of Conservative governments strengthened

employers and weakened unions. A wealth of evidence is presented simply and clearly to substantiate this claim. For example, unemployment and employment figures are produced and there are simple precis of the major pieces of relevant legislation. Second, the effects on both parties are as follows. In its quest for greater productivity to meet increased competition in the product market, in general, management was able to take advantage of the economic situation and new regulations. It carried this out by means of direct communication with individual employees: for example, performance related pay, flexibility agreements and policies of human resource management. For trade unions, a picture of decline is painted. Membership levels and power decreased dramatically in the period while strikes were halved from levels in the previous decade. Some unions responded to their situation by adopting the "new unionism", bowing to "managerial prerogative" and accepting "something for something" bargaining.

None of this is new, but the authors have gathered together a wealth of evidence to establish trends or patterns which emerged in the decade, and a meaningful sequence of changes is presented. What is interesting for New Zealand is the authors' suggestion that, faced with political and economic advantages, management did not take the opportunity to weaken unions further. On the contrary, the authors produce evidence which suggests that some management could not have carried out the new policies without union co-operation; that unions could not have survived without the survival of check-off arrangements.

Throughout the book, the wealth of expertise of the authors is very apparent. The narrative remains lively throughout. In particular, stories of the Miners' Strike, the Grunwick Dispute, Wapping live again as they were retold. This is its major strength: the subject matter lives for the reader. It is also its weakness because it seems sad that such scholarship is not underpinned by any kind of theoretical approach. While it is refreshing not to lose the flames of conflict so central to industrial relations in the endless desert wastes of post-structuralist discussion, nevertheless, some kind of notion of the national interest might have provided a focus for discussion for a consideration of the problem of conflict and consent. The lack of a central analytical theme explains why the conclusions are often weak and speculative of the "are these changes temporary or permanent?" kind. The very involvement of the authors in the era seems to have made them participants rather than objective commentators. This is highlighted by their own research, which seems to consist in part of anecdotes. They are not partisan but they are participants which is why, for example, they see "problems" in the public sector. However, this book will be read by many and will illuminate their knowledge and stimulate their interest. That indeed is a rare reward.

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Alan Williams. Human Resource Management and Labour Market Flexibility: Some Current Theories and Controversies. Aldershot: Avebury. 1993.

Richard I.D. Harris and Bridget M. Daldy. Labour Market Adjustment in New Zealand. Aldershot: Avebury. 1994.

The Avebury imprint has published two monographs that will be of wide interest among readers of this journal. The first is written by Alan Williams, Professor of Human Resource Management at Massey University, and is designed to explore the implications of the revolutionary global structural changes that occurred in the 1980s for human resource management, and for models advocating greater labour market flexibility as a policy response.

There is no claim to original research in the book; to the contrary, Williams emphasises that his work is "an exercise in reconnaissance, and a delineation of the current state of some major if inevitably selective arguments" (p.x). Thus the text sets out terms of reference for a research agenda, rather than presenting any novel theories, new data or final conclusions.

The first chapter discusses some theoretical conflicts in the labour market flexibility literature, identifying three major perspectives; the French regulationist school, flexible specialisation theories and flexible firm theories. Each approach is surveyed critically, with serious problems identified in each case.

This leads to a full chapter on the labour market reforms associated with neo-liberal writers, particularly Frederick Hayek, and contrasts them with the interventionist approach of Richard Jackman and Richard Layard. Williams doesn't come to any conclusions concerning the Jackman-Layard approach, but is generally suspicious of the claims of Hayek and his followers, since he argues "there is little room for human resource management principles in the New Right model" (p.31).

Chapter 3 is devoted to strategic human resource management. Again alternative perspectives are presented, concentrating on the utilitarian-functionalist and the developmental-humanist approaches, and again important shortcomings are identified in each case. The remainder of the chapter is concerned with the necessity of considering strategic human resource management within a wider socio-political environment.

This last point emerges as one of the book's main themes. After a chapter on human capital theory, the last two chapters consider the implications of changes in the global economy for human resource management. Once more, no firm conclusions are reached, but Williams ends on a positive note, expressing the view that, if it is allowed an appropriate role, the contribution of human resource management "to the essential re-moralisation of business, and the rediscovery of a new and equitable collectivism grounded in a new and just international socio-economic order, may prove incalculable" (p.119).

I have one complaint to make about the book, which is that Williams has not been well-served by his editor. Commas are used inappropriately throughout, some sentences have been divided into two sentences so that the first sentence then lacks a principal clause,

references are put into the text without brackets or commas, and the bibliography tends to exclude the titles of chapters in edited volumes and the publisher name for books. These shortcomings made the book much harder to read, and less useful as a resource, than should have been the case.

In contrast, the second book, written by Richard Harris and Bridget Daldy at Waikato University, is very easy to read. The text is clear, each chapter finishes with a succinct summary of the main points made, and the bibliography appears complete.

The first three chapters provide a macroeconomic overview of the labour market changes in New Zealand since the early 1960s, placed within the wider context of structural adjustment and other economic reforms during the 1980s. This is done by presenting a series of graphs and then telling a "story" (in the positive, McCloskey sense) to describe their hypothesised inter-relationships. This has become the standard approach in economic policy discussion, but of course leaves plenty of room for disagreement and further analysis. The advantage of Harris and Daldy's account is that it is well presented and well structured, so that it provides a good framework for further work.

Chapter 4 "sets the scene for much of the rest of the book" (p.44) and begins the task of exploring the implications of the previously discussed macroeconomic forces and outcomes for the behaviour of individual institutions. Some of Williams' themes surface here; particularly the importance of flexibility in response to greater international competition and advancing technology. This idea is further discussed in the next three chapters, using available New Zealand data to illustrate research findings that were originally obtained in other countries (notably, Australia, Japan and the United Kingdom).

Chapter 8 presents the findings of original research by the two authors designed to explore the process of restructuring at the level of individual organisations. This involved interviewing 24 organisations in the Waikato area that had reduced the size of their labour force from 79,103 employees in 1988 to 62,168 by mid-1990 (p.105). This is a fascinating chapter, both for the questions asked and the responses obtained, and makes an important contribution to the applied research literature in this country.

The final chapter suggests possible labour market policy options arising out of the authors' analysis and likely future trends. This section echoes a number of recent recommendations for greater resources to be devoted to vocational education and training, including increased opportunities for management education.

My lasting impression after reading these two monographs was that it is an exciting time to be a researcher in the fields of human resource management and labour market economics. In Williams' view, none of the major paradigms are free of serious problems, and in any case the realities of doing international business in the 1990s mean that new approaches are required, while Harris and Daldy's applied research demonstrates the relevance of these concerns in New Zealand. The scope for further research, both theoretical and applied, appears unlimited.

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Michael Hess. Unions Under Economic Development: Private Sector Unions in Papua New Guinea. Oxford University Press Australia, 1994. 229pp. ISBN: 019 553266 X.

Until recently social researchers have been largely uninterested in the study of industrial relations and trade unions in the South Pacific. As Jacqueline Leckie has made the point, one of the reasons for this is that researchers have been slow to recognise the transformations wrought by capitalist development, unwilling to accept that processes of class formation might be taking place. From the number of new books and anthologies that have appeared recently it would seem the situation is changing rapidly and there is no longer the same reticence about these issues. Pacific labour history is at last beginning to get the kind of serious attention that it deserves.

Even though Michael Hess has not attempted a complete history of trade unions in Papua New Guinea, what he has done in this study of private sector unions represents one of the most comprehensive studies of unionism that has yet been undertaken in the South Pacific. As in many other colonial territories, trade unions did not emerge in Papua New Guinea until the late colonial period, in the last two decades before independence. The first unions grew out of ethnically organized welfare groups. They attracted suspicion from employers and paternalistic concern from the colonial government. Their recognition was assured when an Australian style system of compulsory conciliation and arbitration was introduced in 1962. In the more than thirty years since then they have grown to represent over a quarter of the total workforce and made significant gains in the industrial arena. At the same time, most unions are small and weakly organized; many are inactive. Considering that the state in Papua New Guinea is becoming increasingly authoritarian in pursuit of development goals this is still a vulnerable union movement.

Hess has built his understanding of Papua New Guinea unionism around the close study of two key unions, the Milne Bay District Workers' Association and the Central District Waterside Workers' Union, each representative of different periods in the history of the union movement. He has also made a close study of the Papua New Guinea Trade Union Congress which was the name given in 1974 to a government-sponsored umbrella grouping of private sector unions originally formed for the purpose of having a peak union council which could represent workers at the national level. These case studies make up the main body of the book and provide a useful record of the critical years in union development immediately before and after independence.

There are many issues of comparative interest arising out of this study such as the close relationship between unions and the state during the early years of union existence, described by the concept of "dependent unionism". Also of interest are the strong influence exercised by international agencies in the 1970s and 1980s (mostly conservative bodies like the Asia-America Free Labour Institute and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions), and the limited impact of the union movement on national politics. In respect to the last point, Papua New Guinea is the only independent Pacific country with a large union movement that does not also have a labour party. At the same time there are numerous union leaders who have used trade unions to go on and pursue careers in national politics. Not surprisingly, Hess focuses a lot of attention on the question of leadership in trying to explain the mixed success and uncertain outlook for the union movement. There has been some reluctance in the book to step outside the industrial relations arena and

address post-independence economic and political development generally and the wider impact of the union movement on that development. Even if this meant a larger book it would have given it greater contemporary relevance. The Trade Union Congress might have eschewed the political path, but this does not mean that unions have not had some political impact. This could have been given more attention. The real strength of the book lies in its historical coverage, and in that respect it represents a major contribution to the field.

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Carl Davidson and Marianne Bray. Women and Part-Time Work in New Zealand. New Zealand, Bookhouse. 110pp. ISBN: 0478-100639.

This volume presents the results of a project conducted on behalf of the Suffrage Centennial Year Trust by the New Zealand Institute for Social Research and Development. The study represents a timely investigation into the part-time work of women in New Zealand, in light of the dramatic changes to the political, economic and industrial relations environments over the last decade. Part-time work receives relatively little research attention, and this volume represents a good addition to the literature in the area.

At the heart of the book is the question of why women work part-time. The study investigated women's motivations in seeking part-time work, the supply and demand functions affecting this type of employment and the implications for women of working part-time in terms of employment conditions. These questions were investigated across four industry sectors, these being retail, service, education and health. These particular sectors were chosen because each has experienced a rapid increase in part-time employment, and in each, women are a large proportion of the total work force. In addition, these industry sectors provided a mixture of primary and secondary labour markets, and they have all experienced dramatic changes due to recent deregulation and restructuring.

Chapters one and two set the scene for the study, the first asking why part-time work should be studied, the second putting the research question into context. Both chapters background the implications of economic restructuring and regulatory change in New Zealand over the last decade with respect to part-time work. The authors describe how these changes have driven employers to seek greater flexibilities in employment practices and the role recent industrial relations legislation (i.e. the Employment Contracts Act 1991) has had in enabling employers to gain an advantage at the expense of employment conditions in the labour market. Chapter three describes the methodology used in the study. The study employs the use of primary data (via interviews with what the authors term "key informants" made up of employers, employee representatives and part-time working women across the four industries) and secondary data (e.g. statistical data on participation rates among women working part-time). Chapters four, five and six detail the results of the study. Chapter four describes the motivations of women to work part-time and details the

demand and supply factors within each of the four industries highlighting recent political and economic changes impacting on each area (for example, health and education reforms). Chapters five and six focus on the realities and implications for women of working part-time within each of the four industry sectors in terms of employment conditions. The final chapter provides a general summary of the study.

The findings confirm what others have observed - that is, the primary motivator for women undertaking part-time work is the need to structure their paid work around the constraints posed by their unpaid work commitments. The study also revealed variation in the degree of "choice" women were able to exercise in undertaking part-time work. Choice varied across regions (reflecting differing levels of demand and supply) and class position whereby better paid women in primary labour market jobs were able to exercise more choice than those in secondary labour market positions who were often forced into part-time work due to limited employment options.

The findings concerning employment conditions confirm the suspicions expressed by industrial relations scholars with respect to the likely negative effects on pay and conditions of the Employment Contracts Act 1991. Although variations existed over the four industries, the results overall indicated that employment conditions for women working part-time within these four industry sectors have been reduced. This has primarily been due to increased competitive pressures in the New Zealand economy and the heightened ability of employers to set conditions advantageous to themselves under the ECA. The study revealed a trend toward the removal of penal rates and overtime, increased redundancies and use of probationary periods, a move to individual employment contracts (representing reduced bargaining power) and an overall reduction in employment related conditions, i.e. pay, benefits and security. These reduced conditions represent considerable labour cost savings to employers and illustrate the incentive for companies to hire part-time workers.

The strengths of this volume are threefold. Firstly, the study provides useful and timely empirical data on the position of women in the part-time work force across four industry sectors which have been dramatically affected by political and economic change. Secondly, the study makes good use of data (with a triangulation of sources) and employs useful qualitative research methods which enabled the researchers to capture experiential data revealing variations across different groups of women working part-time. Thirdly, the study provides a comprehensive description of the current labour market context in New Zealand.

The major limitation of the study is the weak theoretical grounding employed to drive or explain the research. As an overall impression the volume represents a solid reference for those seeking a descriptive analysis rather than an explanatory one. It would be necessary to look elsewhere for a more theoretical analysis of the context in which economic reforms and restructuring themselves have occurred and why it is women (particularly married women) who have made up the majority of those entering part-time employment recently.

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Shigeyoshi Tokunaga, Norbert Altmann, Helmut Demes (ed.). New Impacts on Industrial Relations. Munich: iudicium Publisher, 1992. 492pp. ISBN: 3-89129-483-2.

Tokunaga, Altmann and Demes' collection of Japanese, Swedish, Italian, and German authors on industrial relations is basically asking the question, "Can the current developments in European industrial relations be called the *"Japanization of European Industrial Relations?"* Or may there be also anything which could be called *"Europeanization of Japanese Industrial Relations in Japan?"* On a wider scale than the selling title *"The Japanization of British Industry"* (Oliver/Wilkinson 1988), the book examines German and Japanese industries under the MIT's theme of "Lean Production" and its effects on German and European industrial relations. Since foreign direct investment (FDI) by Japanese companies into Germany is much lower than in the case of Britain, the German industry is much less concerned with a *"Japanization of German Industry"*. In addition, Kreissig's chapter shows that Japanese FDI into the former East Germany is very low. In contrast to the *"Japanization of British Industry"*, the Tokunaga/Altmann/Demes book examines the question of a possible Japanization of European industrial relations much more carefully. The book not only includes a detailed analysis of current European industrial relations, but also looks at Japanese industrial relations; its problems and possible future paths.

Japanese and European industry and industrial relations are analyzed under the current constraints of the world-wide move towards lean production on the one hand and the increased internationalisation of industry on the other. Shigeyoshi's analysis of the "multinational enterprise" (MNE), Bosch's chapter on the "European Single Market", and Sengenberger's chapter on the "Economic Internationalisation" show this in detail. MNEs, according to Sengenberger, employed at least 65 million workers in the 1980s. Increasingly, the MNEs can move freely between the 12 member states of the EC, which has implications for European trade unions. Therefore, according to Bosch, the EC is going to implement a "European Works Council" in order to cope with this development.

After studying the "Internationalisation of Industrial Relations", the book's chapter on "Subcontracting and Rationalisation" examines the relationship between the main firm and its subcontractors. Masayoshi and Atsushi undertake a detailed analysis of the differences between Western and Japanese suppliers. Interesting to note, that in the close relationship between the firm and the supplier in a "Just-in-time" (JIT) relation, some of the power of the German Works Council may well be erased. Based on a JIT-regime, overtime in the main plant may result in the immediate demand for overtime in the supplier firm. The works council in Germany needs to agree to the company's demand for overtime. Under the JIT-regime, there will be an "economic" necessity for overtime under which the works council in a small firm may be forced to sign the company's demand for overtime, because of the demand for short-time delivery to the main plant.

According to Shoichiro, small firms in Japan are already under the JIT-regime. Kingo's analysis of 1,424 small firms in the Osaka area resulted in the detection of huge amounts of overtime and the so-called "unrecorded" overtime. Only 6.7 percent of all workplaces in Kingo's survey had a five-day week and 4.4 days of paid annual leave are given to the employees in small Japanese firms. As Mari's article on "Marginalized Labour" in small Japanese firms shows, the situation with women workers is in fact quite similar. Japanese

women on average still earn only 57.1 percent of a man's income.

Ikuro's chapter on trade unions explains the divided situation of Japanese unions, i.e. there are 33,270 unions in Japan. There is a movement towards a formation of trade unions under *Rengo*. *Rengo*, similar to the British TUC or the German DGB, which organises about 7.6 million of the 12.3 million union members in Japan. Nevertheless, Ikuro fails to explain why, for example, the unions in the powerful car industry only organise core workers. Therefore, workers in marginal employment situations, i.e. temporary and part-time workers etc. cannot be members of the powerful union. As the example of the car industry shows, only the relatively well-treated approximately 25 percent of the core workers are under union protection.

Demes' concluding chapter summarises the contributions to the book and concludes that "industrial relations and work organisation concepts are not as easily transferable as production concepts". In contrast to the "*Japanization of British Industry*", Demes sees the difficulties of a transfer of central features of Japanese personnel management to the West. Demes concludes that some elements of lean production may not be implemented in the West because the amount of environmental problems caused, for example, by JIT may not be accepted in the West. Similarly, a production system which is seen as "Management by Stress" may also be rejected in the West. In a survey in Japan, 80 percent of the workers agreed, that too few workers were in their workshop to handle the workload. Berggren/Björkman found that this is also the case for plants operating with Japanese production systems outside of Japan.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the famous Toyota company ranks only 27th as a preferred place to work among university graduates in Japan. Quoting Japan's expert on Toyota (M. Nomura) and summarising the book, Demes concludes on Japan that "signs for change appear to indicate trends toward (northern) European concepts . . .".

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