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What's a Good Job? The Importance of Employment Relationships by Graham LOWE and Grant SCHELLENBERG, Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2001, 117 pp., ISBN 1-896703-53-4.

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rigoureux pour intégrer les différentes dimensions de la négociation collective, à l'instar de Kochan et Katz (1988) dans leur célèbre ouvrage d'introduction à la négociation collective aux États-Unis. La volonté de l'auteur de confiner sa présentation aux éléments essentiels au détriment de l'analyse des processus de la négociation collective peut expliquer l'absence d'un cadre conceptuel intégrateur, mais elle soulève cependant la question de la clientèle visée par cet ouvrage. S'il s'adresse à des étudiants universitaires, il faut constater que son contenu peut alimenter quelques séances introductives à l'étude des processus de

la négociation collective, mais qu'un ouvrage complémentaire est nécessaire pour circonscrire ce sujet. Par ailleurs, si l'ouvrage est destiné aux praticiens, ils seront sûrement déçus du peu d'intérêt que porte l'auteur aux trucs du métier et aux tactiques pouvant être utilisées à la table de négociation. Somme toute, il faudra attendre que l'auteur ait publié son ouvrage annoncé sur les processus pour apprécier à sa juste valeur l'originalité de sa contribution à l'analyse de la négociation collective.

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What's a Good Job? The Importance of Employment Relationships

by Graham LOWE and Grant SCHELLENBERG, Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2001, 117 pp., ISBN 1-896703-53-4.

In *What's a Good Job?* Lowe and Schellenberg expand our understanding of work by focusing on "changing employment relationships." The intention is to "document why good employment relationships are important for workers, employers and public policy."

This thoroughly researched report is based on a survey of 2,500 employed people, conducted in February-March 2000, and supplemented by subsequent focus groups. The analysis of employment relationships unfolds in clearly laid out chapters: a section on methodology; an examination of non-standard work (chapter 4); the legal basis of contracts and the role of unions and associations (chapter 5); a mapping of employment relationships and the sources of variation in employment relationships (chapters 6 and 7); and a new perspective gleaned from a remapping of employment relationships according to their strength or weakness (chapter 8). Finally, the implications for workers, employers and public policy are examined on the basis of the study's findings. The exploration of the legal aspects of employment relationships and the social-psychological dimensions of trust, commitment, in-

fluence and communication form the focus of the study as a whole. The factors associated with higher and lower levels of these dimensions are identified, the explanations are clear though not simplistic and the dynamics of complex change processes carefully unravelled.

A significant contribution is the analysis of temporary jobs and agencies and the growing category of self-employment. The significance of the links between paid work, family and home are also explored. Only about one in four respondents, for example, were found to have access to a medical or dental plan. Notable as well is the finding from survey respondents that the distinction between paid employment and self-employment and between permanent and temporary jobs has become substantively blurred. Although the majority of temporary help agency workers desire full-employment, many are already found to view themselves as permanent due to their ongoing relationship with one agency. Another finding tells us that 12% of self-employed individuals overlap with paid employment to such an extent they could well be "disguised employees."

The chapters concerning the social and psychological dimensions of employment relationships of trust, commitment, communication and influence reveal that the strength of an individual's employment relationship primarily reflects the environment in which they work rather than being a function of their personal characteristics such as age, gender, level of education, etc.

Of particular interest to this reviewer is that union membership was found to be associated with weaker employment relationships on all four dimensions. This finding, while not fully explored, is thought to be associated with higher expectations and awareness amongst the unionized workforce. Is it possible that union members are more aware of structures and relationships of domination and subordination in the workplace? Lowe and Schellenberg raise key questions in their discussion concerning "new" human resources management aimed at cultivating employee trust and commitment such as, "how can unions ensure that employers' efforts to strengthen employment relationships does not spell the decline of third-party representation?" Yet these waters unfortunately also remain largely uncharted.

There are a range of further findings from this major research undertaking, many more than can be outlined in this short review, but among them is a new understanding and definition of what constitutes a good job and why the quality of employment relationships is more important to job satisfaction than even pay and benefits. Further, Lowe and Schellenberg explain why such good jobs are also important for employers and public policy.

Earlier drafts of this important study counterposed a "structural approach," documenting how labour market jobs and workplaces are restructuring and downsizing, to a "relational" approach, emphasizing social-psychological attributes. The final publication views the new work realities in Canada through

the lens of employment relationships claiming to "augment the traditional approach," but any such synthesis of perspectives remains absent. Noticeable by its absence, for example, is any analytically integrated notion of power and social class. Power relations remain key in the workplace and cannot properly be demoted to the vague notion of influence.

By collectively organizing and creating autonomous organizations whether they be unions, professional and staff associations or European works councils, working people are trying to equalize power imbalances and gain more control over their lives. These power imbalances flow from the manner in which the economy and the workplace is organized, where some own and control and many others do not. Such structures of domination and subordination necessarily involve people in relationships both as individuals and members of social groups. It is therefore correct to see social class not as a "thing" or a "category," but rather as a relationship. Nonetheless, such relationships are rooted in the structures of productive process. By largely omitting any analysis of power and class relations, while appealing to all workplace parties to conceive of a "good job" as in their joint long-term interests, this important study cannot tell us how to get from "here" to "there." That is, how do working people move from their current employment relationships to a "good job?"

True, this question stems as much from this reviewer's trade union activity, as from academic interest. But surely if the desired goal is "good jobs" and the evidence suggests there remains a long road to travel to achieve such an objective, it is not unreasonable to expect a discussion that brings together the various threads of this extensive research and suggests directions for change in the workplace, in public policy and in further research. The final chapter in Lowe's earlier book the *Quality of Work*

(RI/IR 56: 4, ISBN 0-19-541479-9) begins precisely this quest by proposing a “people-centred agenda for work reform” in the belief that “individuals can shape the future of work to meet their needs and aspirations.” It makes a thoughtful beginning. Filling this gap in *What’s a Good Job?* is also necessary. It would be significantly facilitated by a theoretical approach that actually in-

tegrated the “relational” with the “structural.” In so doing, both the conflictual and accommodational dynamics of employee and employer relations could be specified in a manner that provided some direction for the way forward to “good jobs” for all.

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Labored Relations: Law, Politics and the NLRB

by William B. GOULD IV, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000, 449 pp., ISBN 0-262-07205-X (hc: alk. paper), 0-262-57155-2 (pbk).

The presidency of William Jefferson Clinton was launched amidst a flurry of reformist zeal. Health insurance and gays in the military attracted the highest public and media profiles but labour law reform also figured prominently among candidates for fundamental review. Like the top-billed issues, however, it did not sustain its early promise and little of the ambitious agenda was realized. Bill Gould’s *Labored Relations*, a memoir of the four and a half turbulent years he spent as Chairman of the National Labor Relations Board, offers insights into the meagre outcome and, in a narrative laced with excerpts from his diaries and buttressed with extensive appendices, sets out a decidedly personal view of events and characters militating against more substantive achievements.

William B. Gould IV, the great-grandson of a former slave and a life-long Democrat, is Professor of Law at Stanford Law School and a respected labour relations scholar. Gould asserts that his book is about “the relationship between law, a quasi-judicial administrative agency and politics in the volatile arena of labor policy.” He adds that it is also about “the balance of power between labor and management” and “the rule of law and the role of labor in the modern economy,” but it is the first of the three themes that dominates the text and that unintentionally, it is

presumed, portrays a Chairman who contributes to and intensifies the volatility.

At the time of his nomination to the NLRB Chairmanship in June, 1993, Gould’s views on reform of the National Labor Relations Act were already well known. Other writings and public utterances had identified his opinions on specific changes needed to address deficiencies in the Act and its interpretation, which he considers inhibit access to collective bargaining and contribute to the overall decline of the American labour movement. His reform list included such features as first contract arbitration, certification based on signed cards and restrictions on permanent replacement workers. These were the kinds of issue, together with procedural reforms such as more readily exercised injunctive relief, the formulation of NLRB rules based on well trodden jurisprudence and expedited case-management practices, which Gould hoped to pursue during his term of office. *Labored Relations* chronicles his attempts to do so, relates his modest successes and, most often, rails against the institutional roadblocks he encountered and the personal opposition he frequently provoked.

Gould makes solid cases for several of the reforms he champions. Virtually none of the substantive changes he